

National Park Authority

23 October 2024

Present (In Person)

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Dr M Havard, Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs J James, Councillor M James, Mr GA Jones, Dr R Plummer, Councillor V Thomas, Councillor M Wiggins and Councillor C Williams BEM.

Present (Remotely)

Councillor M Bowen, Councillor SL Hancock MBE, Mrs S Hoss, Councillor B Price, Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall and Councillor A Tinley.

Councillor C George joined the meeting during consideration of the report on Proposed Designation of the Cresswell Quay Conservation Area (Minute 8 refers).

Also in attendance:

Jason Blewitt and Isabel Hammond (Audit Wales), Catrin Evans (Head of Finance & Fundraising), , Richard Griffiths (Section 151 Officer), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Michael Kent (Monitoring Officer), Gayle Lister (Principal Planning Officer), Linda Jones (Babbs Architects), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager), Jessica Morgan (Head of Decarbonisation), Sara Morris (Director of Place and Engagement), James Parkin (Director of Nature and Tourism), and Mair Thomas (Performance and Compliance Officer).

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely
10.00am – 11.45am; 12.00pm – 12:50pm]

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T Evans.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Dr R Plummer made a general declaration as a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales and as Chair of its Protected Areas Committee. Councillors M Wiggins and V Thomas made declarations with regards to report 39/24, Proposed Designation of Creswell Quay Conservation Area. Councillors M James and C Williams declared interests in report 45/24, RNLi Fundraising Request.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11 September 2024 were presented for confirmation and signature.



On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 11 September 2024 be confirmed and signed with no amendments.

4. Action Log and Matters Arising

An update on the Pay and Grading Review was provided by the Chief Executive who outlined progress made and the next steps. He added that costs were not yet available, but were still anticipated to be as previously outlined, and he was not overly concerned regarding the budget for the coming year.

Noted.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that she had attended the following meetings and events;

- The Authority's Chief Executive Performance Panel
- A Study Day at St Brides (Authority owned site)
- A corporate joint committee meeting where a private sector advisory board was appointed and matters such as the Regional Transport Plan Workshop were discussed

It was reported that the UK National Parks Conference had recently taken place and Mrs S Hoss and Dr R Heath-Davies had attended as representatives of the Authority. Following an invitation from the Chair, both Members shared their experiences of the Conference.

The Chair took the opportunity to congratulate Mike Higgins, the Authority's Principal Planning Officer (Environment), who had been awarded the Richard Fitter Memorial Medal by the British Naturalists' Association. She also noted that a response had been received from the Auditor General regarding her letter on the Audit Wales Governance report. This had been circulated to Members. While the response was disappointing, no further action would be taken at this time.

Noted.

6. Reports of meetings of various Authority Committees

The following reports of meetings of several of the Authority's Committees were presented to Members for consideration/information:

- (i) Development Management Committee held on 04/09/2024;
- (ii) Youth Committee held on 17/09/2024.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the above-mentioned Committees be adopted/received.



7. **Audit of Accounts Report**

The Chair welcomed the Head of Finance & Fundraising and Jason Blewitt (Audit Wales) who presented a report that summarised the main findings for the Audit of the Authority's 2023/24 accounts. It was noted that a summary of amendments made to the draft accounts as a result of the audit was recorded in appendix 1 of the report. Jason Blewitt presented the key findings of the report and confirmed that Audit Wales were in a position to provide an unqualified opinion on the Authority's accounts which were materially correct.

As part of the audit, it was reported that although Audit Wales recognised that the Authority was a small organisation with a limited capacity, a larger number of errors were identified than would usually be expected from a similar sized organisation. It was added that the errors identified had either led to amendments to the accounts and/or a need for Audit Wales to undertake additional audit work and extended sample testing. Jason confirmed that as a result of the errors identified, the Authority's Head of Finance & Fundraising aimed to implement change to strengthen the relevant processes in future. The Head of Finance & Fundraising highlighted examples of improvements and provided Members with an insight into the challenges of the auditing process. It was confirmed that additional resources had been identified within the finance team to support with the auditing process in future. The Section 151 Officer supported the Head of Finance & Fundraising and expressed his confidence that moving forward, the team would deliver what was expected.

Members highlighted that the Draft Accounts had not been presented to the Audit Committee on this occasion. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that this was as a result of conflicting schedules however the comments were noted.

In response to a Members' query, Jason confirmed that the Authority would likely incur additional costs for the additional audit work carried out however the figure was yet to be finalised.

On the proposal of Dr S Hancock MBE, seconded by Mrs J James, it was **resolved** that:

- i) the Audit of Accounts report (Appendix 2) be accepted by Members and the letter of representation to the Auditor General be approved
- ii) the Annual Narrative Report, Statement of Accounts 2023-24 and Annual Governance Statement (Appendix 3) be approved.



8. Proposed Designation of Cresswell Quay Conservation Area

The Chair welcomed Gayle Lister, Principal Planning Officer and Linda Jones (Babb Architects) who presented a report that sought approval to designate a Conservation Area within Cresswell Quay. The report also sought approval for a statutory notice to be placed in the local newspaper and London Gazette and to publish a Report of Consultation, as seen in Appendix C.

It was reported that the National Park Authority had agreed to undertake a consultation and engagement for the designation of a Conservation Area at Cresswell Quay on the 24 July 2024. Officers confirmed that the public consultation was undertaken over an eight-week period from 30 July to 23 September 2024. It was reported that a total of 17 responses were received to the consultation which were in support of the proposal. It was added that there was no opposition to the proposed designation.

The report explained that as a result of the engagement and consultation, the proposal had been amended to include an additional area of woodland on the northern bank of the estuary. A factual update had also been made to the map to indicate a listed building adjacent to the pub. Linda Jones provided Members with a presentation that outlined the proposed Conservation Area. The presentation featured maps that displayed the proposed boundary and images that highlighted the special qualities of the area. It was reported that a draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan were currently being prepared and it was anticipated that these would be presented to the Authority in early 2025.

Members were pleased that there had been widespread support for designation of the Conservation Area. One Member commented that it would have implications for matters such as planning permission and she asked Officers whether these implications had been communicated to the public as part of the consultation. The Director of Place & Engagement confirmed that as part of the consultation, letters were delivered to all properties within the proposed conservation area which outlined all potential implications. The Member also noted some typographical errors in the Welsh version of the public notice appended to the report.

On the proposal of Dr M Havard, seconded by Dr Plummer, it was **resolved** that;

- i) Cresswell Quay be designated as a Conservation Area, as set out on the map attached to the report in Appendix A and that statutory notices be placed in the local press and London Gazette (see Appendix B).
- ii) the publication of the Report of Consultation be approved (see Appendix C).
- iii) Delegated authority be given to the Authority's Chief Executive Officer to correct the typographical errors in the Welsh version of the public notice prior to its publication.

[Mrs S Hoss was not present for the remaining items]



9. Scheme of Delegation

The Chair welcomed the Director of Place & Engagement and the Democratic Services Manager who presented a report that proposed minor amendments to the Authority's Scheme of Delegation in relation to Development Management. The report outlined the proposed amendments and explained that these would streamline processes and provide additional clarification.

Members noted that details of financial delegations within the Authority were omitted from the document, and it was suggested that a reference be included along with links to relevant policies. This was noted by the Officer.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Dr R Heath-Davies, it was **resolved** that the scheme of delegation be amended as outlined within the report and set out in full in Appendix 1.

[The meeting was adjourned between 11.45am and 12.00pm]

10. Socially Responsible and Sustainable Procurement Policy and Strategy

The Chair welcomed the Head of Decarbonisation who presented a report that sought formal approval for the Authority's Socially Responsible and Sustainable Procurement Policy and Strategy (2024-2029). The report explained that the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 had introduced a socially responsible procurement duty which required all contracting authorities to set and publish socially responsible procurement objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving well-being goals and prepare an associated strategy. The report featured further background information and highlighted key changes to the policy.

In response to a Member's query, the Officer confirmed that through the proposed policy, the Authority aimed to continue to support local businesses whilst having the social and sustainable aspects of tendering. It was added that as part of the Authority's action plan related to procurement, a section would be available on the website to help guide small businesses through the procurement process and also, a framework would be developed to actively engage with small businesses. Members agreed that the financial impact of public procurement was not to be underestimated, but it was noted that it was important to stress that fair and open competition involved engagement with suppliers both large and small.

Members recognised the specialist nature of the procurement industry, and the Officer was asked whether the Authority would consider approaching a Specialist for support as the Authority lacked this expertise



in-house. The Officer confirmed that a Procurement Specialist would be engaged to support with training, drafting templates and a framework that would support the Authority in complying with legislation. It was acknowledged there would be a cost to this.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **resolved** that the Socially Responsible and Sustainable Procurement Policy and Strategy be approved.

11. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The Chair welcomed the Performance and Compliance Officer who presented a report that sought Members approval for the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which was previously referred to as the Equal Opportunity Policy. The report detailed that the policy was last presented to the National Park Authority in 2019 and last updated in 2020. The report outlined the aims of the policy and the key updates.

A Member reported that a new Sexual Harassment Act would be implemented at the end of the month which required employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees. The Member asked whether a reference would be added to the proposed policy as a result. In response, the Officer confirmed that a statement would be added to the policy confirming this preventative duty for the Authority and stating that a relevant risk assessment would need to be conducted.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Dr R Plummer, it was **resolved** that the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy be approved, subject to inclusion of a reference to the prevention of sexual harassment under the Worker Protection Act.

12. Record Management and Retention Policy

The Performance and Compliance Officer presented a report that sought Members approval for the Record Management and Retention Policy. It was reported that the Authority had been undertaking activities in support of improved record management and subsequently, it was recognised that a new policy was required, focused on record management and retention. The report explained that from the record management activities, Officers recognised the need to strengthen accountability in terms of roles and responsibilities.

A Member highlighted that the retention periods related to financial documents were not referenced in the policy and it was suggested that a statement to that effect be added. This suggestion was noted by the Officer.



On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor S Hancock, it was **resolved** that the Record Management and Retention Policy be approved, with the addition of a reference to retention periods for financial documents.

13. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report 2025/26

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report that outlined the consultation draft Annual Report of the IRPW on the proposed level of Members' salaries for 2025/26 and sought Members views on the matter. The report detailed background information and highlighted key findings from the Draft Annual Report.

A Member took the opportunity to highlight that the travel considerations of Welsh Government Appointed Members were taxed differently to Pembrokeshire County Council Appointed Members. The Chair stated that although the matter had previously been raised with the relevant parties, she agreed to write a formal letter to raise the matter again.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor M James, it was **resolved** that the response to the IRPW draft Annual Report be submitted with no further amendment except to thank the Panel for its work.

14. RNLI Fundraising Request

The Chair welcomed the Director of Nature and Tourism who presented a report that sought Members approval for RNLI fundraising on six Park Authority managed beaches until December 2029.

The report detailed that the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) was responsible for a substantial length of the coastline and as a result, most organised beach activities that take place within Pembrokeshire require formal permission from the Park Authority. The report explained that since 2008, the RNLI had been granted permission to have an information and fundraising presence on some beaches and that they were once again seeking permission to continue their fundraising activities.

It was noted that the RNLI fundraising activities took place at a limited number of beaches which included Newgale, Broadhaven, Nolton Sands, Whitesands, Newport Beach and Poppit Sands. A Member queried how these beaches had been selected and in response, it was confirmed that the selection was due to factors such as ownership, footfall, associated risks, blue flag status and the presence of lifeguards.



A discussion ensued regarding the RNLI's level of success and impact and the Director of Nature and Tourism agreed to present an annual report on this matter to the Operational Review Committee.

On the proposal of Councillor S Skyrme-Blackhall, seconded by Councillor V Thomas, it was **resolved** that consent be given for the RNLI's fundraising activities to continue for a further 5 years (to December 2029) subject to the following conditions:

- i) That fundraising activities undertaken by the RNLI are limited to 28 days, each year on any single site.
- ii) That all promotional and safety literature provided by the RNLI is bilingual.

15. Membership of Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeal Committees

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report that sought to confirm the Membership of the following committees: Investigation & Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals. It was explained that the composition of the above committees could be established at this stage as the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Authority and other relevant committees had now been appointed. The report featured a suggested composition for each committee.

The Officer highlighted that prior to the meeting, Mrs J James had requested to swap from the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee and so it was suggested that Mrs J James swap with Mr GA Jones who sat on the Appeals Committee. Both Members agreed with the suggestion.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Councillor M Wiggins, it was **resolved** that subject to the amendment raised above, the membership of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee, Grievance Committee and Appeals Committee be confirmed as set out in the report.

