

National Park Authority

11 December 2024

Present (In Person)

Councillor D Clements (Chair)

Councillor M Bowen, Councillor T Evans, Councillor C George, Councillor SL Hancock MBE, Dr M Havard, Mr GA Jones, Dr R Plummer, Councillor A Tinley, Councillor V Thomas and Councillor M Wiggins.

Present (Remotely)

Dr R Heath-Davies, Mrs S Hoss, Mrs J James, Councillor M James and Councillor C Williams BEM.

Also in attendance:

Kate Attrill (Development Management Manager), Catrin Evans (Head of Finance & Fundraising), Charles Felgate (Authority Solicitor), Emma Gladstone (Strategic Policy Manager), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Michael Kent (Monitoring Officer), Caroline Llewellyn (Democratic Services Manager), Jessica Morgan (Head of Decarbonisation), Sara Morris (Director of Place and Engagement), Graham Peake (Larning and Inclusion Team Leader) and Emma Thornton (Visit Pembrokeshire).

[Councillor M Wiggins joined the meeting before consideration of report 47/24, Camping and Caravan Consultation Update.]

[Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock and Remotely
10.00am – 11.25am; 11:30am – 2:45pm]

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Price and S Skyrme-Blackhall.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Dr R Plummer made a general declaration as a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales, as Chair of its Protected Areas Committee and as Senior Independent Panel Member for the Welsh Government. Councillor V Thomas declared a personal interest in report 47/24, Camping and Caravan Consultation Update. Mrs J James declared a personal interest in Report 56/24, Independent Member of the Standards Committee.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23 October 2024 were presented for confirmation and signature.

On the proposal of Mrs J James, seconded by Councillor S Hancock, it was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 23 October 2024 be confirmed and signed with no amendments.

4. Action Log and Matters Arising

In relation to item 961, a Member requested that dates be set for future meetings of the Income Generation Working Group, and this was noted by Officers.

A Member highlighted that actions related to 3 items (the Scheme of Delegation, the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Record Management and Retention Policy) from the previous meeting had been omitted from the action log and it was requested that these be added to update Members on their progress. This was noted by Officers.

Noted.

5. Chair's Announcements

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

- The Authority's Welsh Members' Seminar. The Chair thanked all who had contributed to the event and to Tenby Town Council for hosting a Drinks Reception as part of the Seminar.
- Visit Pembrokeshire Croeso Awards where Carew Castle won the award for 'Best Attraction.' The Chair congratulated the team and confirmed that as Winners, Carew Castle would go forward to the Southwest Regional Awards, followed by the National Visit Wales Awards in spring 2025.
- A meeting with the National Parks Partnership where matters such as funding were discussed.
- A Corporate Joint Council meeting where attendees voted to delay the publication of the Strategic Development Plan due to a lack of resources.
- A meeting with Clare Dowe, Chair of the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park where partner working and challenges faced by the Authority were discussed.
- An online meeting with Huw Irranca-Davies, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, where funding and the visitor levy were discussed.

The Chair reported that the Authority had gained the 'Disability Confident' status. She also confirmed that there was a delay in the Recruitment process for Welsh Government appointed Members which was now expected to commence at the beginning of 2025.

Noted.

6. Reports of meetings of various Authority Committees

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

- i) Standards Committee Appointments Panel held on 31/07/2024 and 20/11/2024
- ii) Audit and Corporate Services Review Committee held on 31/07/2024
- iii) Volunteer Forum held on 06/11/2024

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

7. Camping and Caravan Consultation Update

The Chair welcomed the Director of Place and Engagement and the Strategic Policy Manager who presented a report that sought approval for the introduction of a non-immediate effect Article 4 (1) Direction to remove permitted development rights for the use of land for camping, caravans and/or mobile homes for not more than 28 days, and for Officers to prepare a voluntary Code of Conduct/Working Protocol for Exempted Organisations. The report also sought to inform Members of the findings of the associated consultation.

Members sought reassurance in respect of displacement of sites and staff capacity to enforce and this was provided by Officers. The Authority's Solicitor also confirmed that retrospective planning applications submitted as a result of the proposed Article 4 Direction would not be chargeable.

A Member requested clarification regarding the practicalities of implementation. In response, the Officer confirmed that these applications would be fast-tracked and that multiple-year permissions would be considered (on a case-by-case basis) to minimise the number of applications submitted. She added that planning conditions would be utilised to mitigate more permanent structures being erected.

A Member considered that the Welsh Language Assessment featured in the report required more information before publishing and would liaise directly with Officers to offer support. The Officer noted this suggestion.

A discussion took place regarding a future review of the proposed Article 4 Direction, and it was agreed that a 1-year review should be conducted after implementation. The Authority's Solicitor added that should the proposed Article 4 be approved, Officers would be required to inform the Welsh Minister who may also call for a review.

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

- i) the making and publicising of an Article 4 (1) Direction to remove permitted development rights for 28-day rule camp sites with non-immediate effect as set out in the Background Paper Appendix C be approved.
- ii) Officers be approved to prepare a Code of Conduct / Working Protocol for Exempted Organisations as set out in the Background Paper Appendix C.
- iii) the stage 2 Integrated Impact Assessment in Appendix B Part 1 and Part 2 be published simultaneously for information.
- iv) the report of Consultation (Appendix A), a draft Notice and Article 4 Direction (Appendix D), a working protocol to fast-track applications submitted following the Article 4 (1) Direction (Appendix E) and Advice Note for applicants (Appendix F) be approved.

[The Authority's Solicitor left the meeting at this junction.]

8. Draft Review Report of Local Development Plan (LDP) 2

The Strategic Policy Manager presented a report that informed Members of the findings of the draft LDP 2 Review Report and sought approval for consultation on the document. The report featured further background information and a proposed programme. In response to a query, the Officer outlined the process of the review, and the stakeholders involved.

A Member suggested that a reference to the impact on wildlife be included in the Light Pollution section. She commented that the Welsh Language considerations required further details as it did not reflect the Welsh Language Standards. Lastly, it was suggested that the Corporate Joint Committees be referenced in the section related to 'Opportunities for Joint and Collaborative Working'. The Officer noted all 3 suggestions and agreed to make these amends.

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

- i) the Review Report (Appendix A) be approved for public consultation.
- ii) Delegated Authority be given to the Director of Place and Engagement to make minor amendments necessary to the Review Report prior to consultation.

[The meeting was adjourned between 11.25am and 11:30am]

9. Promoting a Resilient and High Performing Planning Service Consultation

The Director of Place and Engagement presented a report that outlined a current Welsh Government (WG) consultation in relation to planning resources. The report set out the main issues identified and a recommended response, subject to Members' support.

It was reported that one of the main matters identified in the consultation as a mechanism to improve resilience and performance was to increase planning application fees over a gradual period of 3 years, to return to full cost recovery. A discussion ensued regarding the proposed gradual implementation and the difficult position that this would put the Authority in as it continued to subsidise the cost of the planning service. Several Members voiced support for the immediate implementation to achieve cost recovery as soon as possible.

Some Members also expressed concern regarding fees for appeals and householder applications and suggested ways these could be addressed, which Officers agreed to consider as part of the response.

Another mechanism identified in the consultation related to the measuring of performance. It was noted that WG were proposing to focus on statistics of performance within 8 weeks however the Officer explained that the Authority's Planning Team considered 'within agreed timescales' to be a stronger indicator which would better reflect the complexity of the planning system. Several Members agreed that it would be more beneficial to have a greater focus on the standard of customer service rather than simply adhering with an 8-week timescale. A Member expressed concern regarding the potential refocus on 'agreed timescales' as this could present challenges in benchmarking with other organisations.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor T Evans, it was **resolved** that delegation be given to the Director of Place and Engagement to draft a response to the Welsh Government consultation on Promoting a Resilient High Performing Planning Service incorporating the comments made at the meeting. The response to be circulated to Members for final comment prior to approval by the Chair of the Authority and Chair of the Development Management Committee.

10. Draft Consultation Response to Pembrokeshire County Council's (PCC) Re-Deposit Local Development Plan (LDP) 2

The Strategic Policy Manager presented a report that sought approval to submit a consultation response on PCC's LDP 2 Re-Deposit Plan and accompanying documents.

As a verbal update during the meeting, the Officer requested an additional point be added into the proposed consultation response regarding the transfer values of affordable homes and developers to an RSL (Registered Social Landlord) as the figure featured in the consultation was inconsistent with the Authority's policy.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Councillor M Bowen, it was **resolved** that the Draft Consultation Response (Appendix A) on Pembrokeshire County Council's Re-Deposit Local Development Plan 2 be approved.

11. Visit Pembrokeshire (VP)

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive of VP who gave a presentation on the work of the organisation over the last year. It was reported that the Authority had agreed a package of support for VP with particular focus on activity to develop its membership base.

A Member queried the long-term sustainability of the organisation, and the Chief Executive of VP confirmed that in its current structure, public funding would always be required. She added that, depending on funding and the outcome related to the proposed visitor levy, VP could adopt a different model to become more sustainable.

Noted.

12. Newport Parrog Car Park and Lime Kiln Lease

The Chair welcomed the Head of Decarbonisation who presented a report that sought Members' approval for the surrender of the existing National Park Authority (NPA) lease of Newport Parrog car park and lime kiln to Newport Town Council. The report explained that 53 years remained on the lease and as part of this, the Authority was required to repair and manage the land and pay a rent of £268, per annum. It was added that the lease had no break options and featured a restrictive covenant that prohibited the introduction of parking charges of any kind.

In addition to the car park, it was reported that the subject land housed a public toilet which was under threat of being permanently closed by Pembrokeshire County Council. The Officer explained that Newport Town Council were willing to assume responsibility for the public toilet, conditional upon them being able to generate income to cover its operating costs through the introduction of parking charges. It was for this reason that the Authority proposed to surrender the lease as it would enable Newport Town Council to obtain the necessary permissions to charge for parking on site.

The Chief Executive highlighted that the basis of the lease surrender was an opportunity to secure and protect an at-risk public service via the transfer of control from one public body to another trusted public body within the spirit and principle of public sector partnership working.

On the proposal of Councillor M James, seconded by Councillor M Havard, it was **resolved** that delegated authority be given to the Chief

Executive to complete a full and final nil premium surrender of its lease of the subject property to Newport Town Council simultaneously with the latter's freehold purchase of the subject property.

13. Oriel y Parc (OYP) Café

The Chair varied the order of the agenda to take this supplemental agenda item while relevant Officers were present. The Chief Executive provided a verbal update regarding the progress made to maintain continuity in the café offering at OYP. He explained that the previous café operator had made the decision not to extend their lease and so following a tender process, the Authority had granted a one-year lease to new operators. He added that as stated in the tender, it would be the responsibility of the successful bidder to invest in new infrastructure. As a result of this, the Authority proposed a 15-year lease to provide the new operators with a level of security, given the amount of investment that would be required on their part.

A discussion took place regarding the value of the lease and the Chief Executive confirmed that it had been based on the market value. He added that the lease featured break clauses every 5 years to allow the Authority to review the agreement and a clause would be featured in the lease to allow for the informal resolution of any issues that could arise.

Members expressed concern regarding the length of the proposed lease and queried whether this could cause any potential barriers in the further development of the OYP site. It was confirmed that the new operators were aware of the OYP Masterplan and Officers provided assurance to Members that the lease would feature a termination clause to protect both parties.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor S Hancock, it was **resolved** that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to finalise the negotiations with the new operator of the Oriel y Parc café for the new lease and its documentation.

14. Safeguarding Policy

The Learning and Inclusion Team Leader presented a report that sought approval for the Authority's Safeguarding Policy. The report outlined changes to the policy since it was last seen by Members.

One Member expressed concern about certain aspects of the policy and suggested that a reference to the Authority's missing children's procedures be included. The Chief Executive confirmed that all Authority sites had procedures in place should a child go missing and he agreed to distribute a copy of these procedures to Members.

Due to the concerns expressed it was requested that the policy be re-worded.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Councillor M Wiggins, it was **resolved** that the policy be amended to include Members suggestions and be presented to the next National Park Authority meeting for approval.

15. Oriel y Parc (OYP) Stakeholder Group

The Chief Executive presented a report that asked Members to elect two representatives to act as stakeholders in consultations regarding the further development of the OYP Masterplan.

It was reported that an expression of interest had been received from Councillor S Hancock to be on the Stakeholder Group. In addition, both Councillor T Evans and Mr G Jones expressed an interest in becoming substitutes for the group.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr R Plummer, it was **resolved** that Councillor S Hancock be elected as a representative to be a part of discussions in the development of the Oriel y Parc Masterplan, with Councillor T Evans and Mr G Jones as substitutes.

[The meeting was adjourned between 13:50 – 14:05]

16. Member Travel Policy

The Democratic Services Manager presented the revised Members' Travel Policy for approval. The Officer stated that a request had been made by a Member earlier in the year for the policy to be reviewed. The policy had subsequently been circulated to all Members for comments and 4 responses were received. The Officer confirmed that the policy had been amended in light of the comments received.

A Member suggested that the rates related to car sharing and subsistence be omitted from the policy and requested clarification regarding information regarding accommodation as featured under section 9. The Officer agreed to remove the rates and re-word the information in question.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Mrs J James, it was **resolved** that the revised Members' Travel Policy be approved with the above amendments.

17. Independent Member of the Standards Committee

The Monitoring Officer presented a report that detailed the process which had been undertaken to fill a vacancy on the Authority's Standards Committee.

A Member suggested that as Members were asked to approve the recommendation of the Standards Committee Appointments Panel, a brief bio on the recommended candidate would be helpful to ensure Members had sufficient information to reach a decision. The Chief Executive agreed to consider whether additional information could be provided in future.

On the proposal of Councillor D Clements, seconded by Dr M Havard, it was **resolved** that Mr John Hogg be appointed to the Standards Committee for a period of five years with effect from 11 December 2024 and in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in Appendix 1.

18. Replacement Finance System

The Head of Finance and Fundraising presented a report that outlined a proposal to acquire a new finance system and EPOS software upgrade for the Authority. It was reported that the request was as a result of a review that had identified a significant risk of key finance systems failure.

Members discussed the level of risk involved and it was suggested that a review of other IT risks be conducted and considered as part of the Risk Register presented to the Audit Committee and this was noted by the Officer.

A discussion ensued regarding the financial impact of adopting a new finance system and the Officer confirmed that costs had been considered as part of the decision-making process, and it was believed that the proposed system would be the most cost-effective option with the potential to save the Authority money in the long term.

On the proposal of Dr R Plummer, seconded by Councillor V Thomas, it was **resolved** that:

- i) the acquisition of a new finance solution be approved
- ii) the upgrade of the current EPOS system be approved