

# Public Document Pack

## MINUTES OF BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT CONFERENCE ROOM, PLAS Y FFYNNON, CAMBRIAN WAY, BRECON LD3 7HP ON FRIDAY, 29TH JANUARY, 2021

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Blaenau Gwent**

Cllr J Hill

#### **Powys**

#### **Monmouthshire**

Cllr A Webb (Deputy Chair)

#### **Merthyr Tydfil**

Cllr M Colbran

#### **Rhondda Cynon Taff**

Cllr G Thomas

#### **Torfaen**

Cllr S Evans

#### **Members appointed by the Welsh Government**

Mr James Marsden, Mr Christopher Coppock and Canon Aled Edwards

#### **In Attendance**

Julia Gruffydd, Democratic Services Manager  
Mr Julian Atkins, Chief Executive  
Elaine Standen, Finance Manager

#### **Apologies**

### **1/21 Correspondence**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and in particular Chris Hyde from Cooke and Arkwright.

He thanked the Chief Executive for his work with the committee and wished him well in his future career. He also paid tribute to Planning Officer (Policy) who had left the Authority to take up another post.

## **2/21 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3/21 Minutes**

Some corrections to attendance were noted and would be amended before publication.

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 October 2020 be approved and the Chair authorised to sign them as a true record.**

A member reminded the CEO that he had been asked to bring a report with details of the full costs, including financial and reputational costs, of the cyber security incident. The CEO noted this action and said it would be relevant to bring it with the Statement of Accounts.

The Democratic Services Manager was asked whether Welsh Government members could expect to be issued with Authority devices. The officer responded that tests on devices were currently being carried out and advice would be issued soon.

A member advised that the Authority did not take matters arising from the minutes and officers confirmed this from Standing Orders. Several members felt that this should be put on all committee agendas and asked that the Governance and Member Development Working Group review this.

## **4/21 Public Speaking Scheme**

There were no requests to speak.

## **5/21 Access to Information**

**RESOLVED: to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of items 6 and 7 in accordance with section 100A of the Local Government**

**Act 1972, as amended, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.**

The meeting went into closed session at this point.

## **6/21 Property Report**

Mr Hyde presented a review of the Authority's property assets and records together with a draft Asset Management Plan and Property Gazetteer. He hoped this would provide a steer on assessing assets for retention or disposal. He highlighted the concept of natural capital becoming more prominent in discussions on assets. A flow chart had been provided which could be used flexibly to assets sites. Members welcomed this report as a useful way forward for the Authority.

A member made the point that land previously viewed as low value could be recognised for its potential in addressing the carbon budget, payment for ecosystem services and phosphate levels; in this respect the report was already out of date.

Mr Hyde advised on his methodology and photographic records. He offered to add links from each asset to open up additional detail. Asked about the use of an engineering company Mr Hyde advised that they had acted independently but with instruction from Cooke and Arkwright, and that the figures quoted for necessary works represented the worst case scenario. He would always advise the Authority to go out to tender on such works. The CEO confirmed that officers had always challenged costs and would seek the best value for the Authority. A member felt that Cooke and Arkwright could be very helpful to the Authority in respect of identifying opportunities for investment in land to help nature recovery. Mr Hyde agreed that they could assist in offsetting carbon credits with landowners if they could work closely with officers to identify what was needed.

The Chair of Policy Forum invited Mr Hyde to attend the April Policy Forum where they would be discussing payment for ecosystem services, and asked the CEO to send details.

**RESOLVED: To note the report.**

## **7/21 Legal Risk Register**

Members considered the high level legal risks to the Authority and asked questions to the CEO. Mr Hyde advised that the land registry issues had been dealt with and the spreadsheet needed to be updated.

The Chair thanked Mr Hyde for attending the meeting.

**RESOLVED: To note the current high level legal risks and the actions being undertaken to mitigate the risks highlighted.**

The meeting returned to public session at this point.

## **8/21 Budget Performance and Project Financial Management Q3**

Members received the quarter 3 financial monitoring report and noted the positive news about funding in 2021/22. She highlighted examples where receipt of grant monies had impacted on cashflow, and addressed questions from members on project profiling and capital budget.

A member reiterated the need for a capital investment programme for the next financial year. The CEO confirmed that he and the Finance Manager were working on such a plan to sit alongside the budget, which would demonstrate how the Authority would use money from Reserves to progress work. He anticipated that the Welsh Government would invite further funding bids under the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Partnerships scheme although there was no timeline for this as yet.

The Finance Manager expanded on the use of reserves for specific projects. She also advised that there could be over and under spends in the last quarter due to the level of third party funding arrangements affecting cashflow. A member commented that this could be addressed by using resources to underpin this and the office agreed that core expenditure would always be in credit. The CEO assured members that while earmarked reserves were ring fenced to particular workstreams such as the Local Development Plan, the general reserves provided could be used for additional work to progress purposes.

**RESOLVED: To note the report.**

## **9/21 Internal Audit update**

It was noted that Helen Cargill from TIAA, the Authority's internal auditors, had attempted to join the meeting but technology had not allowed her to do so.

The Finance Manager reported that TIAA were about to deliver the final element of this year's plan and were working with officers on the plan for 2021/22.

## **10/21 Integrated Assurance Framework and Risk Register**

The CEO presented the Quarter 3 performance management and risk reports.

A member stated that while climate and nature were featured this was not sufficiently prominent, and should also include flooding and healthy ecosystems as subsets. He also highlighted the risk of phosphate levels to the Local Development Plan and National Park Management Plan development. The CEO advised that the risk register included only those risks that the Authority was able to control and mitigate, but he agreed that climate and nature needed a higher profile.

A member commented that the risk register as presented was easier to read than in previous reports but noted an increase in high level risks. The CEO advised that in line

with members wishes the report included only the high level risks, and that this was not the full register.

**RESOLVED: To note the reports.**

**11/21 Complaints and Freedom of Information Requests**

Members received the Quarter 3 reports on complains and Freedom of Information requests.

**12/21 Other Business**

No further business had been notified but there was a short discussion on whether additional visitor sites should be closed in the west of the Park. The CEO advised that they had not been asked to do this by the police, unlike the sites in the Central Beacons.

The Chair thanked all for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Signed as a correct record  
Chairman of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

This page is intentionally left blank