

MINUTES OF BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD AT VIRTUAL MEETING ON MONDAY, 21ST JUNE, 2021

PRESENT:

Powys

Cllr Ratcliffe (Chair), Cllr M Jones, Cllr E Roderick and Cllr McIntosh

Monmouthshire

Carmarthenshire

Cllr A James

Merthyr Tydfil

Rhondda Cynon Taff

Cllr G Thomas

Torfaen

Cllr S Evans

Blaenau Gwent

Cllr J Hill

Members appointed by the Welsh Government

Mr Christopher Coppock, Mr James Marsden, Liz Davis, Canon Aled Edwards, Sue Holden and Mr Julian Stedman

In Attendance

Angharad HawkesStephanie Evans, Transition Director
Sean O'Connor, Monitoring Officer
Elaine Standen, Finance Manager
Julia Gruffydd, Democratic Services Manager

Apologies

Cllr McNicholas, Cllr A Webb, Cllr Amos and Cllr Williams

79/21 Correspondence

The Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies.

80/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

81/21 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) To approve the minutes of the National Park Authority (EGM) – 14th May 2021 and authorise the Chair to sign them as a correct record;
- b) To approve the minutes of the National Park Authority held on 28 May 2021 and authorise the Chair to sign them as a correct record.

82/21 Public Speaking

There were no requests to speak.

83/21 Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised members that interviews had taken place on 18 June for the post of Monitoring Officer/Solicitor/Data Protection Officer and a decision would be taken shortly. He referred to the National Parks UK climate change statement which had been agreed at the recent Chairs' Forum. It was noted that the Authority had already agreed its own climate change position statement but the Chair hoped that UK document could strengthen this.

84/21 Transition Director's Announcements

The Transition Director updated members on a number of current workstreams.

85/21 Prudential Code Treasury Management Report and Borrowing Approvals for 2021/22

Members considered a report from the Finance Manager in respect of borrowing limits.

RESOLVED: That the Authority continues the present arrangements in relation to operational and authorised borrowing limits and Treasury Management for 2021/22.

86/21 Remit of the Policy Forum

Members considered options for member and officer roles in developing National Park policy.

In discussion the importance of the stakeholder panel was emphasised, as well as the need for clear terms of reference for all groups. The Transition Director referred to Citizen's Assemblies which were part of the process of policy development. There was general support for the Policy Forum as a means of high quality debate, with invited speakers providing accurate and balanced presentations, giving members the opportunity to learn as well as make better decisions. The achievements of the Forum were noted. A request was made to avoid bureaucracy and not to add to officer workload. The Deputy Chair advised that papers to be brought to the Authority meeting on 5 July sought to clarify the roles of governance bodies.

The role of the Stakeholder Panel in scrutinising as well as engaging was welcomed.

RESOLVED:

- a) The role and remit of the various working groups including Policy Forum as outlined in 1.2 is adopted for National Park policy development.**
- b) The proposed working group / committee road map as outlined in 1.2.2 is adopted for the development of National Park policy.**
- c) That the Terms of reference for Policy Forum and the Policy Programme management Group be redrawn in line with 1.2.**

87/21 Phosphates: The current situation and suggested next steps

Members received a report outlining the impact of the phosphate issue and how the Authority could maximise its efforts through its own regulatory and enforcement function, but also as influencer and enabler. Members welcomed this as a clear and helpful report and congratulated all contributors.

The impact on capacity was highlighted, as well as the impact on the planning service and land use, and the challenges in monitoring the situation. There would also be an impact on tourism. These issues would be a priority for the new Public Affairs Manager.

A member reported on a letter he had sent to Natural Resources Wales requesting more information on the source, which he would share with members. Additional information supplied by another member had been forwarded to members prior to the meeting but the source had yet to be verified. The member questioned the veracity and alleged bias of some reports before the Authority, which was strongly refuted by members.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that regular updates on actions undertaken by the NPA be brought to Members as a standing item, including information on:

- a) **Establishing a River Usk catchment management board and partnership.**
- b) **The activity of the River Wye Nutrient Management Plan Board, Technical Advice Group and catchment partnership.**
- c) **The work of the WG oversight board and planning sub-group.**
- d) **Our actions as a ‘competent authority’; including establishing protocol and procedures for Habitats Regulations Assessment across all the activities of the National Park Authority.**
- e) **Planning statistics.**
- f) **Asset management, including the National Park Visitor Centre.**
- g) **Communication, education and involvement activity.**

88/21 HEAP Project plan update

In the absence of the Heritage Officer the Strategy and Policy Manager presented an update on the Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP) and outlined some changes to the timetable and the governance.

The Heritage Champion asked that thanks be conveyed to the Heritage Officer who had been the driving force behind the considerable amount of work achieved to date. He reported on the commitment and enthusiasm of the Historic Environment Partnership.

The point was made in relation to paragraph 2.1 of the HEAP Project Plan that while it was a collaboration, the Authority was ultimately responsible for the strategy and delivery; officers concurred with this. A view was expressed that if there was a conflict it should be for the Chair to resolve rather than the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED: To note the report.

89/21 Salary Headroom Report

The Finance Manager presented a report for information, which was requested at the last Authority meeting. Members noted the update on the salary budget as a result of staff changes, and the amount remaining.

RESOLVED: To note the report.

90/21 Risk Register

The Transition Director presented the Authority's Risk Register, which was the request of the Deputy Chair. She advised that this was one of the areas being reviewed by the consultant working with the Authority at present, and confirmed that while officers were reviewing risks they were aware that the system needed to be strengthened.

The Deputy Chair said that there were some areas of good practice that needed to be applied but that she was happy to wait for the consultant to report back. The point was made that there were additional risks that needed to be recorded, such as climate change and biodiversity, and also that all risks should have an owner and be reflected in performance management reviews. The importance of members being able to challenge through the RAG system was noted.

Cllrs J Hill and I McIntosh left the meeting at this point.

RESOLVED: To note the report.

91/21 Member Reports

The Landscape and Biodiversity Champion reported on a third party report he had received about cultivation of grassland and semi-natural habitat which he had visited and reported back to Authority officers, Natural Resources Wales and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water.

He also attended a meeting to discuss cross border phosphates and planning in the Wye SAC catchment.

92/21 Gifts & Hospitality

No declarations were made.

93/21 Any Other Business

There was no further business.

Signed as a correct record
Chairman of the National Park Authority