

MINUTES OF BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD AT VIRTUAL MEETING ON FRIDAY, 29TH JULY, 2022

PRESENT:

Cllr GRatcliffe (Deputy Chair), Cllr ERoderick, Cllr I McIntosh, Cllr WPowell, Cllr HWilliams and Cllr EJones

Cllr SHowarth

Cllr ADavies

Cllr JDavies

Cllr SEmanuel

Cllr PBaldwin

Canon Aled Edwards (Chair) and Mr Julian Stedman

Apologies:

Cllr LCowles

1/21 Correspondence

Chair welcomes Officers, Members of the Authority and members of the public watching via our livestream.

Apologies were received from Cllr Liam Cowles.

No other correspondence was received.

2/21 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

3/21 Public Speaking

No requests were received.

4/21 Chair's Announcements

The Chair updated the Authority on events he had attended since the previous meeting – notably an event in Brecon to celebrate and acknowledge the contribution of the Gurkhas and lunch hosted by National Parks Wales at the RWAS with the Deputy Chair.

He also joined the Chief Executive and other senior colleagues in spending the day with Talybont Community Council Leadership as part of the Authority's commitment to good partnership working.

The decision to move agenda items 5 and 6 to the end of the meeting was agreed, as these items are restricted and this is the Authority's first time streaming via YouTube.

5/21 Appointment of Monitoring Officer

The Chief Executive noted that Monitoring Officer is a statutory role that we must have, and that the continuity the appointment of this post will bring is welcomed.

Cllr Baldwin and Mr Stedman vote was recorded verbally as he was unable to view the poll.

RESOLVED: to appoint Marc Ronan as the Authority's Monitoring Officer and Data Protection Officer with immediate effect

6/21 Appointment of Section 151 Officer

The Chief Executive noted that this was another statutory role for the Authority and expressed her thanks to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority for providing cover in this role during the recruitment process.

RESOLVED: to appoint Jo Williams as the Authority's S151 Officer with immediate effect

7/21 Draft Annual Accounts 2021/22

Members noted the contents of the Draft Statement of Accounts presented by the S151 Officer. They were advised that once she had signed them they would be published on the Authority's website in August.

It was noted that although this update was for information only, she was confident to sign the accounts, as they have been prepared carefully are complete and accurate, and highlighted that they still subject to audit (as noted on the statement itself).

Audit Wales offered some clarity for those not familiar with the process around working used in paragraph 2.2 of the cover report – Once the Authority as approved the accounts, and Audit Wales have audited, the Auditor-General then certifies them (rather than approves, as noted in the report).

The Chair then briefly explained next steps, as set out in the report, for the benefit of newly appointed Members.

8/21 Audit Wales: The Role of Audit

Members noted the presentation given by Audit Wales which provided information on:

- Legislative basis for their work
- Overview of financial and performance audits
- Main reports to expect throughout the year
- Responding to findings and recommendations
- Introduce key members

The Democratic Services Manager flagged that the order of agenda items had been amended slightly to that of the published agenda as she felt it was pertinent to provide the valuable context this presentation provided ahead of the additional presentations given by Audit Wales.

A Member asked what consideration was given to joint-working with partner authorities as this is a key area of concern for residents within the park – particularly around town centre regeneration and pressure on housing. Audit Wales assured the Member that this is outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and is evidenced in the Sustainable Tourism Report.

The Deputy Chair asked how the Authority can work with Audit Wales in moving forward. Audit Wales assured Members that we were on the right track with our Audit Action Plan.

9/21 Audit Wales: Sustainable Tourism Report

Members noted the presentation given by Audit Wales. They confirmed that the evidence was collected between Autumn 2021 and early 2022, with interviews being conducted in December 2021.

Members asked how they can start to engage now that COVID restrictions were easing, and were advised by Audit Wales that building on existing structures that were in place prior, and the adoption of Future Beacons would be key.

It was also noted by Members that tourism is a strategic issue across Wales, not just for National Parks, and that effective messaging to visit all areas and not just ‘honey-pot’ sites was essential. Audit Wales noted that a key tenet of Welsh Government’s tourism strategy was spread and that effective communications was key in getting this right.

10/21 Audit Wales: Audit Plan

Members noted the presentation given by Audit Wales and were advised that their audit would begin in September with an aim to bring this to the Authority in October.

11/21 Audit Committee Membership

RESOLVED: to appoint Cllr Huw Williams and Cllr Andrew Davies to the Audit & Risk Committee until the next Annual General Meeting of the Authority.

The two Members appointed today join Cllr William Powell, Cllr Liam Cowles and Cllr Simon Howarth who were appointed at the AGM earlier this month.

12/21 Brecon Beacons National Park Authority: Audit Wales Action Plan

The Chief Executive spoke to the attached report and informed Members that Welsh Government colleagues had been consulted when preparing the action plan.

She noted that the aim of the Action Plan is for it to be a living document that allows the Authority to close down the two remaining statutory recommendations made by Audit Wales. The Audit & Risk committee would play a key role in delivering on this action plan and the Authority will be provided additional assistance by Welsh Government in the form of a governance expert to guide us through the process.

She stressed that poor governance and decision-making leads to organisational issues and had led to our capacity issues in key areas, which remains a pressing concern.

RESOLVED: To approve the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority - Audit Wales Action Plan, in response to recommendations made in Audit Wales reports:

- **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority – Delivery of the Change Programme - issued February 2021**
- **Progress in delivering Statutory Recommendations – Brecon Beacons National Park Authority – issued March 2022**

13/21 Presiding Member Nomination

RESOLVED: to appoint Cllr Jeremy Davies to the role of Presiding Member if Chair and Deputy Chair are absent until the next Annual General Meeting of the Authority.

14/21 New Committee Dates 2022

RESOLVED: to approve the new committee dates for 2022 for publication.

15/21 Gifts & Hospitality

None were received.

16/21 Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

17/21 Access to Information

RESOLVED: To exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of item 6 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 paragraphs 13 and 14 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

18/21 Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive announced that she had completed her first year in post and was looking forward to consolidating and building on progress made so far.

She noted good progress achieved in Officer governance, key strategic relationship building, the review and adoption of the National Park Management Plan, and income diversification (assisted by the upcoming Audit Wales audit) – which will be key in allowing more freedom of action and less reliance on Welsh Government grants.

She then invited the Director of Nature Recovery & Climate Change to update Members on her successful SLSP grant and how we are planning on dispersing this funding. It was noted that this is a three-year programme, which enables us to look at bigger programmes of work and leveraging for other funding. The grant is made up of £2.5 million over the next three years, focussing on four areas of work:

- Peatland and upland restoration
- Decarbonisation of transport
- Nature recovery
- Sustainable tourism

The quality and vision of the bid was commended by Welsh Government and we will continue to update Members through the Finance & Performance committee.

The Chief Executive updated Members on events she had attended since the previous meeting of the Authority and upcoming events of interest. She met with the senior official in Welsh Government with responsibility for National Parks to discuss progress made on the outstanding Audit Wales recommendations and the NPMP. Additional meetings are planned to review progress and address capacity issues.

She stressed that she was still committed to regular updates to Members and that the appointment of a new PA (commencing September) would help this progress.

She welcomed the Authority's newly appointed S151 and gave a brief update on where we are at financially, with a commitment of more detailed updates to be delivered to finance and performance committee.

Signed as a correct record
Chairman of the National Park Authority