

**MINUTES OF THE BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
HELD ON 30 APRIL 2012 AT PLAS Y FFYNNON, CAMBRIAN WAY,  
BRECON**

**Present**

**Powys County Council**

Cllrs E T Morgan, G Ratcliffe, Mrs K Silk, K Pathak and M Weale

**Monmouthshire**

Cllrs A James and E Saxon

**Carmarthenshire**

Cllrs Mrs H Wyn and H Morgan

**Blaenau Gwent**

Cllr L Elias

**Torfaen**

Cllr T Huish

**Welsh Government Appointed Members**

Prof A Lovell, Ms C Howell, Mr E Evans, Mr I Rowat, Mrs J James (Chairman), Mrs M Underwood and Mrs M Doel.

**In Attendance:** Mr J Cook (Chief Executive), Mr C Morgan (Director of Planning), Mr J Atkins (Director of Countryside and Land Management, Ms E Standen (Finance Manager), Mr E Watkins (Section 151 Officer), Mrs J Gruffydd (Democratic Services Manager), Mr P Funnell (ICT and Systems Manager), Mr J Parsons (Monitoring Officer), Mrs R Edwards (Solicitor), and officers presenting reports.

**50/12 Correspondence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs H Barrett, M Jones, Mrs J Ward and Mr M Buckle (on other Authority business).

The Chairman welcomed members and officers to the Authority meeting and sought their agreement that the meeting be filmed and recorded. She referred to this as an innovative step towards even greater transparency and accountability and commented that they were only the second authority in Wales to commit to filming all public meetings. She paid tribute to the members who had initiated debate on this, and the officer who had worked hard to develop and implement the project. Members had recognised that this was a huge culture change for members and officers and had shown maturity in not rushing into this, which had benefited the

Authority in the long run, allowing a successful bid to be made to the Welsh Government for funding. She hoped that other authorities might feel inspired to follow the Authority's example and said that she was proud to be its Chairman and to chair this meeting.

The Chairman paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of Cllr Mrs H Wyn and Cllr E Saxon who would not be standing for re-election in the forthcoming elections. They had both led key areas of work during their term of office with the Authority. She also acknowledged the support given to Cllr James by his PA which often went unnoticed but enabled Cllr James to carry out his role effectively.

***RESOLVED: That the meeting be filmed and recorded for the purposes of producing a webcast for the public.***

#### **51/12 Members' Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **52/12 Minutes**

***RESOLVED: To adopt the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 30 March 2012 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them as a true record.***

#### **53/12 Public Speaking**

No requests to speak had been received.

#### **54/12 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman briefed the meeting on events and meetings she had attended since the last Authority meeting.

She announced that in future quarterly reports on gifts and hospitality offered to members would be made to the National Park Authority. She reminded members to record all entries in the register which was kept by the Democratic Services Manager and was available at all meetings.

#### **55/12 Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive briefed members on progress in key areas, highlighting visits to community councils, work with the Local Service Board and meetings with stakeholders. In response to a question from a member he referred to work that the Authority carried out to support regeneration, particularly through its tourism work, but reminded members that the Authority had neither a remit nor resources to lead in this area. Members referred to the excellent work of the Collabor8 project as an example of this. He also referred to the cost to the Authority of commenting on major fringe developments and suggested that this might be borne by developers.

A member highlighted the potential impact of the Review of Planning Services in Protected Landscapes on the planning system and said that this needed to be aligned to Sustaining a Living Wales.

### **56/12 Investors in People**

The Human Resources Officer presented the Investors in People report following the recent successful revalidation. The Chairman welcomed this very positive report which had highlighted the strong leadership shown by members and the Corporate Management Team. She also commented that the report had referred to the strong member development model and that subsequently the assessor had recommended this to Cardiff Council, whose officers were now interested in further discussions. Members welcomed this report and felt that it showed what could be achieved by teamwork between members and officers.

***RESOLVED: To note the Investors in People (IIP) Report***

### **57/12 Draft Improvement Plan**

The PR and Events Officers joined the meeting to present the latest draft of the Improvement Plan which had been tabled. She advised that the remaining data had now been included since this version, and that the Wales Audit Office had endorsed the new layout.

The Chairman of Audit and Scrutiny Committee advised that while the committee had recommended that the Authority approve this document he himself had voted against this, as while he had every confidence in the management of the Park, the document was about the duty to improve, and he felt that a number of targets in the report did not support this, by having targets the same or lower than last year's targets. A number of members concurred with this, feeling that this was a matter of public perception, although the point was also made that it might be unrealistic to include higher targets if there were factors that might prevent this. The issue of quality also needed to be considered. The example was used of schools reducing visits to the Park because of funding issues. The officer advised that these points had also been made by the Wales Audit Office and that she was happy to have further discussion with officers. It was suggested that where lower targets were set, some narrative should be included in explanation.

Members welcomed the clear format of the document and congratulated the officer on this.

***RESOLVED:***

***a) To approve the Draft Improvement Plan for 2012 -2013 subject to the completion of any outstanding Performance Indicator data and the personal assessment***

*by Directors of any targets that were lower than last year, with explanatory notes;*

*b) That the Chairman of the Authority, Chairman of Audit and Scrutiny Committee and the Chief Executive approve a final version for submission to the Wales Audit Office.*

### **58/12 Fire Response Plans**

Members received a presentation from the Warden Service Manager on work carried out in the west of the Park following the wild fires in 2011 and how officers were working with other organisations on mitigation and prevention. Members welcomed this work, often carried out under challenging conditions

A member asked about the impact of the fires on the insect and bird populations, and what officers were doing in terms of educating people about the dangers of setting fires. The officer advised that officers did make school visits. She referred to the presence of birds, including red grouse, in the area, but that they would be unable to nest due to loss of habitat. In response to a question about instant response exercises she agreed that they could discuss this with other agencies.

### **59/12 Conservation Area Grants Review and Options for 2012/ 2013**

The Buildings Conservation Officer presented a report on grants made in Talgarth for 2011/12 and proposed the transfer of funds to Brecon following lack of take up in Talgarth for this financial year.

Members expressed some concern about this and asked whether more effort could be made to highlight the scheme and encourage uptake. They noted the improvement in the appearance of Talgarth over the last few years. Officers responded that this was a relatively small budget which might be put to better use in Brecon in order to avoid diluting the impact. The Chief Executive reminded members of the resolve to 'do less better' and this was an example of that approach, with a better return on investment, rather than attempting to spread resources thinly.

An amendment was moved to extend the scheme in Talgarth for a further six months to encourage take up, and then moved to Brecon if this was not successful. The amendment was not supported.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- a) That the National Park Authority notes the grants for 2011/12 made in Talgarth.*
- b) That Members approve the transfer of the budget for Talgarth to Brecon and that an application for a Townscheme is made to Cadw this financial year 2012/13.*

**60/12 Brecon Conservation Area Review and Appraisal**

Members noted the consultation responses to the Brecon Conservation Area Review and Appraisal, and the positive response from Cadw was particularly welcomed. In response to a question the Buildings Conservation Officer confirmed that any proposed work to trees within a conservation area needed to be notified to the Authority.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the National Park Authority approves the draft Brecon Conservation Area Appraisal as Development Planning Guidance.***
- b) That the National Park Authority designates the extension to the Brecon Conservation Area as shown in the map at Enclosure 4.***

**61/12 Building at Risk Update 2012**

Members received an update on the current buildings at risk.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted****62/12 Excellent Planning Service**

The Director of Planning presented a list of suggested criteria which could be used to define an excellent development management service and which represented a more sophisticated approach than speed of determination.

The Chairman of the Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee supported this approach and said that engagement with the applicant and with communities, possibly through the cluster meetings, was important. He congratulated officers on these criteria. Members concurred with this and felt that this would encourage a more customer focused approach and improve public perception of the service. A member suggested that the Authority should not miss the opportunity to engage with consultee bodies outside the statutory requirements. It was also felt that given the continuing lack of awareness of the planning system and the improvements in performance there was a need to consider more awareness raising. It was suggested that it might be useful to discuss this with Planning Aid Wales who might have some useful ideas.

In response to a question the officer confirmed that the town and community councils had requested training on planning and that three sessions had been scheduled for July.

The Chairman of the Authority concluded that following a discussion with the Chief Executive they had agreed that a meeting with councillors who held wards in the Park so that this could help raise awareness.

***RESOLVED: To agree the set of eight quantitative and qualitative measures that the Authority should use to indicate whether it is delivering an “excellent” development management planning service***

### **63/12 Access to Information**

***RESOLVED: To exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following two items of business 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 12, 13 and 14 of part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.***

NB. The recording of the meeting paused at this point to allow members to consider these two report in confidential session.

### **64/12 Llangattock Beechwood**

Cllr A James declared an interest in the second recommendation in this report.

Members considered a paper from the Director of Countryside and Land Management regarding options for the beechwood. They took the first part of the recommendation but in the absence of further information resolved to revoke this decision pending a further report being brought to the Authority.

During further debate on the remaining aspects of the application, it became apparent that members and officers had misdirected themselves on key issues pertaining to the entire subject matter of the officer's report. The further recommendations appeared incompatible with the earlier decision and accordingly the members resolved to rescind the previous vote on the earlier part of the report and to consider the matter afresh, following advice from the Monitoring officer. They expressed a view that they required the benefit of a fuller report from the officer to enable them to consider the proposed disposal properly.

***RESOLVED: To revoke the decisions taken in this meeting pending a further report to be brought back to the Authority.***

**65/12 Access to Information**

**RESOLVED:** *To exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business 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 12 and 13 of part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.*

**66/12 Rural Housing Enabler**

Members considered proposals regarding the Authority's future funding of the Rural Housing Enabler posts in Powys and Monmouthshire. The Director of Planning confirmed that the Authority would still be able to seek advice and information on affordable housing issues and that it was the role of these posts was to promote this. Members had a full debate on this and it was felt that the Sustainable Development Fund officers should be consulted on the funding issues for the South Powys post.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) *Subject to the agreement of Melin Homes (SDF applicant) and in consultation with the Authority's SDF Officers, the grant for 2012/13 contributes to the South Powys RHE post and withdraws from the Monmouthshire part of the project.*
- b) *In future years, the NPA does not contribute financially to the RHE posts and does not sit on the RHE Steering Group.*

**67/12 Member Reports**

Collabor8 Conference. Cllr G Ratcliffe gave a presentation on the Collabor8 Conference recently held in Ireland at which he had represented the Authority as one of its Regional Tourism Partnership directors.

**68/12 Fforest Fawr Geopark Revalidation and EGN Network Developments**

The Director of Countryside and Land Management presented a report on the work of the EGN network and an action plan which would prepare for the validation process. A member commented on SI4, ED14 and ED18 and asked that child poverty and access requirements be included.

**RESOLVED:** *To note the report*

## **69/12 Other Business**

### **69.1 Work at Craig-y-nos Country Park**

The Director of Countryside and Land Management advised of work that had been carried out during the week at the country park by the wardens. The Chairman, who had been present on one day and who had helped with some of the work, congratulated officers on this work and confirmed that she had written to all concerned to thank them.

The Chairman concluded the meeting by thanking officers for the technical support with the webcasting. She wished members good luck in the forthcoming local government elections, and advised that the next meeting of the Authority would be the Annual Meeting on 15 June followed by an Authority meeting on 29 June 2012..

**CHAIRMAN**