MINUTES OF THE BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
HELD ON 29 JUNE 2012 AT PLAS Y FFYNNON, CAMBRIAN WAY,
BRECON

Present

Powys

Cllrs E T Morgan, M Jones, G Hopkins, P Ashton, J Holmes, P Pritchard and D Meredith

Monmouthshire

Cllrs M Hickman and Mrs A Webb

Carmarthenshire

Cllrs G Davies and A James

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Cllr Mrs J Ward

Members appointed by the Welsh Government

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

In Attendance: Mr J Cook (Chief Executive), Mr J Atkins (Director of Countryside and Land Management), Mr C Morgan (Director of Planning), Mr J Parsons (Monitoring Officer), Mrs J Gruffydd (Democratic Services Manager), Mr P Funnell (IT & Systems Manager), Mr C Allingham (Planning Solicitor) and officers presenting reports.

86/12 Correspondence

The Chairman welcomed members to the first live webstreaming of the National Park Authority and sought agreement to film the meeting. After this meeting, this would be taken as read for all meetings of the Authority, PAROW and Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

She also welcomed Cllr G Davies to his first meeting with the Authority following his appointment by Carmarthenshire County Council.

Apologies were received from Cllrs P Ashton, C Davies, A Furzer and B Pagett. The Chairman advised that Cllr Pagett had recently had a bereavement and that she had written to him on behalf of the Authority.

87/12 Members’ Declarations of Interest
Following advice from the Monitoring Officer the following declarations of interest were made:

Cllr M Jones: Item 17.0 Response to Powys LDP Personal
Cllr E T Morgan: Item 17.0 Response to Powys LDP Personal
Cllr P Pritchard: Item 17.0 Response to Powys LDP Personal
Cllr G Hopkins Item 17.0 Response to Powys LDP Personal and Prejudicial
Cllr J Holmes: Item 17.0 Response to Powys LDP Personal
Cllr J Holmes: Item 20.0 Llangattock Beechwood Prejudicial

88/12 Minutes

RESOLVED:

a) That the minutes of the National Park Authority meeting held on 30th April 2012 be approved and the Chairman authorised to sign them as a true record;

b) To receive the minutes of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9th March 2012.

89/12 Public Speaking

No requests to speak had been received.

90/12 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman thanked all members for re-electing her as Chairman and said how proud she was to have further opportunity to represent the Authority. She thanked new members for committing time to the member induction programme and those returning members who had supported and facilitated events.

The Chairman advised members of meetings and events at which she had represented the Authority in the last few weeks.

91/12 Chief Executive's Announcements
The Chief Executive advised members of meetings and events attended, and progress in areas of work. He was particularly pleased that more community councils were accepting the offer to go and address meetings and discuss issues of common interest.

There was some discussion about the proposed study of the economic benefit of National Parks and the apparent disparity in current figures between the three Welsh Parks. The point was made that additional third party evidence was needed to ensure accurate information, particularly on day/overnight visitors.

92/12 Annual Governance Statement

The Democratic Services Manager presented the draft Annual Governance Statement which incorporated comments from the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 27 April 2012. It was now informed by the inclusion of a statement from the Powys internal audit opinion, which confirmed the good governance of the Authority. Members suggested a number of additions to the document.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the Annual Governance Statement for inclusion with the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2011-12 subject to the inclusion of suggestions made by members in the meeting.

93/12 Welsh Language Policy and Monitoring Report

The Welsh Language Officer presented the monitoring report on the Authority’s Welsh Language Scheme, and stressed that this scheme was now out of date and was being redrafted by the Welsh Language Working Group and Member Champion. This document would be available to members for consultation during August.

Members welcomed the progress made against the scheme and the proactive work being undertaken towards compliance with new legislation, which the Member Champion was very proud of. She commented that this was an obligation rather than a choice and she congratulated officers on their positive approach and the willingness of Welsh speakers to contribute.

The Chairman supported this approach and commented that the strapline should be ‘Yes we can!’ and ‘Gwnawn Siwr lawn’.

The importance of providing bilingual information on the website was highlighted and this was something the Authority was working towards. A member commented that speakers at the Authority should have the opportunity of translation facilities. The Chief Executive responded that this would be addressed in the emerging policy in a proportionate way for the Authority.
RESOLVED: That the Welsh Language Monitoring Report be approved by the NPA for submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner

94/12 415b Paternity Leave Policy

Members considered changes to the policy to comply with recent legislation. A member highlighted the importance of training line managers to be aware of HR policies.

RESOLVED: To approve the revised and updated Paternity leave policy.

95/12 HR Annual Report 2011-12 and Health & Safety Update

The HR Manager presented the annual report to members. Members welcomed the low sickness figures and noted that this also included some longer term sickness absence due to post-operative recovery. It was noted that the colour coding in table 1.3 was the wrong way round.

RESOLVED: Members to note the content of the annual report

96/12 Social Media Guidance

The IT Manager presented a Guidance Document on use of Social Media which had been developed over time in consultation with staff in response to changes in social media. The point was made that this was not a Policy document as existing policies and the Officer Code of Conduct already cover expected and appropriate behaviour.

A member welcomed this and commented that the timing of this was pertinent with the commencement of live webcasting. She hoped that the Corporate Governance Task and Finish Group could discuss the potential for social media in relation to this at its meeting on 27 July.

The Welsh Language Champion referred to the impact of social media on the Authority’s Welsh Language provision and advised that it was hoped that the Authority would not need to comply with this.

A member advised that members of his authority were being given guidance on social media and that it was vital to make a distinction between personal and authority views. The officer advised that a development session could be arranged for members on social media.
RESOLVED: That members approve the guidance for addition to section 6 of Signpost

97/12 Appointment of Member Champion for Sustainable Communities

The Democratic Services Manager referred to this post not being filled at the Annual Meeting and stressed the importance of this role in supporting the valuable work carried out by the Authority and in performance against two improvement objectives for 2012-13. A member made the point that the role would benefit from the appointment of a Welsh speaker.

RESOLVED: To appoint Cllr G Davies to the role of Sustainable Communities Champion for 2012-13.

98/12 A Research Prospectus for the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

The Conservation Manager presented proposals to approve a Research Prospectus as a means to working with other agencies and universities to provide better evidence on which to base decisions about the Park.

Members welcomed this important piece of work which would provide research that the Authority was not resourced to carry out. A member particularly welcomed the way it linked to the Authority’s overall strategy through the Park Plan and the State of the Park Report.

Several members highlighted the importance of resourcing this work and suggested amendments to the second recommendation. They also emphasised the importance of working across directorates.

RESOLVED:

a) To approve the adoption and dissemination of the Research Prospectus as a means of improving the Authority’s ability to make sound decisions about the state of the Park, to provide more evidence in order to make better business decisions and to track emerging trends in the changing world; and

b) That staffing and financial resources towards implementing the Prospectus as collaborations with research institutes grow be considered through Directorate and Authority resource planning processes.

99/12 ROW scrutiny action plan
Members considered the action plan drawn up as a result of the detailed scrutiny review carried out as part of the Scrutiny Project. The Chairman commented that it was good to see so much practical work emerging from the study and how much had already been completed. It was noted that the action plan would be monitored on a six monthly basis by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The Director of Countryside and Land Management advised that a meeting with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority ROW staff has been scheduled for the end of August in preparation for arranging meetings with the constituent local authorities regarding delegation agreements.

**RESOLVED:** That Members approve the rights of way action plan.

**100/12 BBNPA and the Rural Development Plan**

The Sustainable Communities Manager presented proposals to support future joint working on delivery of the Rural Development Plan. A member highlighted the use of RDP funding by the Vale of Glamorgan to improve cycleways and this was noted.

**RESOLVED:** To continue to provide BBNPA officer representation at Powys and Monmouthshire RDP partnerships to further BBNPA and National Park Management Plan aims as described above and to engage in the discussion and development of proposals for future delivery.

**101/12 BBNPA Community Engagement Action Plan 2012/13**

Members noted the action plan for this year and the recommendation to adopt the national principles. A member congratulated the Sustainable Communities Manager on her excellent presentation at the recent Association of National Park Authorities Workshop.

**RESOLVED:** To support the BBNPA Community Engagement Action Plan 2012/13 and BBNPA adoption and use of the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales

**102/12 Response to Powys County Council Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy**
Cllr Hopkins had declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting.

The Head of Strategy, Policy and Heritage presented an officer response to this, which had been submitted to meet the deadline but needed endorsement by the Authority. A member felt that this was an opportunity to remind Powys County Council of its obligations towards the National Park.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the officers’ draft comments on the Powys County Council Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy and Candidate Site assessment methodology

Cllr G Hopkins returned to the meeting.

**103/12 Welsh Government Call for Evidence: Local Growth Zones**

Members considered the officer response to the Welsh Government. The Chief Executive hoped that the Authority would support the idea of Local Growth Zones, and referred to the Authority’s active role in the Brecon Property Rationalisation Project and its approval of the development brief, as well as work it was continuing under the Brecon Town Scheme, Conservation Area status and a sustainable tourism action plan for Brecon. These comments were endorsed by the Chairman.

A member questioned the submission of two separate reports and officers advised that this was because there was a limit of 500 words per response. He also asked officers to clarify the last sentence in the conclusion on page 35, and advised that Section D (LPA response) was not consistent with the role of regeneration as outlined in the National Park Management Plan should be reviewed.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank Rachel Willis, Principal Planning Officer (Strategy) who was moving to take up another post. She had made a significant contribution to the Local Development Plan process over the last few years and the Authority wished her well for the future.

**RESOLVED:**

a) To approve the officer draft responses submitted to the Welsh Government subject to the reports being combined, with changes made to the response in line with members’ suggestions.

b) That the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Authority be asked to approve the final wording in consultation with Mr Martin Buckle who had suggested the changes.
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, 13 and 14 of part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

Llangattock Beechwood

Cllr J Holmes declared a prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting.

Members considered recommendations from the Director of Countryside and Land Management in respect of Llangattock Beechwood and identified a number of housekeeping matters which need to be dealt with prior to progressing with the resolution and these were captured by the Director of Countryside and Land Management. An amendment was made to delete recommendation (a) 1 as originally drafted in the report.

RESOLVED:

a) Members reject Offer 1 to purchase part of Llangattock Beechwood, on the basis that the offer is: 1) not in accordance with National Park purposes; and 2) not in the long term interests of the woodland itself.

b) Members accept Offer 2, as made by Llangattock Green Valleys CIC to lease Llangattock Beechwood, subject to the following:

• The lease is subject to wider public consultation with the Community Council.

• The lease is conditional upon the National Park Authority being represented at officer level on the Management Body for the Woodland.

Cllr Holmes returned to the meeting.
106/12 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 paragraph 12 of part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

107/12 Cleaning services: addition to establishment

The HR Manager presented proposals for the cleaning services in Plas y Ffynnon.

RESOLVED: That Option 4 be approved, to directly employ the two existing cleaners.

108/12 Member Reports

The Chairman advised that the members who attended the Association of National Park Authorities Workshop earlier in the week would be asked to bring a report to the next meeting of the Authority on 27 July 2012.

109/12 Register of Gifts and Hospitality: Report and Declarations

The Monitoring Officer stated that he had advised that a regular report be brought to Authority meetings to highlight any new entries to the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that the register was always brought to meetings.

RESOLVED: To note the Gifts and Hospitality policy for the Authority and the gifts recorded since 2002.

110/12 Landscape Character Assessment Progress Report

The Chairman welcomed Fiona Fyfe from Fiona Fyfe Associates to the meeting, along with the National Park Management Plan Officer. Members were given a presentation on the work carried out on a landscape character assessment which could be used in developing policies on remoteness and visitor management as well as supplementary planning guidance.
A member welcomed the practical application of this study which would help with the State of the Park Report, and asked whether the assessment was contiguous with the Park boundary. Ms Fyfe confirmed that in most cases it was, but that some characteristics continued beyond the boundary. A member commented that similar landscapes needed similar policies and that it was therefore important to work across local authority boundaries. For this reason he suggested adding the word Cynon to Area 4 to encourage community engagement and to facilitate discussion with Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Director of Countryside and Land Management agreed with this approach and referred to the joint approach with Torfaen on the World Heritage Site, where there was potential for working in the buffer zone.

There was discussion about the definition of ‘remote’ which the Remote Area Working Group had been struggling with, and it was felt that this report would be helpful in this respect.

The comment was made that this presentation was timeless, unlike other promotional videos that could quickly become outdated. It would be a valuable resource for tourism strategies and provided great insight into the Park, as well as developing educational materials and messages.

The Chairman thanked the officer and speaker for their excellent presentation.

RESOLVED: Members are asked to note the progress to date on the Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment.

111/12 Dualling of the A465: Section 2

The Director of Countryside and Land Management gave a brief verbal update on the next stage of the dualling, which would include the Clydach Gorge with potential impact on important heritage sites. He advised that the consultants had been approached to make a presentation to Members at the next Authority meeting on 27 July 2012.

A member highlighted the sewerage problems in the area which had been raised at the Authority’s meetings on several occasions and also the importance of cycleways. The officer confirmed that the consultants were aware of this and noted that these were cross boundary issues. The Chairman asked that this be raised with the consultants in advance of their presentation.

RESOLVED: To note the report

112/12 Countryside & Land Management - Fees and Charges 2012
Members considered a schedule of fees and charges in the Countryside and Land Management Directorate and noted that this was an exceptions report in light of the removal of the charge on public path orders. There were no proposed changes in the CEO or Planning directorates and normally these matters would be addressed through the Corporate Management Team.

A member referred to his recent visit to Craig-y-nos Country Park where he had noted high quality hay meadow which was being very well managed. The same member noted the trialing of volunteer car park monitors and highlighted the need to ensure we are promoting car parking permits for regular visitors.

**RESOLVED:** To note the Fees and Charges set out in the report.

**113/12 Dark Skies Presentation**

The Chairman welcomed Jim Wilson (Chairman of the Brecon Beacons Park Society) and Ruth Coulthard (the Authority's Funding Development Manager) to the meeting, to give a presentation on the joint working to achieve Dark Skies status.

Members viewed the Dark Skies DVD which was Visit Britain's video of the month and their most shared video ever.

The speakers outlined the progress made on the application and the initiatives they were pursuing to encourage communities and businesses to reduce their lighting. It was emphasised that light pollution could be reversed, unlike many other forms of pollution. They also referred to the next steps which involved an education programme, publicity, lighting audit, planning policy and engagement, with the application scheduled for the Autumn. They asked members to be ambassadors for this initiative and stressed that this was not about telling people what kind of lighting they should have but encouraging a reduction in use.

There was a discussion about the lighting of sporting grounds, which was regulated with little scope for amendment. A member did not wish to see any disincentive to young people playing sport. Mr Wilson hoped that minor adjustments in the angle of lights might be possible. Ms Coulthard referred to a guide which was being prepared by lighting engineers on reducing lighting, and she would forward this to the member when produced. She would also ask them to contact the member direct.

The Director of Countryside and Land Management advised that there might be localised lighting issues where communities and sports clubs could apply for grants, through the Sustainable Development Fund, for example, and he would discuss whether such schemes would be eligible with the Sustainable Communities Manager.

The Biodiversity and Climate Change Champion referred to the project as being critical for certain species, and felt that the impact of sports venues was not as great
as large housing estates. The impact of additional lighting on the A465 was also cited, and the surfaces which tended to reflect light.

Reference was made to the efforts of Powys County Council to reduce street lighting and the opposition that this had caused through fear of increased vandalism and crime. It was hoped that the Authority would work with local authorities on this. An example was given where lighting had been reduced by a third with no increase in crime but this needed to be addressed with sensitivity and good communication. Another was given where lights had been dimmed with no comment from residents.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for an excellent presentation and useful discussion.

**114/12 Other Business**

There was no further business.

**CHAIRMAN**