

NOTICE OF MEETING



Snowdonia National Park Authority

Emyr Williams

Chief Executive

Snowdonia National Park Authority

Penrhyndeudraeth

Gwynedd LL48 6LF

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Meeting: Snowdonia National Park Authority

Date: Wednesday 7 February 2024

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Location: The Oakeley Room, Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog and via Zoom

Members are asked to join the meeting 15 minutes before the designated start time

Members appointed by Gwynedd Council

Councillor: Elwyn Edwards, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, June Jones, Vacancy, Edgar Wyn Owen, Elfed Powell Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts;

Members appointed by Conwy County Borough Council

Councillor: Ifor Glyn Lloyd, Jo Nuttall, Dilwyn Owain Roberts;

Members appointed by The Welsh Government

Mr. Brian Angell, Ms. Tracey Evans, Mrs. Sarah Hattle, Mr. Tim Jones, Ms. Naomi Luhde – Thompson, Ms. Delyth Lloyd.

****This Agenda is also available in Welsh***

A G E N D A

Page No's

1. **Chair**
To continue with the process of electing the Chair of the Authority until the next annual meeting. (This business carried over from the Authority's meeting on 6th December 2023)
2. **Apologies for absence and the Chair's Announcements**
To receive any apologies for absence and the Chair's announcements.
3. **Corporate Update**
To receive an oral update from the Chief Executive.
4. **Public Question Time**
The Authority has allocated up to 20 minutes at the start of its meeting to allow members of the public the opportunity to ask specific questions that relate to the work of the Authority (apart from planning applications) that is relevant to the Park's duties and purposes.

Questions must be submitted in writing (by post or e-mail) to the Head of Legal and Corporate Services at least 7 days prior to the meeting.
5. **Declaration of Interest**
To receive any disclosure of interest by members or officers in respect of any item of business. 3 - 9
6. **Minutes**
The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the Authority meetings held on the 15th November and 6th December 2023 be signed as true records. (Copies herewith)
7. **Matters for Information arising from the minutes** 10
8. **Action Log**
To submit the Action Log for information and decision. (Copy herewith)
9. **Authority Budget and Levy on Constituent Authorities 2024/2025** 11 - 23
To submit a report by the Chief Finance Officer. (Copy herewith) 24 - 31
10. **Capital Strategy 2024/2025**
To submit a report by the Chief Finance Officer. (Copy herewith) 32 - 35
11. **Plas Tan y Bwlch**
To submit a report by the Chief Executive. (Copy herewith) 36 - 39
12. **Commuted Sums Expenditure Plans**
To submit a report by the Planning Officer (Policy). (Copy herewith)
13. **Working Group Reports**
To submit the reports. (Copies herewith)
(1) **Members' Working Group held on 18th October and 6th December 2023.** 40 - 45
(2) **Local Joint Working Group held on the 17th November 2023.** 46 - 49
14. **Meetings of other Organisations**
To receive oral reports from Members on any recent meetings which they have attended as representatives of the Authority.

**SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
WEDNESDAY 15th NOVEMBER 2023**

Mr. Tim Jones (Vice-Chair)

PRESENT:

Members appointed by Gwynedd Council

Councillors Elwyn Edwards, Louise Hughes, June Jones, Kim Jones, Edgar Wyn Owen, Elfed Powell Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts;

Member appointed by Conwy County Borough Council

Councillor Jo Nuttall;

Members appointed by the Welsh Government

Mr. Brian Angell, Ms. Tracey Evans, Ms. Delyth Lloyd;

Officers

Emyr Williams, G. Iwan Jones, Jon Cawley, Dewi Aeron Morgan, Sian Owen, David Williams, Naomi Jones, Anwen Gaffey, Sarah Roberts.

Apologies

Councillors Annwen Hughes, Ifor Glyn Lloyd, Dilwyn Owain Roberts;
Sarah Hattle, Naomi Luhde-Thompson.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the meeting was being web-broadcast and would also be made available online at a later date. He reported upon problems with the usual technology and that a different system had now been set up which he hoped would not cause problems for those Members who were attending remotely, or for any members of the public.

1. Vice-Chair's Announcements

- (1) all Members were encouraged to complete the online Cyber Security course and were also asked to note that a further 3 new (ELMS) modules will be available in the new year, which were important for member development.
- (2) the Vice-Chair reported upon the launch of the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035 at Plas Tan y Bwlch on the 25th September 2023 followed by a Workshop with Terry Stevens on 31st October 2023.
- (3) the Vice-Chair reported on recent meetings attended:-
 - Chair's Forum on Climate Change held at the Lake District National Park.
 - National Parks Partnership Annual General Meeting held at the Peak District National Park. The EGM was also held, and Cath Hawkins was reappointed to the Chair.
- (4) the Vice-Chair advised upon a meeting with the Minister being arranged on the 27th November 2023.
- (5) the Vice-Chair reported that Councillor Kim Jones would be stepping down as a Member of the Authority at the end of the year and thanked her for her work.
- (6) the Vice Chair referred with sadness to the recent death of Mr. Jonathan Cawley's father and also to the sudden death of Ms. Bethan Hughes' partner. As a mark of respect, Members and Officers observed a minute's silence.

2. **Corporate Update**

The Chief Executive provided an oral update on operational issues:-

- (1) the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Services have met with the new Audit Wales team of officers and a report on “Governance of the three Welsh National Parks” will be published by the end of the month. Audit Wales have also confirmed that the 2023-24 study will focus on “Equality and Diversity”.
- (2) the 3 Welsh Chief Executives will be meeting with Welsh Government officers on the 17th November to discuss a number of issues, including funding, although the Chief Executive could confirm there was nothing to concern Members at this time.
- (3) the Chief Executive advised that the eight Designated Landscapes in Wales have jointly created a pod cast on Climate Change for the Wales Climate Week being held from the 4th to 8th December 2023.
- (4) the Chief Executive advised upon two new appointments:-
 - Ioan Gwilym, Head of Communications
 - Angela Jones, Head of Partnerships

3. **Public Question Time**

Members were informed that no public questions had been received.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

Mr. Emyr Williams, the Chief Executive, declared an interest in items 16 and 17 on the Agenda and left the meeting while these matters were being discussed.

5. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Authority meeting held on 13th September 2023 were accepted and the Vice Chair signed them as a true record.

6. **Matters for Information arising from the minutes**

Item No. 2 – Corporate Update

(2) The Chief Executive will present the Audit Wales “Income Diversification for National Park Authorities in Wales” report to the next meeting of the Performance and Resources Committee on the 29th November 2023.

7. **Action Log**

Submitted – A log of strategic actions arising from decisions taken during meetings of the Authority, for information and action.

Authority Meeting 08.02.23

Action Item 16 – Terms and Conditions of Service – SNPA Senior Management

Team: Directors

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the 2nd action (*to address potential matters resulting from turnover of personnel in the Senior Management Team*) was included as part of the annual report and should remain on the Action Log for the time being.

RESOLVED to note the Action Log and remove the action, as outlined.

8. **Race to Zero**

Submitted – A report by the Chief Executive for Members to consider and decide whether to pledge with the other UK National Parks to Race to Zero.

Reported – The Chief Executive presented the report and provided Members with a PowerPoint presentation outlining the nature of the challenge which is different for each of the 8 designated landscapes in Wales. The Chief Executive reported upon the 5 challenges identified for each landscape, which included cutting energy-related emissions, reducing the carbon footprint of locally consumed food and local agriculture, managing habitats, engaging with the visitor economy and educating the public on how they can play a part in reducing their carbon footprint. Members were advised that the 15 National Parks have now commissioned a new communications unit which will provide a focussed communication function for the family of National Parks. The Chief Executive also provided charts which projected the estimated net emissions in Eryri in 2050 and the expectation that Eryri would be carbon neutral by 2032.

Members and officers discussed the report in detail and made the following observations:-

- Members welcomed the report and the actions proposed.
- in response to a question on the challenge in Wales to retrofit the current housing stock to become carbon neutral and how this would impact on the development plan and resources, the Director of Planning and Land Management stated that Cynllun Eryri and the Local Development Plan (LDP) were key to this work. The review of the LDP was likely to begin in 2024 at which point the Authority would set its targets, objectives and strategy. The Carbon Steering Group have already recognised the importance of these two strategic documents and the Director of Planning and Land Management thanked Naomi Luhde-Thompson for setting up initial talks on Net Zero with the University where she lectures. He advised it would be up to Members to decide how ambitious they were going to be when they review the LDP.
- a Member recommended that in the interim the Authority should report upon, and also accelerate, the processes already underway, e.g., sustainable tourism work, the Authority's contribution to carbon reduction etc., to recognise the work currently being carried out.
- in response to a question, the Chief Executive advised that as the National Parks do not have the power or resources to deliver themselves, they will have a leadership role and will work with local businesses, landowners etc., to achieve decarbonisation.
- the Director of Planning and Land Management confirmed that the Planning and Access Committee will consider whether to move forward with the Article 4 Direction at its meeting on the 6th December, which will have implications on the Eryri Local Development Plan review timetable and represent a delay of approximately 12 months.

RESOLVED

- 1. to note the report and to record where the Authority currently stands on the journey to Net Zero.**
- 2. to agree to pledge with the other UK National Parks to Race to Zero.**
- 3. to ensure that Net Zero principles are considered when reviewing the Authority's two statutory plans.**

9. **Draft Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales**

Submitted – A report by the Director of Corporate Services to discuss the Independent Remuneration Panel’s draft Annual Report and accompanying questionnaire, and to determine what response was required.

Reported – The Director of Corporate Services presented the report and questionnaire and outlined the proposed changes for 2024/25. Members did not have any additional observations at this time and agreed to respond individually to the questionnaire, included as part of the annual report, if they felt it was necessary.

RESOLVED to accept the report, as submitted.

10. **The Authority’s Risk Profile**

Submitted – A report by the Director of Corporate Services to provide an update on the Authority’s Risk Profile and present the Annual Summary.

Reported – The Director of Corporate Services presented the report and the risk register and Members discussed the following:-

- Members were reassured that the risk register is reviewed regularly by the Performance and Resources Committee.
- in response to concerns raised regarding Risk Ref 2 and Risk Ref 16, which refer to the challenges faced by Plas Tan y Bwlch, the Chief Executive advised that Audit Wales had recommended that a Business Plan be presented to the Authority within 12 months. He also confirmed that the Plas Tan y Bwlch Board would formulate options on the future direction of Plas Tan y Bwlch at their meeting later today. The Board will then present recommendations to the next meeting of the Members’ Working Group in January 2024 prior to submitting a report for formal decision to the Authority in February 2024.
- in response to a concern from a Member (Risk Ref. 1 - Insufficient Core Budget Funding) the Chief Executive clarified that following the Audit Wales report which proposes that the National Park Authorities in Wales should develop a strategy for income diversification, officers were still awaiting guidance from the Welsh Government and his report to the next meeting of the Performance and Resources Committee will recommend that until the Welsh Government have considered and addressed the issues identified in the joint report to pause this work for the time being.
- the Director of Corporate Services agreed to update the risk register (Risk Refs. 1, 2 and 16) to reflect the actions more accurately.
- in response to a question on Risk Ref 15 – Income Generation (Planning), the Director of Planning and Land Management advised that the Association of Chief Planning Officers (Wales) together with Principal Members, were writing to Julie James MS to seek an increase in the planning fees. He confirmed that current fees only cover approximately 20% of the Authority’s development control costs.

RESOLVED

1. **to note the contents of the report.**
2. **to update Risk Ref. 1, 2, and 16 as outlined.**
3. **to formally approve the removal of ‘The effect of Covid-19 on the National Park and on the Authority’s work’ from the Risk Register.**

11. **Eryri Lake Names**

Submitted – A report by the Head of Cultural Heritage to present a standardised list of Eryri lake names to the Authority.

Reported – The Head of Cultural Heritage presented the report and background and outlined in detail the work undertaken by the Place Names Steering Group.

Arising thereon, Members and officers made the following observations:-

- the importance of this work to the Cultural Heritage of Eryri and the Welsh Language was recognised.
- arising from the Authority's decision to use the Welsh name Yr Wyddfa and Eryri, this provides a precedent of the Authority's intention to always use the Welsh names unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- the Chief Executive clarified that the report asks Members to consider the lake names which will be used by the Authority only, and that it was a matter for Gwynedd Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales etc., to decide which names they would use. This work does not impact on road signs or create any additional costs.
- the Authority will use the name Llyn Tegid only, and to note that the OS has recognised it as such for some years.
- the Head of Cultural Heritage agreed to ascertain why Llyn Celyn had been omitted from the list of names whilst Llyn Arenig, which was also a reservoir, was included.
- the importance of securing the Welsh names as a standard for map designers was recognised.
- in response to a question with regard to the use of the name Eryri only, the Chief Executive advised that when the Senedd reviews National Park purposes, officers have put forward a request to formally accept use of the Welsh name only.
- the Head of Cultural Heritage confirmed that following discussions with the Director of Planning and Land Management, officers will develop interpretation/signage scheme for the lake shores.
- Members welcomed that Eryri National Park had taken the lead with this work.
- a Member noted that Llyn Llugin was the name used locally for Llyn Gelligain and the Head of Cultural Heritage agreed to note that this was the case.

RESOLVED

1. to approve the list of lake names.
2. to approve the name Llyn Tegid only for use by the Authority.
3. to delegate responsibility for approving names for Eryri's topographical features to the Place Names Steering Group with an annual report on the work being presented to the Authority.

12. **Members' Working Group Report**

Submitted – Report of the Members' Working Group held on 6th September 2023, for information.

RESOLVED to note the report.

13. **Meetings of other Organisations**

Members had not attended external meetings as representatives of the Authority.

14. **Minutes**

The following minutes were submitted for information:-

- (1) Minutes of the Performance and Resources Committee held on 12th July 2023.
- (2) Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 1st September 2023.

RESOLVED to note the minutes.

15. **Europarc Conference 2023**

Received – A slide presentation by the Chief Executive who had attended the Europarc 2023 Conference in Leeuwarden, Netherlands. Councillor Ifor Glyn Lloyd had also attended the Conference but was unable to attend the meeting today. The Chief Executive advised upon the two Conference themes ‘Tribute to our landscape, where nature and people meet in harmony?’ and ‘Celebrating 50 years of the Europarc Federation: learning from the past, preparing for the future’.

The Vice Chair encouraged all Members to take up the invitation to attend if they were given the opportunity.

RESOLVED to thank the Chief Executive and welcome the presentation.

16. **Terms and Conditions**

Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972: Exemption from disclosure of documents.

Submitted – A report by the Director of Corporate Services requesting Authority approval for the exemption of the subsequent report.

RESOLVED that the “Terms and Conditions” report be exempt from disclosure for the reasons outlined.

17. **Terms and Conditions**

Submitted – A report by the Director of Corporate Services to discuss the recommendations of the Senior Panel of Members.

Reported – The Director of Corporate Services presented the report and Members considered the Chief Executive’s Terms and Conditions, the conclusion of the Panel and the resource implication in detail. Arising thereon, the Director of Corporate Services advised that as a result of the 2022/23 salary settlement there would be a slight cost increase to the Authority from circa. £5k to £6k, as referred to in para. 4.1 of the report.

Members discussed the considerations and conclusion of the Panel of Senior Members and supported the Panel’s recommendations.

RESOLVED

1. **to support a two-pay point increase in the salary of the Chief Executive to reflect the current market, backdated to April 2022.**
2. **to introduce arrangements whereby the Chief Executive is allowed TOIL for evening and weekend working.**
3. **to allow St David’s Day as a discretionary day’s leave for the Chief Executive.**
4. **the Human Resource Officer to monitor senior officer salaries over the next 3 years with the Panel to discuss the same annually in addition to any potential matters resulting from turnover of personnel in the Senior Management Team (this aspect has previously been agreed by the Authority).**

The meeting ended at 12.00

**SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
WEDNESDAY 6th DECEMBER 2023**

Mr. Tim Jones (Vice-Chair)

PRESENT:

Members appointed by Gwynedd Council

Councillors Elwyn Edwards, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, June Jones, Edgar Wyn Owen, Elfed Powell Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts;

Members appointed by Conwy County Borough Council

Councillors Jo Nuttall, Dilwyn Owain Roberts;

Members appointed by the Welsh Government

Brian Angell, Tracey Evans, Delyth Lloyd;

Officers

Emyr Williams, G. Iwan Jones, Jonathan Cawley, Anwen Gaffey.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the meeting was being recorded and would be made available online at a later date.

1. **Chair**

The Director of Corporate Services outlined the procedure for electing a Chair for the Authority and advised that in accordance with Standing Orders 5.2 and 5.3, he had received nominations proposing two Members for the Chair, Councillor Edgar Owen and Mr. Tim Jones

Arising thereon, a Member had advised that he was unable to join the meeting due to technical problems and on account of this technical delay, two Members were having to leave the meeting imminently to attend another appointment. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that business could be transacted as the Authority had a quorum, but if Members considered that it would be preferable to adjourn the matter to the next meeting of the Authority then this would be acceptable pursuant to Standing Orders. Members considered the situation and felt under the circumstances the election of a Chair should be deferred on the grounds of fair play.

It was also noted that due to the technical difficulties encountered the recording had been stopped and so no recording will be available of this particular meeting.

RESOLVED to defer consideration until the next meeting of the Authority.

2. **Apologies**

Councillor Ifor Glyn Lloyd; Mrs. Sarah Hattle, Ms. Naomi Luhde-Thompson.

The meeting ended at 12.55



TAFLEN WEITHREDU – ACTION SHEET

AUTHORITY MEETING – 08.02.2023

ITEM NO. AND TITLE	DECISIONS / OBSERVATIONS	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	UPDATE or COMPLETION DATE	REMOVE FROM ACTION LOG
16. Terms and Conditions of Service – SNPA Senior Management Team: Directors	- that the Panel, together with the Head of Human Resources and the new Section 151 Officer, are tasked and authorised to address potential matters resulting from turnover of personnel in the Senior Management Team.	Need to arrange a meeting to consider the issues, date is yet to be agreed	NM	Noted and issue is being monitored.	NO

ITEM NO. 9

MEETING	Snowdonia National Park Authority
DATE	7 February 2024
TITLE	THE AUTHORITY'S BUDGET & LEVY ON CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES 2024/25
REPORT BY	Chief Finance Officer
PURPOSE	To approve the 2024/25 revenue and capital budget and the levies on constituent authorities based on the Welsh Government's draft grant allocation figure for the Authority.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of the Authority's budget for 2024/25 based on the draft National Park Grant settlement for 2024/25. The final grant settlement will be confirmed in March 2024, so there is a possibility of change in the meantime.
- 1.2 This report also contains details of the levy distributed between the two constituent authorities, namely Cyngor Gwynedd and Conwy County Borough Council based on the indicative grant figure.
- 1.3 The budgets presented in this report are based on a standstill budget. That is, a level of expenditure necessary to continue with the current level of services in 2024/25, without any developmental additions.

2. Revenue Budget 2024/25

- 2.1 Information about the draft settlement was received in December 2023 and although inflationary pressure on the budget continues, there will be no increase in the level of the Welsh Government's grant to the Snowdonia National Park Authority for 2024/25. As a result, the authority faces an extremely challenging financial situation, and starts the financial year with a deficit in the baseline of £640,450.
- 2.2 Following the presentation of the Basic Revenue Budget 2024/25 at the Performance and Resources Committee meeting on the 29th of November 2023, adjustments were made which have been presented in Appendix 1.

- 2.3 An inflation provision of 6% has been set for wage increases in 24/25 (£349,990). Although inflation rates continue to fall compared to levels seen over the past two years, with the current rate being 4%, I believe that this provision is a prudent one, with any remainder being put towards the funding deficit.
- 2.4 As a result of the revaluation of the rateable value of the Authority's property in 2023/24, there is an increase of £47,900 to the baseline in the 2024/25 budget.
- 2.5 As a result of an increase in interest rates, we have increased the interest income budget by £72,000, after years of very low rates.
- 2.6 We note that the costs of Plas Tan y Bwlch will be funded from the reserves in 2024/25, which will be a reduction of approximately £240k on the deficit compared to the amount reported to you back in November.

3. Analysis of the 2024/25 Revenue Budget

- 3.1 Based on the draft grant figure, Appendices 2 and 3 contain information about the Authority's budget for 2024/25, analysing the net revenue budget at key service area level (Appendix 2) and on the basis of standard subjective headings (Appendix 3).
- 3.2 Appendix 4 contains a more detailed analysis of the revenue budget at individual departmental level in every key service area. The analysis and the net costs of the services also include estimates for assumed capital costs.

4. Capital Budget 2024/25

- 4.1 Gross capital expenditure is estimated at £1,376,260 funded from capital grants, together with contributions from the Authority's revenue budget and reserves. (see Appendix 5 for details).

The £1,376,260 is funded from:

	£
Welsh Government Capital Grants	850,000
Authority baseline and reserves	526,260
	1,376,260

5. Use of Reserves

- 5.1 At the time of writing the report it is anticipated that the 2024/25 budget will include a net contribution of £1,061,760 from the Authority's reserves. A significant part of the financial challenge will be met during the year, with any remainder being funded from the reserves. There is therefore an expectation that this contribution will increase. There is an outline below, and the full details are in Appendices 6 and 7.

The contribution of £1,061,760 of funds includes:

Revenue £731,330 (appendix 6.)

Capital £330,430 (appendix 7.)

Please see appendices 6 & 7 for full details

6. Levy on Constituent Authorities

- 6.1 Section 71 of the Environment Act 1995 and the National Parks Authorities (Wales) Levy (Amendment) Regulations prescribe the method of setting a levy, and the Authority is required to approve the levies before they can be claimed by the relevant constituent authorities.
- 6.2 The levies are awarded on the basis of one third of the National Park Grant received from the Welsh Government. The levy is apportioned between the constituent authorities in accordance with the "relevant proportions" set out in Regulation 5 and the Schedule to the Act above.
- 6.3 The table below shows the distribution of the levy based on the grant figure received from the Welsh Government and the "relevant proportions" from the Schedule to the Act.

2023/24	(£)	Shares	(£)
Government Grant	4,119,789		
Total Levies	1,373,262		
Funding Total	5,493,051		
Apportionment of the Levy:	Cyngor Gwynedd	77.1%	1,058,785
	Conwy County Borough Council	22.9%	314,477
	Total	100%	1,373,262

- 6.4 How the £7,195,119 budget is funded (see appendices 2-4) is summarised as follows:-

Government Grant	£4,119,789
Total Levies	£1,373,262
Contribution (net) from Reserves	£1,061,760
Deficit	<u>£ 640,450</u>
Budget 2024/25	<u>£7,195,119</u>

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 Approve the Snowdonia National Park Authority's revenue and capital budget for 2024/25, as presented in the following appendices.**
- 7.2 Approve the levies on the billing authorities, as stated in part 6.3 above.**

	(£)	(£)
1 Base Budget 2023/24		8,343,810
2 Change in staff costs		
Compuisory Changes		
2023/24 Salary Provision Reversal	- 231,600	
2023/24 Pay Award (£1,925 on each scale point)	330,110	
Inflation Provision 6%	349,990	448,500
Discretionary Changes		
Minor changes to staff/structure	- 87,570	87,570
3 Changes in Expenditure		
Increase		
Changes in Rateable Value	47,900	47,900
4 Changes in Income		
Increase		
Bank Interest	- 72,000	72,000
Grants & Projects Income		
Eryri Fringes	- 31,260	
LIFE - grants received in advance	- 535,820	
Nature Restoration	- 2,530	
Peatlands	- 37,770	
Carneddau	- 12,940	620,320
Decrease		
Yr Ysgwrn	4,110	4,110
Completed Grant Projects		
ENRaW	24,560	
Cymmum THI Dolgellau	11,910	
Harlech and Ardudwy	- 13,000	23,470
Additional Capital Projects financed from Grants/Reserves	- 892,711	892,711
5 Base Budget 2024/25		7,195,119
6 National Park Grant and levy 2024/25		- 5,493,050
7 Net contribution from reserve		
Projects Reserve Carneddau project	- 25,000	
Projects Reserve Wellness	- 40,000	
Reserve Youth Manifesto	- 39,310	
Yr Wyddfa Interpretation Plan	- 23,000	
Yr Wyddfa Partnership Plan	- 15,000	
Carneddau - Data Lidar	- 3,000	
Carneddau - Paths	- 35,000	
Penmaen Brith (Circular)	- 25,000	
Dark Skies Reserves	- 58,180	
Dark Skies Capital Projects	- 33,610	
Gorseddau capital Project	- 148,220	
Llyn Llywelyn/ Drws y Coed Rhyd Ddu Capital Project	- 23,750	
Lon Gwyrfaï Capital Project	- 23,850	
Salary Costs Engagement Officer	- 43,420	
Salary Costs Planning Officer	- 37,260	
Salary Costs Yr Wyddfa Plastic Free	- 43,420	
Salary Cost Yr Wyddfa Partnerships Officer	- 34,480	
Salary Costs Property Officer	- 47,880	
Plas Tan y Bwlch costs to be funded from reserves	- 260,960	
Wardens re-structure costs	- 30,870	
Admin fee to Finance	- 16,000	
Peatlands	- 54,547	1,061,757
8 Deficit		640,450

Atodiad 2 / Appendix 2

**CRYNODEB O'R GYLLIDEB REFENIW 2024/25
REVENUE BUDGET SUMMARY 2024/25**

PRIF FEYSYDD GWASANAETH / KEY SERVICE AREAS

	Cyllideb Net Net Budget 2024/25	
	£	%
<u>Gwasanaeth / Service :</u>		
Cynllunio a'r Dreftadaeth Ddiwylliannol a Rheolaeth Tir/ Planning and Cultural Heritage and Land Management	2,124,327	28.9
Corfforaethol / Corporate	4,855,597	66.0
Balansau, Arian Wrth Gefn a Darpariaethau / Balances, Reserves & Provisions	379,986	5.2
Cyllideb Net Gwasanaethau / Net Services Budget	7,359,910	100.0
Llog ar Arian Dros Ben / Interest Earned on Surplus Funds	-100,000	
Cyllido Gwariant Cyfalaf / Financing of Capital Expenditure	526,259	
Addasiad Taliadau Cyfalaf / Capital Charges Adjustment	-591,050	
Cyfanswm Cyllideb Cyfrif Refeniw / Total Revenue Account Budget	7,195,119	
 <u>Daw'r Arian O / Financed by :-</u>		
Cronfeydd wrth gefn / Reserves (prosiectau/projects)	1,061,748	14.8
Cronfeydd wrth gefn / Reserves (diffyg / deficit)	640,450	8.9
 Grant y Parc Cenedlaethol / National Park Grant	 4,119,789	 57.3
Dyraniad Lefi Rhwng Cynghorau Lleol / Levy Allocation between Constituent Authorities -		
Cyngor Gwynedd Council	1,058,785	14.7
Cyngor Conwy Council	314,477	4.4
	7,195,250	100.0

Atodiad 3 / Appendix 3

**CRYNODEB O'R GYLLIDEB REFENIW 2024/25
REVENUE BUDGET SUMMARY 2024/25**

LEFEL ODDRYCHOL / SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

	Cyllideb Budget 2024/25 £	%
Gweithwyr / Employees	5,914,426	56.1
Tir ag Adeiladau / Premises & Grounds	1,532,960	14.5
Cludiant / Transport	154,740	1.5
Cyflenwadau a Gwasanaethau / Supplies & Services	1,972,412	18.7
Taliadau Cyfalaf / Capital Charges	591,050	5.6
Arian Wrth Gefn a Darpariaethau / Reserves & Provisions	379,986	3.6
Cyllideb Gros Gwasanaethau / Gross Services Budget	10,545,574	100.0
Incwm / Income	-3,185,664	
Cyllideb Net Gwasanaethau / Net Services Budget	7,359,910	
Llog ar Arian Dros Ben / Interest Earned on Surplus Funds	-100,000	
Cyllido Gwariant Cyfalaf / Financing of Capital Expenditure	526,259	
Addasiad Taliadau Cyfalaf / Capital Charges Adjustment	-591,050	
Cyfanswm Cyllideb Cyfrif Refeniw / Total Revenue Account Budget	7,195,119	

Atodiad 4 / Appendix 4

CYLLIDEB REFENIW 2024/25

REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25

Costau Gweithwyr a Chostau Rhedeg	Costau Cyfalaf	Cyllideb Gros 2024/25	Gwerthu, Ffioedd ac Incwm Grant	Cyllideb Net 2024/25
Employee Costs & Running Expenses	Capital Charges	Gross Budget 2024/25	Sales Fees & Grant Income	Net Budget 2024/25
£	£	£	£	£

Cynllunio a Threftadaeth Diwylliannol a Rheolaeth Tir / Planning and Cultural Heritage and Land Management

Archeoleg / Archaeology	67,538	-	67,538	-	67,538
Treftadaeth Diwylliannol / Cultural Heritage	80,778	-	80,778	-	80,778
Ysgwrn	120,372	45,250	165,622	- 46,800	118,822
Cynllun Partneriaeth Tirwedd Carnedau / Carneddau Landscape Partnership Scheme	583,777		583,777	- 558,777	25,000
Cynllunio/ Planning	900,520	3,320	903,840	- 206,500	697,340
Cadwraeth ac Amaethyddiaeth / Conservation and Agriculture	791,712	10,580	802,292	- 269,220	533,072
LIFE-Coedwigoedd Celtaidd / LIFE - Celtic Rainforests	618,772	-	618,772	- 543,979	74,793
Awyr Dywyll / Dark Skies	58,176	-	58,176	-	58,176
Adfer Natur a Dal a Storio Carbon / Nature Recovery and Carbon Sequestration	70,746	-	70,746	- 70,746	-
Mawndiroedd/ Peatlands	250,000	-	250,000	- 250,000	-
Cynllun Rheolaeth a Phartneriaethau / Park Management Plan and Partnerships	468,808	-	468,808	-	468,808
Eryri Fringes	31,252	-	31,252	- 31,252	-
	4,042,451	59,150	4,101,601	- 1,977,274	2,124,327

Corfforaethol / Corporate

Costau Gweithwyr a Chostau Rhedeg	Costau Cyfalaf	Cyllideb Gros 2024/25	Gwerthu, Ffioedd ac Incwm Grant	Cyllideb Net 2024/25
Employee Costs & Running Expenses	Capital Charges	Gross Budget 2024/25	Sales Fees & Grant Income	Net Budget 2024/25
£	£	£	£	£

Gweinyddol / Administration	223,627	-	223,627	- 300	223,327
Cyllid / Finance	229,380	1,250	230,630	-	230,630
Technoleg Gwybodaeth / Information Technology	343,032	24,980	368,012	-	368,012
Cyfreithiol / Legal	58,380	-	58,380	-	58,380
Adnoddau Dynol/ Human Resources	208,157	-	208,157	-	208,157
Cyfiethu / Translation	107,095	1,430	108,525	-	108,525
Pencadlys / Headquarters	149,056	121,690	270,746	- 9,000	261,746
Cymorth i Aelodau a'r Awdurdod / Members & Authority Support	206,886	-	206,886	-	206,886
Rheoli Corfforaethol / Corporate Management	681,189	-	681,189	- 18,000	663,189
Plas Tan Y Bwlch	570,216	225,540	795,756	- 309,260	486,496

Eiddo / Property	247,489	-	247,489	-	247,489
Cyfleusterau Ymwelwyr / Visitor Facilities	262,330	67,280	329,610	- 66,160	263,450
Meysydd Parcio / Car Parks	343,715	3,090	346,805	- 830,020	483,215
Llyn Tegid	33,910	2,030	35,940	- 56,120	20,180
Casglu Ysbwriel / Litter Collection	15,000	4,510	19,510	-	19,510
Ymgysylltu / Engagement	364,945	7,300	372,245	- 4,130	368,115
Wyddfa Di-blastig / Plastic-free Yr Wyddfa	43,416		43,416		43,416
Manifffesto Ieuenctid / Young People's Manifesto	39,310	-	39,310	-	39,310
Llwybrau Llesiant / Well Being Routes	40,000	-	40,000	-	40,000
Canolfannau Gwybodaeth / Information Centres	373,749	5,940	379,689	- 193,110	186,579
Mynediad i'r Cyhoedd / Public Access	120,910	4,640	125,550	- 2,000	123,550
Wardeiniaid, Gweithwyr Stad a Gwirfoddolwyr / Wardens, Estate Workers and Volunteers	1,152,505	62,220	1,214,725	- 7,500	1,207,225
Traffic a Thrafnidiaeth / Traffic and Transport	5,000	-	5,000	-	5,000
	5,819,297	531,900	6,351,197	- 1,495,600	4,855,597

Balansau, Arian wrth Gefn a Darpariaethau / Balances, Reserves & Provisions

Darpariaeth Chwyddiant Cyffredinol / General Prices Inflation - Provision	30,000	-	30,000	-	30,000
Darpariaeth Chwyddiant Cyflogau / Inflation Provision	349,986	-	349,986	-	349,986
Payroll					
	379,986	-	379,986	-	379,986

Cyfanswm Cyllid Gwasanaethau / Total Services Budget	10,241,734	591,050	10,832,784	- 3,472,874	7,359,910
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Llog ar Arian Dros Ben / Interest Earned on Surplus Funds	-	-	-	- 100,000	100,000
Cyllido Gwariant Cyfalaf / Financing of Capital Spend	526,259	-	526,259	-	526,259
Addasiad Taliadau Cyfalaf / Capital Charges Adjustment	-	- 591,050	- 591,050	-	591,050

Cyfanswm Cyllid Cyfrif Refeniw / Revenue Account Budget	10,767,993	-	10,767,993	- 3,572,874	7,195,119
Total					

Capital Expenditure 2024/25**Appendix 5**

Description	(£)	(£)
Information Technology	22,340	
Access Projects	10,000	
Warden Vehicles	14,000	
		<hr/> 46,340
Cultural Heritage Schemes	149,490	
		<hr/> 149,490
Carneddau - Paths	35,000	
Penmaen Brith (Circular Route)	25,000	
Snowdon Interpretation Plan	23,000	
Snowdon Partnership Plan	15,000	
Mobile Observatory	23,600	
Sky Paths	10,010	
Gorseddau slate quarrying landscape	148,220	
Llyn Llywelyn / Drws y Coed, Rhyd Ddu	23,750	
Lon Gwyrfai	23,850	
		<hr/> 327,430
Carneddau - Lidar Data	3,000	
		<hr/> 3,000
Communities SLSP	155,000	
Decarbonisation SLSP	175,000	
Nature SLSP	165,000	
Tourism SLSP	355,000	
		<hr/> 850,000
		<hr/> <u>1,376,260</u>

Revenue Reserves Utilised for 2024/25**Appendix 6**

Project	Reserve	(£)	(£)
Projects Reserve Carneddau project	Projects Reserve	25,000	
Reserve Youth Manifesto	Projects Reserve	39,310	
Salary Costs Engagement Officer	Projects Reserve	43,420	
Salary Costs Planning Officer	Projects Reserve	37,260	
Salary Costs Yr Wyddfa Plastic Free	Projects Reserve	43,420	
Salary Cost Yr Wyddfa Partnerships Officer	Projects Reserve	34,480	
Salary Costs Property Officer	Projects Reserve	47,880	
Wardens re-structure costs	Projects Reserve	30,870	
SLSP Finance Contribution	Projects Reserve	16,000	
Dark Skies	Projects Reserve	58,180	
Peatlands (NPAP grant)	Projects Reserve	54,550	
			430,370
Plas Tan y Bwlch	Specific Risks Reserve	260,960	
			260,960
Projects Reserve Wellness	Revenue Grants Reserve	40,000	
			40,000
	Total		731,330

Capital Reserves Utilised for 2024/25**Appendix 7**

Project	Reserve	(£)	(£)
Carneddau - Paths	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	35,000	
Penmaen Brith (Circular Route)	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	25,000	
Mobile Observatory	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	23,600	
Sky Paths	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	10,010	
Gorseddau slate quarrying landscape	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	148,220	
Snowdon Interpretation Plan	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	23,000	
Snowdon Partnership Plan	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	15,000	
Llyn Llywelyn / Drws y Coed, Rhyd Ddu	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	23,750	
Lon Gwyrfai	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	23,850	
Carneddau (Data Lidar)	Capital Grants (Welsh Government)	3,000	
			<u>330,430</u>
			<u>330,430</u>

ITEM NO. 10

MEETING	Snowdonia National Park Authority
DATE	7 February 2024
TITLE	CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25
REPORT BY	Chief Finance Officer
PURPOSE	To approve the Capital Strategy for 2024/25 and the Chief Finance Officer's recommendations with reference to the Prudential Code.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Capital Strategy report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure; capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of National Park services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

1.2 The Strategy covers: -

- Capital Expenditure and Financing,
- Treasury Management including debt-free status,
- Investments for Service Purposes,
- Commercial Activities,
- Liabilities,
- Revenue Budget Implications, and
- Knowledge and Skills.

2 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FINANCING

2.1 Capital expenditure is where the Authority spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles that will be used for more than one year. For the National Park Authority this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and grants to other bodies enabling them to renovate listed buildings. The Authority has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, for example assets costing below £10,000 are not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year.

2.2 In 2024/25 the Authority is planning capital expenditure of £1,376k as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £ thousands

	2022/23 actual (£'000)	2023/24 forecast (£'000)	2024/25 budget (£'000)	2025/26 budget (£'000)	2026/27 budget (£'000)
General Fund (Corporate Services)	486	36	36	36	69
General Fund (External to the Authority)	966	1,382	1,340	384	205
Capital Investments	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1,652	1,419	1,376	420	274

2.3 The general fund's main capital projects for 2024/25 includes £1,145,000 worth of projects funded by Welsh Government. This includes £850,000 for Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects. These are part of a 3 year plan, with the current agreement coming to an end in 2024/25. There is a possibility of a further agreement in 2025/26, however we have not received any confirmation. The main single contribution from the authority will be for Cultural Heritage Schemes as well as annual contributions towards warden vehicles, IT equipment and access projects.

2.4 GOVERNANCE: The allocation from the annual revenue budget tends to stand unrevised and is usually supplemented by unspent budgets carried over from the previous financial year. Considering the financial challenges currently facing the authority it is unlikely that there will be unspent budgets available for capital purposes over the next three years.

2.5 All capital expenditure must be financed, either from

- external sources (government grants and other contributions),
- the Authority's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or
- debt (borrowing, leasing and Private Finance Initiative).

The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital financing in £ thousands

	2022/23 actual (£'000)	2023/24 forecast (£'000)	2024/25 budget (£'000)	2025/26 budget (£'000)	2026/27 budget (£'000)
External sources	1,350	1,289	1,145	146	0
Own resources	303	130	231	274	274
Debt	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1,652	1,419	1,376	420	274

The “external sources” noted in the table above represents grants and contributions. The Authority is “debt free” and at present there is no intention of incurring debt in 2024/25, however the Celtic Rainforest (LIFE) project is likely to create a scenario where short-term borrowing will need to be considered. The outlined completion date for the project has been extended to October 2027, with no further income expected before the project has been completed and audited. There are adequate provisions within the reserves to account for the deficit until 2025 but an extension until 2027 would present an increased risk if the authority were to rely on reserves, and consideration needs to be given to the option of borrowing.

2.6 The Authority has a capital receipts reserve which is forecasted to stand at £163,790 on 31/3/2024.

2.7 The Authority’s capital financing requirement therefore stands at zero and the Authority is expected to stay debt-free in 2024/25.

2.8 ASSET MANAGEMENT:

To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Authority has an asset management plan in place, and it is currently being reviewed to determine the level of financial commitment required over the coming years.

2.9 ASSET DISPOSALS:

Any decision on proceeds on the sale of any assets would be put before the Authority. Otherwise, the proceeds from disposals of vehicles and heavy plant are ring-fenced for financing replacements.

3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

3.1 Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Authority’s spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash may be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account.

3.2 BORROWING STRATEGY:

It was agreed on discussing the Authority’s Policy on Borrowing in the Performance and Resources Committee (9/11/2016) that any future borrowing should be for a specific project with a sound business case. No significant changes have occurred since, hence that policy stands. **Therefore, the Authority will, commence the 2024/25 financial year with no outstanding debt and is regarded for treasury management purposes as being debt-free.**

3.3 AFFORDABLE BORROWING LIMIT:

The Authority is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 3: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary in £ thousands

	2022/23 limit	2023/24 limit	2024/25 limit	2025/26 limit
Authorised limit - borrowing	500	500	500	500
Authorised limit - PFI and leases	0	0	0	0
Authorised limit - total external debt	500	500	500	500
Operational boundary - borrowing	100	100	100	100
Operational boundary - PFI and leases	0	0	0	0
Operational boundary - total external debt	100	100	100	100

No reduction in the ‘authorised borrowing limit’ nor the ‘operational boundary’ is recommended, in order to retain flexibility, in the context of inflationary pressures, and the possibility of no increase in the grant settlement until 2027.

3.4 INVESTMENT STRATEGY:

Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

3.5 The Authority's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield; that is to focus on minimising risk, rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities, or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. The Authority at present, does not hold investments for longer terms (these would be invested more widely, including in bonds, shares and property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation).

3.6 The Authority's day to day cash flow will be monitored carefully throughout the year. Any surplus funds will be deposited with one or more of the following institutions:

- Bank of Scotland
- HSBC
- Santander UK
- Barclays Bank
- Lloyds Bank
- Nationwide Building Society
- UK Debt Management Office ("DMO")

3.7 Amounts invested will be dependent on the prevailing credit status and required minimum balances, whilst also maintaining sufficient balances to satisfy the Authority's cash flow requirements. The main emphasis is on safeguarding the Authority's monies and to this end finance officers arrange as even a spread as practically possible between the approved establishments (other than Barclays).

3.8 At the time of writing the banks noted above have the appropriate credit rating (Fitch short-term credit rating F1 or better for holding short term deposits).

3.9 An exception to the requirement for banks to have the appropriate credit rating may be Barclays Bank in respect of the Authority's current account, where (should credit ratings fall) the Authority may continue to deposit surplus cash overnight.

Credit or debit card payments made for parking and received through the pay and display machines are processed through Allied Irish Bank which has an F2 rating. The risk is mitigated by the fact that these monies transfer over to Barclays within 3 working days.

3.10 Also, the Authority deposits cash with unrated building societies e.g., Nationwide Building Society where independent credit analysis shows them to be suitably creditworthy.

3.11 Should the approved financial institutions' credit ratings fall generally, the Authority will consider depositing cash with the UK Debt Management Office ("DMO"), to ensure security, but minimal interest receivable.

3.12 The Authority's investments are for treasury management purposes only i.e., there is no investment property held and no investment to support services. *Table 4: Treasury management investments in £ thousands*

	31.3.2023 actual (£'000)	31.3.2024 forecast (£'000)	31.3.2025 budget (£'000)	31.3.2026 budget (£'000)	31.3.2027 budget (£'000)
Near-term investments	11,089	10,690	8,138	5,683	3,037
Longer-term investments	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	11,089	10,690	8,138	5,683	3,027

The table above reflects the fact that significant sums of "one-off" grants have been paid to the Authority in recent years, and are in the process of being spent, as well as the need to use some of the reserves during this challenging time.

3.13 GOVERNANCE:

Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Head of Finance and Finance staff, as advised by, and in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer where necessary. The Head of Finance and Finance staff must act in line with the Treasury Management Strategy approved by the Authority in February each year. Reports on treasury management activity are presented to the Authority as follows:

- Reports concerning treasury management operation will be presented to the authority during the year (written or oral as deemed appropriate) and following the year (written).

4 INVESTMENTS FOR SERVICE PURPOSES

The Authority does not undertake such investments, rather it provides assistance by means of grants through e.g., the Commissioning Fund, small grants fund, listed buildings budget.

5 COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

5.1 The Authority currently does not have investments in property purely for financial gain.

5.2 The Authority does engage in other commercial activity, such as sales in the three Information Centres and at the Ysgwrn property. The proceeds contribute to the costs of running the individual services. As noted in the 2022/23 Statement of

Accounts - £2,540k generated from fees and other service-based income.
The main components are as follows:

- *Car Park fee income* £1,179k
- *Planning Fees* £308k
- *Information Centre sales* £219k
- *Rent* £56k

5.3 The risks involved are managed through the Plas Tan y Bwlch management board, Ysgwrn management board and budget monitoring reports to Authority members. Plas Tan y Bwlch and Ysgwrn are also included on the Corporate Risk Register.

6 LIABILITIES

6.1 The Authority has received substantial amounts of “one-off” revenue and capital grants paid in advance over recent years – most of these have been transferred to the revenue and capital grants reserves whilst others (including grants relating to the LIFE scheme) have been recorded under creditors.

6.2 The Authority reviews its reserves annually.

6.3 GOVERNANCE: The pension fund position is reported annually to members as part of the Annual Statement of Accounts. The position regarding utilisation of grants and progress against profile is reviewed by the Head of Finance as part of the budget monitoring process which feeds into reports to members every September, November and March, and the Authority outturn report in June.

7 REVENUE BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 As the Authority is debt free, there are no debt interest charges to the revenue budget.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY:

The Chief Finance Officer is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable because it does not require external debt financing.

8 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

8.1 The Authority employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions.

8.2 Where Authority staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, it is possible to use external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. Presently, the Authority's Treasury Management operations are comparatively straight forward, hence external expertise is not required, other than consultation as necessary with the Authority's Chief Finance Officer.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Note that there is no intention to borrow monies for capital purposes, but the limitations below are recommended on a prudent level as a precautionary measure in case of an emergency or need for expenditure at short notice.

9.2 To approve no change in:
(i) the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £500,000 for 2024/25, and an Operational Boundary of £100,000, and
(ii) no limit on the proportion of interest payable at a variable rate.

9.3 To adopt the Capital Borrowing Strategy for 2024/25 as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report, and to note the content relating to the Prudential Code (see tables under paragraphs 2.2, 3.3 and 7.1).

9.4 To adopt the Investment Strategy for 2024/25 as outlined in paragraphs 3.5-3.14 of the report, and note the institutions listed in paragraph 3.7.

MEETING:	Snowdonia National Park Authority
DATE:	07 February, 2024
TITLE:	PLAS TAN Y BWLCH
AUTHOR:	Chief Executive
PURPOSE:	To provide an update for Authority Members to enable them to consider and discuss the content and recommendations.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Plas Tan Y Bwlch has played a role in the identity and business of the Authority over many years. However, in recent times the business model for Plas has been unable to deliver against the Authority's statutory purposes and the challenge of becoming commercially viable has not been achievable. The last ten years specifically have been challenging in terms of running Plas due to austerity, implications of the pandemic and now inflationary pressures on Plas.

The Authority established a Board structure to provide a specific focus for Plas's management and in meeting its challenges. The Board has come to the conclusions that a viable business linked to delivery of the Authority's statutory purposes cannot be developed within the current resources available.

- 1.2 Members specifically considered the position of Plas Tan Y Bwlch in its working group of April 2023. That working group requested that Plas Board review the Plas business plan and report back with recommendations. Additionally, in July 2023 Audit Wales presented its findings on income diversification within the Authority.

There was a specific recommendation in relation to Plas Tan Y Bwlch, which was to: within 12 months, the Authority review its operating model at Plas Tan y Bwlch to undertake a cost benefit appraisal of the facility to determine its future strategy for the site. Additionally, Audit Wales commented that Plas should be seen to deliver National Park purposes.

- 1.3 Plas Board has thoroughly considered the Working Group request and recommendations of Audit Wales. The Board considerations were agreed unanimously and reported back on them to members in its working group of January 2024. Members want to see Plas prosper; however, the Authority is not able to do so. To enable Plas to be maintained, its staff to be protected and the site to prosper, the Authority should seek potential partners for the management of Plas or consider its transfer to a partner or potential disposal on the open market.

2. **PLAS BOARD CONSIDERATIONS:**

- 2.1 The Board accepts that Plas cannot function as an Environmental study centre as the provision for such courses have changed significantly in the last two decades, with a significant shift away from residential weeklong courses. The Plas calendar confirms this.
- 2.2 The Board could not construct a coherent vision of operation for Plas that aligned it with delivery of National Park purposes, especially the first purpose. The Board felt that there was potential of delivering against our second purpose which involved mostly concentrating on activity-based business. The Board felt that the skills and business experience were not within the Authority and the required capital investment could be substantial. Business delivered at Plas does provide some socio-economic benefits to the area in terms of employment, however the Board felt that a similar benefit could exist if managed under a different model.
- 2.3 It was reported to the Board that the likely capital need in Plas over the next ten years would be in the region of £3M and the annual revenue costs at present are in the region of £240K to 260K. Members felt that such a resource could be utilised in delivering more directly against National Park purposes.
- 2.4 Board conceded that if the Authority wishes to see Plas prosper then a partnership approach could be a mechanism, especially if the Authority wishes to retain an interest in Plas. The Board requested that an informal approach was made with two potential partners to gauge level of interest.
- 2.5 After thorough consideration the Plas Board came to a unanimous decision and concluded to make the following recommendations to the members:
 - 1 The Board could not develop a vision for Plas that delivered strongly against National Park purposes whilst delivering commercial gain,
 - 2 The Board could not support the current business model in terms of delivering against National Park purposes and becoming commercially effective,
 - 3 The Board would wish to consider partnership models but accepted that such a window should be time limited and no more than 6 months,
 - 4 If no partnership is to mature then Plas should be offered on the open market, preferably as a going concern but subject to agent advice,
 - 5 Considering the time constraints involved the Board recommends progressing a twin track approach in terms of gaining a partnership arrangement and open market disposal,
 - 6 Authority members to consider these issues in a member working group and make recommendations to the Authority before the end of the current financial year.

2.6 Members have been previously advised of the maintenance implications to the Authority if Plas Tan Y Bwlch has to be closed and not transferred or sold. These were quoted at circa £76,000 annually. Additionally, it was reported to the Board that two estate agents had been approached as to their view of the potential marketability of Plas on the open market. Both confirmed that a potential market does exist and commented on the relatively good condition of Plas, property that is predominantly disposed of by the public estate are usually presented in poor condition.

2.7 Members in their working group of January 2024 agreed with the findings of the Plas Board and agreed to consider a formal report with recommendations to the Authority based on Plas Board considerations.

3. AUTHORITY'S FINANCIAL POSITION:

3.1 Any decision on Plas or any other element of the Authority's business must be made in knowledge of the Authority's general finances. Over the last two financial years the Authority has set a budget with a deficit of circa £300K. A series of in-year management decisions enabled the Authority to deliver within its budget. It was reported to the Performance & Resource Committee in November 2023 that the predicted shortfall for the 2024/25 is in the region of £870K. Such a deficit cannot be managed by in-year management decisions.

3.2 I have consulted with Welsh Government in relation to future financial predictions and their advice considered that any improvements in finances will not be achievable until at least 2027. I advised members previously that permanent savings in baseline cost to the value of at least 50% of the shortfall should be considered in the coming financial year.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 Part of the recommendation is to continue with the current business model until the Authority is able to consider the outcome of any negotiations/offers. However, there will be a need to provide some tolerance in such a time frame, subject to how negotiations with potential partner or purchaser progress or not. Subject to success of such negotiations there may be potential implications to staff, however these can be reported at the appropriate time. In creating a partnership or disposal there will be legal and agent fees that need to be met.

4.2 The Authority has established a specific reserve to enable the Authority in transitioning its business to address the implication of inflation and a flatline budget. To adjust baseline costs of the Authority Plas operational costs for 2024/25 need to be funded from this reserve.

5. CONCLUSION:

5.1 The Authority needs to reduce the revenue and capital costs resulting from operational management of Plas Tan Y Bwlch and the Authority needs to consider alternative models for Plas Tan Y Bwlch which includes forming partnerships or open market disposal, preferably as a going concern.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 6.1 To continue with the current business model for a period until the Authority can formally consider its options on future management of Plas Tan Y Bwlch.**
- 6.2 To invite interest from potential partners for the operational management/development of Plas Tan Y Bwlch.**
- 6.3 To offer Plas Tan Y Bwlch on the open market to perspective buyers.**
- 6.4 To actively promote Plas Tan Y Bwlch as a going concern to any perspective partner/buyer.**
- 6.5 To allow a period of up to 6 months for seeking partner or open market disposal.**
- 6.6 The Management Team and Plas Board to monitor progress and report back to members as required but no later than September 2024 with long term recommendations based on outcome of any negotiations.**
- 6.7 To utilise the identified reserve to bridge any financial pressures/needs.**

JO/Awdurdod/07 02 24 Plas TyB

MEETING	Snowdonia National Park Authority
DATE	7 February 2024
TITLE	COMMUTED SUMS EXPENDITURE PLANS
REPORT BY	Geraint Evans, Planning Officer (Policy)
PURPOSE	To ask the Authority to approve two plans to spend funding from the commuted sums fund

BACKGROUND

1. Commuted sums (or deferred payment) is the term used for the financial contribution received by the Local Planning Authority from planning applicants when approving conversions to residential uses; which is then used to help finance affordable housing within the National Park. The authority receives commuted sums relating to financial contributions towards providing affordable housing in accordance with policies in the Eryri Local Development Plan.
2. The Authority will work to ensure that it makes the best use of any affordable housing commuted sums received to assist with providing affordable housing to meet local needs within the National Park area. The principle of receiving commuted sums is common throughout Planning Authorities in Wales.
3. Following discussions with Gwynedd Council's Housing Department and a community group from Penmachno, two schemes will be presented to the Authority which will enable spending from the commuted sums fund. The discussion below explains the schemes that the applicants have submitted to the Authority.

Scheme 1: Contribute to Cyngor Gwynedd's Buy to Rent Scheme.

4. The Buy to Rent Scheme is one of a range of schemes within the Council's Housing Implementation Scheme and aims to increase the number of affordable rental houses within the County. Through this scheme, the Council will once again adopt its own housing stock, focusing mainly on intermediate rental housing, due to the general shortage of rental housing as well as the average rental prices of the Private Rental Sector.
5. Currently 332 people have registered for an intermediate rental house in Gwynedd, with applications increasing weekly. The Buy to Rent Scheme is based on the simple concept of buying houses off the open market, refurbishing and upgrading them where necessary and then recouping the investment over a period of 50 years. The houses will be let through the Fair Housing Social Rent Scheme and at an intermediate rent, which is a price consistent with either Local Housing Allowance or a rent equivalent to 80% of the open market rent level.

6. The scheme is based on a model of prudent lending but national financial circumstances have, and are, affecting the financial viability of some purchases. The challenges are acute in some areas of the National Park, especially those places where a higher percentage of the population has been priced out of the housing market (65.5% in Eryri National Park).
7. Cyngor Gwynedd has so far bought 16 houses across Gwynedd, with plans to buy and let 76 more over the next 3 years, throughout the County. Some of these houses will need repair work.
8. The houses bought will depend on which properties that come on the market are financially viable. Along with the repair costs, the need for subsidy is inevitable. The Council already makes use of the Council Tax Premium Fund, collaboration with the Welsh Government, and the ability to borrow.
9. In order to contribute to addressing the need for affordable rental housing within the boundaries of the National Park, it is proposed to make use of commuted sums arising from 106 Agreements. That in turn would enable an increase in some areas where house prices are beyond the financial viability of the scheme's business model.
10. The exact investment required per property varies depending on its value, its condition as well as what can be produced as rental income. All purchases will be subject to a specific business case from Cyngor Gwynedd.
11. Although waiting lists and other indicators will guide the investments, it is not known where or when houses will come on the market. Based on Cyngor Gwynedd's operating experiences to date, it is very important that the process of buying houses is flexible in order to enable officers to move quickly on agreeing purchases.
12. It is proposed that we can work together with the Council to provide a minimum of 4 to 5 intermediate rental houses within the boundaries of the National Park for an investment of £500,000 by the end of the 2024/25 financial year. The investment would enable and facilitate purchases in areas that are beyond our financial reach at the moment and lead to increasing the stock of affordable housing. The contribution of commuted sums can support the purchase and/or the repair work. It is not anticipated that a contribution from the commuted sums fund would exceed 50% of the total investment on property. In such cases, and if necessary, a legal restriction can be registered which requires written approval from the Authority before the Council can dispose of the property.

Scheme 2: Financial assistance towards a Community Housing Officer for Bro Penmachno.

13. The Authority has received a request from the Penmachno Housing Partnership for the use of commuted sum funding. The Partnership is a community group that was established in response to the housing crisis, following discussions with key partners. While not part of the Community Council, they have received their support for this application.
14. Bro Penmachno faces challenges relating to affordability and access to the housing stock. The Penmachno Housing Partnership commissioned a Bro Machno housing needs survey report by the Rural Housing Enabler Service in 2022. It found that 51.5% of households have been priced out of the housing market entirely. House prices have increased significantly since 2020, making it more difficult for first-time buyers.

15. Council tax and non-domestic business tax data for short term holiday accommodation shows that the combined percentage of second homes and holiday accommodation in 2023 is 24% of the housing stock, which is high in the context of Eryri (17% across the National Park). It is likely that properties are also advertised on platforms such as Airbnb in addition to this, along with vacant properties, therefore the percentage is likely to be higher. Properties are bought to be let as holiday homes, reducing the opportunities for residents of the area to buy houses and rent. Another effect is on the viability of Welsh as a Community Language as young Welsh speakers are unable to own houses and property in their communities. Community-led housing is increasingly seen as a way of responding to these challenges.
16. The partners' intention is to explore innovative solutions to meet a need under the leadership of the community, including exploring the possibility of developing plans that would make use of empty houses and buildings in the village.
17. It is very difficult for community groups to have the capacity to raise capital to own property. The Penmachno Housing Partnership sees the main way of helping these communities will be to give them the capacity to establish community groups and help them raise capital to own property that comes on the market and let it locally. As there is no competence within the community for this function, the partnership is looking for funding to finance an officer who would work on trying to realize these objectives.
18. A contribution of £20,000 per year is requested to go towards a part time post for two years. The job will be administered by Menter Iaith Conwy, who are assisting them with this application. In addition, they have received an offer of £5000 from the Perthyn scheme (a scheme from Cwmpas which provides local early stage support to our Welsh communities in the north and west who are interested in developing social enterprise ideas) in order to spend on establishing a body to buy the houses. The Authority's Policy Officers will maintain close contact with the group throughout the duration of the job to offer support and guidance.

Assessment

19. Both schemes are considered to be in line with the Authority's Commuted Sums Expenditure Protocol, which was adopted in October 2019. The protocol lists schemes to be considered to assist with the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs within the National Park area. One option is to provide a subsidy to a Registered Social Landlord to buy a property and let it as an intermediate rental house; in this case, Cyngor Gwynedd as the Housing Authority will implement the scheme. Another option is to provide a subsidy to a formal community group to help facilitate the development of an affordable housing scheme. While the Penmachno scheme does not directly fund affordable housing, the post will provide a resource and capacity for the community to achieve this.
20. Confirmation was received from the Authority's Legal Department that both schemes comply with the conditions of the Section 106 Agreements, namely that it is required to be spent on affordable housing within the National Park.
21. Both schemes offer the Authority an opportunity to show support for our communities by spending commuted sums on schemes which tackle the housing crisis in Eryri.
22. It is considered appropriate to contribute upwards of £500,000 to Gwynedd Council's scheme, and £40,000 (£20,000 over two years) to the Penmachno scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

To approve the scheme of contributing up to £500,000 from the commuted sums fund towards Cyngor Gwynedd's Buy to Rent Scheme, and:

To approve the scheme of contributing £40,000 from the commuted sums fund towards creating Community Housing Officer for Penmachno Housing Partnership.

REPORT OF THE MEMBERS' WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 18th OCTOBER 2023

PRESENT:

Members appointed by Gwynedd Council

Councillors Elwyn Edwards, June Jones, Edgar Owen, Elfed Powell Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts;

Members appointed by Conwy County Borough Council

Councillors Jo Nuttall, Dilwyn Owain Roberts;

Members appointed by the Welsh Government

Brian Angell, Sarah Hattle, Delyth Lloyd, Naomi Luhde-Thompson;

Officers

Emyr Williams, G. Iwan Jones, Jonathan Cawley, Eiliw Owen, Geraint Evans, Anwen Gaffey;

Apologies

Councillors Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Kim Jones, Ifor Glyn Lloyd; Tracey Evans, Tim Jones.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the meeting was being recorded to assist in verifying the minutes.

1. **Election of Chair**
RESOLVED to elect Councillor Elwyn Edwards to Chair the meeting in the Chairman's absence.
2. **Declaration of Interest**
No declarations of Personal Interests were made in respect of any item.
3. **Minutes**
The minutes of the Members' Working Group meeting held on 6th September 2023 were accepted and the Chair signed them as a true record.
4. **Application of Article 4 Direction relating to C3 (Dwellinghouses, used as sole or main residences), C5 (Dwellinghouses, used otherwise than as sole or main residences) and C6 (Short-term Lets) in Eryri**
Submitted – A report by the Director of Planning and Land Management for Members to consider whether to apply Article 4 Directions in Eryri.

Reported – The Director of Planning and Land Management thanked Members for agreeing to defer consideration of the 'Replacement Eryri Local Development Plan – Delivery Agreement' report at the Planning and Access Committee today, in order to allow this report to be considered without any barriers.

The Director of Planning and Land Management presented the report and background and provided Members with a detailed explanation of the new use classes. He confirmed that an Article 4 Direction has the potential to restrict permitted development rights and that the new use classes will, in future, require planning permission. The Director of Planning and Land Management provided Members with further updates during the PowerPoint presentation which

outlined the evidence on the effect of holiday lets and second homes on the housing market and summarised the strengths, opportunities, weakness, and risks of applying Article 4 Directions. In conclusion, the Director of Planning and Land Management confirmed that officers were in support of Article 4 Directions in principle, subject to a 9–12-month delay to the Eryri Local Development Plan Review, which would address concerns over inadequate resources. He also advised, following recent legal advice, that producing a Supplementary Guidance Note to supplement Strategic Policy G would potentially address any possible policy vacuum, but further legal advice on this may be necessary as the process evolves.

Members and officers discussed the report and presentation in detail and made the following observations:-

- Members noted that Gwynedd Council were currently implementing the Article 4 Direction and the Director of Planning and Land Management confirmed there was continuous discussions with Gwynedd Council, Conwy County Borough Council and Ynys Mon Council.
- the Principal Planning Officer Policy confirmed that Local Development Plans and Strategic Development Plans were a completely separate process. An Article 4 Direction, once adopted, will provide local supplementary planning guidance within the Eryri Local Development Plan.
- in response to a question, the Director of Planning and Land Management stated that a partial review of the Eryri LDP had already been undertaken and had proved to be quite a lengthy process which would delay a full review even further. He confirmed that if Members resolved to defer the LDP review, Policy Officers may be able to continue with some of the LDP preparatory work in the background without a formal commitment to a statutory timetable.
- some of the work on the Article 4 Direction had already been carried out by Gwynedd Council and Members were assured that Gwynedd Council officers were happy to help and work with the Authority. The Director of Planning and Land Management confirmed that he would continue to seek to recruit a planning officer to take on some of the work, whilst noting it may be difficult to attract suitable applicants to a temporary role.
- Members and officers discussed a proposed timeline should Members agree to implement the Article 4 Direction. The Director of Planning and Land Management agreed to present a report to the next meeting of the Planning and Access Committee in December 2023 to set out the process and to seek “in principle” support, prior to publishing formal notification of the Authority’s intention to implement the Article 4 Direction at the January 2024 Planning and Access Committee. The notice period would be for 12 months from this date which would avoid risk of compensation claims and allow the Article 4 Direction to be operational from January 2025.
- the Chief Executive felt that when additional powers are offered, they should be accepted, whilst noting the importance of controlling the message carefully.
- Members and Officers further discussed the potential for more resources going forward. The Chief Executive outlined possible funding streams, such as working with the WLGA to seek funding from the Welsh Government, discussing assistance from Gwynedd Council and Conwy County Borough Council who have tax raising powers, to re-purpose resources internally, or to provide funding on a one-off basis from the Authority’s reserves.
- Members asked officers to bear in mind that Gwynedd Council have received financial assistance from the Welsh Government for Dwyfor as a pilot area, and that part of Dwyfor lies within the National Park boundary.

RESOLVED

- 1. to provide 'in principle' support to the implementation of an Article 4 Direction in the National Park, primarily due to the high and increasing level of second and holiday homes which are affecting the accessibility of homes for local people.**
- 2. following legal advice, to note that Housing Policy G can potentially be utilised to address the possible policy vacuum referred to in the report alongside a new PPG which will be adopted, although further legal advice may be needed as the process evolves.**
- 3. to address the issue of insufficient resources to implement the Article 4 Direction by delaying the LDP review by 9-12 months.**
- 4. to await a report to the next meeting of the Planning and Access Committee setting out the process of implementing an Article 4 Direction in Eryri together with a report on a revised timetable for the Eryri Local Development Plan Review.**

The meeting ended at 12.10

REPORT OF THE MEMBERS' WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 6th DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT:

Members appointed by Gwynedd Council

Councillors Elwyn Edwards, Annwen Hughes, Edgar Owen, Elfed Powell Roberts, Meryl Roberts;

Members appointed by Conwy County Borough Council

Councillors Jo Nuttall, Dilwyn Owain Roberts;

Members appointed by the Welsh Government

Brian Angell, Delyth Lloyd, Tim Jones (Chair);

Officers

G. Iwan Jones, Jonathan Cawley, Angela Jones, Naomi Jones, Alec Young, Anwen Gaffey;

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the meeting was being recorded to assist in verifying the minutes.

1. Apologies

Councillors Louise Hughes, June Jones, Ifor Glyn Lloyd, John Pughe Roberts; Tracey Evans, Sarah Hattle, Naomi Luhde-Thompson. Emyr Williams, Chief Executive.

2. Declaration of Interest

No declarations of Personal Interests were made in respect of any item.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the Members' Working Group meeting held on 18th October 2023 were accepted and the Chair signed them as a true record.

4. Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Impact Report 2022-2023

Submitted – A report by Alec Young, the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Officer to update Members on progress achieved on the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa project to date.

Reported – The Partnerships Manager introduced Alec Young to the meeting.

The Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Officer presented his report and outlined the background, progress to date and the next steps. He also gave a short presentation on the work and its successes over the past year and also reported upon the aims for the next 12 months. He hoped that the report would increase Members' awareness of the work and enable them to promote the project in their communities.

Members welcomed the presentation and discussed the following in detail:-

- Members congratulated the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Officer and his team for their innovative and creative work and the experimental aspects.
- in response to a question, the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Officer agreed to amend the report to record that the target was for 600k digital impressions, whilst the outcome reported was 410k, this had omitted the number of physical contacts.
- Members were encouraged to promote the project on their social media channels and discuss the same with their communities.

- Members noted that the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Officer would welcome the opportunity to visit their communities to promote the project.
- a Member felt it was an excellent project which had achieved a lot in a short space of time. He enquired about the next steps once the funding ends, and whether there were plans to extend the work to other areas, as well as monitoring the current work. He felt the National Park was in a good position to continue to provide leadership and bring about change.
- Members agreed that the Com-B Public Information Campaign was a good example of what had been learnt from the project and can be developed for the future.
- a Member noted that as Mountain biking and cross-country biking had become extremely popular, organisations such as 'Traws Eryri' encourage people to pick up litter along the way. Also, the National Trust have partnered with the cycling website Komoot to promote litter collection. The Member asked whether Eryri was thinking of doing something similar? In response, the Plastic Free Yr Wyddfa Officer advised that he had initial discussions with 'Trash Free Trails,' who also work with Komoot, and who provide free profiles which can be used by the volunteer wardens to track and monitor data. He also agreed to continue to seek similar opportunities to promote the message.

RESOLVED

- 1. to welcome the report and presentation and note the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the strategy.**
- 2. that Members should become Ambassadors for the project in their wider roles in their communities.**

5. Carneddau Landscape Partnership Scheme

Submitted – A report by the Head of Cultural Heritage to update Members on the progress of the Carneddau Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Reported – The Head of Cultural Heritage presented the update report and confirmed that the scheme was now 3½ years into the Delivery Phase. Members were advised that the project would be completed by December 2025 with the following 3 months to March 2026 being used for final administration of the project. The project structure had meant there was a specialist project leader for each of the 24 projects which had helped to drive the work forward. Also, the project is continuously evaluated as it moves forward, rather than looking back when the project is complete. This allowed improvements, such as revising the guidance on community grants to help the application process and improve the relationship between officers and communities.

The Head of Cultural Heritage referred to the staffing difficulties encountered and took the opportunity to especially thank the National Trust for their assistance in stepping in to support the Authority under difficult circumstances.

Members considered the report and discussed the following in detail:-

- Members thanked the Head of Cultural Heritage for her work. The Director of Planning and Land Management also took the opportunity to thank the Head of Cultural Heritage who had taken on this role in addition to her usual duties.
- Members discussed the staffing issues in detail and noted that the Project Manager was returning to the post in April 2024 at which time the Head of Cultural Heritage would return to her normal duties. All the other positions had now been filled and the advertisement for a member of staff to fill a vacancy coming up in January was being published today.
- a member felt there were lessons to be learnt from this partnership and officers needed to reflect on the structures in order to de-risk staffing issues for future projects. In response, the

Director of Corporate Services advised that the Management Team had looked into staffing concerns and had agreed to change some of the short-term contracts into permanent roles. There was always an element of risk with such projects, but the aim was to achieve a balance and remain vigilant.

- the Head of Cultural Heritage advised upon other lessons learnt, in that once a project receives funding there was a need to create a team and that having a team of staff who were already used to working together would be an advantage. Also, this was a long project term (since 2016) which had made it difficult to stay connected with all the communities involved over 24 individual projects. In future officers should be more aware of the project timeline.
- a Member asked whether officers had explored within its own networks innovative ways of de-risking such a project. The Director of Planning and Land Management advised that short-term contracts which last more than 5 years automatically become permanent positions in any event. Whilst a large body like Natural Resources Wales may create permanent positions at the outset for projects such as these, it could prove to be more of a financial risk for a smaller organisation like Eryri and each post has to be looked at on a case by case basis.

RESOLVED

- 1. to note the report, for information.**
- 2. that Members should highlight any opportunities and further community and partner links.**

The meeting ended at 15.00

**LOCAL JOINT WORKING GROUP
FRIDAY 17th NOVEMBER 2023**

PRESENT:

Employer Representative

Councillor Elwyn Edwards;

Employee Representative - Unison

Rhydian Roberts;

In Attendance

Emyr Williams, G. Iwan Jones, Nia Murray, Anwen Gaffey.

Apologies

Councillors Ifor Glyn Lloyd; Sarah Hattle.

Ms. Celia Kelly, GMB

Mr. Tim Jones (ex. officio)

The Members' Services Officer reported that Mr. Richard Thomas (Unison representative) had resigned from the Local Joint Working Group and would not be attending any future meetings.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the meeting was being recorded to assist in verifying the minutes.

1. **Chair**

RESOLVED that the Vice-Chair (Rhydian Roberts) should chair the Local Joint Working Group in the absence of the Chair (Sarah Hattle).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of Personal Interests were made in respect of any item.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Local Joint Working Group held on 30th June 2023 were accepted and the Vice-Chair signed them as a true record.

4. **Authority Budget**

Received – An oral report by the Chief Executive.

Reported – The Chief Executive apologised there was no written report and advised that whilst the Authority's financial position was fluid, there was currently nothing for the Authority's staff to be concerned about. Whilst other bodies may be facing cuts within the financial year, this was not the case for the Authority as the Welsh Government department responsible for the National Parks had identified savings from funds which have yet to be allocated. This would also be the case for the 2024/25 financial year. Members noted that the three Welsh National Park Authorities' Chief Executives were meeting with Welsh Government officers later today and that on the 27th November 2023, the Chief Executive and the Authority's Vice-Chair will be meeting with the Minister to discuss various issues, including the budget.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the local government pay award for 2023/24 had now been agreed and represented a rise of 6%, whereas the Authority had anticipated a rise of 5%. This amounts to £59k more than allocated and with wage inflation, there will be an overall cost to the Authority of £334k.

The Chief Executive stated that whilst the Authority had a £400k funding gap, car park income was significantly higher this year and income from interest had attracted an additional £120k. The Authority also receives additional income for administering grant projects. The Chief Executive advised that if there was a change in Government at the next general election, the position could change, but as Members had already approved the release of up to £1.3 million from its reserves, if necessary, the Authority was in a better position than anticipated.

RESOLVED to note the report.

5. **Human Resources – Update Report**

Received – An oral update on the bullet points as presented by the Head of Human Resources.

Flexible Working – progress to date:

- Feedback from staff.
 - questionnaire – the majority of staff prefer flexible working.
 - a number of staff felt that working flexibly during the pandemic had been of great benefit to their productivity and mental health.
 - most staff also favour the idea of trialling a 'super-flexi' scheme which is an adaptation to the current flexi system with more flexibility by releasing the core hours requirement.
- Setting a Plan – the Management Team and Heads of Service have discussed:-
 - issues around flexible working / implementing a 'super-flexi' scheme which could cause problems for the services.
 - the need to agree the necessary steps to ensure that each department provides a full service and that managing staff output was important to ensure the success of both schemes.
 - whether it was necessary to set a minimum number of days a week that a member of staff who works flexibly would need to attend the office. The preference was that this should be arranged with their line manager.
 - how to ensure effective communication between the teams and the services.
- Work locations by Job Descriptions
 - all service heads had now assessed job descriptions within their services and identified the posts that need to:-
 - work in the office - permanently
 - work on a hybrid basis
 - work from home - mostly
 - field worker

➤ Policies

- Flexible Working Procedure – a report will be presented to the management team setting out the Authority's hybrid working approach and provide guidelines for implementing the scheme effectively.
- the 'Super-flexi' policy was currently being produced and will be presented to the management team on the 4th of December. If approved, the next steps will be:-
 - to consult with the staff and trade unions.
 - hybrid working and super-flexi procedures should be trialled for a period to ensure that they can be delivered within the “My Options” programme. Once this has been confirmed, flexible working arrangements will be put in operation.

Job Description Standardisation

The Authority's job descriptions have not been reviewed for a number of years and many no longer reflect the roles correctly. Different templates were also in use and therefore a standard template needed to be agreed moving forward.

It was intended to engage external consultants, David Jones of Datrys HR Solutions, to start on this work for the Management Team and Heads of Services by:-

- reviewing job descriptions (first tier) followed by consultation with the job holder
- providing new templates
- reviewing the new templates via the Job Evaluation Scheme. It may become necessary to modify the appraisal process to consider the scheme as a whole in order to establish the correct grading.
- the HR Team would then apply the new templates to the rest of the Authority.

HR Policy reviews

- Probation Policy
- Relationships in the Workplace Policy
- Special Leave Policy. Members noted that the Authority has a generous special leave policy when compared with other organisations.
- Menopause Policy
- Secondment Policy (which provides protection for the job holder)
- Alcohol and Drug Policy

Health and Safety Issues

➤ Health and Safety Review

Following the Head of Human Resources' appointment in June 2022, an initial review of the Authority's Health and Safety procedures was carried out, and as a result it was clear that a further, more detailed review by a Health and Safety specialist was necessary to provide a detailed report on findings and the required actions for managing Health and Safety across the Authority.

During February 2023, Mike Roberts, ADRA's Health, Safety and Environmental Manager (IOSH DipNEBOSH) was commissioned to carry out this review and a report with his findings and recommendations was presented to the Management Team. The review was carried out over a period of 3 months and included reviewing the Authority's existing documentation, including the Health and Safety Policy.

➤ Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The report returned a summary of the following findings and recommendations:-
“From discussions with various members of APCE it was clear that health and safety is a key consideration when planning and carrying out work. However, various evidenced documents such as policies and training matrices have not been updated for some time and do not accurately reflect APCE's current approach.
The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulation 1999 (MHSWR) requires organisations to have access to competent health and safety advice and it appears that APCE has not had access to consistent health and safety advice and support for some time.”

➤ Acting on the Recommendations

Following discussions with the Management Team, it was agreed that two part-time health and safety officers should be employed, rather than one full-time officer, in order to provide consistent support throughout the year. The posts were advertised on the 10th November and the closing date for applications was on the 27th November. The post holders will report to the Head of Human Resources.

RESOLVED to note the report and thank the Head of Human Resources for her work.

The meeting ended at 10.35