

BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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Plas y Ffynnon
Cambrian Way
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7HP

Dear Member

A meeting of the **CORPORATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE** will be held in **THE MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM, PLAS Y FFYNNON, BRECON** on **27th JANUARY 2006** at **10.00AM** when your attendance is requested.

Yours sincerely

CHRISTOPHER GLEDHILL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Cllr P Ashton
Cllr Mrs M Morris
Cllr E T Morgan
Cllr K Pathak
Cllr Mrs K Silk
Cllr Mrs M Tunncliffe
Cllr A Breeze (Chairman)
Cllr A Carrington

Cllr H Morgan
Cllr E Williams
Mrs J Charlton
Mrs M Taylor
Mr J Suter (Deputy Chairman)
Mr P Seaman
Mr C Young

Fire Evacuation Advice

In the event of a fire, please exit the building via the main staircase, and assemble in the car park at Assembly Point 3

AGENDA

I.0 CORRESPONDENCE

To receive and consider the attached schedule of correspondence and make any recommendations thereon. (Below).

2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest from members relating to items on the agenda. **Members' attention is drawn to the sheet attached to the attendance sheet and the need to record their declarations.**

3.0 MINUTES

To receive and adopt the minutes of the Corporate Resources Committee meeting held on 11th November 2005, and authorise the Chairman to sign them as a true record. (**Enclosure 1**).

4.0 PUBLIC SPEAKING

To give opportunity for members of the public to address the Committee in accordance with the Authority's Public Speaking Scheme.

FINANCIAL ITEMS

5.0 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2005/06

Alan Elliott

Members are referred to **Enclosure 2** which includes the latest budget monitoring details together with an out-turn forecast for the financial year 2005/06. Explanations in relation to variances (actual compared to estimate) have been included in the notes to the right hand side of the enclosure.

Budget Monitoring 1st April 2005 to 31st December 2005

The overall actual net expenditure for the period (£3,436,534), shown at the bottom of the third column on the enclosure, represents 73% of the full year estimates.

The period covers nine months (75%) of the financial year and therefore the Authority still appears on track to spend most of the budget.

Out-turn Forecast 2005/06

An end of year forecast has been included in the sixth column of the enclosure. The forecast is based on the latest budget monitoring figures together with

information supplied by the budget holders in relation to remaining expenditure and income.

The forecast net expenditure for 2005/06 is £4,670,092 compared to the budget figure of £4,709,260, a reduction of £39,168 or 0.84%.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: 73% of the net budget has been spent in the first nine months of the year. The year-end forecast is an underspending of £39,168 or 0.84% of the net budget.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 3**

Recommendation: That the contents of the report be noted.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Alan Elliott or Elaine Standen on 01874 624437.

6.0 ESTIMATES 2006/07

Alan Elliott

6.1 Background

The revenue Estimates for 2006/07 have been prepared assuming that the Welsh Assembly Government Grant for 2006/07 is in line with the indicative increase for all three Welsh Parks of 1.04% on the 2005/06 settlement. Members will recall that this year's estimate was partly financed by a large one-off withdrawal from reserves which are expected to be close to the levels recommended by the Audit Commission by the end of the year. In effect, the resources available next year will be lower than those used in this year, as summarised below.

Revised Estimate 2005/06 £000	Original Estimate 2006/07 £000
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Net Expenditure	4,709	4,313
Welsh Assembly Grant plus Levy	4,156	4,199
Use of Reserves	485	46
Planning Improvement Grant	68	68
Total resources	4,709	4,313

The Welsh Assembly Government have based the indicative settlement (the final figure had not been notified at the time of writing of this report) on the assumption that 1% efficiency savings would be found to finance any expenditure increases over and above the 1.04% allowed.

6.2 The Baseline Estimate for 2006/07

In drafting a budget in response to the difficult settlement for the coming year, Officers have adopted a two-stage strategy. The initial phase involved stripping out all project and non-recurring expenditure from the 2005/06 budget to produce a baseline estimate and providing for known increases in costs, principally staffing. The pay award of 2.95%, together with increments has been fully reflected in the budget. Known unavoidable cost increases such as rent and rates have been included but budgets for other items have been left at 2005/06 levels where possible.

A copy of the baseline estimate is included at **Enclosure 3** for Members' consideration and approval. It does not include expenditure for Authority priorities such as Area Action Plans, Biodiversity projects, Geopark work or a capital programme.

The second phase of the budget process involves identifying efficiency savings and income generation opportunities which will enable the Authority to fund priorities and projects in the coming year, including the Area Action Plans. Detailed prioritised bids have been made by each Department and these will be allocated funding following evaluation.

The Assembly is encouraging all Authorities to channel more expenditure into service delivery and reduce overheads. Accordingly, efficiency savings will be sought in areas such as transport, stationery and related costs, such as printing and postages while reviews are undertaken of income generation by front line services such as visitor facilities and planning. It is likely that some difficult decisions will need to be made about budget priorities.

Looking ahead to 2007/08 and 2008/09, it is unlikely that the budget situation will ease. Additional pressures such as the loss of the Planning Improvement Grant, the Local Development Plan process and the impact of the triennial review of the Powys Pension Fund will place extra demands on the budget. By working to generate more income, make better use of resources and cutting on-going

overheads in 2006/07, the Authority will be better able to set balanced budgets in future years.

Officers propose to report back to Members on the outcome of the second phase of budget-setting at the next meeting of the Committee. In the interim, it is suggested that the baseline estimate is approved to enable the Levy to be issued to constituent Authorities.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement Implications: as outlined in the report.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 3**

Recommendation: Members approve the baseline estimates as shown at Enclosure 3.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Elaine Standen or Alan Elliott on 01874 624437.

7.0 STATEMENT ON RESERVES 2005/06 and 2006/07

Alan Elliott

A Statement of Reserves as at 1st April 2005, together with a projection for 31st March 2006 and estimated position as at 31st March 2007, is shown at **Enclosure 4**. The General Reserves are estimated to stand at £306,171 at 31st March 2006 and £290,392 at 31st March 2007.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: The estimated contribution from reserves in 2005/06 is reduced by £39,168 (now estimated at £446,190).**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**

- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 3.**

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the Reserves Statement.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Alan Elliott or Elaine Standen on 01874 624437.

8.0 LEVY AND NOTICE TO UNITARY AUTHORITIES

Alan Elliott

The Authority has previously been advised that the revenue settlement for the three Welsh parks is 1.04%, but this has not yet been ratified by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Therefore it is proposed that a letter of notice of intention to levy should be sent out to the relevant Unitary Authorities after this Committee in accordance with the National Park Authorities (Levies) (Wales) Regulations 1995, subject to ratification of the revenue settlement by the Welsh Assembly Government. These regulations state that the levy shall be issued before 15th February in the financial year preceding the financial year for which the levy is issued. The regulations provide guidance as to the maximum amount of the levy and to the apportionment of the levy.

The apportionment between the Unitary Authorities for the Brecon Beacons National Park levy will be tabled at the meeting. The levy requires the Unitary Authorities to provide sums calculated in accordance with Section 72 levy requirement.

The regulations allow for a National Park to issue a levy for a sum greater than the Authority's 25%, providing that the Authority has given prior consent in writing.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: As indicated on the apportionment between the Unitary Authorities tabled at the meeting.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**

- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 3**

Recommendation: That the Chief Executive be instructed to issue a levy at the maximum amount in the proportions as set out in the Schedule to Regulation 5 of the National Park Authorities (Levies) (Wales) 1995, subject to the provisions regarding increased levies (Regulation 6 (4))

Contact Officer: For further information contact Alan Elliott or Elaine Standen on 01874 624437.

9.0 PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS

Alan Elliott

The Authority is required to report on the Prudential code indicators each quarter and also, in this meeting, to agree a treasury management plan for the coming year. The monitoring report for the last quarter in 2005/06, which reflects the fact that the Authority is debt-free and has no planned capital expenditure, is attached at **Enclosure 5**. The treasury management plan is unchanged from 2005/06, although the cash surplus invested and hence the interest earned is likely to fall as reserves are reduced from the high levels of recent years.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: No implications.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 3**

Recommendation: Members are asked to note and approve the contents of the report.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Elaine Standen or Alan Elliott on 01874 624437.

10.0 FINANCE SERVICES REVIEW

Emlyn Watkin

10.1 Introduction

An update on the Finance Services Review was presented to the last meeting of the Committee on 11th November 2005 and a commitment given that a more detailed report would be available at this meeting.

The review was commenced in January 2005 by the Section 151 Officer and the following approach was adopted:

- Discussions with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority and Resources Committee
- Discussions with the Chief Executive and Chief Officers
- Interviews and discussions with staff in the Finance Section
- Overview of responses to a survey of all users of the finance services undertaken in the autumn 2004
- Comparative data obtained from Snowdonia and Pembrokeshire National Parks
- Review of External Auditor reports and Management Letters
- Review of recent Internal Audit reports
- Meetings with the Director of Resources, Carmarthenshire County Council and the Head of Financial Services, Powys County Council

10.2 Background and Present Arrangements

Prior to 1996, the BBNPA received the complete range of financial services from Powys County Council. After the reorganisation in 1996 a decision was taken to directly employ the staff locally but to continue to use some of the finance services available from Powys County Council under Service Level Agreements. These include Payroll, Internal Audit, Superannuation and Leased Cars.

The Finance Section consists of three full-time equivalent posts and provides the following financial activities:

- Financial planning and budget monitoring
- Financial Ledger, cash book and treasury management
- Statutory year-end accounting and reports including the Statement of Accounts
- Completion of annual returns and grant claims
- Payment of creditors and issue of debtor invoices
- Checking and payment of travelling and subsistence allowances
- Supply of data to Powys CC on payroll and superannuation matters

- Provision of internal financial advice and support to Members and Officers as required

The annual cost of the Finance Section is summarised as follows:

	£000
Staff related costs	95
Powys CC Service Level Agreements	22
Other operating costs	2
 Total Annual Estimated cost in 2005/6	 119

10.3 Comparisons with other Welsh National Park Authorities

Information provided by the National Parks is as follows:

	Snowdonia NPA	Pembrokeshire NPA	Brecon Beacons NPA
Gross Budget 2005/6 £m	£8.653m	£6.068m	£5.775m
Net Budget 2005/6 £m	£5.903m	£4.458m	£4.272m
Total number of employees	130 Full- time 27.5 Part-time	102 Full-time 69 Part-time / seasonal	92 Full time 56 Part- time / seasonal
Number of Finance Staff	5.0 FTE	3.64 FTE	3.0 FTE

10.4 Structures and Staffing

The Head of the Business Unit has managerial responsibility for the Finance Section and the Finance team is comprised of the following:

Finance Manager (Qualified Accountant) 37 hours (50/50 Job Share)	Salary Grade 14
Accounting Technician 37 hours	Salary Grade 8
Finance Officer 37 hours	Salary Grade 8
Temporary Input Data help 6 hours per week	

10.5 Findings and Current Position

One of the main findings as a result of the discussions and meetings referred to in paragraph 1 was that the Authority could benefit from an improvement in the presentation of financial data, reports and Statements. The Section 151 Officer submitted a draft report to the Chief Executive in March 2005 and a number of improvements have already been initiated including the following:

- Review of Financial Regulations and Procedures.
- Presentation of financial reports to Corporate Resources Committee and Corporate Management Team by an accountant.
- Improvements to the annual Statement of Accounts as indicated by the favourable external audit report.

As previously reported discussions have taken place with two of our constituent authorities, who are potential providers of financial/internal audit services and/or finance systems, with a view to obtaining an improvement in the quality and flexibility of financial management systems, particularly in the following areas.

- Reporting tools.
- Online access for budget holders.
- Improved online purchase ordering facilities.
- Improved electronic transfer of data e.g. sales at Visitor Centres.

The Committee has approved the extension of the payroll contract with Powys County Council for a period of 3 years from 1st April 2006. The current agreement with Powys in relation to Internal Audit Services expires on 31st March 2006 and they have indicated that they lack the resources to continue that agreement.

Initially the most advantageous option, subject to confirmation of acceptable costs and suitable network connections, was considered to be that of Carmarthenshire County Council. That option is for BBNPA to have access to and the use of their financial system (Agresso) which is one of the market leaders. In addition Carmarthenshire could be interested in providing other services such as Internal Audit. They have been requested to provide costs for the access to the financial system but we are still awaiting a response. A further update on this issue will be reported verbally at the meeting.

The current BBNPA financial system is QL, supplied by Distinction Systems, and is the same package as is used by the two other Welsh National Parks in addition to many Further and Higher Education organisations.

A recent development which has influenced the recommendation below is that Agresso have recently acquired Distinction Systems, who were their

competitors in the FE and HE sectors, and state that they intend to continue to support, develop and improve the QL system.

Informal discussions have taken place with our current suppliers and it does appear that the desired improvements can be achieved by retaining the current package and investing in current and future enhancements. Guide prices have been requested from our current suppliers and these will be reported verbally at the meeting.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: To be reported verbally at the meeting.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications..**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 3.**

Recommendation: As a result of the recent takeover of Distinction Systems by Agresso the current accounting package (QL) be retained and, subject to funding, be improved and enhanced as indicated in paragraph 5. Quotations to be obtained from interested Constituent Authorities in relation to providing an appropriate Internal Audit Service for a period of three years commencing on 1st April 2006.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Elaine Standen or Alan Elliott on 01874 624437.

11.0 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

Alan Elliott

11.1 Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations provide the framework for managing the Authority's financial affairs, together with Standing Orders relating to Contracts, Codes of Conduct, the Scheme of Delegation and the Treasury Management Policy.

The regulations apply to every Member and Employee of the Authority and can only be amended or suspended by the Authority.

The Financial Regulations periodically require updating in order to take account of changing circumstances and or new legislation. The current Regulations are dated February 2000, with an amendment in May 2004, and accordingly a revised set of regulations is attached at **Enclosure 6** for approval.

11.2 Financial Procedures

The Financial Procedures are designed to underpin the Financial Regulations and, whilst covering the same issues, are intended to be more 'user-friendly'.

Providing they do not conflict with the approved Financial Regulations it is recommended that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, can authorise amendments to the Financial Procedures.

A draft copy of the Financial Procedures will be tabled at the meeting.

- a) ***Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: Update of the current Financial Regulations and the introduction of more 'user-friendly' Financial Procedures.***
- b) ***Equality Issues: No implications.***
- c) ***Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.***
- d) ***Human Rights: No implications..***
- e) ***Background Papers: Current Financial Regulations.***
- f) ***Corporate Objective: 3.***

Recommendation: That the Corporate Resources Committee recommend approval of the draft Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures to the National Park Authority.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Elaine Standen or Alan Elliott on 01874 624437.

12.0 TRADING REPORT APRIL TO DECEMBER 2005

Ruth Nicholson

Trading figures for the period April to December 2005 are attached at **Enclosure 7.**

12.1 National Park Visitor Centre

Overall income is up 5% when compared with the same period in 2004/5. The largest percentage increase in performance has come from increased sales of publications, thanks partly to renewed stocking of National Park Authority publications, and new lines of welsh food items in the visitor centre shop. There has also been a 5% increase in income from the tea rooms with a large number of bookings for Christmas lunches during December. Overall, in comparison with the previous year, the total cost to the Authority has been reduced by 9%.

All money from education groups now is shown in the Education Service budget which accounts for the reduction in this income stream.

Despite a rise in visitors over this period, revenue from car parking has fallen by 4%. A survey is to be undertaken to ascertain the level of visitors not paying the standard charge along with a New Year promotion of an improved season ticket. This promotion is linked with the introduction of the new till system which will allow vouchers and discounts to be taken. The till system should be installed in the next month.

12.2 Craig-y-nos Country Park

As with the previous quarter, the country park appears to have a large reduction in expenditure and income when compared with the last financial year. This is due to the Adfwyio work that was carried out at the same period last year with grant monies being received and expenditure being spent on the work.

With this factored out, the Country Park has had a difficult trading period during September to December. Along with the information centres, as detailed below, trading has taken a downturn with sales of souvenirs down by 12%. There appears to be no obvious explanation for this although with reduced staffing levels, and increased teaching commitments for the centre warden, the shop has not been open as much as in the previous year.

The large reduction in June compared with last year was due to not having the canine capers event. However, as the event had a net cost rather than a profit, the expenditure in comparison is also down.

All money from education groups now is shown in the Education Service budget which accounts for the reduction in this income stream.

Visitor numbers are slightly increased for the site with a high number of visitors during December which has traditionally been a popular month. The

sharp increase in visitors is likely to be related to the favourable weather when compared with the previous year.

12.3 Information Centres

As explained previously, both information centres have experienced a very difficult trading period, especially during November when both visitor numbers and income were down by over 30%. There is no explanation for the reduced numbers of visitors in November except for the weather, but similar problems have been experienced by other retail outlets in both towns. However, thanks to a good start earlier in the year, this relates to an overall decrease of just 1%.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: No implications.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: Increased usage at the Centres, especially at the National Park Visitor Centre, increases the pressure on water and electricity supplies.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 4 and 5**

Recommendation: That the contents of the report be noted.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Ruth Nicholson or Alan Elliott on 01874 624437.

13.0 TRADING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Peter Tyldesley

There have been concerns about the performance of the Authority's trading operations. In the current budgetary climate, it is more important than ever that the contribution that trading activities make is maximised.

Ruth Nicholson, Visitor Services Manager, has been tasked to produce a development plan for trading operations by 31 March 2006. In addition, an Income Generation Working Group has been established, made up of staff from across the Authority, to look at new ways of generating income. The group has now had two meetings and is beginning to generate a range of interesting ideas.

In the meantime, there are a number of steps that can be taken now to improve trading performance. These are set out in the report at **Enclosure 8**.

- a) ***Financial, Staffing and Improvement Implications: Trading provides an important component of the Authority's income. The actions proposed are designed to improve this contribution.***
- b) ***Equality Issues: None.***
- c) ***Sustainability Appraisal: All potential product lines are appraised for their sustainability. Products made from locally sourced and/or recycled materials are selected wherever possible.***
- d) ***Human Rights: No implications.***
- e) ***Background Paper: None.***
- f) ***Corporate Objective: 4 and 5***

***Recommendation:* That Members note the contents of the report and approve the proposals for action set out therein.**

Contact Officer: For further information contact Peter Tyldesley or Ruth Nicholson on 01874 624437.

14.0 CATERING BUSINESS PLAN

Peter Tyldesley

The Catering Manager and Visitor Services Manager have carried out a review of the performance of the National Park Visitor Centre Tearooms.

The review and resulting business plan for future development is at **Enclosure 9**.

- a) ***Financial, Staffing and Improvement Implications: Catering provides an important component of the Authority's income. The actions proposed are designed to improve profitability and integration with the other work of the Authority.***
- b) ***Equality Issues: None.***

- c) ***Sustainability Appraisal: Use of locally produced products is a key element in the Tearooms approach. These are inherently more sustainable than products from national suppliers.***
- d) ***Human Rights: No implications.***
- e) ***Background Papers: None.***
- f) ***Corporate Objective: 4 and 5***

Recommendation: That Members note the contents of the report and approve the proposals for improvement set out therein.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Peter Tyldesley or Ruth Nicholson on 01874 624437.

15.0 WATERFALLS AREA CAR PARKS

Peter Tyldesley

The Authority operates two car parks in the Waterfalls Area: Cwm Porth, which is manned all year and Gwaun Hepste, which is manned between April and October.

The rationale behind the Authority operating these car parks is to provide secure locations where visitors have the confidence to leave their cars, to prevent haphazard parking on roadside verges in the area and to provide information to visitors. The two car parks receive up to 80,000 visitors per year.

However, the operation is very expensive to run, mainly as a result of high staff costs. The annual cost to the Authority of running the car parks i.e. the excess of running costs over income received, is around £20,000. A number of options have therefore been considered for eliminating this deficit.

From the outset, the aim has been to retain year-round cover at Cwm Porth and not to raise charges to such a level that people are deterred from using the car parks. The current level of charging is £3 per car and £5 per minibus for the whole day at both car parks. The money is collected by the attendant as vehicles enter.

It is proposed to reduce staffing levels to 365 man-days per year to cover both car parks. The car park warden will be based at Cwm Porth and will be equipped with a National Park liveried vehicle to make regular, visible, visits to Gwaun Hepste. The car park at Gwaun Hepste will be visited by the Car Park Watch volunteers as part of their patrol routine and there will also be a

presence from Forestry Commission maintenance staff. Charges will be increased to £4 per car and £7 per minibus on a pay-and-display basis.

The effect of these changes is as follows (based on current vehicle numbers):

<u>Income</u>	Cwm Porth:	Cars	£13,332
		Minibuses	£11,200
	Gwaun Hepste:	Cars	<u>£12,400</u>
	Total:		£36,932

Operating Costs

Staffing	£30,835
Vehicle lease	£ 2,400
Fuel	<u>£1,000</u>
Total:	£34,235

Start-up Costs

Purchase of 2 pay & display machines	£6,000
(less) Contribution from Forestry Commission	(£3,000)

These figures show that the car parks should move in the first year from a £20,000 deficit to being cost-neutral. In addition, now that the new building has been erected at Cwm Porth, there is increased scope for retailing activities, principally maps, publications and vending services (hot drinks and snacks).

- (a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement Implications: Anticipated £20,000 improvement in the financial position before increased trading income is taken into account. Staffing reductions will be achieved by reducing seasonal staff cover – no redundancy situation.**
- (b) **Equality Issues: None.**
- (c) **Sustainability Appraisal: None.**
- (d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- (e) **Background Papers: None.**
- (f) **Corporate Objective: 4 and 5**

Recommendation: That Members note the contents of the report and approve the proposals for action set out therein.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Peter Tyldesley or Ruth Nicholson on 01874 624437.

16.0 EXTERNAL FUNDING - THIRD QUARTER 2005

Jane Davies

16.1 The Physical Regeneration Fund (PRF) – Update

Both the Brecon and the Crickhowell schemes are progressing well. The Building Conservation Officer (Will Hughes) and the Listed Building Officer (Keith Sloan) have made a number of visits to Talgarth where it is planned to set up a new physical regeneration scheme. A number of buildings have been identified as suitable for the scheme. The award of sums from the Physical Regeneration Fund relies on the appropriate match funding being provided by the owner of the relevant building. The next step is to set up a meeting between BBNPA Officers and William Powell BBNPA Member to discuss the progression of the Talgarth Physical Regeneration Scheme before submitting an application to the fund.

16.2 The Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund – Fforest Fawr Geopark (Update)

A meeting was held at Craig-y-nos Country Park on Wednesday 30th November 2005 where a presentation on the Fforest Fawr Geopark and the application to the fund was given by the partners of the bid namely, Dr Adrian Humpage, Dr Poul Strange, Dr Paul Henney (British Geological Survey), Ian Thomas (National Stone Centre), Dr Tony Ramsay, Jane Davies and Rosie Whitfield (BBNPA/Fforest Fawr Geopark) to Christopher Morgan (Welsh Assembly Government) and David Eccles (Aggregates Levy Fund). This presentation was requested by WAG to answer some outstanding questions that the panel had raised when considering the application. The presentation was well received and a visit to Penwyllt Quarry took place for those present to provide a further understanding of what the project would achieve if successful in attracting the funding. A decision was to be made by the Minister after a further meeting of the Aggregates Levy panel in early December and we expected to hear the outcome in the first week of January.

The partnership has received a request to make a further presentation to the full Aggregates Levy Sustainability Panel on the 3rd March 2006 in Beaumaris, North Wales this will consist of a 30 minute presentation followed by 30 minutes of questions and answer after which the panel will make their final decision.

16.3 Living Landmarks – The Big Lottery Fund – Forward Out of the Earth

An application has been made to the Big Lottery Fund for funding under Living Landmarks. The Big Lottery Fund is the operating name of the two Lottery distributors, the New Opportunities Fund and the National Lottery Charities Board who are responsible for distributing half of the funding that the Lottery raises for good causes.

The Big Lottery Fund supports projects that meet the following key themes:

- Community learning and creating opportunity
- Promoting community safety and cohesion
- Promoting well-being

These themes are underpinned by four key outcomes which will hopefully lead to long term improvements to people's lives and the places where they live by:

- Ensuring that people have better chances in life and are able to get better access to training and development
- Building stronger communities with more active citizens, working together to tackle their problems
- Being used to improve rural and urban environments which communities are better able to access and enjoy
- Bringing about healthier and more active people and communities

The challenge for the BBNPA was to devise a project that would include the above themes and outcomes and a partnership workshop took place on 22 December 2005 between Officers from BBNPA, Brecon Action Limited and Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO). Building upon the Fforest Fawr Geopark designation of October 2005 and by using the Powys Community Strategy, Carmarthenshire Community Strategy, Cherished Heartland research, Wales Spatial Plan, Wales; A Better Country, Making and Delivering the Connections we were able to put forward a project called '**Forward Out of the Earth**' incorporating all of the above themes and outcomes.

The project, if successful will draw down £20,081,250m from the fund with a total project value of £24,775,000m. The starting point for the project was the Upper Swansea Valley - an area that has seen decades of economic deprivation – a Residential Study Centre will be constructed at Craig-y-nos Country Park and a general upgrade of educational/training facilities is planned. The National Environment Geopark Centre at Dan-yr-Ogof will be constructed at a cost of £2.8m, moving further up the valley to the National Park Visitor Centre a

renovation and refurbishment programme costing £2m is planned, finally in Brecon itself the construction of the Brecon Design Centre and the restoration and development of Brecon Castle will form the final link in this chain development.

By using the Fforest Fawr Geopark (a non-funded initiative) as the focus this project will aim to reconnect communities with the environment and their cultural heritage, to provide a positive focus for the 21st Century to inhabitants who started the new millennium in one of the worst affected areas in the UK for Foot and Mouth disease. Forward out of the Earth will aim to benefit local communities, local businesses and visitors to the area, creating employment, sustainability and capacity. It will provide valuable facilities for educational and scientific research as well as encouraging local people to venture out into their surroundings to discover more of the valuable cultural heritage on their doorstep.

The main beneficiaries of Forward out of the Earth will be local inhabitants within the Fforest Fawr Geopark, young and old alike with an 'open to all' approach.

The application was completed and sent off to meet the deadline of the 6 January 2006. Projects will now be checked for eligibility and assessed, scored and prioritised before a long-list of successful projects is drawn up between now and March 2006. In April 2006 long-listed projects are visited and assessments updated before being scored and prioritised further. In May 2006 recommendations are made to the programme committee, who decide to award a development grant or reject the application and notification of the decision will be received in June 2006. If successful we then move on to the stage two application process and will be notified of the outcome of the second stage in July 2007.

16.4 The Heritage Lottery Fund – Brecon Castle and Town Walls Update

Donald Insall Associates, consultants to the Brecon Castle project have now submitted their final report to the Building Conservation Officer with the initial stages of the project now complete. In the meantime the project has been included in the much larger 'Forward Out of the Earth' project and we await the outcome of that application before moving forward on the scheme.

- a) ***Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: There are no immediate financial implications for the above projects as their success will ultimately rely on drawing down the funding and raising sufficient match funding to be able to implement the projects. Potentially staff will be involved in delivering all of the above but until we know the outcome of the funding applications work***

programmes will need to build in adequate flexibility. Improvements for the Communities within the Brecon Beacons National Park, Partners and Stakeholders are substantial.

- b) Equality Issues: All the above projects will give specific consideration to access for the disabled. The Forward Out of the Earth project will be open to all providing training facilities for old and young alike.**
- c) Sustainability Appraisal: Sustainability is key to all of the above projects; the success of the Forward Out of the Earth Project is built upon sustainability.**
- d) Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) Background Papers: None.**
- f) Corporate Objective: 2, 4 and 6.**

Recommendation: The contents of this report be noted.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Jane Davies on 01874 624437.

17.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

Helen Roderick/Jonathan Cook

17.1 Grant Awards Update

At the November meeting of the Sustainable Development Grants Advisory and Members' meeting nine grants and two grant increase requests were awarded totaling £26,921.

17.1.1 Llanthony Valley & District Show Society - Notice Boards

A grant of £1,044 was awarded towards the cost of installing nine notice boards, manufactured by SIREN Ltd., at key points along the length of the Llanthony Valley and in adjacent areas, including the South-Eastern end of the Grwyne Fawr and the southern end of the Olchon Valley. The aim of the project is to keep the dispersed local residents and visitors up to date with all local activities and events in an organised way.

17.1.2 Biodiversity Information Service - 'Data Exchange Development'

A grant of £1,853 was awarded to the Biodiversity Information Service towards the cost of improving the services to its partners, environmental consultants, local biological recorders and the public, by improving and upgrading BIS facilities and IT potential to further promote exchange of biodiversity information through the Brecon Beacons National Park.

17.1.3 Talgarth Information & Resource Centre - Centre Coordinator

A grant of £2,093 was awarded towards the cost of the co-ordinator salary to keep the centre running for a further three months to the end of January 2006. The centre continues to search for core funding to ensure its longer term success.

17.1.4 Red Kite Theatre - Celt Touring Project

£10,000, £5,000 in 2005/06 and £5,000 in 2006/07 has been awarded to the Red Kite Theatre to tour a smaller spin-off of Celt, its successful, large scale community production. The themes and ideas from Celt will be taken out to 10 villages within the Brecon Beacons National Park through workshops and performances enabling new audiences to benefit from a higher quality performance project and to gain new skills in the performing arts by working with professionals.

17.1.5 CPRW - Youth Conference

£2,450 has been set aside to enable CPRW to hold an environmental youth conference in the Brecon Beacons National Park in February 2006. 40 young people from schools within the Park and from neighbouring areas will spend 4 days studying issues to do with sustainability, the environment and our ecological footprint on the environment in the Brecon Beacons Area.

17.1.6 Primrose Earth Awareness Trust - 'Promoting our Community Foundation'

A grant of £2,077 has been awarded to PEAT, a centre for educational activities for all ages, specialising on matters relating to the environment and sustainability based at Felindre. The grant will be used to extend the local network of people regularly involved with their work and actively engaged with activities on site to assure long term sustainability.

17.1.7 Mr Hywel Evans - Twenty 20 Memories

A grant of £980 has been given to support the publication of a book written by Mr Evans which sets out some of the memories of twenty local men and twenty local women, born between 1904 and 1935, who lived in the Black Mountain area to the south west of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

17.1.8 Llandovery Farmers' Market - Market Promotion and Advertising Campaign

A grant of £914 has been awarded to increase the success of the Farmers' market. The promotion and advertising campaign will increase both the diversity of stallholders and the number of customers attending the market. SDF supported Llandovery in 2002 when the grant helped to establish the market stalls and pay for a trailer for their transportation.

17.1.9 Ystradgynlais Miners Welfare and Community Hall Trust Ltd - Ddoe a Heddiw/Then and Now

A grant of £880 has been awarded to enable Creu-ad, a group experienced at involving communities in arts projects, to put on a two day workshop in Sennybridge which will explore community art and heritage with the local community and will culminate in wall-hangings and other artwork which will be displayed at Maescar community hall. This represents a continuation of the work previously funded by Menter Brycheiniog and supported by the BBNPA.

17.1.10 Grant Increase Requests

Grant increase requests were awarded to Cadog Film Club and Arts Alive. At Cadog Film club, £630 was awarded to cover the VAT costs of buying the new projector and Arts Alive, based in Crickhowell were awarded an increase of £4,000 to cover an extension of three months to the project and the increased costs of the Dragon Festival.

17.2 Programme Spend 2005/2006

The SDF financial spreadsheet is attached (**Enclosure 10**). The following funds remain available for new projects in 2005/2006 and this is expected to be allocated at the meeting in January 2006.

2005/2006 - £7,451

The Welsh Assembly Government have confirmed that they intend to continue the Sustainable Development Fund in 2006/07.

- a) ***Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: No financial or staffing implications as SDF is a stand alone budget.***
- b) ***Equality Issues: All SDF projects aim to address social inclusion and equality of opportunity issues.***
- c) ***Sustainability Appraisal: All projects have been assessed according to the criteria established for the SDF programme by the Assembly.***

- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: 4.**

Recommendation: *To note the contents of the report.*

Contact Officer: For further information contact Helen Roderick or Jonathan Cook on 01874 624437.

18.0 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Members are asked to agree the following recommendation in relation to items 19.0 – 21.0 on the agenda.

Recommendation: *That pursuant to the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Act.*

The following exempt reports are attached at Enclosure 11 (circulated to members only) for members to consider and make any recommendations therein.

EXEMPT ITEMS – FINANCE

None.

EXEMPT ITEMS - HUMAN RESOURCES

19.0 SICKNESS REPORT

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - This report contains exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

20.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - This report contains exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

21.0 STRESS COUNSELLING REPORT

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - This report contains exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

22.00 CHIEF OFFICER'S SALARY REVIEW

NOT FOR PUBLICATION - This report contains exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

23.0 STAFFING REPORT

Richard Mears

A staffing report for the period 1st October 2005 to 31st December 2005 is attached at **Enclosure 12**.

Cumulative turnover for the Authority for the period April to December 2005 remains high at 16.3% against a target of 10% and a number of key improvements have been made to family friendly policies, flexible working, exit interview forms and line management development.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: £8,200 paid for internal and external recruitment for six vacancies.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**

f) **Corporate Objective: Underpins all corporate objectives.**

Recommendation: *That the contents of the report be considered and noted.*

Contact Officer: For further information contact Richard Mears, HR Manager on 01874 620425.

24.0 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT Richard Mears

A monthly summary of learning and development, which has taken place between 1st October 2005 and 31st December 2005 is attached at **Enclosure 13**.

Members will note that the number of Health and Safety and Walking Group Leaders/Mountain Leaders training and assessment courses have been provided this quarter. To date Human Resources have organised 118 separate training events totalling 406 training days including 54 days of training provided for internal sources.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: No implications.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: Underpins all corporate objectives.**

Recommendation: *That the contents of the report be considered and noted.*

Contact Officer: For further information contact Richard Mears, HR Manager on 01874 620425.

25.0 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REVIEW

Richard Mears

The Investors in People review was completed in December 2005 members will be delighted to hear that the Authority has achieved its Investors in People Accreditation and will not require another re-assessment until 2008.

- a) **Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: No implications.**
- b) **Equality Issues: No implications.**
- c) **Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.**
- d) **Human Rights: No implications.**
- e) **Background Papers: None.**
- f) **Corporate Objective: Underpins all corporate objectives.**

Recommendation: That the contents of the report be noted.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Richard Mears, HR Manager on 01874 620425.

26.0 POST OF TOURISM GROWTH AREA OFFICER

Peter Tyldesley

This post is one of two staff in the Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Section of the Authority. The post was established using funding from the Wales Tourist Board to develop tourism in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Growth Area.

Members will be aware of some of the high profile work that the current post-holder has carried out including the Mountain Bike routes and web site, the development of horse tourism including the Three Rivers Ride and, more recently, the Welsh Breakfast training and competition.

The very practical support that this post gives to the tourism trade locally is greatly valued by local tourism businesses and gives the Authority a great deal of credibility as a serious player in tourism. This intends lends added weight to, and encourages the trade to engage with, our work on tourism strategy development.

The post has been held on a series of temporary contracts, the latest of which expires on 31 March 2006. The reason for appointing on a temporary basis

was that continuation of WTB could not be guaranteed and it would not therefore be appropriate to establish the post as a permanent one.

However, CMT have agreed that the work carried out by this post is of such importance that, irrespective of whether or not WTB funding continues to be available – and the situation is currently unclear as a result of the incorporation of the WTB into the Assembly Government – that funding will be provided from within the Sustainable Tourism and Recreation budget to allow this post to continue.

It is therefore proposed to add the post of Tourism Growth Area Officer to the permanent staffing establishment and to confirm the current post-holder in post.

- (a) ***Financial, Staffing and Improvement Implications: WTB funding may continue, in which case no financial implications. If no WTB funding, then financial implications contained within Sustainable Tourism & Recreation budget. If the post is discontinued then much important and high-profile work will cease.***
- (b) ***Equality Issues: None.***
- (c) ***Sustainability Appraisal: This post contributes to helping tourism businesses be more sustainable in both the environmental and economic senses.***
- (d) ***Human Rights: No implications.***
- (e) ***Background Papers: None.***
- (f) ***Corporate Objective: 4 and 5***

Recommendation: That Members to add the post of Tourism Growth Area Officer to the permanent staffing establishment and to confirm the current post-holder in post.

Contact Officer: For further information contact Peter Tyldesley on 01874 624437.

IMPROVEMENT ITEMS

27.0 PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT ITEMS *Audrey M Oakley*

This performance and improvement report outlines progress made towards the key work targets and performance indicators for 2005/06 and identifies those which look unlikely to be achieved.

It outlines progress towards the Three Parks Corporate Action Plan and raises an issue on attaining the Green Dragon Environmental Award Level 3 which is a Welsh Assembly Government target in the Strategic Grant Letter.

Finally, a review of the Whole Authority Analysis Task and Finish Group and Action Plan has been carried out and a recommendation is brought before members for consideration.

27.1 Corporate Performance Review April – November 2005

The Performance Management Team met on 9th December to review progress against Key Work Targets and Performance Indicators for the period 1st April to 30th November 2005.

27.1.1 Key Work Targets 2005/2006

Out of approximately 200 key work targets it is likely that 23 key work targets will not be achieved for a variety of reasons. eg vacant posts, resources not available, technical issues or workload issues, these are highlighted in red in the attached **Enclosure 14**. However, this is a vast improvement on 2004/2005 key work target achievement and we will learn from this.

The annual business cycle timetable implemented this year if followed will ensure that key work targets for 2006/2007 will be set to support the new corporate objectives and will be adequately resourced.

27.1.2 Performance Indicators 2005/2006

The main issues with the Performance Indicators shown at the back of **Enclosure 14** relate to:

- a decrease in income at the Information Centres - due to lack of visitor numbers and
- at Craig y Nos Country Park – due to lack of visitor numbers.

- Members attendance at training events decreasing – May be skewed due to ANPA event.
- Enforcement complaints due to lack of staff.

27.2 Corporate Action Plan 2005-2006 (Three Parks)

The Three Parks Corporate Action Plan is attached for consideration at **Enclosure 15**

27.3 Strategic Grant Letter 2005/2006

All targets itemised on the strategic grant letter are being progressed and are on target to be achieved. The Authority is well on the way to achieving level 3 of the Green Dragon Award by March 2007. However, due to staffing problems within Arena it was decided not to take up their time in carrying out a level 2 audit, which was due to take place in August. Instead we have carried out a desk top audit with Arena which identified any gaps there might be in achieving level 2.

A desk top assessment for level 3 will take place on 14 March with the actual assessment taking place on 27 March.

We are confident of achieving level 3, but if the worse case scenario occurred and we missed level 3 we would be awarded level 2.

27.4 Whole Authority Analysis (WAA) – Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

27.4.1 Introduction

Members will be aware that a review of the Whole Authority Analysis (WAA) task and finish group and action plan has been taking place as part of the review of the Performance Management framework. Additionally a review of Committee structures is being carried out alongside the WAA review and it is intended that a workshop for Members and CMT be held in February to explore the options and possible restructure.

27.4.2 Background

The Whole Authority Analysis (WAA) task and finish group was originally set up by the Chief Executive and the then Chairman of the Authority, Cllr Meirion Thomas. Its task was to consider the findings of the Audit Inspection carried out in early 2003 and devise an action plan. The group was comprised of Members, the Chief Executive and Staff representatives from Departments.

The issues identified in the inspection report came from a number of sources eg Audit reports, the Marsh Risk Assessment report and from a number of interviews held between the Wales Audit inspection team and members of staff. The task and finish group devised an action plan to address the issues and continued to meet on a quarterly basis to monitor progress against the plan.

As part of the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) the Authority has a statutory duty to review risks annually and to ensure that they are addressed. This has been done through consultation methods with staff and external stakeholders. Each year a new action plan is devised to include any outstanding actions and any newly identified risks to the Authority. This process has been approved by the Wales Audit Office.

27.4.3 Review of the WAA

The Authority has a number of Strategies and Action plans, some of which are disparate to the Performance Management framework. This is now being addressed and a number of workshops and training events have, and are being held, to address these issues and to ensure SMARTER key work target setting. The Annual Business Cycle, introduced this year, if followed, sets out the logical timetable for the implementation of a good performance management framework and this has been communicated to all staff. This is also shown in the new Corporate Business Cycle shown at **Enclosure 16**.

The main issue with the WAA is that the actions set out in the action plan have not been linked to the Corporate Objectives and most of the activities have not been linked into the performance management database. Where actions have been included in the performance management database this means we have two separate groups monitoring the same targets that is the Performance Management Team (PMT) and the WAA task and finish group.

The statutory duty of identifying annually assessing risks should continue to be carried out and activities to address the risks should be set out in an action plan. The activities from the action plan should then be prioritised with resources allocated against those prioritised actions. These actions to be incorporated into the Performance Management database. These will then be monitored through the Performance Management Team and the Whole Authority task and finish group disbanded with progress or issues being reported to Corporate Resources Committee. This to continue until the review of Committee Structures is complete.

- a) ***Financial, Staffing and Improvement implications: Capacity and resource issues have prevented some of the key work targets being***

achieved. Disbanding the WAA Task and Finish Group will save resources and free up some capacity.

- b) Equality Issues: No implications.*
- c) Sustainability Appraisal: No implications.*
- d) Human Rights: No implications.*
- e) Background Papers: None.*
- f) Corporate Objective: All.*

Recommendations:

- a) To consider the report on progress of Key Work Targets and Performance Indicators for 2005/06.*
- b) To consider the report on progress of the Three Parks Corporate Action Plan.*
- c) To note the progress and issues relating to achieving Green Dragon level 3 by 31st March 2006.*
- d) That the statutory duty of identifying and annually assessing risks be carried out as follows:*
 - Identify risks and draw up an action plan to address these risks*
 - Actions to be prioritised against resources*
 - Actions to be incorporated into the Performance Management Database*
 - Actions to be monitored through the Performance Management Team.*
- e) That the Whole Authority Analysis Task and Finish Group be disbanded with progress or outstanding issues being reported to Corporate Resources Committee.*
- f) That these procedures be continued until the Review of Committee structures is completed.*

Contact Officer: For further information contact Audrey Oakley on 01874 624437.

28.0 OTHER BUSINESS

Such other business as is, in the opinion of the Chairman of such urgency as to warrant consideration.

SCHEDULE OF CORRESPONDENCE

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. Such other correspondence as, in the opinion of the Chairman, is of such urgency as to warrant consideration.