

Managing Large Numbers of People in the Coast and in the Countryside.

A project taken from the Action Plan for the Wales Environment Strategy.
Delivered by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority 2007-8

The purpose of the grant from the Assembly Government was to carry out a series of pilot projects to help improve the management of large numbers of people using the coast and the countryside in Pembrokeshire.

Based on the South West Wales Recreation Audit (2005 coordinated by the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum) we carried out an internal scoping exercise to look at recreational issues in the National Park. This was then used as a basis of our expenditure. (The same document also fed into the early stages of the Local Development Plan.)

We identified a series of stages in the management of recreation:

1. How people get information and make decisions/choices
2. How they get to the recreation site
3. What they do on site and how this is managed
4. How we evaluate impact on the resource

We decided to use the majority of the project funding to invest in local partnerships, building on existing good relationships. The list of projects and partners is shown in the table below. Funding allocated is specified in a separate claim letter.

STAGE	PROJECT	LEAD AGENCY
1	Recreation Website and pre-visit information through Marine Code	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum/PCNPA
1	Promote awareness of access opportunities including less able access	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
2	Promotion project for coastal access buses	Greenways Partnerhip
3	Better Management of People and Dogs	Pembrokeshire County Council
3	Freshwater West Ranger	National Trust
3	Beach Activity Team, Broadhaven Beach	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
3	Beaches leaflet for 2008	PCNPA/PCC
4	Base line impact survey on the south St Davids peninsula	Twr Y Felin Outdoor Activity Centre
4	Contribution to Development of Recreation Audit	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum / Recreation Audit Group

The new interactive recreation website builds on and applies the information gained through the South West Wales Recreation Audit. We will not see the potential merits of this until 2008 (In fact the scale and complexity of this means that the site is still under construction in Nov 2008) but we have designed the site to make it easy to gain information on coastal recreation opportunities, to promote good practice in these activities and to encourage use of sustainable transport in reaching the venue. The website will be linked closely with the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter and Marine Code websites and these were also supported by funding the development of leaflets to extend the scope of the Marine Code from Operators to the wider public.

The second project builds on the WAG funded disabled access project from 2006 and promotes many of the inland paths available to both able and less able users. We will distribute folders with less-able walking opportunities to individuals and groups (many of whom we are already in touch with through our Flexible Programme of tailored activities for people with disabilities). We contributed to the production of 1000 copies of a walking CD/rom with 200 circular walks and OS maps, disabled and easy access walks and the new National Trail Website. These will also be distributed to Youth Hostels and other accommodation providers, the local health partnerships, local communities and TICs. With some 70% of our visitors saying they undertake recreational walking and 84% of our local communities having a good circular walk within 500 m, we expect to see increased levels of use of these excellent facilities.

The Pembrokeshire Greenways Project has been enormously successful and this research shows that once people have tried the buses they tend to use them again. The hurdle is the first journey. To attempt to address this issue a well publicised free ticket initiative was organised on all of the Greenway Coach routes to be available on the days of lowest passenger numbers. The project was very successful despite a poor year for weather with numbers increasing by 37.5% in August, 31.6% of this being attributed to this initiative. Routes that were well published in the local paper did especially well.

In Pembrokeshire the main area that experiences serious visitor pressure is the Coast, particularly the beaches. Four management projects to trial solutions to particular problems on particular beaches were selected.

Funding to increase dog wardens and the promotion of dog byelaws was offered to the County Council and this has helped to improve working contacts and understanding. In the South a seasonal National Trust Warden was employed at Freshwater West; a remote but increasingly busy surf beach with a fine sand dune system which is under pressure from campers, bonfires and vehicles. On Broadhaven, a resort beach on St Brides Bay a series of activities and events were arranged to provide a low key official presence on the beach that could seek to address behaviour and information. Using these staff as a management tool as well as providing a better product for the local tourism trade. Of these the most successful was certainly the Freshwater West Warden with a great deal of community and visitor recognition and support. The NPA offered the National Trust (who own half the site) funding

to help continue a seasonal post in 2008 but lack of resources meant that this did not take place. In each project there was an attempt to provide a longer term benefit from the project. The dog management project has purchased promotional material for 2008, a beach wheelchair will make access onto Broadhaven beach easier in 2008 and removal of a wartime barbed wire dump in the sand dunes will make access easier and safer at Freshwater West. Stemming from these three projects a trial beaches leaflet to inform users of some of the issues associated with beach use has been produced and this will be trialled in 2008 and 2009. The beaches pilots have been used as the basis of a Convergence Fund bid into the Visit Wales Coastal Tourism project.

Finally the question of whether the recreation which we have is sustainable and whether we have capacity for expansion is a very relevant current issue. Some funding was used to improve the accessibility of the Pembrokeshire Recreation Audit and a project to obtain more detailed information about levels of use and impacts was set up with Twr y Felin, one of the outdoor activity centres which is most supportive of the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group which looks to provide training and information to encourage recreational use in a truly sustainable way.

A heavily used stretch of coast along the south side of the St Davids peninsula was surveyed in detail to ascertain any physical impacts of recreation to the seaward side of the Coast Path. These included changes in vegetation and foreshore, cliff-top erosion and associated damage to vegetation as well as the presence of physical factors such as belay stakes and other permanent fixings. At the same time the outdoor instructors were interviewed and reported on levels of use of different activity types along the coast. Surprisingly in a national park this is one of the first such detailed surveys of use and impacts across the whole spectrum of recreation, and acts as a pilot for future survey work.

The merit of pilot studies is that they evaluate both potential and opportunities. From these nine pieces of work we can expect to see at least 4 providing potential benefit into 2009-10 and it is only when that season is complete that we will be able to evaluate them. One will inform the continual development of the Greenways project and we hope that at least two will be used as a pilot in a Convergence Fund bid under the Coastal or Sustainable Tourism Project funding.

The National Park Authority and the partner organisations who were involved in these projects valued the opportunities which additional funding provided. Several of the projects generated detailed reports of findings are available on the PCNPA website.

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