REPORT OF THE BIODIVERSITY OFFICER

SUBJECT: 2015 CHOUGH SURVEILLANCE REPORT.

1. Please note that the attached report is CONFIDENTIAL. Due to the sensitive nature of the information contained within the report it should not be circulated or published in any format.

2. The surveillance programme covers three Special Protection Areas (SPA's), Ramsey & St. David's Peninsula Coast SPA, Skomer & Skokholm SPA and Castlemartin Coast SPA which have Chough as a feature of European importance. The results are used to assess the conservation status of these designated sites for the purposes of National and European reporting.

3. The Chough population in the National Park has been the subject of annual surveillance since the early 1980's. The monitoring scheme reports on the numbers and distribution of breeding pairs of Choughs and productivity (number of chicks fledged) within the National Park.

4. The report notes an additional eight occupied territories in 2015 when compared to 2014 and a higher number of pairs with eggs and young in the nest. Overall productivity (birds fledging chicks) was slightly lower than in 2014 due to late stage failures, possibly due to predation or weather impacts. The number of non-breeding birds was estimated at between 65 and 76 birds the highest for many years. In conclusion, the population continues to show good signs of recovery since the severe winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11.

5. Choughs in Pembrokeshire rely entirely on coastal slope vegetation and low input farmland in the coastal hinterland. Choughs are a major driver for the authority's nature conservation work on the coast and vegetation and grazing management carried out as part of our 'Conserving the Park' programme is critical for maintaining suitable foraging habitat for these birds. Management for Chough benefits a range of other coastal species therefore this iconic bird acts as an ideal 'flagship' species for our conservation work in the park.

RECOMMENDATION:
Members are requested to note the Report.