

REPORT OF THE DISCOVERY TEAM LEADER

SUBJECT: AN UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITY OF YOUTH RANGERS IN AND AROUND PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL PARK COMBINED WITH A PRESENTATION FROM MEMBERS OF THE GROUP.

Purpose of Report

To provide National Park Authority members with information regarding Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's Youth Rangers group and to allow participating young people to give their perspective on involvement with the group.

Introduction/Background

The National Park Authority has worked with young people across a range of National Park related activity over many years, however the Youth Ranger scheme is the first where recruitment, delivery and developmental support is provided by PCNPA staff.

Youth Rangers take part in full day or overnight sessions every month, gaining a unique experience of the special qualities of the National Park and undertaking diverse activities from practical conservation to supporting the NPA's presence at numerous events.

The scheme was conceived as a way to give further opportunities to young people from organisations involved in the Lottery funded Your Park project, allowing them to return to their own and other organisations equipped to sustain motivation and momentum in using the outdoors. There are currently Youth Rangers from Future Works, Elliots Hill and from Plas Dwbl, CYPRO, Pembrokeshire Youth Service and pupils from several local secondary schools. The Youth Rangers scheme has also provided opportunities for young people interested in careers related to the natural environment to gain valuable experience and knowledge.

Youth Rangers are able to act as 'young ambassadors' for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, providing a young person's perspective, sharing their experiences and raising the profile of the National Park as a valuable asset for young people.

At present there are 16 active Youth Rangers between the ages of 16-25. A further 19 young people have taken part in Youth Rangers since the group started in January of 2013.

One of the most important aspects of the Youth Rangers experience is the involvement of participants in all aspects of the group – from working on funding opportunities to planning the programme of activities. Regular feedback and evaluation allows young people and adult leaders to better understand the purpose of activity and relate it to the experiences of those involved.

The Youth Rangers produced a statement in March of this year which reflects the thoughts of the group on their motivation in being part of the group and also provides some ideas for the future involvement of Young People in and around the National Park. *The statement is included as supporting material to this paper.*

Comparisons

Locally, whilst there are no groups comparable to Youth Rangers (providing the mix of volunteering and engagement activity for this age range) other groups including the scouts and guides offered the opportunity to take part in outdoor activity, but not in the focussed way provided by Youth Rangers. Similarly, there are opportunities for environmental volunteering in Pembrokeshire through (for example) participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme or joining adult volunteer groups with the National Trust or Wildlife Trust. However none of these opportunities provide the same focussed approach as that provided by Youth Rangers.

Other National Park Authority's support young people's groups, managed in a similar way to Youth Rangers. Whilst some of these engage with young people of a similar age range to that of Youth Rangers in Pembrokeshire, the majority work with a younger age range – typically from 14 to 18 years old.

In 2015, Pembrokeshire's Youth Rangers won 'Volunteer Group of the Year' as part of the National Parks UK Volunteering Awards.

Options

The Youth Rangers group is co-ordinated through the Discovery Team, with the support of a volunteer youth leader. The group also has additional help from adult volunteers and the support of both Area and Discovery Rangers in delivering the programme of activity.

The membership of the group is diverse with young people drawn from a range of backgrounds. Some participants have recognised additional needs, whilst others are in higher education. The motivation for being part of the group varies, but all share a love and enjoyment of the outdoors and in particular the National Park.

Financial considerations

The resource implications of managing and running the group's activity are significant, but based on present levels of activity, they are within the resources available to the Discovery Team, provided volunteer support and the contribution of other rangers continues to be forthcoming. For the group to expand and develop (in line with some ideas put forward by those associated with Youth Rangers) there will be a need to identify additional resources/funding. There are several possible external sources and these are being explored at present, these include the Heritage Lottery Fund's Young Roots fund.

Risk considerations

There are few risks associated with this area of work, although the public perception of the Authority as one that engages with and listens to its communities of young people can only be enhanced by the existence of Youth Rangers.

Compliance

Youth Rangers addresses key areas of NPA policy and corporate objectives as identified in the new Corporate Plan.

Human Rights/Equality issues

Youth Rangers provides targeted services for young people between the age of 16 and 25. Membership of the group is open to an audience with a wide range of abilities and from diverse backgrounds, as is evidenced by the existing membership. The aims of Youth Rangers is supported by the objectives in PCNPA's Strategic Equality Plan.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

Youth Rangers engage with the natural environment as part of their activity, increasing their understanding and knowledge of local biodiversity. There are no discernible negative impacts or conflicts with the National Park Management Plan.

Welsh Language statement

Youth Rangers does not at present deliver a service in the Welsh language. The recruitment of a Welsh speaking volunteer Youth Leader would improve service in this area.

Conclusion

Youth Rangers represents an important strand of work for the Authority in demonstrating a commitment to 'equality of opportunity' with regard to the services provided. The young people already involved in Youth Rangers provide a voice for this age group in terms of their views on the National Park and the work of the Authority.

Youth rangers can provide a starting pointing for a much wider conversation with young people which has the potential to make a significant contribution to the sustainable management of the protected area.

Recommendation

Members are asked to Note the report.

Background Documents

DRAFT Youth Rangers Statement 2016

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Youth Ranger Statement

Introduction

This statement comes from our discussion held by Pembrokeshire Youth Rangers at Clynyfw, North Pembrokeshire on March 12th, 2016

We are 14 young people aged 16-25 from communities across Pembrokeshire. We all partake in volunteering once a month, and are involved in a variety of activities to support our National Park. There are many reasons why as a team we wanted to partake in this volunteering. We believe the heritage of our National Park is very important and believe it is exciting and fun to be involved. This is probably the leading factor of why we take part. However, thinking a bit deeper we propose that the activities we are involved in give us a better understanding of the place in which we live, making us positive and giving us a greater connection to our community. This gives us a sense of identity, and by taking responsibility in our area, we feel a greater pride to our National Park.

One barrier that we believe is clearly reducing the number of young people using the National Park is 'screen culture'. Many young people today are staying indoors due to the influx of technology and materialism. We also believe that lack of awareness has a massive impact on the usage of our National Park. Some young people may have never had the chance to try such activities and therefore don't know how they could benefit from them. We think that current marketing via social media, posters or magazines such as 'Coast to Coast' is not effectively reaching many young people. There are also many barriers around the cost of getting outdoors, and issues regarding rurality and lack of transport. There are ways around these barriers however.

Young people may be convinced to go outdoors more, and to participate in the activities that the National Park provides in many ways. We have lots of ideas on how this can be done. A great idea that we had is to educate young people in what is required. We have thought about working with a wider range of young people, giving them a range of experience and meeting a wider range of young people, who's lives are greatly affected by the outdoors, such as National Park workers, outdoor instructors (e.g. TYF) tourism workers and so on. We want to show what we believe is great about our Park amongst other young people, helping them understand the importance of the Park and the Great Outdoors.

We would also like to work out a better way to market the National Park, creating a 'snowball effect' whereby our young people can encourage other young people to become involved. We also want to reach decision makers in the National Park and other organisation such as the County Council, to change the way that they work.

This year we will be supporting the National Park at various events including the Really Wild Festival, the County Show and we are all looking forward to our work party weekend trip to Skomer Island and wild camping to support the National Park 'Apple Day' event in October at St Brides Orchard.

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We would also like to work out a better way to market the usage of the National Park to young people. By doing this we may succeed in this creating a 'snowball effect' whereby our young people that are involved can encourage other young people to become involved and also other decision makers in the National Park such as other organisation such as the County Council, to change the way that they work. We propose that finishing our work by a celebrity event such as a young people festival will get everyone involved, have fun and generate a greater awareness , across the county.