

REPORT OF HEAD OF PARK DELIVERY

SUBJECT: ASSESSING THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL PARK WARDEN SERVICE

1. Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update and assessment of the work of the National Park Authority Warden Team in managing the facilities and assets of the organisation and delivering a commissioned programme of practical work for the Park Direction Team.

2. Introduction

The Authority went through a restructuring process in 2012 which moved the main directorate structure from a Conservation and Planning directorate and an Enjoyment and Understanding one to a structure defined by function – with one directorate for Development Management and Direction (who set the policy and define the priorities for work) and another for Discovery and Delivery. The Warden Team was brought together from several subject-based teams and put into three area-based teams, all located within the Delivery group. (Staff tree Appendix 1). This brought the advantage that nearly all of the practical work of the Authority came within the same team ensuring that a comparable approach to working was applied in each team. It also removed the disadvantages linked to the potential of having multiple vehicles and crews arrive at the same site to do different tasks.

It is perhaps worth defining the difference between a Warden and a Ranger because it is not a standard distinction across all of the National Parks. In Pembrokeshire, a warden spends the majority of work time on practical tasks, whether conservation and woodland work, property management of National Park sites (including the land around Castell Henllys and Carew Castle) or (the majority of the work) in managing access facilities; the Coast Path, definitive rights of way or permissive paths.

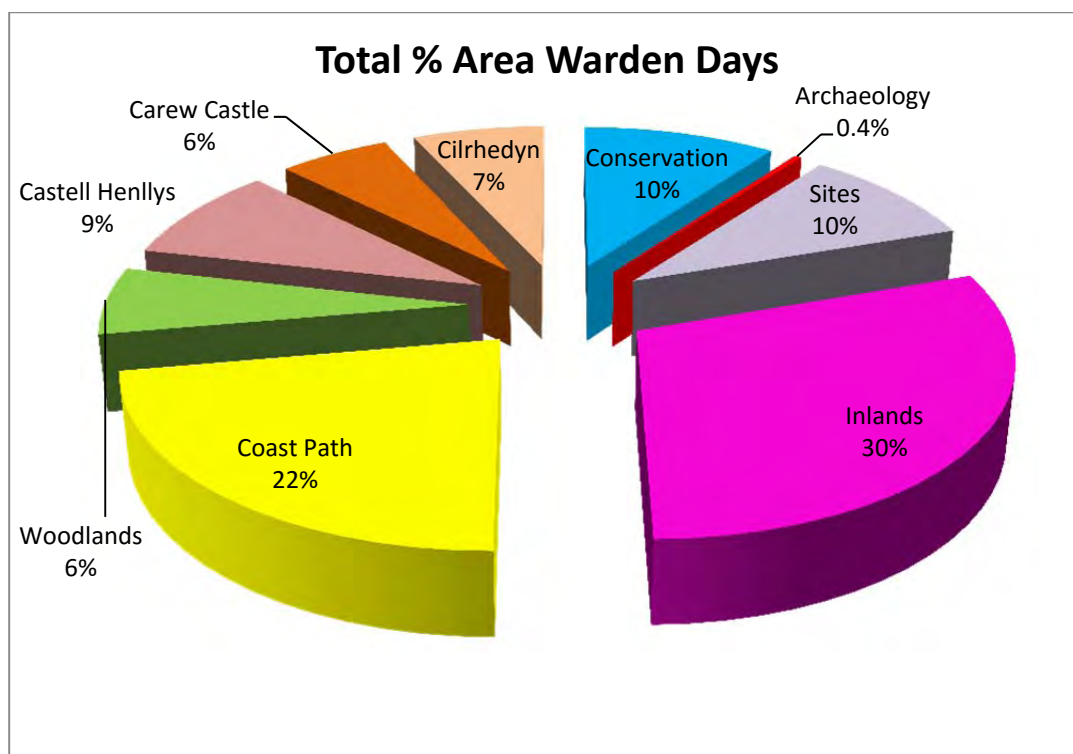
The warden role does involve a good deal of landowner liaison and visitor contact but the main focus is on planning and carrying out practical work. While the Ranger may do any of these tasks, their main focus is on dealing with people – community liaison, working with schools, volunteers or to address recreational impacts. Both jobs are complimentary and mutually dependant and it is essential that the two teams work very closely together.

3. What do the Warden Teams do?

The work of the warden teams is split between management of the Coast Path and inland rights of way, conservation and woodland work including the transport of grazing animals, management of NPA sites and properties. The proportion of each class of work varies between the three areas but the broad proportional

division is shown in the chart below. Amounts of work vary from year to year but since 2012 the proportions of work have remained broadly similar though specific initiatives may make changes in individual years.

Chart of how the Warden Work was allocated between work areas 2015-6



The scale of the job

The table below gives an idea of the scale of work carried out by the warden teams. A great deal of the work involves vegetation control – probably more is done here than in any other National Park because of a combination of low altitude, mild growing conditions and high fertility. Many paths are cut two or three times per year.

	North	West	South	Total
Coast Path maintained (Km)	43	162	107	312 (inc high tide routes)
Inland Path maintained (Km)	301	193	242	736 Km of PROW
Number of NPA owned sites maintained	11 sites & 7 Woods	20 sites 1 wood	15 sites & 2 Woods	43 Sites & 10 Woods
Acreage of NPA sites maintained	265 acres	235 acres	246 acres	873 acres
Number of Woodlands with commissioned work 2015-6	10	0	1	11
Acreage of NPA woodland	219 acres	7 acres	10 acres	
No. of Nature Conservation sites	39	25	17	81

	North	West	South	Total
with Warden tasks 2015-6				
Number of archaeological tasks allocated	2	0	0	2
Total number of 2016-7 commissioned tasks*	191	67	64	322

*N.B. This is not an especially useful figure because the scale of an individual ‘task’ can be so variable e.g. one task could be fixing a drinking trough (important when there are livestock on the land) which could take a very short time to complete, on the other hand, conservation burning in the north (again one task) took 39 warden days last year.

4. Resources and Costs

There are currently 19 full-time permanent wardens split into three area teams, each with an Area Warden Manager. The areas are shown below in Appendix 2. There are nine wardens in the north and five each in the south and west. Each team also has one or two trainees and a similar number of seasonal staff. The additional wardens in the north are there because the majority of the NPA owned woodland is in the north and that area has both the largest mileage of inland paths and the greatest number of delegated conservation tasks. The north team is located at Cilrhedyn and the centre there is also managed by the North Area Warden Manager. Each team operates out of a well-located and equipped depot which is shared with the ranger teams.

The total budget of the three Warden teams (including managers) is £689,000 of which 17% is paid for by the Coast Path grant. The majority of the budget is accounted for by salaries and related on-costs including travel and equipment / machinery (89%) with the remainder being accounted for by materials costs, property budgets and contractor costs (11%).

How do we evaluate the work of the wardens?

We can look at the work of any staff in a number of ways, for this paper we have chosen to ask the following questions.

- a) Are we doing the right jobs?
- b) Are we doing those jobs well?
- c) Are there any ‘better’ (In terms of cost effectiveness, engagement of users, protection of the special qualities) ways to do the jobs?

a) Are we doing the right jobs?

About 70% of the work of the warden team comes in the form of commissioned work from the Direction team – The warden teams then report back the work completed and rely on Direction to monitor the outcomes of our work and to adjust priorities to ensure the best use of resources. At the same time the wardens and their managers are all experienced in countryside management and are able to have an input into

work to ensure that the best results can be gained from the work done. The warden teams are expected to bring more to the process than a simple completion of the work order – they should be looking to add value where they can and to challenge work which is not cost effective or well defined. In essence, the managers are part of the checks and balance process. At the end of the day, however, the commissioning staff have the overview necessary to ensure that work done fits into corporate priorities.

At Carew and Castell Henllys the wardens that traditionally worked to the site managers now work as part of the area team. The work programmes are agreed with the site managers. This has advantages for the site manager in that more staff and equipment are available for tasks which need a bigger team and there is potential to cover sick leave and holidays more easily. It does cause frustration as well in that, at peak times, the demand on wardens, vehicles and equipment for path and conservation cutting may coincide with the busiest time on sites for events – resolving priorities is not always easy. In practice Carew has been funded from the south warden budget to have a short summer seasonal post to do many of the on-site jobs while the Castell Henllys Warden has remained fairly full time on the site though working to the north warden manager. It has been especially helpful for the Castell Henllys team to have access to the full warden team during the past few years of site development; although that has meant that the time allocated to Castell Henllys has significantly increased in recent years.

For the remainder of the work, the tasks are self-identified and allocated within the team. This may be because there is no direct 'Client' in Direction - for example, many of the Park's properties have the Area Warden Manager as the property manager so he identifies the work needed and allocates it within the team. In other situations the work is simply too widespread to be allocated by a single specialist officer. On the inland rights of way for example, most of the identification of path work comes either from surveys carried out by area staff or volunteers or because the teams themselves identify work for the winter during the summer cutting visits.

The jobs that the teams do are well defined to meet path standards or conservation prescriptions and the access prescriptions led by the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. There is always the question of the balance between work areas and this is defined partly by the amount of work needed and partly by corporate priorities. In most cases there is more work required than the teams have capacity to complete, so it is a matter of trying to keep each of the clients and the local community well served. Managers have to constantly prioritise regarding public safety, animal welfare and site presentation work.

b) Are we doing those jobs well?

Here again the majority of monitoring of outcomes is done by the Park Direction Team using information on completion of jobs fed back into the system from the Wardens. The majority of work done is on the access side – management of rights of way, the Coast Path and a network of permissive paths. Maintenance is prioritised to focus first on the Coast Path (Greatest use / external funding / highest risk) and link paths, the promoted paths, then paths that we know are of importance to users and the local community. Members have recently received a presentation from the

Access Officer on the rights of way survey and the very positive response of users is a good indication of success.

In terms of the condition of the network, the percentage of paths open and available for use has stabilised at around 86%. This means that the managed network (Including Coast Path and Permissive Paths) has grown from 705km at the time of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan in 2007 to 964km today. The target set for 2017 in the plan was 885km. This has been a 27% increase in the network maintained with a broadly stable warden staffing level and some improvement funding from Welsh Government under the Rights of Way Improvement Fund. This means that the teams are fully stretched in maintaining the network, making it hard to take on new work even when that work is of high value for NPA objectives.

In terms of the management of Conservation sites and National Park owned sites, the Direction Team submitted their monitoring report in September 2016. The tone of this was very positive with many of the sites which are managed through the warden teams recording particular progress and an overall improvement in condition of the longer managed sites. The measures on Ffynnon show a steadily good result in terms of meeting management plan targets but there are situations where more work could be achieved with more warden time and resource.

In recent years the warden team have worked with the Rangers and the Discovery Team to take on a series of trainees. The initiative has been funded by the Heritage Lottery and has been in partnership with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park has taken on 5 trainees per year for the last three years and much of their work experience has been generated from working alongside experienced wardens. The trainees have been selected less for their actual skills and experience and more for their potential to benefit from the placement. This has meant that for the wardens working alongside them there have been significant supervision and training challenges and the output of the trainees in their early months has not always exceeded their costs in terms of supervision time. However of the ten who have completed their year's placement, 9 are in full time employment (all but one in landscape-related work), one has gone on to additional training studying conservation at Aberystwyth and one of this year's group has already left us to take up a role with the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. This project has the benefit of providing additional support for the warden teams once the trainees become well established and also providing local young people with the vital step onto the employment ladder that so many really need.

c) Are there any 'better' ways to do the jobs?

It is always worth looking at whether there are ways to do the job more effectively than the present system but the definition of 'better' comes from a complex mix of judgements. The table below attempts to look at the options to using a warden team to carry out the work and while the rating for any individual box in the table can be questioned the decision is clearly not a simple one. The factors which argue strongly in favour of an in-house warden team as opposed to other options are.

1. The amount of machinery cutting required makes it much harder to get the work done by volunteers, landowners or the community. We have however

increased the amount of cutting we do with contractors to bring more flexibility at peak times.

2. The importance of close relationships with landowners – the vast majority of our rights of way and most of our conservation work takes place on other peoples’ land (The NPA owns less than 1% of the park) a warden who may be working for twenty years in a single patch can develop good relations and a high level of trust. This is important for getting the work done but also as a ‘face’ for the Park Authority.
3. The need for a consistent approach and a timely response to complaints. These two elements, especially on the Coast Path mean that a park-wide team working to a consistent standard across the path network has many advantages.
4. The need to carry out the work is a landscape which is sensitive in terms of habitats, historic and visual landscape. The experience of the wardens also means that many of them can present that landscape in response to visitor enquiries.
5. The size of the conservation equipment used matches the size of the sites and paths that we manage. Most farmers and contractors now all use equipment far too large for conservation management.

Are the alternatives to the present Warden Service ‘better’? – the ratings in the table below may be subject to debate but it is interesting how many variables make up the word ‘better’

Options	Price per unit	Durability of work	Reliability / certainty of work	Quality and a consistent approach	Protect NPA from claims	Closer links / better relations for NPA with community / Landowner	Closer links for NPA with users	Protect Special qualities	Flexibility	Management / Administrative cost
Contractors	Green	White	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Green	Red
Volunteers	White	Yellow	Yellow	White	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	White	Yellow
Pay other organisations NT, community councils,	Green	White	Red	Red	Green	White	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
PCC – return PROW delegation	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
Pay Landowner for PROW	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	White	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red
Single NPA warden Team	White	White	White	White	Yellow	Yellow	White	White	Yellow	Green

KEY

- Possibly better than present system
- Likely to be similar than present system
- May be worse than present system
- Likely to be worse than present system

The conclusion from this would be that while there may be cheaper ways to do any particular unit of work, the present system is the one which brings the most long term advantages and may well be more cost-effective over the longer term.

Financial, Risk and Compliance Considerations

The costs of the service are outlined above. A review is needed for the warden service provided at Carew, but, at present there is no other direct challenge to the present way of working although there is a change in the line management structure planned.

The compliance issues are mainly to do with health and safety and environmental legislation. The teams work on a wide variety of jobs, often in challenging locations, and many of the works have to have SSSI and other consents required. In addition the teams need to meet a high standard of user safety and satisfaction. The present resources enable us to meet these compliance standards though the new team leader being sought should bring new expertise in equipment and safety to the role.

The main risk is that if future budgets are reduced, we will either not be able to sustain the level of staffing or the level of machinery maintenance and materials. At that point hard decisions will have to be taken about the priorities for work both in terms of corporate purposes and corporate liabilities.

Another challenge is the planned move of Rangers to the Discovery team. It will be important that their links with the practical work of the Warden teams are not lost.

Human Rights/Equality issues

There are no Human Rights / equality issues that need to be considered as a result of this paper.

Biodiversity implications / Sustainability appraisal

The use of trained and very experienced directly employed wardens in small teams from local depots should bring the best possible results in terms of reducing environmental impacts and sustainable working. The majority of timber used is Wales-sourced and locally manufactured at Cilrhedyn and the team have recently changed working approaches to bring down annual mileage. For the warden team the mileage in 2016 was 15% lower than in the previous year reflecting changes in working and vehicle use practices.

The changes planned at Cilrhedyn may change the ability of the authority to easily source welsh-origin timber furniture but at present this forms the majority of the materials used. Wherever possible materials are reused or recycled.

In terms of biodiversity implications the work of the team is positive and even work like essential footpath cutting is carried out with an awareness and sensitivity to biodiversity implications.

Welsh Language considerations

The make-up of the warden teams to some extent reflects the communities which they serve - with most welsh speakers in the north and north-west and few if any in the south and south west. Two of the Warden Managers (West and North) are Welsh speakers, one a proficient learner, one first language. If we want to be able to offer a

truly bilingual service across the whole Park then as staff leave or retire, consideration will need to be given to recruiting more welsh speaking staff.

Conclusion

For many years the authority has prioritised the provision of practical work into the landscape of the National Park over other priorities. Even during the periods of the cuts of the last few years the work of the warden team has been seen as a priority and staffing, machinery and training investment has been maintained (one loss in 2015 from an assistant warden who left and has not been replaced). The operation of the Trainee programme has extended the work role of the warden teams.

The conclusion of the paper is that, if the delivery of a range of practical work in the National Park remains a high priority, then the constraints and opportunities support the continued employment of a significant and well-funded warden team into the future. This does not mean that there are not changes in structures, roles or in the use of other mechanisms such as better use of contractors or volunteers but it seems likely that for the foreseeable future the bulk of the work will require a well-trained and equipped warden team working closely with rangers and volunteers to use the best combination of resources to deliver the work.

RECOMMENDATION:

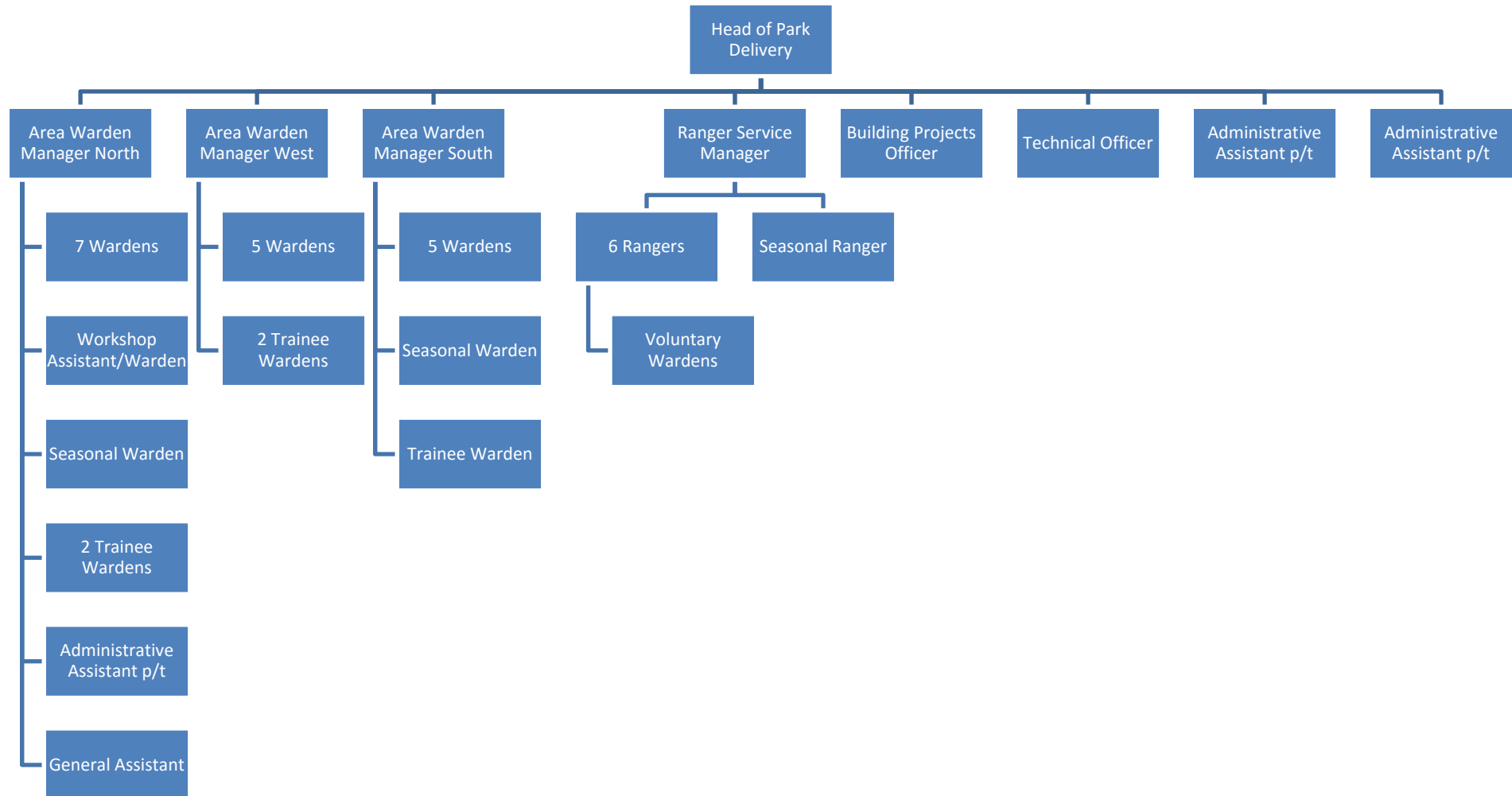
That Members receive this report for information and take the opportunity to raise any concerns about the service. Members are encouraged to contact their local Warden Manager or Ranger and arrange a day on site to learn more about the practical work of the Authority.

(For further information, please contact)

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Appendix 1 Staff Chart



Cyflawni Parc / Park Delivery

Tim y Gogledd / North Team

Rheolwr Wardeniad / Warden Manager: Geraint Harries

Wardeniaid / Wardens: Craig Mabe, Geoff Severn, Dyfan Evans

Wardeniaid Cynorthwyol / Assistant Wardens: Ainsley Corp, Ioan Evans, Mike Horton, Philip McCarthy, Jonathan Davies

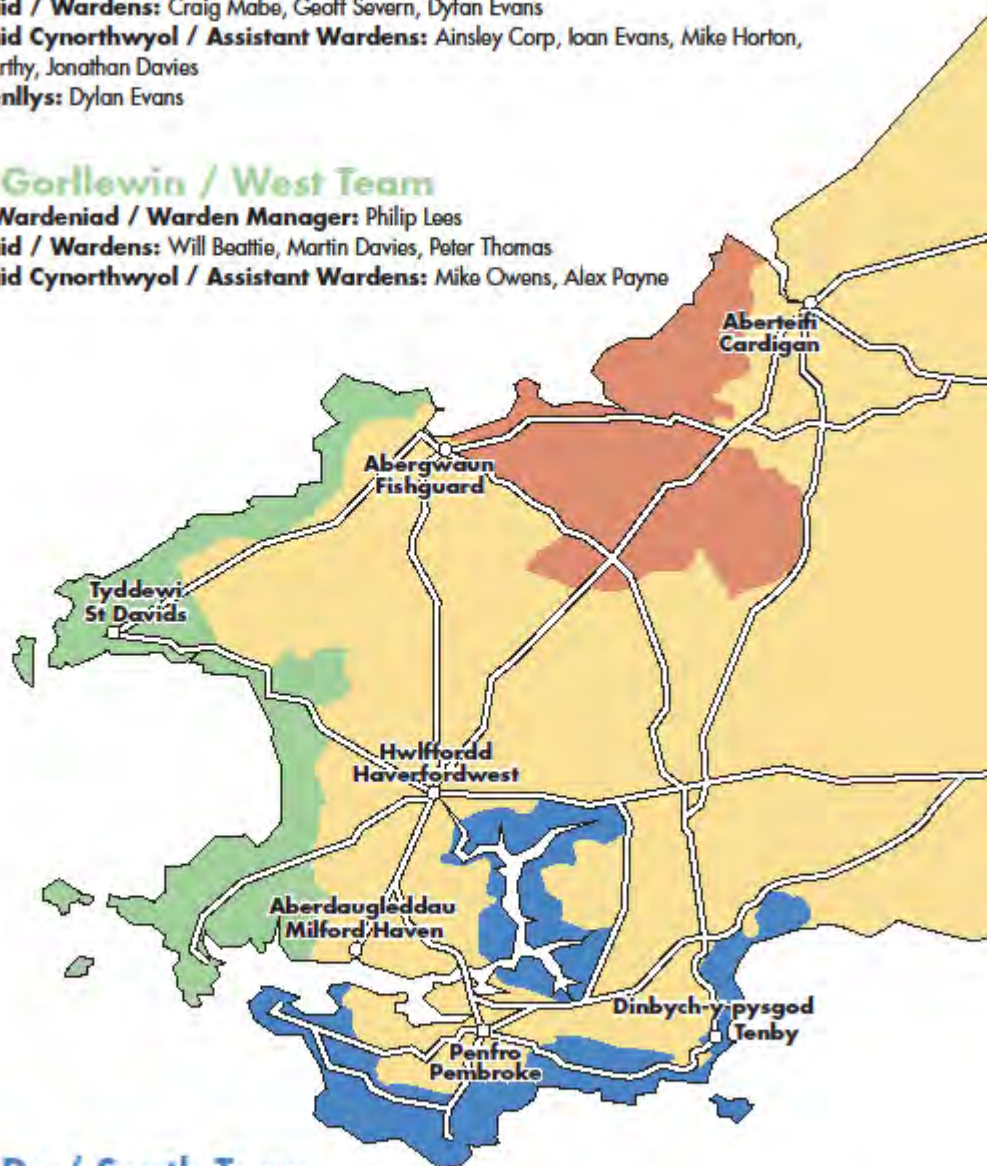
Castell Henllys: Dylan Evans

Tim y Gorllewin / West Team

Rheolwr Wardeniad / Warden Manager: Philip Lees

Wardeniaid / Wardens: Will Beattie, Martin Davies, Peter Thomas

Wardeniaid Cynorthwyol / Assistant Wardens: Mike Owens, Alex Payne



Tim y De / South Team

Rheolwr Wardeniad / Warden Manager: Tim Jones

Wardeniaid / Wardens: Mitch Hill, Owen Duffy, Dave Reynolds

Wardeniaid Cynorthwyol / Assistant Wardens: Neil Griffiths, Richard Hughes

**Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority**

