

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DELIVERY AND DISCOVERY**

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**SUBJECT: NEWPORT TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE**

**Purpose of Report**

To provide Members with an overview of the performance of the Park Authority's Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in Newport over the last three financial years.

**Background**



The National Park Authority has been involved in running a visitor centre in Newport since the 1980's. The original tourist information centre (TIC) was housed in the existing building which was then expanded in 2007/8 following the acquisition of the neighbouring cottage which allowed the Park authority to increase the range of visitor services on offer when the centre re-opened to the public in 2009.

The centre forms part of a wider network of TIC's across Pembrokeshire but is the only 'traditional' TIC facility presently run by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Authority (PCNPA). The TIC plays an important role in helping to interpret the special qualities of the National Park for residents and visitors to North Pembrokeshire and is ideally situated opposite the main car park in Newport.

### **Current Provision**

The current facility is open during the summer (until 31<sup>st</sup> October) from 10am – 5.30pm every day of the week except Sunday. Winter opening times are: Mon / Wed / Fri – 10.30am till 15.30 and Sat 10.30 till 13.30 – from November until April 1<sup>st</sup> or Easter whichever comes first.

The site is manned throughout the year by Newport Centre Assistant, Jane Davies, who has worked at Newport TIC for over 19 years with support from two Seasonal Centre Assistants during the summer months.

### **The Team**

- Visitor Services Manager (North) – Jenn Jones
- Newport Centre Assistant – Jane Davies
- Seasonal Staff x 2



### **What we do**

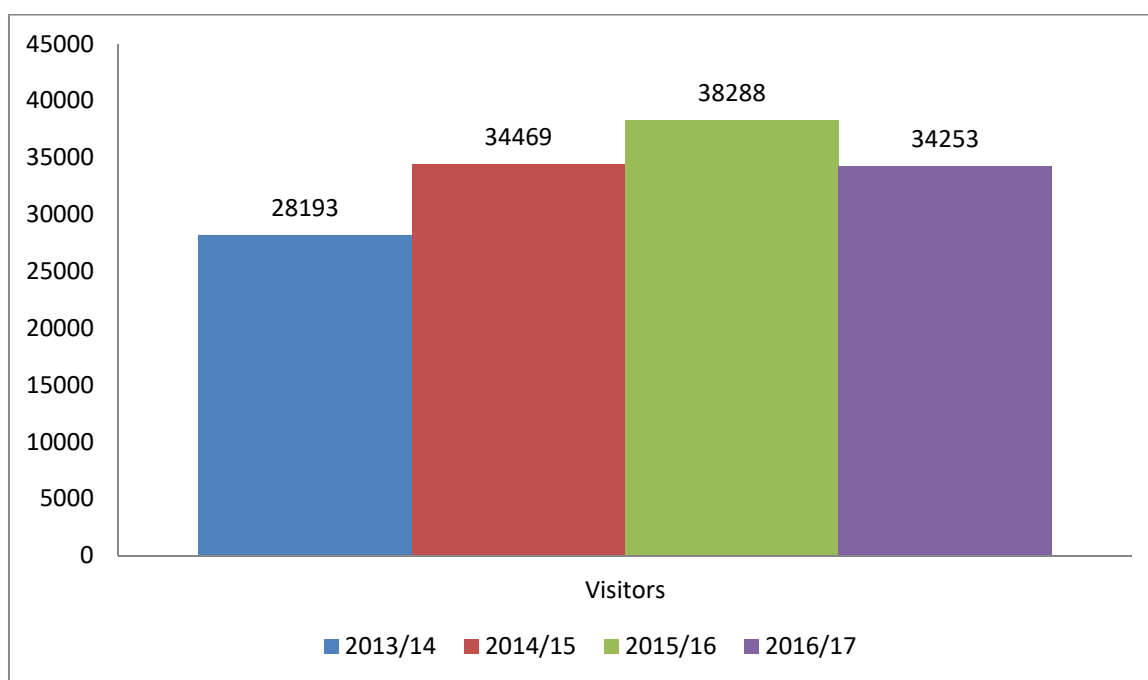
- Provide general tourist information to residents and visitors to Newport and the surrounding area.
- Act as ambassadors for the National Park and add value to people's visits to Newport by offering guidance and advice about the National Park.

- Interpret the National Park through a range of audio-visual displays and general display materials highlighting the special qualities of the North Pembrokeshire landscape.
- Offer a range of retail merchandise, with a specific focus on local literature and Welsh language books, which both celebrate and help visitors to explore the culture, landscape and heritage of North Pembrokeshire.
- Offer hot-desk facilities for staff based in North Pembrokeshire and a local meeting space for residents to discuss local issues with PCNPA staff.

## **Visitor Numbers**

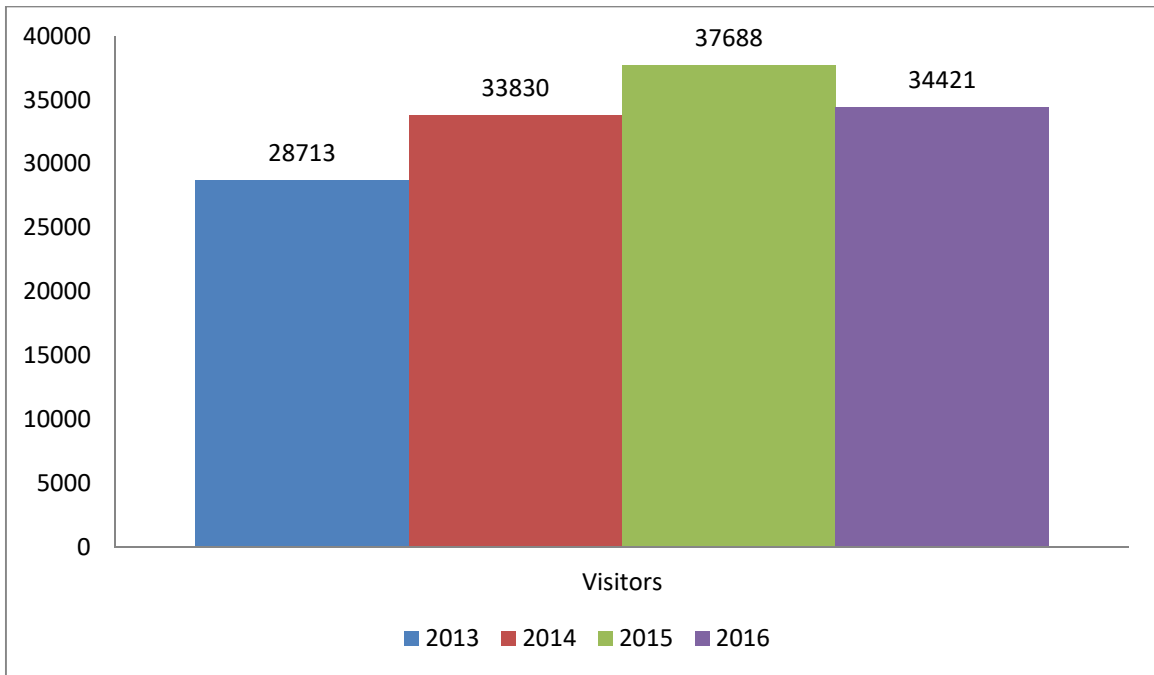
### **Visitor Numbers – Financial YTD (2013/14 – 2016/17)**

Based on financial year figures up to 2015/16 there has been a year on year increase in visitors to the centre. In 2015/16 there was a 35% increase in visitor numbers compared to the number of visitors in 2013/14. Please note there were no Easters in the financial year 2016/17 and this will have impacted on visitor numbers for 2016/17.

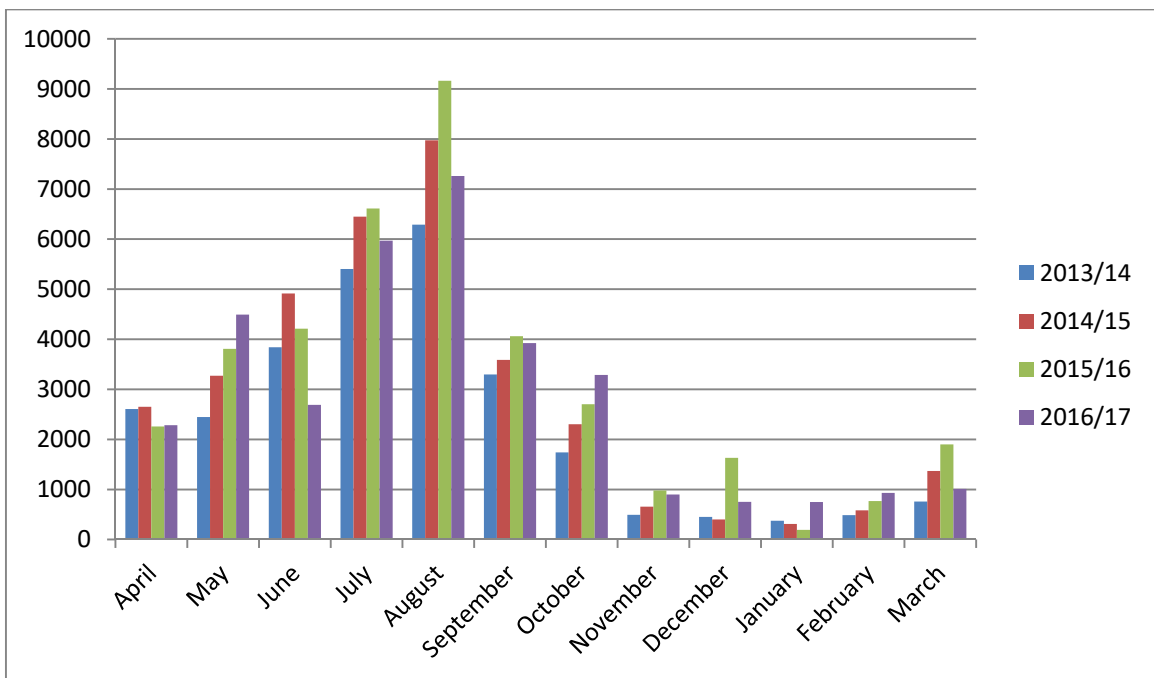


### **Visitor Numbers – Calendar YTD (2013 – 2016)**

Based on Calendar year figures up to 2015/16 (see overleaf) there has been a year on year increase in visitors to the centre. In 2015 there was a 31% increase in visitor numbers compared to the number of visitors in 2013. However in 2016 there was a 9% decrease in visitors compared to the previous year.



**Visitor Number – Monthly Distribution (2013/14 – 2016/17)**



**Finance**

The Newport TIC facility costs approximately £20K per year to run which offers extremely good value considering that it provides a year-round service for residents and visitors to Newport. The facility costs very little to run due to low staffing costs, low utilities costs and a high-performing retail offer. An overview of the running costs can be found below (see overleaf).

			2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Employee Costs			24	28	27
Other Direct Cost			38	43	39
<b>Total Costs</b>			<b>62</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>66</b>
Income					
	Merchandise sales		29	31	31
<b>Total Income</b>			<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Net Cost</b>			<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>
Income as a % of Operating Costs			46.77%	43.66%	46.97%
Includes Depn & Support Service costs			22	22	16
<b>Net Direct Costs</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>

### **Future Developments**

The future of Newport TIC will be determined at a future NPA meeting following the ongoing consultative work with Newport Town Council and local stakeholders. However, if the facility continues to operate as a Tourist Information Centre (TIC), run either by PCNPA and/or a third party, then the following priorities are recommended for consideration:

- Update interpretation at the centre and review ways that National Park promotion and wider interpretive information can be improved.
- Continue to provide visitor information and a selling / marketing platform for local artists and craft makers.
- Update and promote the 'Treasure Trail' that introduces visitors to the National Park and Newport.
- Continue to provide hot-desk facilities for PCNPA staff.

### **Other Opportunities (Staff Suggestions)**

- Be proactive in developing additional National Park and community use of the centre.
- Develop a social media presence and Trip Advisor account
- Develop and expand the merchandise ranges.
- Use the centre for local talks and small events and activities.
- Develop more activities, in conjunction with Rangers and the Discovery Team that leave from the centre and explore the local history, culture and landscape.

## **Conclusion**

Members are asked to note the report.

**Author:** *James Parkin – Director of Delivery and Discovery*

**Consulted:** *Jenn Jones – Visitor Services Manager (North Pembs)*  
*Jane Davies – Newport Centre Assistant*  
*Mair Thomas – Performance and Compliance Co-ordinator*  
*Richard Griffiths – Finance Manager*

## **APPENDIX 1 – Customer Experience**

There is currently an online petition to keep Newport Visitor Centre open which can be viewed by following this link:

<http://saveneportvisitorcentre.naeg.org.uk/index.htm>

The site contains many testimonials regarding the quality of the services at the Newport TIC. Below are some of the edited highlights although all comments relating to whether or not the building should remain open have been removed as this issue will be discussed at a future NPA meeting.

**Mrs. Shirley Wiatrowicz, Abergavenny.** 6 Aug 2017

*“We used the visitor several times when we had a fortnights holiday close to Newport in June this year. We popped in for information as well as an ice cream. It always had people in there being so handy by the car park.”*

**Toby Swift: St. Albans, Herts.** 30<sup>th</sup> July.

*“Our family has visited Newport every year for the past 5 years and we always use the Visitor Centre. There would be no other way to get as much help and information we need to make the most of our holiday.”*

**Sophie Allen. Bristol.** 27<sup>th</sup> July.

*“... a vital part of Newport and Pembrokeshire tourism!”*

**Debra Dalton. Manchester.** 26<sup>th</sup> June.

*“It's well used and is of huge benefit to the town, its visitors and residents alike. It's clearly popular as indicated by the higher footfall in comparison to other Visitor Centres and the staff are always helpful, friendly and kind. The centre should be seen as a jewel in the National Park crown....”*

**David Rees. Australia.**

*“Provides focus for visitors attracting people to the town and a vital strategic location for the Coastal Path users and North Pembrokeshire in general.*

*Hefyd mae'r Canolfan rhoi flas yr ardal mwy na Parc Genedlaethol yn Lleogr!”*

**Lorna Stanley. Crickhowell.**

*“I feel very strongly that Newport is a wonderful town and much should be done to encourage the tourist industry in North Pembrokeshire to flourish. I fully support the local author Brian John and 'Refresh Pembrokeshire'. As a frequent visitor I love the town. The tourist office is very helpful and a natural centre to draw visitors and impart useful information about walks, events and accommodation. I think more could be made of it and perhaps it could take on a more proactive role in encouraging visitors and supporting local events.”*

**David Evans. Winchester.** 19<sup>th</sup> March.

*“We have been coming to Newport for many years and still use the Visitor Centre - it is a real asset to the Village...”*

**Paul Naples. Cambridgeshire.**

*"We holiday in Parrog every year for 1 or 2 weeks and visit the Visitor Centre several times. It would be a real loss because it always has interesting information and I discover something new each time."*

**Michelle White. Nottingham**

*"Always go into the visitors centre - good source of local knowledge, great little gifts, and when holidaying a visitors centre is a must go to place..."*

**Emma Biddle. Brynberian.**

*"I work opposite the visitor center in Newport and it is always busy. Tourism is essential to the economy of the area and many local businesses benefit from having the visitor center to notify tourists of points of interest within the area."*

**Lynn Morgan, Crymych**

*"I use this centre with my minded children all the time in the summer months, and I send all my friends and visitors down there as well for information on the area."*

**Colin David Jones. Southampton.**

*"Newport is a lovely town and what better way to promote it, and I love going in the visitor centre..."*

**Mr Marsden, Crymych.**

*"I use the Information Centre to help promote my business in the area..."*

**Mansel Kedward, Crymych.**

*"Tourism is a vital source of income for North Pembrokeshire. The Newport Visitor and Information Centre is badly needed to enrich the visitor`s experience and increase the likelihood of a return visit or a recommendation to friends to come to Pembrokeshire."*