

REPORT OF HEAD OF PARK DELIVERY

SUBJECT: REQUEST FROM THE RNLI TO EXTEND THEIR EXISTING FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES ON NATIONAL PARK BEACHES

Purpose of Report

Members are asked to approve RNLI fundraising on three Park Authority-owned beaches and to extend the period of time that is available for fundraising activities by the RNLI.

Introduction/Background

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) is responsible for a substantial length of the coastline throughout Pembrokeshire via a range of freehold and leasehold arrangements. In most cases, PCNPA controls either the beach-head and/or the foreshore area. As a result, most organised beach activities that take place within Pembrokeshire require a licence or other formal permission from the Park Authority.

Over the years the Park Authority has been hesitant in allowing commercial and/or charity fund raising activities to take place on the County's beaches. The Authority's primary concern was that fundraising of this nature could detract from the National Park's special qualities and impinge on people's enjoyment of the spectacular beaches throughout the National Park.

However, in April 2008 the Park Authority agreed to make an exception for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and granted permission for the charity to provide an information and fundraising presence on some beaches in Pembrokeshire for a limited period and only on a trial basis.

This decision, made by the National Park Authority in 2008, was a change to a longstanding policy of resisting commercial and charity fundraising activities on beaches but was accepted because of the vital role that the lifeguard service of the RNLI provides and the opportunity to impart practical beach safety information to the general public. The initial trial period was deemed to be a success when the National Park Authority (NPA) considered the matter at subsequent meetings in 2009 and 2011.

The RNLI has again contacted the Park Authority seeking permission to extend their existing beach activities to include fundraising teams (of two staff) being based on a beach entry point at Whitesands, Poppit and Newport beaches between 30th May to 7th September. The Authority previously granted permission for the RNLI to undertake fundraising activities between 9th April and 26th June (weekends and bank holidays) and between 2nd July and 18th September.

In the past the RNLI have stressed that *“although regular support is the principal goal, the fundraising team also deliver key beach safety messages - ‘Swim between the flags’ and ‘always swim at a life-guarded beach’”* and they feel that their professional and tactful approach helps to raise awareness of the lifeguards, helps to make beaches safer and helps to offset the costs of life-guarding for partner organisations such as Pembrokeshire County Council.

Comparisons

Whilst fundraising activities take place at a large number of beaches throughout the UK it is felt that uninterrupted access and enjoyment of the beaches throughout the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park is one of the county’s unique selling points. The quality of the beach experience in Pembrokeshire is enjoyed by just about every visitor to the County and is, therefore, vital to the tourism industry. It is therefore important that commercial and/or charitable activities are sensitively managed and do not erode the visitor experience.

However, the RNLI provide an important role in managing beach safety that, if withdrawn, would need to be funded by other local service providers. In addition, the reputation of Pembrokeshire beaches as being both clean and safe is equally vital to the visitor economy and, to this end, the RNLI play an important role that keeps the beach experience in Pembrokeshire competitive when compared with other destinations in the UK.

For the above reasons Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) remain supportive of the RNLI’s beach presence and currently authorise the RNLI’s fundraising activities on beaches under PCC’s management control.

Options

The basic options in responding to the RNLI’s request are as follows:

- Remove or reduce consent for use of NPA beaches
- Keep status quo of limited number of days on limited beaches
- Agree to all or part of the RNLI’s request – perhaps focus on most ‘commercial beaches’ e.g. Whitesands,
- Agree to all or part of the RNLI’s request but add specific conditions to carry PCNPA promotional materials.

Financial considerations

There is no charge made by PCNPA in allowing the RNLI to undertake fundraising activities at key beach sites. However, it needs to be recognised that the presence of the RNLI helps to subsidise the lifeguard service in the county which adds to the appeal of Pembrokeshire as a destination whilst reducing the burden on the public purse for providing such services (i.e. it’s an arrangement with reciprocal benefits).

Risk considerations

Risks-

- If the NPA refuses permission – we will need to have clear ground for doing so (e.g. what has changed?) and a decision of this nature could impact on the RNLI’s ability fund the lifeguard service on key beaches in Pembrokeshire. .
- If the NPA grants permission – we need to be clear that the RNLI will be receiving a commercial benefit of considerable value. Also, there may be a

danger of some beach users feeling that Pembrokeshire is becoming more 'developed' and 'commercialised' which could impact on their enjoyment.

Compliance

The Park Authority has previously resisted fundraising activities on its beaches (and adjacent car parks) but the RNLI were granted limited permissions in 2008 and 2011 respectively.

Human Rights/Equality impact issues

No evidence to suggest possible issues, although the 'right' to a person's quiet enjoyment of the beach could be impinged upon.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

No implications

Welsh Language statement

It is anticipated that the RNLI will supply bi-lingual safety information.

Conclusion

The RNLI have requested that the Park Authority grants formal permission to extend the number of weeks where the RNLI can fundraise on three of the beach-heads within PCNPA's control.

Recommendation

Members are recommended to give consent for the RNLI's fundraising activities to continue for a further 5 years (to December 2018) subject to three conditions:

- **That fundraising activities undertaken by the RNLI are limited to 28 days on any single site.**
- **That all promotional and safety literature provided by the RNLI is bi-lingual.**
- **That the RNLI staff involved in fundraising carry PCNPA promotional literature and receive training by the Authority's Discovery Team, as part of their formal induction, to promote safe use of the National Park.**

Background Documents

- ❖ Face-to-Face (F2F) Beach Fundraising Campaign Brief 2008 – Original RNLI proposal
- ❖ NPA report from Recreation Management Officer outlining initial proposal April 2008
- ❖ NPA 2nd April 2008 <F:\Committee meetings\2008\NPA 2 April\RNLI.doc> when authority agreed initial consent.
- ❖ NPA 24th June 2009: [F:\Committee meetings\2009\NPA 24 June \(Ordinary meeting\)\RNLI Fundraising.doc](F:\Committee meetings\2009\NPA 24 June (Ordinary meeting)\RNLI Fundraising.doc) when authority agreed to extend consent
- ❖ NPA 30th March 2011: <F:\Committee meetings\2011\NPA 30 March\RNLI Requestcommittee.doc> when authority agree to extend consent

*Author: Charles Mathieson Head of Park Delivery
Consultees: Chris Payne PCC*