

# Talks progress on council take-over of visitor centre

NEWPORT Town Council will be taking over the running of the town's former visitor centre after the National Park Authority agreed to lease the site.

The building, which closed as a visitors centre in November last year, was initially

proposed to be sold on the open market.

Before going down that route it was agreed that the authority should invite local groups to make Community Asset Transfer applications.

Two expressions of interests came back - one from the

town council hoping to run tourism services in the building, and a second, which was deemed unsuitable, which proposed running a private nursery business from the premises.

The report to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority recommended approving the new lease of Bank Cottages, on Long Street.

A report to authority mem-

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bers stated: "The council have long advocated the importance of the subject building as a hub for the delivery of local public-facing services and an opinion that information to visitors should be available from the premises during the economically important summer visitor season via a traditional face-to-face approach."

Gary Meopham, the Estate officer who presented the report to the NPA said that the talks with the council had progressed smoothly.

"Since we last reported in March discussions have progressed extremely well," he said.

"I think the guidance in that report was that we should come back to members in six months and hopefully we should do that now within six weeks, which is really encouraging."

Mr Meopham said that the lease was now going back and forth between the solicitors to reach a final agreement.

The estate officer also suggested one amendment be made to the lease agreement to allow the Newport Town Council to sub-lease parts of the building to non-profit organisations.

The earlier report had said there should be a complete prohibition on this type of lease.

Mr Meopham said: "I don't have any report concerns to amend it slightly that within the terms of the lease the NPA should allow for subletting of parts to non-profit subject to the landlord's consent."

The report with the amendment was passed unanimously by the park members.