

29th October 2016

**Cllr. Mike James,
Chairman of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.**

Dear Councillor James,

We run a holiday letting business in Newport, Pembrokeshire.

We are very concerned and upset to hear that the National Park is proposing to close the Newport Visitor Centre.

This Centre makes a large contribution to the success of the local Tourist Industry. Our visitors find this centre extremely valuable and they almost always visit it and use it. We refer them to it. We get very positive comments about the fantastic support provided - a recent comment was about how well some visitors were advised of good places to see particular types of birds in the area.

While there is no doubt that many people increasingly use new technology to look things up and plan trips, there is no substitute for personal face to face contact and local knowledge. I don't object to you adapting to changing situations, but the fact is that the Newport Visitor Centre provides a facility that cannot be replicated any other way.

Closing this Centre will make North Pembrokeshire a less attractive place to visit and will damage the Tourist industry.

Recently we were on holiday in France. Almost every small town has its Visitor Centre, friendly, welcoming and helpful. Why are you not working to keep and preserve the few facilities that there are in the Park?

I do understand that you are under severe cost pressures and our government keeps cutting Public Services (something I strongly oppose). But the cost of running the Newport Visitor Centre, at about £20,000, is a tiny amount in terms of your overall budget. Surely you should be working with the local community to find ways to reduce the cost, but not close the Centre. For example, you could let out some of the space to the local library group.

I understand that the National Parks have a duty, by law, to "Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public". Visitor Centres make a strong contribution to this objective.

Closing them down, without an adequate and proven method of replacing them (and I don't believe your new plan will be anything like an adequate replacement – businesses will not have time or knowledge to take over the role) would seem to me to be in breach of your statutory responsibilities.

Likewise, I believe there is a legal requirement for an adequate period of consultation and consideration. The consultation was advertised as being to "discuss proposals to change the way that information services are delivered in Newport". Many people

will not have understood this was such an important consultation, thinking it is just some process discussion. In the short period you have given for consultation many people will not have any idea what is going on, even though they would have strong views about a closure.

Please work to keep Newport Visitor Centre open.

Yours sincerely,

Dr W B J Blake.

Erw Wen, Feidr Brenin, Newport, PEMBS