

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY****FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Public minutes of the meeting held at Grassington Town Hall on Monday, 14th November 2005.

**Present:**

Mrs A Brooks in the Chair.

W Fenten, Mrs N Grace, C Hammond, OJ Kendall, C Lis, Mrs D Millward, A Osborne and Mrs FG Ramsbottom.

**COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK**

**341. MINUTES****RESOLVED -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th August 2005, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**342. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No notifications of public questions or of the intention to make a statement had been received.

**343. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC****RESOLVED -**

That pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items of business listed in column 1 of the following table on the grounds that each involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph in column 2:

<u>Item No on the agenda</u>	<u>Paragraph No</u>
13	1, 7, 8 and 9
14	8 and 9

**344. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from D Ireton.

**345. DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

The following members declared personal, non-prejudicial interests in the following items for the reasons listed:

A Osborne – Item Nos 7 & 8 as an employee of Defra.

Mrs D Millward – item relating to Limestone Country Project – having worked on the project.

Mrs N Grace – item relating to Limestone Country Project – as her employer (National Trust) was a partner in the project.

**346. DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING**

None.

**347. FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT 2005/06: SECOND QUARTER TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Finance and Resources.

The Chairman congratulated the Head of Finance and Resources and other Heads of Departments, on the positive reaction of the Peer Review Group, who had recently visited the Authority, to the Authority's sound financial management.

Members, in noting the downturn in retail income, were informed that a report would be prepared for the next meeting of the Committee giving a more detailed report on the retailing operation.

A member referred to the Planning Delivery Grant (Appendix 2, page 6) and asked for further information about the level of grant that the Authority actually received, the level it could receive and comparisons with other National Park Authorities. He suggested that the information should be made available to the Working Group established by the Planning Committee to look at the performance of the planning service.

The member also referred to the above-profiled spend on members' car allowances (Appendix 3, page 9) and asked if there was any particular reason, such as more site visits, or less car sharing and if the position could be monitored.

The Chief Executive suggested that the concept of an organisation reviewing its own performance was unusual and, potentially, raised some governance issues. He stated that he would consider whether it would be more appropriate for the Audit and Review Committee to be undertaking the review of performance and, if necessary report to the November meeting of the Authority.

**RESOLVED –**

That, subject to member and officer comments being taken into account:

- (a) the report and the position against the 2005/2006 budget for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005 be noted;

- (b) the following proposals be approved:
- that £35k of the Opportunities Fund be retained to fund programmes in 2006/07;
  - of the remaining, £65k be utilised to fund projects from 2006/07 that can be bought forward into 2005/06; and
  - £43k remain unallocated.
- (c) the delegations set out in Appendix 6 of the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be noted.

### 348. **PROPOSED BUDGET 2006/07**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Senior Finance Officer.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to discuss the budget process itself. Concern was raised at the trend towards stand-still grant settlements and the potential impact of that on core costs, the bulk of which related to staff costs. It was pointed out that if less money was available to fund work on projects, there might need to be some consideration of staffing levels.

The Chief Executive acknowledged members' concerns and stated that a recent meeting of National Park Authority (NPA) Chief Executives had also considered the issue of grant settlements and how Authorities' concerns at potential hardship and/or damage to protected landscapes should be raised with Government.

The Head of Park Management informed members that he had analysed the Authority's staff costs against projects in comparison to those of other NPAs. He reported that the Authority's spent approximately 70% of its budget on staff costs, similar to other NPAs where the percentage was 65-70%. Officers had taken the view that the Authority should aim to maintain a maximum spend on staff costs of 70% of budget.

In considering the report in detail, members raised a number of issues, including:

- suggesting the need for a review of resource allocation and a planned approach to future budgets, including further information on ~~the~~ *possible staffing changes*
- requesting a detailed review of the Authority's car parking policies and charges, including the policy of free parking for National Park residents
- the provision of toilets and the issue of charging
- expressing disappointment at the Government's decision to allocate equally amongst NPAs funding for work in connection with the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act which bore no relation to the amounts of work actually being undertaken by different NPAs
- the need to contain the Authority's costs on its 'rolls royce' planning service
- endorsing the proposed spread of costs for Information Centre display redevelopment
- suggesting the need to cap the Authority's costs on Hudson House

**RESOLVED –**

That, subject to members' and officers' comments being taken into account, the 2006/2007 draft budget, as set out in the report of the Senior Finance Officer, be submitted to the January 2006 meeting of the Authority for approval.

**349. CHARGING FOR PUBLIC PATH ORDERS**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Senior Definitive Map Officer.

It was suggested that to leave any review for three years was too long a time scale and could result in there being a discrepancy between costs and charges.

**RESOLVED –**

That:

- (a) the Authority adopts fixed charges for the administration of applications for Public Path Orders, the charges to be set at the level of the current maximum charges;
- (b) the level of costs be monitored by officers and in the event of changes in costs that would warrant a revision of charges, a report be brought to the Committee; and
- (c) the fixed charges for the administration of applications for Public Path Orders be reviewed on a three yearly cycle beginning in 2008.

**350. PENNINE BRIDLEWAY NATIONAL TRAIL: STAINFORTH CAR PARK – CREATION OF PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Pennine Bridleway Project Officer.

In response to a member's question, the Head of Park Management stated that he would consider the issue of the Authority's car park charges including a specific rate for horse boxes.

**RESOLVED –**

That:

- (a) the creation of the Pennine Bridleway over Authority land at Stainforth Car Park and picnic area; and
- (b) refurbishment of the site to accommodate two horse boxes including two mounting blocks, the erection of a National Trail sign and fencing through the underpass and associated improvements

be agreed.

**351. STAFFING MATTERS**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

The Head of Finance and Resources informed the Committee that Mrs Julie Boucher, the Authority's Personnel and Training Officer would be going on maternity leave in December and then leaving the Authority to take up another post. His appreciation for her hard work for the Authority was endorsed by members.

**RESOLVED -**

That the report be noted.

**352. SICKNESS ABSENCE**

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

**RESOLVED -**

That the report be noted.

---

**The remainder of business was conducted in private**

---

**PUBLIC SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

**(a) Private Minutes**

The Committee confirmed, as a correct record, the Private Minutes of the meeting held on 8th August 2005 that had been circulated with the agenda. The Minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

**(b) Northern Office Sub-Committee**

The Committee considered a written report from the Head of Finance and Resources that had been considered by the Northern Office Sub-Committee at its meeting on 7th November 2005.

The report from the Head of Finance and Resources had updated members on:

- construction work on the project
- the current position with contractual issues between the Authority and the Contractor; and
- the issue of capital receipts from the sale of other premises owned by the Authority.

Members were advised that 23<sup>rd</sup> December was the target date for completion and that a locally-run website ([www.thedaes.org.uk](http://www.thedaes.org.uk)) was monitoring progress of the development.