

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUDIT & REVIEW COMMITTEE

15th December 2006

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS – HALF YEARLY RETURNS

Purpose of report

To inform Members of compliments and complaints received by the Authority and handled under the compliments and complaints procedure during the period June to November 2006 inclusive

Strategic Planning Framework

The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework.

Background

The Audit & Review Committee monitors, on a half-yearly basis, the compliments and complaints received by the Authority under the compliments and complaints procedure. Appendix A sets out details of compliments received during the period June to November 2006 including a summary of the compliment, and the area of Authority work to which the compliment relates; Appendix B is a summary of complaints handled during the period including a summary of the complaint and the findings, timescale to complete the process, and the area of work to which the complaint relates. Details of these complaints are given in a private report

RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

LESLEY KNEVITT
SECRETARIAT ADMINISTRATOR

Background documents: None

4th December 2006

Appendix A

DETAIL OF COMPLIMENTS HANDLED - June to November 2006 inclusive

Ref No	Date compliment received	Name of complimenter	Summary of compliment	Department	Area of work
238	05.06.06	Malcolm Hodgeson, National Trails Officer NYMNP	Letter of thanks to Alan Hulme (Ranger Services Manager) on advice and information provided to assist NYMNP to get funding from Countryside Agency for creation of a ranger post	Park Management	Rangers
239	08.06.06	Prof Roy Swanston (ex-Member)	Prof Swanston and wife called at Hawes NPC to enquire about red squirrels, and were "hugely impressed" with information provided by Audrey Thwaite (Information Adviser) who "could not have been more helpful – really friendly and jolly – she was a credit to the Park"	External Affairs	NPCs
240	12.06.06	Mr Chris Ellison	Compliments Authority on clarity of signage regarding NERC restrictions, and the proactive way in which the sensitive issue has been handled	Park Management	Access/ Rangers
241	27.06.06	Mr Cliff Preest	Note of thanks to Andrea Green (Information Adviser) for her "prompt, helpful and diligent advice on phone regarding the Dales Way Walk" which was very much appreciated	External Affairs	NPCs
242	14.07.06	Mrs W Thrower	Letter complimenting Marnie Peacock (Information Advisor) on her handling of an incident at the car park where a car aerial was broken by overhanging branch – "efficient, friendly and extremely helpful; she was a credit to your organisation	External Affairs	NPCs
243	14.06.06	Mr Dave Smith, Headteacher Settlebeck High School, Sedbergh	Letter thanking Paul Wilkinson (Area Ranger, Cumbria) for his efforts in supporting concerns over spillage of effluent on school grounds, and guidance on ensuring Environmental Health were aware of their legal responsibilities in public area.	Park Management	Rangers
245	03.08.06	Mr John Hall, Chairman Swaledale Festival	Thanks to Geraldine Coates (Centre Manager Aysgarth/Reeth) for "invaluable assistance" given to Festival – "we very much appreciate the additional demands put on you and the patience you show answering our many questions	External Affairs	NPCs
246	09.08.06	Mr Trevor Hicks	Very appreciative of the time spent by Daniel Child (Senior Planning Officer) on application – "commend you and your staff (Val Brown, Enforcement Officer) for the sensible, helpful yet entirely professional way this difficult situation has been handled ... it is especially pleasant to be able to say so in these days where service standards are so often sacrificed or lost in red tape and bureaucracy".	Planning	Development Control/ Enforcement
247	07.08.06	Ms Jean Asher on behalf of Stainforth Parish Council	"Warmest thanks" to Gareth Evans (Pennine Bridleway Project Officer) for the work done to restore and repair Goatscar Lane, and particularly impressed by standard of work – "we recognise the immense amount of work and organisation that you personally have done to achieve this excellent result"	Park Management	Access

Ref No	Date compliment received	Name of complimenter	Summary of compliment	Department	Area of work
248	01.09.06	Mrs Julia Queen, Kettlewell Scarecrow Festival	Letter of thanks to Iain Mann (Area Ranger Upper Wharfedale) for his "great support of the annual festival – your help is invaluable"	Park Management	Rangers
249	12.09.06	Ms Junie Joseph, Project Officer Mosaic Partnership	Thanks to Cathy Bergs (Outreach Project Officer) for "brilliant job" arranging the Mosaic Community Champions visit to Malham	External Affairs	Outreach
250	20.09.06	Ms Amelia Vyvyan, Artistic Director Grassington Festival	Thanks on behalf of committee for support shown by NPA towards Festival, particularly to Alan Hulme (Ranger Services Manager) for "being helpful, sensitive and very easy to deal with" and to Phil Richards (Area Ranger, Lower Wharfedale) and colleagues for the dry stone walling courses	Park Management	Rangers
251	17.09.06	Ms Sue Cliff	Congratulations to NPA for "doing a great job" on the Settle Loop of the Pennine Bridleway	Park Management	Pennine Bridleway
244	02.11.06	Mr and Mrs Machling	Telephoned to express gratitude for the help and advice received from Lynda Bayne and Yvonne Denison (Information Advisers) when they visited Aysgarth. She and her husband both have mobility difficulties and the help and advice they received "was beyond the call of duty"	External Affairs	NPCs
252	11.11.06	Ms Angie Faulkner	Card sent to Nigel Metcalfe (Area Ranger Lower Wensleydale) and Gwen Clarke (Information Adviser) for their "kind help" at Aysgarth when she lost her purse	Park Management/External Affairs	Rangers/NPCs
253	29.11.06	Ms Sara Billany	Letter of appreciation to Chris Pratt (Senior Personnel Officer) for time spent on, and speed of, response to her enquiry about job opportunities	Finance & Resources	Personnel

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS HANDLED - June to November 2006 inclusive

NB entries in italics show cases reported to last committee which were unresolved at that time

Key: CEO = Chief Executive Officer

HoD = Head of Department

Ref No	Date complaint received	Area of work	Stage	Summary of complaint	Findings/current situation	Time taken to complete
0097 <i>(and 98)</i>	23.05.06	<i>Planning – listed building/enforcement</i>	<i>1HoD 3CEO</i>	<i>Complains that adjacent Grade II listed property is being developed contrary to conservation restrictions; alleges that Authority has failed in its duty to protect building of historic interest</i>	Complaint not upheld. <i>Complainant and other objectors represented via solicitor; detailed explanation of requirements of listed building consent sent by Building Conservation Officer along with "covering" letter from Head of Planning.. Assurance given that NPA is fully aware of works being carried out and confirmed ongoing dialogue with developer. Condition of some features require complete replacement rather than reinstatement.</i> <i>Complainant subsequently (as individual) wrote asking for explanation; request considered but not upheld as full explanation had previously been given. Option to refer to Ombudsman</i>	<i>89 days (17 days to stage 1)</i>
0099	08.06.06	Planning – developmt control	1 HoD	Unhappy at continuous lack of response to questions (including one asking why 106 agreement unenforceable) regarding apparent breach of occupancy restrictions at one unit in development Repeatedly telephoned NPA to speak to enforcement officer who is "never available" and repeatedly asked to leave telephone number for officer to ring back but no response; experience apparently shared by other residents of development	Complaint upheld in part. Occupant met 106 conditions in respect of age; officers sought legal advice on scope for possible enforcement action in respect of nature of occupation which revealed this provision of legal agreement was unenforceable. . However agreed that complainant not kept sufficiently informed by Authority or enquiries responded to in timely fashion, leading to sub-standard service for which apologies given.	16 days
0100	26.06.06	C&P - consrvation	1 CEO	Alleges that intervention by Authority has resulted in loss of sales and marketing contract and represents personal discrimination by officer demonstrating "abuse of power" using financial sanctions.	Complaint not upheld. Officer in question totally refuted allegations of what was said; corroborated by others present at the meeting who were asked for their version of what happened: each disagreed with allegations of undue pressure on company in	51 days

Ref No	Date complaint received	Area of work	Stage	Summary of complaint	Findings/current situation	Time taken to complete
					question. No evidence therefore to support any of allegations and complaint wholly unfounded. <i>(NB complainant has subsequently asked for information under Data Protection Act – ongoing)</i>	
0101	19.06.06	C&P – built environment	1 HoD	Complainant acts as agent regarding application to convert part of building, requiring archaeological recording at a particular level. He claims was advised by NPA and accordingly carried out the work, heard nothing further, and then eventually received correspondence which disputed this claim. Wishes to complain about the tone of the correspondence and the resultant delay to the start of the construction work which has cost implications for his client	Complaint upheld; full apology given. Inappropriate to have sent memo, and delay unacceptable. Matter to be resolved in matter of days to enable construction work to proceed.	15 days
0102	30.08.06	Planning – dev control	1 officer	Complainant says has sent emails to planning officer "on a number of occasions" regarding breaches of conditions site and has not received any response to date. Wishes it treated as "formal complaint"	<i>In circumstances (planning officer responded immediately with full explanation), complainant requested her complaint be withdrawn pending receipt of requested information.</i> <i>No further action.</i>	
0103	01.09.06	Planning – dev control	1 HoD	Further to earlier complaint, now complains that planning officer has not given clearance of condition despite phone calls and letter; officers generally poor at responding to correspondence	Complaint not upheld? Head of Department wrote to confirm that planning officer had in fact responded, one day before complaint letter written (crossed in post).	2 days
0104	20.09.06	Park Mgmt - rangers	1 HoD (AH)	Complainant angry at being asked to remedy damage to footpath caused through creation of drainage channels - claims the ranger advice was misinformed and incompetent;	Complaint not upheld. Rangers acted entirely appropriately – Ranger Services Manager visited complainant to run through the situation in person and subsequently wrote to confirm what was agreed.	8 days
0105	20.09.06	Planning – dev control	1 HoD 3 CEO	Complainant acting through solicitors. Alleges that planning officer, during conversation with contractor, accused client of flytipping excavated material;	Complaint not upheld. Confirms that planning officer had conversation with contractor which included reference to the excavator and confirms that complaints had been received about flytipping.	53 days (8 days to stage 1)

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				points out that allegations could have further repercussions with regard to future contracts.	As this information factually correct, planning officer's response to specific question was truthful therefore not deemed appropriate to apologise. Complainants lawyers subsequently disagreed with NPA version of events, asking for further investigation at stage 3. NPA responded by inviting witness (to whom remarks were made) to appear before panel; declined therefore NPA investigations complete; referred to ombudsman.	
0106	29.09.06	Park Mgmnt – volunteers	1 HoD (KB)	Complainant accuses Authority of "bullying" in way treated in relation to lack of activity over past eighteen months during mother's illness and subsequent death, followed by taking a sabbatical and travelling extensively. Was unable to respond to contact by Authority or to requests for activities and training, but felt that the Authority's attitude was unsympathetic in the extreme and were wrong to ask for resignation as volunteer.	Complaint partly upheld. Communication between officers had been poor, leading to misunderstandings compounded by lack of intervention from full-time staff. Did not amount to bullying as alleged. However, measures put in place to prevent future misunderstandings, including improved communication procedures, and discussion on management style and approach of area co-ordinators.	8 days
0107	17.10.06	Planning – dev control	1 HoF	Complainant is a neighbour objector to recent planning permission and claims he had no prior knowledge or consultation on proposed development;; objects on the grounds that procedure was not followed regarding site notices, neighbour notification, misapprehension of planning officer.	Complaint not upheld. Full notification/consultation procedures complied with. Loss of view not material factor, and unable to use in determination of application. Distance between properties justifies lack of obligation to consult.	9 days
0108	23.10.06	Planning – enfrcmnt	1 HoD	Complainant accuses enforcement officer of bad manners/trespass - visiting property without prior notification.	Complaint not upheld - HoD confirms that Under Town & Country Planning Act the Authority is allowed to exercise powers of entry and inspection when investigating alleged breaches of planning control so no trespass occurred; the second site inspection was made from the road.	22 days