

Date: 27 March 2007

Report: REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ENGAGEMENTS

1. Since the last meeting of the Authority, the Chief Executive has been involved in the following:-

(a) Media

- Interview with the producer of Radio 4's 'Open Country' to discuss future pressures on land use.

(b) Events

- Partners within the Richmondshire Local Strategic partnership to discuss future working arrangements.
- A joint conference held by the National Park Authority and the National Trust, at Gibson Mill, Hebden Bridge; to discuss the protected areas response to renewable energy.
- A full meeting of the Authority's staff at Grassington.

(c) Meetings

- Yorkshire Forward/Craven District Council and Rural Solutions to discuss the future of the Langcliffe Quarry site.
- The development control champions to discuss current issues.
- Senior civil servants in DCMS to discuss the Historic Environment and the relationship between National Park Authorities, DEFRA and DCMS.
- The Parliamentary Secretary (Commons) (Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs); Barry Gardiner, to discuss the role of National Park Authorities in adaptation and mitigation measures regarding Climate Change.
- Senior Civil Servants from DEFRA to discuss the Historic Environment and its role in DEFRA's thinking. Specifically within Agri-Environment schemes.
- The National Park Officers Group [England].
- The Mosaic steering group to discuss current progress on the project.
- The Director and Trust Manager of the North of England Civic Trust to discuss current projects and their future business plan.
- John Henderson to discuss the National Park Authority's role at the 2007 Kilnsey show.
- Along with the Chairman, the ENPAA executive meeting.
- The Director of the Yorkshire Rural Community Council to discuss issues of mutual interest.
- Along with Mr Macaré and Mr Lancaster, the annual partners meeting at Hudson House.

MATTERS FOR MEMBERS' CONSIDERATION

Standards Committee Membership

2. Attached as an **Appendix** is a copy of the report that would have been considered by the Standards Committee on 1 March 2007, had the meeting not been cancelled because of the likelihood of it being inquorate.
3. The report is self explanatory.

Recommendation:

4. That the arrangements for advertising and interviewing for independent members of the Standards Committee, as set out in the attached Appendix, be approved, including the suggestion that both positions should be recruited to at the same time, albeit that the new members will only take their places when the existing appointments expire.

Pennine Bridleway Funding – Update March 2007

5. As Members are aware we are over half way through implementing the Yorkshire Dales section of the Pennine Bridleway (PBW), which is due to be completed in 2009. However, since the establishment of Natural England, funding to complete the work has been uncertain for 2007/8 and beyond. At the time of writing this report, revenue and capital bids have been submitted, by the Authority, to Natural England. These are for the continuation of the post of Pennine Bridleway project officer for a further three years, and a capital bid for works in 2007/8.
6. In January, Natural England wrote to the Authority, saying that it will fund the PBW Project Officer post for another year (2007/08), with a possible further two years pending confirmation of Natural England funding. This has been agreed by the NW Regional Director who now has the national role for all National Trails. However we are still waiting for the formal grant offer and, as yet, we have had no more than an initial 'indication' of likely funding of capital works for 2007/8.
7. We recognise that, as a new organisation, it will take sometime for Natural England to sort out its overall priorities. However, it has been unclear where National Trails and the Pennine Bridleway fit within its priorities for future work. In particular, whether Natural England will honour the commitment made previously by its predecessor body (the Countryside Agency) to implement the Pennine Bridleway in the Yorkshire Dales. We are especially concerned that a budget, to continue the excellent work, has yet to be allocated for 2007/8, and appears uncertain for the project overall. It is hoped that by the time of the Authority meeting there will be more clarity. If this is not the case, I would intend to send a letter to Natural England asking that the uncertainty be resolved and funding allocated for the Pennine Bridleway project to be completed - so as not to waste the investment to date, and the development potential of a unique sustainable tourism product for the area.

Recommendation:

8. That, subject to the situation at the time of the meeting, a letter be sent to Natural England, expressing the concerns of the Authority with regard to the funding of the Pennine Bridleway project.

ISSUES FOR MEMBERS TO NOTE

Revised National Park Circular

9. At the recent Audit and Review Committee meeting a member asked for an update on the position regarding the Revised Circular (Government advice to National Park Authorities in implementing legislation) which was expected to be circulated "by the end of 2006".
10. Having contacted Defra, I have to report that progress on the revised national park circular is being held up whilst Defra consider various legal points which have arisen in its drafting. I will of course keep members involved of future progress.

Standards Authority

11. Good news! Members will be delighted to note the attached letter from David Morris from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) which confirms that the Authority is no longer to be designated as a 'Standards Authority'.
12. Members may recall that this designation was as a result of a failure to meet government targets on the speed of planning applications. Considerable effort has been made by the Authority generally and the planning performance working group in particular to improve this situation. Particular praise is due to the planning officers, technicians and all those who provide support to the development control service for their excellent efforts.

Yorkshire Tourist Board Fees

12. Members considered a report in Sept 2006 outlining the proposed increase in subscriptions to the Yorkshire Tourist Board [YTB]. The proposals would have seen an increase in fees from £670 in 2005/06 to £1500 in 2006/07, leading to a further increase totalling £3900 in 2008/09.
13. Following further discussions between the Chief Executive, the member champion for promoting understanding and the Chief Executive of the YTB, I can announce that the fee for 2007/08 has now been confirmed at £1000. Future arrangements will be discussed during the coming financial year.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

Background documents: None

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Committee: STANDARDS
Date: 1 March 2007

Report: APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Purpose of the report

1. This report is purely for the information of the Standards Committee.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework. The Authority is required by law to have a Standards Committee, which must include at least 25% of independent members.

Background

3. The Standards Committee comprises five Authority Members and two Independent Members. Currently, the independent members are Mike Lawton and Yvonne Rose. It is for the Authority to fix their terms of appointment and, in accordance with that:
 - Mr Lawton's term of office ends on 27 July 2007. He was appointed in July 2004 after the position was advertised and four people were interviewed.
 - Ms Rose's term of office ends on 25 January 2008. She was originally appointed in 2002, and by January 2008 will have served two three year terms. At the end of her first term, the position was advertised and three applicants were interviewed, resulting in her second appointment.
4. The advice of the Standards Board is that independent members should be appointed for long enough to gain an understanding of the Standards Committee and the Authority generally, but not so long that they lose their independence.
5. The compulsory elements of the procedure for appointing independent members to the Standards Committee are as follows:
 - a) advertise the position in at least one local newspaper;
 - b) interested persons must complete an application form;
 - c) persons to be appointed must not have been a member or officer of YDNPA within the last 5 years, nor must they be a relative or close friend of any current member or officer;
 - d) appointments must be approved by a majority of the members of the Authority.

6. The Standards Board suggest that the following are qualities we should be looking for in independent members of this Committee:
- familiarity with ethical dilemmas
 - experience of committee work
 - questioning skills
 - assertiveness
 - independence of local government

and I would add that it would be useful if the person has chairing skills (it is recognised as best practice, and may become a legal requirement that the Standards Committee is chaired by an independent member), and also experience of investigative / determinative procedures would be helpful, now so many complaints cases are referred for local resolution.

Financial Implications

7. There will be a cost involved in placing advertisements in local newspapers, and also in conducting interviews.

Conclusion

8. This report is for information. The Authority will be asked to approve the arrangements for advertising and interviewing. This will include the suggestion that both positions should be recruited to at the same time, albeit that the new members will only take their places when the existing appointments expire.

RECOMMENDATION

9. That the report be noted.

Richard Daly
Solicitor / Monitoring Officer

14 February 2007

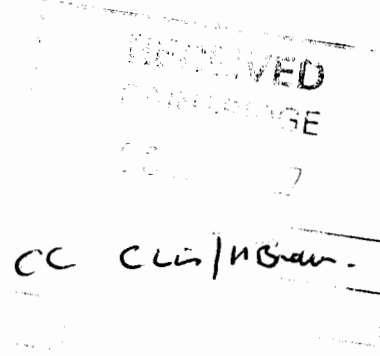
Background documents:

None

Chief Executive
Yorkshire Dales NPA
Yorebridge House
Bainbridge
Leyburn
DL8 3EE

Our Ref: PLANDC/032/1/

9 March 2007



Dear Chief Executive,

Development Control Performance

You will recall that my predecessor wrote to you on 20 October 2006 to inform you that Yorkshire Dales NPA had been included in the consultation paper: *Proposed Planning Best Value Performance Standards for 2007/08: Consultation* because performance on processing other applications to the year ending 30 June 2006 was below the Department's performance thresholds for designating planning standards authorities for the 2007/08 financial year.

Following the consultation round Ministers considered the responses and agreed the final list of authorities that will be designated as Best Value planning authorities for 2007/08. A summary of the responses to the consultation received by the Department is attached.

I am delighted to say that Yorkshire Dales NPA, will not be formally designated as a Best Value planning authority on 1 April 2007 under the Best Value provisions of the Local Government Act 1999 (Statutory Instrument 2007/585). Your authority's performance in the quarter ending 30 September (data published in December) improved sufficiently for performance in the year ending September to rise above the threshold levels specified in the consultation document. I would like to congratulate your staff on this achievement

Finally if you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Julian Wheeler on 020 7944 5790.

I am copying this letter to your Chief Planning Officer or equivalent

Yours sincerely



David Morris

PROPOSED PLANNING BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR 2007/08 CONSULTATION

Summary of responses to the consultation document

We received a total of 31 responses. A summary of the main points made by the consultees and responses to them is set out below. Following the consultation, 57 authorities were designated as planning standards authorities for 2007/08 rather than the 73 originally proposed in the consultation paper.

Eleven authorities asked to be taken off the list because, once the figures for the quarter ending 30 September were taken into account, their performance was above the threshold levels for inclusion as standards authorities for 2007/08.

Response: We said in the consultation document that we would take improvement in the year to September into account before making a final decision. The eleven authorities, plus five others who did not respond to the consultation but whose performance was above threshold in the year to September, were therefore removed from the list of authorities to be designated as standards authorities: Aylesbury Vale, Broxbourne, East Hampshire, Hambleton, Harborough, Lambeth, Leeds, Leicester, Newcastle-under-Lyme, North East Lincolnshire, Scarborough, Southwark, Three Rivers, Weymouth and Portland, Wyre and Yorkshire Dales National Park.

In addition, we have taken Blyth Valley off the list for major applications because of improved performance in the year to September (but still designated them for minor and other applications); we have taken Torridge off the list for minor applications (but still designated them for major and other applications); Bromsgrove for minor and other applications (but still designated them for major applications); Craven for other applications (but still designated them for major and minor applications); and Kingston upon Hull for other applications (but still designated them for minor applications).

Four other authorities asked to be taken off the list because of improvements in performance since September.

Response: The use of performance data relating to a later period than specified in the consultation document would have necessitated a further consultation round. This would not have been possible in the timeframe for laying the order to designate 2007/08 standards authorities. Also the year to December data had yet to be verified and published.

Six authorities said that when Section 106 Agreements were required, this meant applications were delayed.

Response: We accept that there will inevitably be some major applications which, for one reason or another, will take longer than the 13 week target for major applications. That is why the standard is for 60%, rather than 100%, of major applications to be determined within 13 weeks.

Six authorities plus the Environmental Services Association said that the threshold used to assess performance on major applications was too high and/or did not allow for local circumstances.

Response: The current targets were set in the 2004 Spending Review which established the progress to be made by March 2007. The thresholds used in this exercise were set five percentage points below these targets, which allowed some latitude for authorities to continue to improve performance up to the target date.

Six authorities thought the assessment period was not a satisfactory basis for judging performance.

Response: We have used a time period of 12 months so that we could take into consideration recent improvements in performance whilst ensuring the time period was long enough to give an indication that the recent improvements in performance are sustainable. This year for the first time we have allowed for a further three months of performance to be taken into consideration, in order to minimise the time lag between the qualifying performance period and designation.