

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Tuesday, 30th May 2006.

Present:

RA Bird, J Blackie, Mrs A Brooks, WH Brown, C Hammond, TRN Harrison-Topham, D Heather, OJ Kendall, HA Kirkbride, KJ Lancaster, C Lis, SR Macaré, Mrs S Marshall, Mrs D Millward, Mrs Y Peacock, JJ Pearlman, Dr KM Petyt, Mrs FG Ramsbottom, Ms N Stedman and W Weston.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

JJ Pearlman, Acting Chairman of the Authority, took the Chair for the first item of business.

43/06 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Having been nominated unopposed, it was –

RESOLVED –

That C Lis be elected Chairman of the Authority, to hold office until the annual meeting of the Authority in 2006.

C LIS IN THE CHAIR

44/06 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2006, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

45/06 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

46/06 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 Item No 18 on the agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 6 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

47/06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from SHK Butcher.

48/06 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

The following Members made declarations of interest:

- Mrs D Millward declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 16, having been involved in initiating a project through the Trust and currently serving on the Haytime Project Working Group
- Messrs Lis, Macaré and Pearlman all declared personal non-prejudicial interests in Agenda Item 16 as Trustees of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
- TRN Harrison-Topham declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 16 (Haytime Project) as a landowner
- Dr KM Petyt declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in that part of the Chief Executive's report that related to attendance at meetings of the Local Access Forum.

49/06 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

No declarations of lobbying were made at the meeting.

50/06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Chairman.

The Deputy Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the Yorkshire Humber Regional Assembly and a report of his attendance and a copy of a paper on the Yorkshire and Humberside Rural Framework were each circulated.

RESOLVED –

That the report and further comments be noted.

51/06 REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Chief Executive.

The Deputy Chairman of the Access Committee explained that he had been lobbied by a number of members of the Local Access Forum seeking to forge closer links with the Authority. It had been suggested that the attendance of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Committee at Forum meetings would assist to this end and he suggested that such attendance should be eligible for travelling and subsistence expenses. A proposal that attendance by any member of the Committee at Forum meetings should be an 'approved duty' was defeated, although members supported the designation as approved duty for the attendance of the Chairman and/or Deputy Chairman of the Committee.

A number of members expressed an interest in attending one or both of the MOSAIC Partnership visits in July and September.

A member referred to a comment in the 'Open Evening' feedback that questioned the Authority's decision to introduce an '0870' telephone number for the public. The Head of Finance and Resources commented that this was not an income generator, but allowed better links between the Authority's various bases. He reminded members that 'local' numbers, which he accepted would benefit from greater local publicity, were still an alternative and that 'direct dial' to individual officers was also available.

Members welcomed the report listing projects that had been given grants through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). It was suggested that there may be some reluctance from local organisations to submit applications, fearing that the process would be over-bureaucratic. The Head of Conservation and Policy accepted members' suggestion of the need for improved publicity to try to generate local interest in smaller projects, although a member pointed out that the SDF budget did not include any provision for publicity.

While the proposals for new woodland planting were welcomed, a member expressed some concern how sites for the new planting may be selected given that the Authority did not have a Landscape Character Guidelines in place. The Head of Conservation and Policy reminded members that the Authority did have the Landscape Character Assessment that, together with other criteria would be used to evaluate sites on a case by case basis.

RESOLVED –

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

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the attendance by the Chairman and/or Deputy Chairman of the Authority's Access Committee at meetings of the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum be designated as an approved duty for the purposes of the payment of travelling and/or subsistence allowances;
- (c) member attendance at the MOSAIC Partnership visits in July and/or September be designated as an approved duty for the purposes of the payment of travelling and/or subsistence allowances;
- (d) additional local publicity be given to the availability of 'local' numbers by which the public may contact the Authority;
- (e) a press release, to generate local interest in smaller projects, be issued to publicise the availability of the Sustainable Development Fund.

[Notes: During the course of the debates on the following issues, members made the following declarations of interest:

- *Attendance by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Authority's Access Committee at meetings of the Local Access Forum – Messrs Harrison-Topham, Heather, Lancaster, Macaré and Pearlman – personal non-prejudicial interests as members of the Access Committee*
- *Sustainable Development Fund - Mrs Y Peacock - personal non-prejudicial interest as a shareholder of Hawes Farmers Auction Mart]*

52/06 DRAFT STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Treasurer.

In response to a member's suggestion, the Treasurer accepted that a more precise form of words was acceptable in referring to the fact that whilst the accounts before members were unaudited and subject to possible amendment in the light of that audit, they had, nevertheless been properly compiled for the purposes of submission to the External Auditor.

The Chief Executive, in response to a member's question, agreed to raise with Defra why the headings (eight in number) under which the Summary of Revenue Spending was categorised, differed from the seven functional headings that the Authority was required to use for the Best Value Performance Plan.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the Authority is satisfied that the Statement of Final Accounts (SOFA) for the financial year ended 31st March 2006, which is unaudited and subject to amendment in the light of audit, has been properly compiled for the purposes of submission to external audit and approves the Statement accordingly;
- (b) the Chairman of the Authority be authorised to sign the accounts on page 20 of the SOFA; and
- (c) the Chairman of the Authority be authorised to sign the Statement of Internal Control on page 10 of the SOFA.

53/06 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY IN 2006

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Secretariat Officer.

Members, in considering the report, raised a number of issues, including:

- suggesting that some thought may need to be given to the way in which members not on the Committee but in attendance to speak on particular applications, are accommodated. When the draft report had been considered at the Planning Performance Working Group, it had been suggested that such members should not sit with the Committee, and in order to avoid confusion for the general public, may need to sit away from the general public;
- the proposal to review the workings of the Committee in 12 months may be too soon. 24 months was suggested as a more appropriate timescale;
- accepting that the proposals that the Authority was about to introduce constituted major changes and there was a general appreciation that there would be a number of minor issues that would need to be addressed over time;
- how the introduction of the proposed changes would inter-face with the appointment of member champions. It was suggested that the Champions should be appointed before the Planning Committee membership was considered, otherwise nominations for the Committee would need to be contingent on possible appointment as Champions.

In response to some of the issues raised by members, the Chief Executive stated that:

- there was no intention that Groups should be considering potential Champions or submitting nominations for any of the posts of Champion;

- it might be of assistance to have some indication, prior to the annual meeting of the Authority, of which members might wish to be considered for a position of Champion. Any member with an interest in one or more of the Champion roles could put their name forward.
- there was an intention to report to the Authority in January 2007 with a view to members considering how the reduction in Authority membership from 26 to 22 would affect the size of membership of the Committees. If members chose not to review the Planning Committee for 24 months, that would, in effect, mean that, from 1st April 2007, the number of Champions would reduce from a potential 11 (26 less 15 on the Planning Committee) to 7 (22 less 15 on the Committee);
- there was a difficulty for the Parish Group of members, which currently was without two of its number. It would be sensible for that Group to leave its meeting to as late as possible to consider nominating members for membership of Committees to await possible progress with the appointment of the two members. He added that one nomination, for the re-appointment of Graham Dalton, had been submitted to the Secretary of State, but Wilf Fenten's position was to be the subject of an election amongst Parishes in Craven and would take some weeks to conclude.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) at least 10 working days prior to the Authority's annual meeting each year, the four Groups meet to select nominations for their respective numbers of seats on **all** Committees, together with nominations, in order of priority, for substitute members of the Planning Committee;
- (b) with effect from the first meeting of the newly constituted Planning Committee following the Authority's annual meeting in 2006:
 - (i) optional rotation of members of the Planning Committee shall operate on the following basis:
 - all members who are members or substitutes of the Committee will be required to attend appropriate training;
 - members who are not members or substitute members of the Planning Committee may also attend such training;
 - any member who wishes to revise a previous decision not to serve on the Committee will, if they have not attended appropriate training, be required to undertake the 'normal' planning induction training (if they have not been a member or substitute member of the Committee in the preceding six months);
 - at the next annual meeting of the Authority, those members of a Group who had been substitute members during the preceding year and any other members who may be eligible (e.g. ex-Champions or members who have reversed a previous decision not to serve on the Committee), shall, with the exception of 'Champions', who will not form part of the 'rotation' process but may still be substitute

- members, form part of the Group's nomination to be members of the Committee;
- in the event of a mid-year 'departure' from the Committee by a member, the first-named substitute will 'step-up' to become a member of the Committee. This is a change from the current convention whereby that member's replacement on the Authority would normally take over the departing member's Committee seats.
- (ii) a scheme for the appointment of substitute members of the Planning Committee be adopted in accordance with the Scheme set out in Annex B of the report of the Secretariat Officer;
- (c) the quorum for the Planning Committee of 15 members be set at seven, subject to at least one of those present being a local authority member and at least one a Secretary of State member;
- (d) a review of the operation of the Planning Committee be considered in July 2008.

54/06 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Chief Executive.

Members welcomed the report, particularly the detailed appendices.

They considered that:

- whilst not ruling out nominations on the day of the meeting, it may be helpful for members to submit individual notifications of interest to the Chief Executive prior to the annual meeting of the Authority;
- certainly during its first year, only travelling and subsistence allowances should be paid for the roles: the question of Special Responsibility Allowances to be considered as part of a general review of the Authority's Scheme of Members Allowances in due course.

The name Champion was not popular, although alternative suggestions of 'Advocate' and 'Advisor' were also not supported.

In response to some concern about the relationship between the role of Champion for a particular service and that of the Committee Chairman, the Chief Executive reminded members that the Chairman would be responsible for chairing the formal meetings of a Committee, while the champions would have a wider role including looking at areas of performance of, and being an advocate for, the service. He suggested that the distinctions would become clearer once the Champions were in place.

A member reminded the Authority that one of the roles that had been suggested for Champions was to assist in representing the Authority on some of its numerous partnerships.

The Chief Executive, in response to a member's concern that Champions might be tempted to put forward a personal rather than a corporate view of Authority issues, stated that officers have to work within policy and the same would apply to Champions. He would have no compunction in highlighting to the Authority any instances where Champions had taken a different line.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the establishment of member champions across the seven areas of the Authority's work be approved;
- (b) the principles and role of member champions as outlined in the Chief Executive's report be agreed;
- (c) no Special Responsibility Allowance be paid to member champions, the matter to be considered as part of a wider review of the Scheme of Members Allowances in 2007;
- (d) the role of member champion be classed as an approved duty for the purposes of the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances;
- (e) the Chief Executive's report and its appendices be used as background information during the group meetings to be held between May and July 2006; and
- (f) any member who wishes to become a Champion may submit to the Chief Executive their nomination together with reasons in support of their nomination(s). These self-nominations and supporting papers will be circulated without alteration to the annual meeting of the Authority, to be considered together with any further nominations that may be made at the meeting.

55/06 BEST VALUE ACTION PLAN 2005/06: END OF YEAR REPORT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

In response to a number of issues raised by members, the Head of Conservation and Policy stated that:

- the flower-rich road verges project had been the subject of discussion with North Yorkshire County Council. While progress had been made, a major

scheme could not be progressed this year without the Authority withdrawing from one of the biodiversity projects already approved by members. It was, however, hoped to resume the work at some time in the future.

- the 'Public Spaces, Private Places' project was to be the subject of a detailed report to the Audit and Review Committee on the lessons learned from the project.
- the review and re-negotiation of 10 Woodland Management Agreements had not been completed because resources had been concentrated on achieving woodland creation targets and supporting the successful bid by YDMT for additional funding for woodlands.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the Authority's performance in achieving the actions set out in the Best Value Performance Plan 2005/06 be noted; and
- (b) officers be requested to reconsider the re-instatement of the Flower-Rich Roadside Verges project in 2007/08.

56/06 BEST VALUE ACTION PLAN 2006/07

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

In response to a number of issues raised by members, the Head of Conservation and Policy stated that:

- Target No 9 – Review and re-negotiate 5 Woodland Management Agreements (WMAs) - was not dealing with new WMAs, but also about trying to transfer existing agreements into new schemes.
- Target No 11 – Publish the revised Dales Woodland Strategy – the Strategy would come to the Authority for formal endorsement in due course, once the draft had been agreed by the Dales Woodland Forum.

The Chief Executive undertook to ensure that members were advised of progress on Target No 71(b) – clear backlog of Section 106 Agreements - and Target No 74 – Up-to-date development framework issues.

RESOLVED –

That subject to member and officer comments and issues being taken into account, the Authority's Best Value Action Plan for 2006/07 be formally approved.

57/06 YORK AND NORTH YORKSHIRE INVESTMENT PLAN REVIEW – STRATEGIC ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT – ‘FIRST THOUGHTS’ PAPER

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Policy and Liaison Officer.

A member commented on the importance of the document and the need and opportunity for the Authority to represent and put forward the case for remoter rural areas. Concern was expressed that the paper overlooked the state of many small rural businesses.

The Policy and Liaison Officer accepted members comments and concerns, and confirmed that it was often the larger, high profile schemes that received funding and support. However, he stated that the area had strengths beyond its traditional industries and that a sound case could be put in support of the area. He confirmed that a copy of the final response would be circulated to members.

RESOLVED –

That subject to member and officer comments being taken into account, the York and North Yorkshire Partnership Unit be thanked for the opportunity to comment on the ‘First Thoughts’ paper and be asked to consider the comments contained in the report of the Policy and Liaison Officer.

58/06 YORKSHIRE DALES MILLENNIUM TRUST

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Park Management.

A member commented that on Page 9 of the Annex to the report there was reference to ‘monitored’ which he feared could be misconstrued to imply that the Authority has some form of control over the Trust. He suggested that ‘reported’ would be a more appropriate word to use in this context. It was also questioned whether the Authority received feedback from the Trust on how the Authority’s contribution was spent.

The Head of Park Management stated that the Authority’s contribution went towards the administrative costs of the Trust, but accepted the concern raised in the context of the report and the distinction between ‘monitored’ and ‘reported’. He suggested that some form of annual report might be appropriate.

The Chief Executive accepted that core costs for organisations such as the Trust were always difficult to obtain, but endorsed the need for feedback on the work undertaken.

A member hoped that the Authority would continue to support what was a very successful organisation and suggested that the fact that it was being 'copied' was testimony itself.

RESOLVED –

That subject to member and officer comments being taken into account, the recommendations contained within the Annex to the report of the Head of Park Management be agreed and taken forward.

59/06 PLANNING COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 14th March and 11th April 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 14th March and 11th April 2006 be received.

60/06 AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Review Committee held on 17th March 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Review Committee held on 17th March 2006 be received.

The remainder of business was considered in private

61/06 PLANNING COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The private minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 14th March and 11th April 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the private minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 14th March and 11th April 2006 be received.