

**YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING**

**ITEM
FOR INFORMATION**

Date: 31 July 2007

**Report: RECONSIDERATION OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

Purpose of the report

1. To provide background information for members on the decision, taken at the Authority meeting on 29 May 2007, to establish a Planning Committee of 11 members.

Background

2. There are two elements to the background to this report:
 - (a) the decision of the Authority on 29 May to establish, with effect from 1 August 2007, a Planning Committee consisting of 11 members; and
 - (b) the procedure by which that decision is able to be reviewed.

Previous decision

3. At the Authority meeting on 29 May, Members considered a paper entitled 'Membership Changes to Committees', which dealt with issues arising from the reduction in the Authority's membership from 26 to 22 that had come into effect on 8 May 2007.
4. One of the reasons for considering those matters at that meeting was so that the necessary committee nominations could be made by the 4 'groups' before the July annual meeting.
5. It was pointed out in the report that, as a result of the reduction in the size of the Authority's membership, a re-examination of Committee memberships would be required. The issue had become more urgent because the potential impact on the Authority's 'champions' initiative and its link to the size of the Planning Committee had been highlighted by a number of members during discussion of the paper on 'Changes to the Authority's Membership'.
6. The paper that was considered at the May meeting set out options for members' consideration in respect of each of the Authority's committees. Members debated the options at some length, particularly in respect of the Planning Committee, but I do not intend to rehearse those views in this paper.
7. For your information, I have extracted from that report the options that were put forward in respect of the Planning Committee and, together with the Conclusion from the report, they are attached as **Annex 1** to this report.

Procedure

8. Members may be familiar with the Authority's Standing Order 2.7(d), more commonly known as 'the six month rule', which states -

(d) No motion to rescind a resolution which has been passed by the Authority within the preceding six months or which would have the effect of rescinding such resolution or a material part thereof, and no motion to the same effect as a motion which has been rejected within the preceding six months, shall be in order unless the notice thereof as specified in the summons bears, in addition to the name of the Member proposing the motion, the names of two-thirds plus one of the membership at the time of the Authority; and, when any such motion has been disposed of by the Authority, it shall not be competent for any Member to propose a similar motion within a further period of twelve months.

9. However, Standing Order 2.2(a) states:

(b) A special meeting of the Authority, a Committee or Sub-Committee shall be called on the request of at least one quarter of the whole number of the Members of the Authority, Committee or Sub-Committee by notice in writing signed by them and given to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) and specifying the business for which the meeting is to be called.

10. Attached as **Annex 2** to this report is a copy of the request, which was signed by six members of the Authority, which requested that a Special meeting be called for the purposes specified.

11. On receipt of such a request, **there is no discretion** for the Chief Executive or Chairman. Providing the request is signed by the requisite number of members and specifies the business for which the meeting is to be called, a special meeting **must** be held.

12. The only further 'control' in respect of the Suspension of Standing Orders is Standing Order 4.3, which states:

4.3 Suspension of Standing Orders

(a) Subject to paragraph (b) of this Standing Order, any of the preceding Standing Orders may be suspended so far as regards any business at the meeting where its suspension is moved.

(b) A motion to suspend any of the preceding Standing Orders cannot be moved unless at least one-half of the whole number of the Members of the Authority are present.

Discussion document

13. The signatories to the request for the Special meeting have indicated that they are intending to produce a discussion document. A copy will be circulated separately as soon as possible.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

11 July 2007

Background documents: None

EXTRACT FROM REPORT TO THE AUTHORITY**29 May 2007**Planning Committee

14. It is the Planning Committee that is the most contentious when determining its membership. At present the membership is 15 made up of 4 District, County and Secretary of State members and 3 Parish members.
15. At the Authority meeting on 30 May 2006 members considered the arrangements for the new Planning Committee. Among the recommendations was that review of the operation of the Planning Committee would be considered in July 2008. Although not specifically stated it is believed that these arrangements would have included consideration of the size of the Planning Committee. However, Members have now resolved to examine the question of the size of the membership earlier than 2008 (along with all the other committee memberships) in response to issues arising from the `champions initiative`.
16. A fundamental difficulty is, because the Authority's total membership has reduced from 26 to 22, if the Planning Committee membership remains at 15, only 7 Members are eligible to become champions. This considerably reduces the `field`. It should also be recognised that some Members wish neither to be on the Planning Committee nor serve as `champions` reducing the field still further.
17. A review of the first year's experience of the champions' initiative will be considered at the AGM in July. A fundamental principle regarding the introduction and development of this initiative was contained in the National Park Authority Performance Assessment (NPAPA) Review of 2005 which concluded that more member time should be spent on the overall responsibilities of the Authority and less on development control. Members accepted this recommendation and indeed put it into effect when they reduced the Planning Committee from 26 to 15 during August 2006. The difficulty now is the other recommendation (in NPAPA). That being that in order to release member time they should not serve as members of the Planning Committee and be champions, at the same time.

Option 1

18. Retain the status quo with the membership of the Planning Committee remaining at 15.

Option 2

19. Increase the size of the Planning Committee back up to the full membership of the Authority at 22 and abandon the `champions initiative`.

Option 3

20. Reduce the size of the Committee to 13 and, rather than recognising 4 groups, recognise 2. Those being 7 members selected from the District/County group and 6 from the Secretary of State/Parish group.

Option 4

21. Reduce the size of the Committee to 11 and appoint in the same proportion as at present. This would mean 3 members appointed from each of the District, County and Secretary of State group and 2 from the Parish Group. This would retain 11 members (the same as at present) who could be considered for the role of member champions.

Conclusion

22. Most of the reductions on the size of the Authority's committees, as a result of the overall reduction in the size of the Authority, should be quite straight forward to implement without any appreciable difference to the performance of those committees. However, the Planning Committee is a special case. The hybrid nature of the Authority (part local government/part quango) with a particular responsibility for an area of public policy (development control) that is ordinarily left with elected Authorities means Members need to give careful consideration to the arrangements for the Planning Committee.

To the Chief Executive of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

NOTICE

In accordance with Standing Order 2.2(b), requesting the calling of a special meeting of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

We, the undersigned six members of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, hereby request that a special meeting of the Authority be called to consider the following business:

1. That Standing Order 2.7(d) be suspended to allow discussion and decision on item 2 of the business specified herein.
2. That the size of the Planning Committee should be fifteen members of the Authority, consisting of four members appointed by the County Councils; four members appointed by the District Councils; four members appointed by the Secretary of State to represent the national interest; and three members appointed by the Secretary of State as Parish members; and that this decision take immediate effect, the membership of the Planning Committee to be determined by the Authority under the established procedures at its meeting on 31st July 2007, and thereafter at each annual meeting of the Authority.

Signed:

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2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Note: Whilst we recognise the choice of date, time and venue of the special meeting of the Authority is within the remit of the Chairman we request he considers calling it for 12.00 midday on Thursday 19th July at The Buck Inn in Reeth, ahead of the informal training on the Standards Board for England new Code of Conduct, and the Policy Development Forum, to which all Members have been invited to attend from 1.00 pm onwards. We respectively point out that choosing this date, time and venue would ensure the calling of this special Meeting has not incurred any additional expenditure by the Authority.

Discussion paper

“detailing what we consider to be compelling arguments in favour of a 15 member Planning Committee, and a realistic and attractive proposal for allowing this size of Planning Committee to sit very comfortably with a thriving Member Champion initiative whilst at the same time allowing a small number of members to opt out of both being on the Planning Committee and being a Member Champion.”

To be inserted