

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Friday, 15th September 2006.

Present:

WH Brown, G Dalton, OJ Kendall, Mrs S Marshall, Mrs Y Peacock, JJ Pearlman, S Shaw-Wright and Ms N Stedman.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

26/06**MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

The report of the Secretariat Officer was noted.

27/06**ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Having been nominated unopposed, it was –

RESOLVED –

That Mrs Y Peacock be elected Chairman of the Committee, to hold office until the first meeting of the Committee following the annual meeting of the Authority in 2007.

MRS Y PEACOCK IN THE CHAIR

28/06**ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

In their absence, SR Macaré and KJ Lancaster were nominated for the position of Deputy Chairman.

A paper ballot was held and the Chairman announced the result of the vote as follows:

SR Macaré	-	3 votes
KJ Lancaster	-	4 votes

RESOLVED –

That KJ Lancaster be elected Deputy Chairman of the Committee, to hold office until the first meeting of the Committee following the annual meeting of the Authority in 2007.

29/06

MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2006, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

30/06

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

31/06

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from D Heather, HA Kirkbride, KJ Lancaster, SR Macaré and Dr KM Petyt.

32/06

DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Ms N Stedman, as an employee of Defra, declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 10 which referred to work and projects that the Authority undertook with Defra.

33/06

DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

None.

34/06

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Finance and Resources.

The Solicitor referred to the reference in the Auditor's report on Car Park Income (para 2.02: "The Park has no enforcement powers.."), and stated that the Authority did have Bye-Laws that allowed enforcement against non-payment of car park fees.

A member referred to a petition that had been submitted to the Authority on the decision to charge residents for parking permits. He was concerned, not with the specific subject matter of the petition, but with the fact that it had not been received or considered by members. The Chief Executive stated that he had responded to the organiser of the

petition, with a detailed explanation of the reasons for the Finance and Resources Committee's decision. Members considered that whilst this action was perfectly correct, there was a wider issue of public perception and it was suggested that in such cases members should at least be notified of petitions. Some concern was expressed that the submission of a petition should not automatically require an issue to be reconsidered as this could set a precedent. The Chief Executive advised members that he would raise the matter at the next Authority meeting to enable a wider debate amongst members on how petitions should be dealt with.

RESOLVED –

That the report of the Head of Finance and Resources and the appended Internal Audit reports be noted.

35/06 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2006/07: PROGRESS ON ACTIONS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

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

- Target 61 – how are the 'focus groups' set up?
- Target 37 – has there been any progress in obtaining additional resources from Cumbria or North Yorkshire County Councils?
- Target 71 – is there any possibility of additional resources being directed towards clearing the backlog of Section 106 Agreements?
- Target 18 - where is the pilot project to be run?

The Head of Conservation and Policy stated that separate responses on Targets 61 and 71 would be provided for members and added that for Target 18 the pilot had focused on a 10 km square around Reeth. The Chief Executive confirmed that, with regard to Target 37, Cumbria County Council had agreed to make some resources available to the Authority to assist with delegated highway work and discussions continued with North Yorkshire County Council on the same matter.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to member and officer comments being taken into account, the progress made towards achieving the actions set out in the Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07 be noted.

36/06 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE 'OUT OF OBLIVION' PROJECT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

Members welcomed the fact that the Authority had undertaken the project, although regretted that it had not been possible to provide some of the information in CD format, even if only as a 'taster' CD for schools.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report and member comments be noted, and
- (b) the recommendations for future projects, set out in the Annex to the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy, be endorsed.

37/06 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE ‘PUBLIC SPACES PRIVATE PLACES’ PROJECT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

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

- referring to a similar project in Northumberland that had been very successful and suggesting that lessons should have been learnt from that project;
- enquiring if the village character appraisals would be made publicly available; and
- questioning the value of the project.

The Head of Conservation and Policy responded by stating that, in hindsight, the project had probably been over ambitious. The nature and size of the village communities in the Dales are very different from those in the Northumberland National Park. He commented that it was difficult to adapt our project to learn the lessons from Northumberland because our project was already well under way at that point. However, the Authority had resolved the staffing difficulties by employing the same consultants who had carried out the Northumberland project. He confirmed that the interpretation produced through the project was already available on the Authority’s website and further information would be added shortly.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report and member and officer comments be noted, and
- (b) the recommendations for future projects, set out in the Annex to the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy, be endorsed.

38/06 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT AND MAJOR PROJECT REVIEW

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

Members endorsed the proposed framework for reviews, although questioned the ability to consider four major project reviews and two performance improvement reviews each year. The Chief Executive accepted that the target was challenging, but believed it to be realistic. Members, however, felt that a 'target' of up to four reviews per annum, would be more appropriate.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report and member and officer comments be noted;
- (b) the framework for project reviews and performance improvement reviews, as set out in Annexes A and B of the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy be approved;
- (c) two performance improvement reviews and up to four project reviews be undertaken each year;
- (d) each project review to be undertaken by the relevant Head of Department and the project manager;
- (e) during 2007, the following project reviews be programmed:
 - Northern Office Project – report to the February 2007 meeting of the Committee
 - Park-wide Habitat Survey – report to the May 2007 meeting of the Committee
 - WAN/Citrix/Intranet - – report to the August 2007 meeting of the Committee
 - Limestone Country Project – report to the November 2007 meeting of the Committee
- (f) each performance improvement Review Team to consist of:
 - two members (from the Audit and Review Committee and/or the relevant Member Champions)
 - Head of the relevant Department
 - Head of another Department
 - two further members of staff
- (g) one performance improvement review – covering natural environment and cultural heritage consultations - to be carried out during the remainder of 2006/07;
- (h) for the Review identified in (g) above, Mrs D Millward be appointed to the Review Team and the Chief Executive write to all members of the Committee inviting them to volunteer for the remaining position.
- (i) Mr S Shaw-Wright be appointed to assist officers with the forthcoming project review of the Northern Office.

39/06

ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Solicitor/Monitoring Officer.

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

- that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks should be undertaken in relation to all existing and new members of staff; and
- in addition to notifying the Authority's insurers and the Police, the Policy should also require appropriate professional bodies to be informed of allegations of financial misconduct.

Members were advised that a range of posts were subject to CRB checks, and CRB advice was that checks should only be requested where "both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned". The suggestion about informing professional bodies was accepted, although it was emphasised that this should only be done where a financial irregularity was found.

RESOLVED –

That subject to member and officer comments being taken into account, the Authority be recommended to adopt the amended Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy and steps be taken to ensure that staff and members are aware of the Policy.

40/06

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP

CONSIDERED – the report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Working Group held on 16th June 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Working Group held on 16th June 2006 be noted.