

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 19 February 2007

Report: MEMBER FEEDBACK

1. Attached as an **Annex** to this report is feedback from Wilf Fenten, the Authority's representative on the UK National Parks E-Government Group.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the report be noted.

Richard Parkin
Secretariat Officer

Background documents: None

7 February 2007

UK NATIONAL PARKS E-GOVERNMENT GROUP

For four years a Government programme called “Implementing Electronic Government” (IEG) provided funds, first through Defra, later through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, to improve the electronic delivery of services in all English National Parks.

Some of the funding was provided under the condition that all English National Parks would work jointly on a number of projects. In order to facilitate such joint working, which was unusual at the time, lead officers from all the English National Parks set up an IEG Steering Group which was “shadowed” by a similar Member group.

It became soon apparent that there was a lot of duplication in the work of the two groups. Wilf Fenten who chaired the member group and Nigel Stone, lead officer of the officer group and Exmoor National Park Officer, therefore suggested merging both groups. This member/officer steering group remained in existence for four years until last year when the programme, as funded by Government, came to an end.

The joint working between the English National Parks in the IEG Steering Group has been cited by Government as exemplary. One of the results of this co-operation was the setting up of a joint National Park website portal (the Portal) which has been so successful that Welsh and Scottish National Parks are joining it or are considering doing so.

In order to ensure the efficient and continued working of the Portal a partnership was set up. All members of the Portal are represented in this partnership which needed a legal body to look after it. After consultation with all UK National Parks, their chief executives/National Park Officers and members of the IEG Steering Group, the member National Parks decided that a group similar to the IEG Steering Group should carry out that work. In addition, the informal working-together of IT officers in a Portal Group was to continue. Both groups work with great enthusiasm, little cost and even less bureaucracy.

The new E-Gov Group (E-GG)

The roles of the E-GG were defined in a report that Nigel Stone presented to UK ANPA as follows:

- Act as the UK National Parks Portal management board in accordance with the current Partnering Agreement
- Working together on common areas of interest in pursuing the Transformational Government Agenda and the National eService Delivery Standards (NeSDS)
- Provide a forum for exchange of information and best practice amongst National Park Authorities on e-government matters

Membership of the E-GG: The new E-GG has asked for one member and one officer to be nominated from each National Park Authority, in England, Wales and Scotland. This

Authority is represented by Wilf Fenten, as appointed at the Authority meeting in July 2006, and Steve Funnel, Senior IT Officer.

At its first meeting on 14th December 2006, the new Group elected Wilf Fenten as its chairman and agreed the roles outlined above (the draft minutes of this meeting area attached as an **Appendix** to this report). The following points were raised in discussion:

- The feeling from the UK ANPA meeting was that the new E-GG was still based around English National Park Authorities, so the Group needs to work to bring the Welsh and Scottish National Parks closer.
- In order to allow the current Portal Partnership legal agreement, which runs until March 2008, to continue without needing amendments, the Group decided that the IEG Steering Group should be fully incorporated into the Electronic Government Group (E-GG), and that the E-GG will therefore carry out the business of the 'Governing Body' as set out in the Partnering agreement.
- The E-GG will meet twice a year in December and June or thereabouts, timed to be before the bi-annual meetings of UK ANPA. If there are any problems with the proposed budget and membership costs for the Portal there will be an extra meeting in March. The meeting costs are to be met from the Portal budget, which has allowances for these costs.

Sponsorship: ANPA has been approached by Blacks Leisure Group which is interested in sponsoring the National Parks. There is a meeting planned in late January / early February with Blacks, Cathryn Marus (UK ANPA co-ordinator) and Charlotte Westney. So far Blacks have indicated that they are interested in National Parks Week and in the Britain's Breathing Spaces brand, and in helping ANPA with PR activities. The Portal website and individual National Park websites may also be of interest. Charlotte Westney will report back to the E-GG after the meeting.

Britain's Breathing Spaces and Portal branding: At the meeting in December, John Ablitt presented the work done by the Welsh National Parks on creating brand guidelines for implementing the Britain's Breathing Spaces brand work originally done by Corporate Edge. The Group welcomed the Britain's Breathing Spaces brand and the Portal team will be working closely with the ANPA communicators' team to implement the brand on the Portal website. However, some extra work may be needed to explain the use of the BBS branding work at a UK level and at an individual Park level to some National Park Officers who may have reservation about the purpose of the brand.

Conclusion

The new E-GG is a natural continuation of the IEG Steering Group which carried out some excellent work over the past years and improved the way National Parks in England work together.

The new Group contains some of the Members/officers of the IEG Steering Group but also a number of new Members/officers which will invigorate the functioning of the Group. The Group conducts its business very efficiently and in a spirit of real co-operation.

Together with the Portal Group of expert officers, the two bodies provide an excellent forum for exchange of information and best practice amongst National Park Authorities on e-government matters. It has led and will continue to lead to efficiency and cost savings in this area which can so easily swallow up large amounts of money.

Wilf Fenten
Deputy Chair, Finance and Resources Committee
Chairman of E-Government Group of UK National Parks

Association of National Parks
E-Government Group Meeting
14th December 2006

DRAFT MINUTES

Attendees:

Nigel Stone	National Park Officer, Exmoor National Park
Ali Bright	Dartmoor National Park
Bill Hitchins	Member, Dartmoor National Park
Wilf Fenten	Member, Yorkshire Dales National Park
Steve Funnell	Yorkshire Dales National Park
VV Ramaswamys	Member, North York Moors National Park
Chris Leggett	North York Moors National Park
Colin Banfield	New Forest National Park
Martin Lord	Lake District National Park
Adrian Brown	Member, Peak District National Park
Jeff Winston	Peak District National Park
Ruth Marchington	Peak District National Park
Tim Fuller	Northumberland National Park
John Ablitt	Snowdonia National Park
Charlotte Westney	National Parks Portal Manager

Apologies:

Steve Linford	Broads Authority
Lorna Brown	Dartmoor National Park
Arabella Amory	Exmoor National Park
Susan Achmatowicz	New Forest National Park

1. Election of Chairman

Wilf Fenten was elected as Chairman. He was proposed by Adrian Brown, seconded by Bill Hitchins and the election was supported by all group members present.

2. Membership of the Group

The achievements brought about by the work of the IEG Steering Group were noted, and members of the group thanked for their part in this.

The new Electronic Government Group (E-GG) is to invite one Member and one officer to be nominated from each National Park Authority, in England, Wales and Scotland. The current nominated members are:

Steve Linford	Broads Authority
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Lorna Brown	Dartmoor National Park
Ali Bright	Dartmoor National Park
Bill Hitchins	Dartmoor National Park - Member
Nigel Stone	Exmoor National Park
Arabella Amory	Exmoor National Park - Member
Martin Lord	Lake District National Park
Stan Collins	Lake District National Park - Member
Colin Banfield	New Forest National Park
Susan Achmatowicz	New Forest National Park - Member
Tim Fuller	Northumberland National Park
Chris Leggett	North York Moors National Park
VV Ramaswamys	North York Moors National Park - Member
Ruth Marchington	Peak District National Park
Jeff Winston	Peak District National Park
Adrian Brown	Peak District National Park - Member
Steve Funnell	Yorkshire Dales National Park
Wilf Fenten	Yorkshire Dales National Park - Member
Paul Funnell	Brecon Beacons National Park
Alan Hare	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Jan Waite	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Snowdonia National Park – still to respond

Cairngorms National Park – still to respond

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park – still to respond

3. Role of the Group – Nigel Stone’s report to UK ANPA

The group were asked to review the report that Nigel Stone presented to UK ANPA, and in particular the following three roles of the group, as set out in section 4.1:

1. Act as the UK National Parks Portal management board in accordance with the current Partnering Agreement (role as given in Appendix 1)
2. Working together on common areas of interest in pursuing the Transformational Government Agenda and the National eService Delivery Standards (NeSDS)
3. Provide a forum for exchange of information and best practice amongst National Park Authorities on e-government matters

The group agreed these roles and the following points were raised in discussion:

- The feeling from the UK ANPA meeting was that the new E-GG is still based around English National Park Authorities, so the group needs to work to bring the Welsh and Scottish National Parks closer.
- There is still a budget issue for the Welsh and Scottish Parks who have yet to join the Portal partnership, most of whom already have alternatives to the technology offered by the Portal. Reduced or 'pick and mix' membership models may erode the current partnership.
- Officers from the Welsh Parks will meet to discuss how to become involved in the Portal, and will then discuss membership with representatives of the E-GG.
- In order to allow the current Portal Partnership legal agreement, which runs until March 2008, to continue without needing amendments, the group decided that the IEG (Implementing Electronic Government) Steering Group will be fully incorporated into the Electronic Government Group (E-GG), and that the E-GG will therefore carry out the business of the 'Governing Body' as set out in the Partnering agreement.
- The E-GG will meet twice a year in December and June, timed to be before the bi-annual meetings of UK ANPA. If there are any problems with the proposed budget and membership costs for the Portal there will be an extra meeting in March. The meeting costs are to be met from the Portal budget, which has allowances for these costs.

4. UK National Parks Portal update, budget and contributions for 2007/08 – Charlotte Westney & Ruth Marchington

The group were asked to review the report by Charlotte Westney and to approve the following three recommendations (Item 4a):

1. To discuss and agree in principle to the 2007/08 budget proposal prior to a letter being sent to National Park partners asking for a formal commitment.
2. To note progress made in 2006/07.
3. To agree the direction of the 2007/08 work programme for the Portal.

The group were also asked to review the specific reserve budget as reported by Ruth Marchington (Item 4b)

The group agreed these recommendations and the following points were raised in discussion:

- The group thanked the Portal team and the Portal manager for their work during the last year.
- The current membership contributions and budget does not leave a lot of room next year for inflationary increases in costs. The Portal team are therefore asked to report back with costs for different levels of service delivery for hosting, support and sever renewal.
- All group members are asked to warn their National Park Officers that a letter for commitment and contributions to the Portal partnership will be sent out shortly.
- Sponsorship – ANPA have been approached by Blacks Leisure Group who are interested in sponsoring the National Parks. There is a meeting planned in late January / early February with Blacks, Cathryn Marus (UK ANPA co-ordinator) and Charlotte Westney. So far Blacks have indicated they are interested in National Parks Week and in the Britain's Breathing Spaces brand, and in helping ANPA with PR activities. The Portal website and individual National Park websites may also be of interest. Charlotte will report back to the E-GG after the meeting.

5. Britain's Breathing Spaces and Portal branding – John Ablitt

John Ablitt presented the work done by the Welsh National Parks on creating brand guidelines for implementing the Britain's Breathing Spaces brand work originally done by Corporate Edge. [See attached presentation document.]

The discussion raised the following points;

- The group welcomes the Britain's Breathing Spaces brand and the Portal team will be working closely with the ANPA communicators' team to implement the brand on the Portal website.
- Charlotte Westney is invited to attend a Welsh Communicators meeting.
- Some extra work may be needed to explain the use of the BBS branding work at a UK level and at an individual park level to some National Park Officers who may have reservation about the purpose of the brand.

6. DEFRA Transformational Government Web Rationalisation – Jeff Winston & Charlotte Westney

Charlotte Westney and Jeff Winston reported back from the DEFRA Transformational Government Web Rationalisation meeting. [See attached report –Item 6 - Defra TGWR feedback.doc] The discussion raised the following points;

- The National Parks should engage with DirectGov and BusinessLink, in a two way exchange of content and functionality on our websites.
- The Joint Improvement Group identifies non customer-facing systems, whereas the E-GG identifies and works on customer-facing systems and those with web-based delivery. Ruth Marchington is a member of both groups and can act a liaison between them.
- The Welsh Parks also have to make efficiency savings, of 1% year-on-year for the next three years.
- There can sometimes be a conflict between working in partnerships regionally and working in a National Parks partnership, the solution should be what meets customers' needs best in each situation.
- DEFRA have talked about the possibility of shared services for National Parks in the future, such as finance and HR.

7. E-consultations – report from Dartmoor NPA - and

8. E-Petitions – report from Dartmoor NPA

The Joint Improvement Group were all very interested in online consultations, and fairly interested in online petitions, and the Portal team has been asked to evaluate appropriate ways of implementing this at both a national (on the Portal website) and local (on individual National Park websites) level.

9. Any other business

Charlotte Westney informed the group that the South Downs Joint Committee have attended some Portal team meetings, and would like to put in a budget bid to become a member of the Portal. The

group had no objections to this and welcomed this early involvement from the South Downs before they become a full National Park.

10. Date and venue of next meeting

Thursday 24th May, MWB Meeting Rooms, Birmingham.

Please could each National Park let Charlotte Westney know who will be attending the meeting.