

Date: 25 March 2008**Report: REPORT FROM THE MEMBER CHAMPION FOR
CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

Being a NP Member Champion for Conservation of the Natural Environment has, at last, given me real involvement in the aspect of the NP's work which holds the greatest interest for me and in which I feel I can make the greatest contribution. In fact there is so much overlap in what I as a private individual do, and the work that I do with the Authority, that I sometimes have difficulty separating the two. A couple of examples illustrate this dilemma. I have attended the Dales Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group since its inauguration, now I attend as a NP delegate and my report from the latest meeting is included in these papers. However I also currently chair the steering group for the Haytime Project, which is run by the YDMT with considerable involvement with NP staff (and funding), you have no report from me for that activity as I am there because of my experience, not as a delegate from the NP.

The remit of the NP's conservation staff is huge, not just biodiversity in the strict sense of conserving and monitoring species and habitats as reflected in the Haytime Project. I attend the monthly Conservation and Policy Team meetings which are working meetings for all staff involved and are chaired and "minuted" on a rota system. Gary Smith reports back on Authority and SMT meetings, and all staff report back on progress. The diversity of work covered, debated and progressed is impressive and I have nothing but praise for our team. For those who have reluctantly sat in on ineffective staff meetings in other work situations I can assure you that C&P meetings are worthwhile, productive and efficient uses of time. I am pleased to be involved and believe my contribution is more than merely supportive. I have separately worked on a review of how consultations are dealt with by the conservation team.

Climate change now looms large in all aspects of the Authority's work and especially so in conservation of the natural environment. I attended the ANPA conference in Newcastle last spring which dealt solely with how NPs might deal with climate change. Along with other members we collectively reported back on what I consider to be the most pertinent ANPA conference I have attended. It was encouraging to hear from the Minister of the important role NPs can play in combating climate change. Here in the Dales I have attended working group

meetings which have drawn up our policy and approach to climate change and these have now been adopted by the Authority.

I have also been involved with the moorland working group, again attempting to draw together our policy and approach to moorland management, not least in the light of coping with climate change. In England, peat holds a considerably greater amount of carbon in a stable, chemically-bound form than woodland does, so managing our moorland peat is important. As a knock on effect, well managed peat also holds more water and releases it more slowly, thus helping to reduce flash flooding. Releasing water more slowly also improves summer flows in streams, giving more consistent water quantity and quality. Given the current interest in harnessing water power, water quantity is very relevant. I have worked closely with the sustainability officer to promote micro-generation, especially using water power and F&R committee have endorsed our approach.

The NPs highly successful Limestone Country Project finishes at the end of this month. It has received international acclaim and I look forward to the next major project being equally successful. It is early days but I hope to be able to report back to members that this NP continues to lead the way on innovative conservation projects. Being a part of the team and having input, from the start, into major conservation work is why I allowed my name to go forward for membership of this Authority.

I do juggle fulfilling NP purposes in an official capacity as member champion, in a voluntary capacity with the Raydale Project, which seeks to help the local community cope with climate change, and in a working capacity, where I have taken on a five year research project on managing hay meadows in the light of a warmer climate. However I do see the inter-change of ideas from my professional and voluntary work as an integral part of being a member champion.