

Date: 25 March 2008

Report: MEMBER FEEDBACK

Appended to this report is 'feedback' from the following members who have represented the Authority:

- Mrs D Millward who represents the Authority on the Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum.
- Dr KM Petyt who represented the Authority at the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly meeting held at County Hall, Wakefield on 7 February 2008.

Richard Parkin
Secretariat Officer

Background documents: None

11 March 2008

Report from Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum Co-ordinators Group

This group is made up of voluntary and statutory members and is currently chaired by David Sharrod. It aims to oversee the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for the area of the Dales.

Progress on the annual action plan was examined.

The digital biodiversity maps will be completed in March and will then go to the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC). They will be available on line in the autumn through the National Biodiversity Network.

The annual report will go to Natural England (NE) and the Yorkshire and Humberside Biodiversity Forum.

Work on the special sites and places to see website is on going.

A sub-group of the Forum is working on a Biodiversity Conference for young people in 2009, this will probably be at DCM in Hawes.

A second sub-group is working on a "Raising Awareness" project. The NPA is working with NE, National Trust, YDMT, NEYEDC, and the Wildlife Trusts for Yorkshire and Cumbria. Funding is being sought from the "Access to Nature" fund from NE.

There are five strands to the project

- Parish Wildlife Plans – turning ecological data into workable plans
- Parish Wildlife Projects
- Practical conservation and wildlife survey visits
- Exchange visits
- Wildlife Twinning – these get higher grants

NE funding would be 80% and the total budget, over four years is likely to be £406500.

Given all this positive work it is disappointing that the future of the LBAP group and the whole UK BAP is to change. NE have felt the need to rationalise the bureaucracy and lump all of North Yorkshire into one sub-region. NE acknowledge that the Dales LBAP forum is considered one of the most effective groups but others are struggling, especially those with little local authority support, hence the aggregating. In effect we might just end up being a "Partnership" and continue pretty much as before, but there is no disguising the fact that members felt under-valued.

Deborah Millward

Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

I attended the meeting of the Assembly held at County Hall, Wakefield on 7 February 2008.

As usual, much of the meeting was concerned with the formal receiving (with little comment) of reports from various boards and committees.

A Business Plan for the period 2008/9 - 2010/11 (by which time the Assembly will cease to exist) under the title "Continuity, Confidence, Change" was presented, together with a budget for the first of these years, prepared on the assumption that the Government grant for that year will be £2.15 million. The most relevant part of the Plan for YDNPA is probably that concerned with Planning. Here the priority will be on an early review of the Yorkshire and Humber Plan (RSS), reflecting the Government's Green Paper on Housing. The RSS will ultimately be replaced by the new single regional strategy (SRS), so there will be a need to develop closer working relationships with Yorkshire Forward, which will take over the current role of the Assembly. There will also need to be continued close working with local authorities as they prepare their Local Development Frameworks, to secure general conformity with the RSS. Also of relevance to us will be future work on housing strategy, particularly in seeking to deliver more affordable housing.

Among the agenda of "Discussion Items" (though there was in fact little discussion of either) were an update of the Sub National Review, which is concerned with arrangements following the demise of Regional Assemblies and the RDAs taking over their functions; also a Scrutiny Review Report on the Rural Economy, with which both Carl Lis and Shelagh Marshall had been involved. Its two themes were "Making Rural Areas More Enterprising" and "Regeneration of Rural Town Centres".

Before the main part of the agenda, the Assembly was addressed by the newly-appointed Regional Minister for Yorkshire and Humber, Rosie Winterton MP, who said she was hoping to facilitate regional-central government dialogue. She dealt with questions on social cohesion and extremism (e.g. in multicultural areas like Bradford); eco-towns (such as that proposed for near Selby); and, since she is also a Transport Minister, with transport issues (which she accepted also relate critically to matters such as the economy, housing etc). On several matters she said she wanted to learn more before developing her views; on others she spoke with more confidence but without promising that anything would be done.

Malcolm Petyt
8 February 2008