

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting held at Bolton Abbey Village Hall on Tuesday, 28th March 2006.

Present:

C Lis in the Chair.

RA Bird, J Blackie, WH Brown, SHK Butcher, G Dalton, W Fenten, Mrs N Grace, C Hammond, TRN Harrison-Topham, D Heather, D Ireton, OJ Kendall, KJ Lancaster, SR Macaré, A Osborne, Mrs Y Peacock, JJ Pearlman, Dr KM Petyt, Mrs FG Ramsbottom and Ms N Stedman.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

21/06 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2006 be amended to include D Heather's apologies and, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22/06 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

23/06 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Item Nos 17(a) and 17(b) on the agenda on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs 1, 7, 8 & 9, and 12 & 13 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

24/06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs A Brooks, Mrs S Marshall and Mrs D Millward.

25/06 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

The following Members made declarations of interest: Messrs Lis, Macaré and Pearlman all declared personal and prejudicial interests in Agenda Item 15 (Haymeadows Project) as Trustees of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust; A Osborne and Ms N Stedman declared personal, non-prejudicial interests in Agenda Item 8 (Chief Executive's Report) as employees of DEFRA.

26/06 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

C Hammond reported that he had been lobbied on Agenda Item 14 (Proposed Conservation Area Designation for the Village of Hebden).

27/06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Chairman.

The Chairman welcomed Mr William Weston, the new Secretary of State appointee, and reminded members that Mrs Nicky Grace would end her term of office as a Secretary of State appointed member of the Authority on 31st March. On behalf of Members and officers he thanked Mrs Grace for her outstanding contribution to the work of the Authority. He also provided Members with feedback on the recent NPAPA seminar held at Warwick University.

RESOLVED –

That the report and further comments be noted.

28/06 REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Chief Executive.

Members expressed their deep concern regarding the proposed closures of three Youth Hostels within the National Park area and asked what action could be taken by the Authority to make these views known, and to facilitate a discussion with representatives from the Youth Hostel Association on the future strategy for rural areas.

Concern was also expressed at the lack of speed and diligence with which the new Single Farm Payment was being introduced and the effect of this delay on hill farming within the National Park.

There was a brief discussion regarding the future direction of Member training within the Authority and it was suggested that the remit for this important area should be with the Audit & Review Committee.

Members debated whether, in light of the proposal by the Finance & Resources Committee to discuss future funding and staffing arrangements, the post of Landscape Conservation Officer should be filled at this time.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to Member and officer comments being taken into account:

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the Chief Executive write to the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) expressing the concerns of Members regarding the proposed closure of the three hostels in the National Park, and a delegation from the YHA be invited to address the May meeting of the Authority to discuss the Association's strategy for hostels in the area;
- (c) W Weston be appointed to serve on the Planning and Finance & Resources Committees, until such time as the Authority re-constitutes its Committees;
- (d) the Agricultural Reform Group be charged with producing the Authority's detailed response to consultations, within the framework set by the Authority's existing policies, and all Members be invited to attend the Group's meeting; and that the review of the workings of the Group be postponed till July 2006;
- (e) the Chief Executive write to the Rural Payments Agency expressing the concerns of Members regarding the delay in payment of Single Farm Payments with particular reference to the effect on hill farming in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and that ANPA be requested to take a formal position on the matter;
- (f) the Member Development Programme for 2006/07, appended to the report of the Chief Executive, be noted;

- (g) the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Review Committee, and the Standards Committee, be amended at the July AGM to reflect their appropriate roles in Member training and development
- (h) the vacancy on the Limestone Country Project Advisory Group be filled by SHK Butcher;
- (i) the vacancy on the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum be filled by WH Brown, his term of office to be for three years from the date of this meeting;
- (j) all members be canvassed on their attendance at the South Lakeland District Council event on 'Employment and Economy', in late June;
- (k) the recruitment of a part-time Landscape Conservation Officer be postponed, pending the outcome of the Finance and Resources Committee's consideration of future staffing proposals for the Authority, the report of the Finance & Resources Committee to come back to the full Authority for consideration;
- (l) should Members wish to attend the forthcoming Europarc seminar in Oxford, they do so at their own cost and inform the Secretariat of their wish to attend.
- (m) all press releases to be sent (by email) to Members for information;
- (n) an update on the current position regarding discussions with the Skipton Building Society be included in the next edition of the Members' Information Bulletin.

29/06 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Treasurer.

A Member questioned the National Park Authority's £250k borrowing facility and asked if, in light of experience, it was sufficient. The Head of Finance & Resources responded that not only did the Authority have the ability to borrow up to £250k but, in the case of any financial difficulties, we could, with the agreement of DEFRA, draw down government grant in advance.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the Annual Treasury Management Strategy for 2006/07 as detailed in Appendix A of the Treasurer's report be approved;

- (b) the Treasury Management Policy Statement as detailed in Paragraph 7 of the report of the Treasurer be approved; and
- (c) Members agree with Para 5.8 of the report of the Treasurer regarding the Annual Investment Strategy and the proposed delegation arrangements.

30/06 CAPITAL FINANCE AND THE PRUDENTIAL CODE

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Treasurer.

RESOLVED –

That approval be given to:

- (a) the Prudential Indicators as set out in Paragraph 3 of the Treasurer's report;
- (b) an affordable borrowing limit of £250,000 for 2006/07 under Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 as set out in Paragraph 3(iv) of the Treasurer's report; and
- (c) the specific delegations to the Treasurer proposed in Paragraph 3 of the Treasurer's report in relation to day to day management of Prudential Indicators (iv) and (v).

31/06 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (NPAPA) IMPROVEMENT PLAN

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that the paper brought together three inter-related issues for consideration:

- confirmation, from Members, that the Performance Assessment Improvement Plan (first considered at the January meeting) is now acceptable to Members;
- the role of Members in leadership and management of the Authority;
- a final decision on the reduction in the Planning Committee and, if that decision is taken, how the Planning Committee might be managed in the future.

The Chief Executive highlighted the view that, should Members accept the proposals for their new role, this was likely to lead to a fundamental culture shift in the way in which the Authority was managed and led.

He outlined the considerations of the Planning Performance Working Group (PPWG) which met following the last Authority meeting in January to consider the future workings of the Planning Committee.

There was support from Members both for reducing the size of the Planning Committee and for leaving it at its present membership. Some Members were happy to accept a reduction in size but only once it had been agreed how future appointments might be made to the Committee and once they had a better understanding of what the future role of Members might be in the overall leadership and management of the Authority.

In relation to future arrangements for the management of the Planning Committee, Members debated at great length the following issues:

- the method of appointment to the Planning Committee;
- rotation of members;
- substitutes;
- reference back;
- splitting policy from delivery.

Votes were taken, during the discussion, on all these issues.

There was a widespread discussion on the future role of Members. Some Members were unhappy about the proposals for the creation of “champions” and thought that other models might be more appropriate. It was suggested that a better approach might be to establish Member ‘leads’ to look at cross-cutting issues rather than the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) headings. It was accepted by Members that more discussion was required on this matter and, as a first step, the item regarding the role of Members should be discussed at the April Policy Development Forum.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the size of the Planning Committee be reduced from its current membership of 26 to 15 members;
- (b) the four Member groupings should meet in advance of the Annual General Meeting to determine which nominations they would make to the Authority for representation on all the Authority’s Committees, including the Planning Committee;
- (c) optional rotation be introduced for appointment to the Planning Committee;
- (d) substitutes from all four groupings be established, these substitutes to be numbered and, in the event of a Member being unable to attend the Planning Committee, the Member concerned to use the listing to choose a substitute;
- (e) reference back reports continue to be made to the Planning Committee;

- (f) the Planning Committee be responsible for decisions in relation to planning applications, but the full Authority be responsible for the establishment and monitoring of planning policy;
- (g) a paper dealing with the future role of Members be presented to the next meeting of the Policy Development Forum for further discussion;
- (h) subject to the comments of Members and officers being taken into account, the detailed Improvement Plan attached as Appendix 1 to the Chief Executive's report be approved.

32/06 NORTH YORKSHIRE SUB-REGIONAL TOURISM REVIEW

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Sustainable Tourism Officer.

(Note: D Heather declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in this item as a member of the Settle District Tourist Information Centre)

RESOLVED –

That Members note the progress being made on the North Yorkshire Sub-Regional Tourism Review and agree that: -

- (a) officers work with Yorkshire Forward to finalise agreement on the three-year business plan;
- (b) SR Macaré be appointed to represent the Authority on the Yorkshire Dales and Harrogate ATP; and
- (c) a further paper be brought back to a future Authority meeting providing Members with the detailed action plan.

33/06 BEST VALUE ACTION PLAN 2006/07

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

One Member expressed considerable unhappiness concerning the lack of actions, within the Plan, on landscape issues. Of the three actions that had been identified for this area of work, one was now not likely to be achieved because of the earlier decision of the Authority not to appoint to the Landscape Conservation Officer post.

It was suggested by a member that identifying the twenty key targets might be a useful approach to the implementation of the Plan.

The Chief Executive highlighted his concern that the Plan contained a considerable number of actions, many of which were extremely resource-intensive. He asked Members to allow him to give greater consideration to the current Plan, taking into account Members' views and building in actions from the current year (2005/06) that had been postponed. A report would be brought back to the next meeting of the Authority.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority's Best Value Action Plan for 2006/07 be noted with a further report to be brought back to the May Authority meeting.

34/06 PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION FOR THE VILLAGE OF HEDBEN

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Building Conservation Officer.

The Head of Conservation & Policy outlined the process by which Members had already considered this item. In particular, he outlined the findings of the recent site visit/training event carried out for Members in Hebden.

A number of Members were concerned that the industrial site was included in the conservation area boundary. They felt this was not merited. There were also some concerns that the former holiday homes site did not merit inclusion within the boundary.

RESOLVED –

That: -

- (a) the village of Hebden, as defined by the boundary map included in the appendices to the report of the Building Conservation Officer with the exception of the industrial site, be designated as a conservation area; and
- (b) the notification actions outlined in Section 4 of the Building Conservation Officer's report be implemented.

35/06 HAYMEADOWS PROJECT

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

The Head of Conservation & Policy explained that the Haymeadows Project had evolved from an original scheme called the "Dales Meadow Heritage" Project for which Members had previously approved a grant of £30,000. He was now seeking to transfer the £30,000 grant into this larger project.

Members commented on the extent of the project and how successfully it had managed to generate external funding. The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust were praised for their role in the project.

RESOLVED –

That approval be given to the transfer of the £30,000 Sustainable Development Fund grant, originally allocated to the 'Dales Meadow Heritage' Project, to the 'Hay Time' Meadows Project.

36/06 PLANNING COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 10th January and 14th February 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 10th January and 14th February 2006 be received.

37/06 ACCESS COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Access Committee held on 2nd February 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Access Committee held on 2nd February 2006 be received.

38/06 FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Review Committee held on 13th February 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 13th February 2006 be received.

39/06 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 23rd February 2006.

Members considered the proposed new Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee which identified the training of Members within its remit as one of its roles.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the draft minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 23rd February 2006 be received; and
- (b) the proposed terms of reference for the Standards Committee, as appended to the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2006 be approved, subject to 8(g) being amended to read: 'Training to enable members to perform their roles effectively.'

40/06 LATE ITEM: MEMBER FEEDBACK

CONSIDERED –

A report from SR Macaré on the Yorkshire Tourism Conference held on 10th February 2006, which was circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

The remainder of business was considered in private

41/06 PLANNING COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The private minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 10th January 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the private minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 10th January 2006 be received.

42/06 FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED –

The private minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 13th February 2006.

RESOLVED –

That the private minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 13th February 2006 be received.