

Date: 30 January 2007

Report: PREPARING FOR CHANGES TO THE AUTHORITY'S MEMBERSHIP

Purpose of report

1. To inform members of the changes that are about to commence to the Authority's membership, and seek their approval of proposals in order to deal with these changes.

Background

2. Members will be aware that the Authority's membership reduces from 26 to 22 on 8 May 2007.
3. Having considered a paper at the November Authority meeting, members will also be aware that DEFRA proposes to postpone changes contained within the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, by which those members who are facing elections, could continue to serve as National Park Authority members for a period up to 3 months from the election date.
4. Clearly these changes to the size of the Authority's membership will have an impact on Committees. It is proposed that a further paper, dealing with the size of all the Authority's Committees, is brought to a meeting of the Authority in May 2007. This will then give the member groups the opportunity to consider their nominations for the AGM in July.
5. The changes to the membership raise a number of issues that the Authority needs to address. It is proposed to do that within this paper, by firstly, looking at the impact of the proposals on the individual committees and then on the four member groups (Secretary of State, Parish, County and District).

Committees

Planning Committee

6. The 2007 local elections are to be held on 3 May 2007. Members facing elections will cease to be members of the Authority on 8 May 2007, the same day as the scheduled Planning Committee meeting. It is proposed that the May Planning Committee be brought forward one week to 1 May 2007.

Audit & Review

7. There is an Audit & Review Committee scheduled on 4 May 2007. At that time there will be one Secretary of State Member missing (as a result of the reduction in the number of Secretary of State Members which will take place on 31 March 2007). It is proposed that the Audit & Review Committee runs with this vacancy until the Authority decides on the future size of this Committee.

Finance & Resources

8. There is a Finance & Resources Committee meeting planned for the 9 May 2007. There will be one District Council member missing from this meeting as a result of the forthcoming elections. As with the Audit & Review Committee, it is proposed that the Finance & Resources Committee meet with one member short until the Committee is reconstituted.

Access Committee

9. On 1 April there will be a vacancy on the Access Committee following the completion of Mr Pearlman's term of membership on the Authority. In order to retain the balance on the Committee, the Secretary of State group will need to meet to nominate a replacement for Mr Pearlman (from amongst Mrs Brooks, Mrs Millward, Ms Stedman and Messrs Osborne and Weston) and that nomination will be for consideration at the Authority meeting on 27 March.

Member Groups

Secretary of State

10. The Secretary of State group will reduce from seven to six on the 31 March 2007. Mr Pearlman, whose term with the Authority ends, will be the Secretary of State member who stands down.
11. In order to fill the resulting vacancy on the Planning Committee, the Secretary of State group will need to meet to select a new Planning Committee member to replace Mr Pearlman. This member must be chosen from: Ms Stedman, Dr Petyt or Mrs Millward. All three of these members are currently 'Champions' but the person appointed to the Planning Committee will have to relinquish their Champion role.
12. At its meeting in March, the Authority will receive, and will need to consider, the nomination from the Secretary of State group. April will be the first meeting for the new Planning Committee Secretary of State member.

Parish Councillors

13. The current Planning Committee Chairman, Mr Brown, is up for election in May 2007 and will cease to be a member of the Authority on 8 May. He will, therefore, have to be replaced as a Parish Council member on the Planning Committee. The only member eligible to replace Mr Brown from this group, is Mr Fenten. Other members are either on the Planning Committee already or are up for election at the same time as Mr Brown. It is proposed that Mr Fenten be appointed to the Planning Committee with effect from 8 May, but in the event that Mr Brown is re-elected to his parish, re-appointed to the National Park Authority by the northern parishes and formally appointed by the Secretary of State, that he [Mr Brown] is re-appointed back to the Planning Committee. Members should note that Mr Fenten is also currently a member champion.

District Councillors

14. If the Planning Committee is scheduled to the 1 May 2007 as proposed, there will be no problems caused by the reduction in the size of the Authority membership/local elections. Richmondshire District Council meet on the 15 May to re-appoint their two members to the Authority and the three members of Craven District Council, who currently sit on the Planning Committee, are not facing elections this year. South Lakeland District Council is unaffected by the change in size of the Authority's membership.

County Councillors

15. North Yorkshire County Council meets on the 21 February 2007 to determine which of their members will lose their seat on the National Park Authority with effect from 8 May. There are no County Council elections this year. Cumbria County Council are unaffected by the changes in the size of the Authority's membership.

Size of the Planning Committee/Member Champions

16. It is obvious from the changes outlined above that there will be a major impact on the Authority's initiative regarding member champions as a result of the overall changes to the size of the Authority's membership.
17. In effect, if the Authority decides to retain the size of the Planning Committee at 15 [which must be 'in balance'], then that leaves a potential 'field' of only seven members who could be member champions. This may well be the route that Members wish to take but the matter can be considered by the Authority at its May meeting. This should then allow time for all four of the member groups to meet in June/July to determine their nominations to the Planning Committee and member champion roles. Members will recall that these nominations have to be approved by the Authority at its AGM in July.

RECOMMENDATION

18. It is recommended that:-

- (a) A paper on future proposals for the size of the Authority's Committees is brought to the Authority meeting in May 2007.
- (b) The date of the May 2007 Planning Committee is changed from 8 May to 1 May.
- (c) The Audit & Review and Finance & Resources Committees meet on 4 May and 9 May 2007 respectively, as scheduled.
- (d) The Secretary of State group meet prior to the March 2007 meeting of the Authority to nominate to fill the vacancies on the Planning and Access Committees.
- (e) Mr Fenten be appointed to the Planning Committee with effect from 8 May 2007 on the terms outlined in Paragraph 13 above.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

Background documents:
NERC Act 2006

15 January 2007