

## YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

30<sup>th</sup> May 2006**APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS****Purpose of the report**

To discuss the potential roles of Member Champions and to invite Members to decide on these roles, so that appointments can be made at the July Authority meeting.

**Background**

The issue of member champions has been discussed in a number of fora since the publication of the National Park Authority Performance Assessment (NPAPA) report in January 2006.

The creation of a more 'hands-on' role for members represents one of the major cultural shifts in the way in which the Authority intends to carry out its business along with a number of other initiatives, namely review of the Audit and Review Committee function, review of the Planning Committee, the member role in partnerships and members' ambassadorial/representational role.

This paper, and the attached appendices, identify a 'direction of travel' for the role of member champion. The paper is not intended to be prescriptive in addressing an issue which is clearly at the early stages of development. The way in which the role develops will be very much in the hands of members and it will be important over the next 12-18 months to share good and bad practice in assessing the success of this venture. This will be in addition to any formal review that the Authority might wish to undertake.

**Principles**

Discussions with members have highlighted a number of principles that should be applied to member champions:-

- Members appointed by the Authority need to be committed and enthusiastic about the area of work in question (of all the principles identified this is the most critical).
- In the first instance it is important to recognise what the member champions are not. They are not policy makers, executive members or a cabinet, nor will they direct staff.
- Champions will cover the seven areas of the Authority's work:-
  - Conservation of the Natural Environment
  - Conservation of Cultural Heritage
  - Recreation Management
  - Promoting Understanding

- Development Control
  - Forward Planning
  - Corporate and Democratic Core
- The arrangements should be appropriate to the resources and capacity of members and officers:
    - Up to two members can be champions in a particular area
    - A member can only be a champion in one area
    - Champions cannot be members of the Planning Committee

### **Role of the Champion**

- To assist officers with the implementation of the Authority's policy. To develop future policy proposals for consideration by the Authority and its committees
- To champion the service within the Authority
- To represent and champion the service externally
- To report back to the Authority and its Committees on their brief. Processes will need to be established so that they can be questioned by other members on their role and performance.
- To act as a 'sounding board' for senior officers regarding the discussion of new ideas and initiatives. They are expected to bring the 'member perspective' to these discussions.

Officers will be expected to consult champions regularly, but particularly on difficult or sensitive issues where they are taking decisions under the Authority's delegation scheme. This consultation with member champions would be in addition to, not instead of, existing consultation with members.

The specific roles for each of the seven areas are identified in the attached **Appendix**.

### **Issues**

#### **1. Remuneration**

At this stage it is difficult to quantify the amount of time commitment that will be required from the member champions. It may be significant. There is a question that members need to determine as to whether the member champion roles should be remunerated. The Authority is subject to the Local Authorities Members' Allowance Regulations 2003, and under them we have to have a members' allowance scheme which must provide for each member to receive an identical amount of basic allowance and may provide for Special Responsibility Allowances to be paid to such members who have special responsibilities specified in the scheme. Currently the Authority has five members who receive a Special Responsibility Allowance.

If the Authority wished to remunerate member champions it would have to be by way of the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and we would have to amend the Members' Allowance Scheme in order to do so. In taking this action the Authority would have to conclude that the responsibilities of a champion are at least equal to those responsibilities mentioned in the regulations. The existing special responsibilities are

the Chairman and Deputy of the Authority, Chairman and Deputy of the Planning Committee and the IEG Working Group nominee.

Aside from the technicalities there are obvious political implications, both for a large increase in the number of SRAs paid, and also in terms of the message it gives that this role is worth more to the Authority than being a member of the Planning Committee. Planning Committee members may argue that the champions should not get SRA as they are simply using their time which has been freed up now because they are no longer on the Planning Committee, and that Planning Committee members spend just as much time on the Authority's business as the champions do. **Members' views are sought on this.**

However, one area that will need to be specified as an approved duty, for champions, is the payment of travel and subsistence.

2. Appointment

The purpose of bringing this paper to this meeting of the Authority is to allow members to give consideration to whether they wish to take on the role of member champion. It would be useful if this were discussed in the group meetings (to take place between May and the AGM in July). However, members should be aware that ultimately these appointments will not be made by the groups but by the Authority at the July meeting.

3. Monitoring

The Chairman has suggested that it would be useful for him to meet with the member champions, initially on a quarterly basis. This would give an opportunity for identifying good and bad practice, sharing information and monitoring the implementation and development of the initiative with a view to reporting back to the Authority in a more formal manner.

4. The future role

Members should be aware that the establishment of champions is likely to replace some of the existing working groups eg the Planning Performance Working Group, the Corporate Governance Working Group and may, subject to members' views, replace the Authority's IEG representative. This does fit in quite neatly with existing policy where working groups are established on a task and finish basis. The role of the champion would be to continue developments in these areas.

5. Training and Development

Members should recognise that, if they are appointed by the Authority to be champions in a particular area, there is a range of training, development and induction that they will need to undertake. To some extent this will depend on the existing knowledge and understanding of members. More details are contained within the appendices.

6. Relationship with Chairs of Committees

The establishment of member champions should bring greater clarity to the role of the chairmen of the existing committees.

7. Working within Existing Processes

As described earlier the establishment of champions will mean a much closer relationship with officers involved in the management and delivery of the Authority's work programmes. Although flexibility has to be shown by both officers and members in

ensuring this new arrangement is successful, members should bear in mind that the established processes of the Authority can't simply be overhauled and replaced to ensure they are geared to the personal circumstances of individual members. Nonetheless, it is incumbent on both members and officers to ensure that the processes established are as compatible as far as they can be.

## **Conclusions**

The establishment of member champions for each of the Authority's main areas of responsibility represents a genuine and exciting attempt to improve the performance of the Authority and to take full advantage of the skills, experience and expertise that members of the Authority possess across a wide range of issues.

If successful this initiative has the potential to bring a step change to the way in which the Authority is perceived, how it performs, the relationship between members and officers, and ensuring the Authority gets the maximum benefit out of the skills and experience that members bring to their role.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to:-

1. Approve the establishment of member champions across the seven areas of the Authority's work.
2. Agree the principles and role of member champions as outlined in the paper.
3. Consider the issue of remuneration for member champions.
4. Agree that the role of member champion be classed as an approved duty.
5. Use the paper and its appendices as background information during the group meetings to be held between May and July 2006.

DAVID BUTTERWORTH  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Background documents: National Park Authority Performance Assessment Report – January 2006.

16<sup>th</sup> May 2006

**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT MEMBER CHAMPION****Areas of activity covered**▪ ***Biodiversity***

- research and surveys to inform conservation activity;
- action to conserve and enhance species and habitats;
- involving local communities in biodiversity (Local Nature Reserves);
- monitoring and reporting progress on the local Biodiversity Action Plan;
- managing Dales Biodiversity Forum

▪ ***Farm Conservation***

- providing a range of advice/assistance to farm businesses, and advising and supporting DEFRA in the local delivery of national agri-environment schemes (esp Environmental Stewardship);
- monitoring impacts of CAP reform

▪ ***Trees and Woodland***

- funding of existing YDNPA woodland management agreements;
- developing, facilitating and funding new planting and management schemes, working with Forestry Commission, YDMT and others;
- supporting integrated woodland management, training and product initiatives through Yorwoods;
- protecting important amenity trees and hedgerows (TPOs etc);
- research and surveys to inform conservation activity

▪ ***Landscape***

- developing landscape character guidelines;
- landscape advice on individual projects.

▪ ***Limestone Country***

- grants and advice to farmers to introduce hardy cattle;
- environmental enhancements (rabbit/bracken control)
- research on environmental and economic impacts of the project.

### **Current/Future Issues**

1. Impact of CAP reform on the environment and economic viability of farming in the Park
2. Future national schemes to support agri-environment measures and the Authority's role in delivering them
3. Developing relationships with Natural England
4. Future of 'Limestone Country' – what happens when current project ends next year?
5. Securing funding needed to meet woodland creation targets

### **Induction programme**

Briefings from Head of Department and section heads

Join Biodiversity Forum, Dales Woodland Forum, Agriculture Reform Group

Series of site visits

Attend appropriate Senior Management Team (SMT) and Policy Development Group (PDG) meetings to discuss relevant issues.

Attend appropriate departmental meetings

## HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT MEMBER CHAMPION

### Areas of activity covered

- **Archaeology**
  - intervention to preserve historic buildings and structures that are neglected because they are of no economic value or have uncertain ownership;
  - activities to improve knowledge of the historic environment, and help local people and visitors to realise and appreciate its value and interest (e.g. archaeology day school);
  - data collection to monitor the condition of the most important sites and features;
  - using SMR data to respond to a wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultations
  
- **Building Conservation**
  - action to conserve and enhance Listed Buildings within the Park, including dealing with significant applications for Listed Building consent and advising on development control applications;
  - supporting the Rural Development Service in restoring traditional field barns through agri-environment schemes;
  - activities to improve knowledge of the historic environment, and help local people and visitors to realise and appreciate its value and interest;
  - data collection to monitor the condition of the NP's most important buildings and structures;
  - appraisal and enhancement of Conservation Areas.
  
- **Barns and Walls**
  - advice and assistance for barn restoration works being funded by the Rural Development Service;
  
- **Sites and Monuments Record**
  - maintaining a publicly-accessible, electronic Sites and Monuments Record, including interpretation and educational resources ('Out of Oblivion' website);
  - transfer of paper records to new electronic database.

### **Current/Future Issues**

1. Workload on keeping Conservation Area information up-to-date + how to fund Conservation Area enhancements
2. Ensuring historic environment is not overlooked in new agri-environment schemes
3. Future role of the Authority in conservation of barns and walls
4. Continuing development of volunteers to support historic environment work
5. Involving local communities in historic environment work.

### **Induction programme**

Briefings from Head of Department and section heads

Join Dales Historic Environment Forum

Series of site visits

Attend appropriate Senior Management Team (SMT) and Policy Development Group (PDG) meetings to discuss relevant issues.

Attend appropriate departmental meetings

## RECREATION MANAGEMENT MEMBER CHAMPION

### Areas of activity covered

- ***Managing the access resource***
  - The Rights of Way Network including Long Distance Trails eg Pennine Bridleway
  - Public rights of way surveying
  - Development of 'prow' maintenance plan
  - Open Access and access to other recreation opportunities
  - Management of recreational vehicular use on unsealed routes (green lanes)
  - Organised recreational events
- ***Accessibility and Visitor Management***
  - Maintaining the diversity – so everywhere doesn't become the same
  - Access Interchanges, car parks and toilets – how people access the area
  - Management of the recreational resource
- ***Sustainable Transport***
  - Sustainable Travel Partnership – including travel options and information
  - Advisory road hierarchies and traffic management
  - Local Transport Plans
- ***Access for All***
  - Enhancing the rights of way network for those with disabilities and limited mobility
  - Working with tourism service providers in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act
- ***Healthy Living***
  - Walks for health – also an example of using volunteers to increase our capacity
- ***Car Park Management***
  - Management of Cleaning/Maintenance and cash collecting contracts
  - Enforcement and Compliance, parking charges
  - Developing pricing strategies
  - Involvement of local communities
- ***Ranger Service*** (closely involved in all the above but in addition..)
  - Local Community Consultation
  - Interaction with Local schools
  - Communication with the visiting public
  - Apprenticeship Scheme
  - Management of Authority amenity sites
- ***Volunteering***
  - Dales Volunteers
  - Work Experience Placements
  - Corporate 'Volunteers'
  - Ad hoc volunteer events

## **Current/Future Issues**

1. Management of recreational vehicular use of unsealed routes
2. Management of CRoW Open Access Areas
3. Delegation agreements with County Councils covering public rights of way management
4. Public rights of way maintenance programmes, particularly the development of annual maintenance plan.
5. Overview of the review of the Definitive Map eg producing and publishing a digital definitive map, [NB members already receive a detailed quarterly report of casework and the member champion would not become involved in individual cases.]
6. Role of the Authority in relation to sustainable travel/transport
7. Relationships with County Councils regarding the production of Rights of Way Improvement Plans
8. The promotion of the Recreational Charter
9. Planning for the management of increasing recreational uses eg. mountain biking
10. Health agenda and determining the Authority's role in encouraging greater participation in sport and recreation in line with Government targets
11. Overview of development and implementation of externally funded projects eg Pennine Bridleway
12. Resourcing the demand for volunteer involvement
13. Local community involvement in car park/toilet management
14. Fostering a good working relationship between the LAF and Authority
15. Potential for Dales Volunteers (DVs) to support community projects
16. DV involvement in project initiation and development (plus ext. funding).

## **Induction Programme**

Briefings with key staff

Site visits

Attendance at Ranger and Access and Recreation Team meetings

Attend one Dales Volunteers training day (First 'Awareness' day, if not previously attended.)

Attend a Spring or Autumn meeting of Dales Volunteers (or a pre-Christmas lunch with DCM Volunteers or Ragged Robins?) in order to be able to hear any thoughts DVs might want to share

Training:       Media  
                  Access Committee training events

## **PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING MEMBER CHAMPION**

### **Areas of activity covered**

Assistance with strategies and policies plus involvement in a wide range of departmental and over-arching projects including the following:

- ***Sustainable Tourism***
  - Sustainable Tourism – general issues
  - Area Tourism Partnership (ATP, Yorkshire Dales Tourism)
  - National Park Centres, Partnership Centres and Park Information Points
  - Dales Countryside Museum
  - Retail Services
  - Survey and evaluation work
  
- ***Outreach and Education***
  - Beyond the Boundary Cricket Project
  - Mosaic Partnership
  - Events Programme
  - Education Services
  - Outreach Services
  
- ***Corporate Communications***
  - Media
  - Website
  - Publications
  - Interpretation
  - Corporate Identity and Branding

### **Current/Future Issues**

Each of the three areas covered above are in a process of development. The member champion(s) should be able to assist in these processes.

### **Induction Programme**

Briefings with HOD and Team Leaders on each of the three areas of work probably half a day each

Site visits to key sites including all NPC, all Partnership Centres, a couple of Park Information Points, Retail Services and DCM

Attendance at Departmental and Team meetings

Attendance at a NPC briefing

Attend three events to cover some of the range of activities on offer

Attend at least one outreach activity

Attend a Group Leader Visit or Mosaic Partnership Steering Group

Join a school group at DCM

Attend a national Communicators' Meeting

Attend an Area Tourism Partnership (Yorkshire Dales Tourism) meeting

## **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MEMBER CHAMPION**

### **Areas of activity covered**

- ***Oversight of the work of the Dept, including:-***
  - Land Charge Searches
  - Appeals
  - Enforcement
  - Minerals Planning
  - Regional Aggregates Working Party
  - Providing information to the general public
  - Planning Surgeries
  - Website
  - Validation & registration of applications
  - Consultation
  - Professional assessment of development proposals & report writing
  - Negotiations
  - Liaison with Members
  - Planning Committee
  - Design Awards
  - Design Guides
  - Staff & Member training
  - Dealing with complaints
  - Best Value processes

### **Current/Future Issues**

1. Standards Authority status/Performance in processing applications to target times
2. Recruitment & Retention of qualified Planning Officers
3. Probity in Planning/Peer Group Review – Members role/approach
4. IT development & support
5. Public expectations/relations
6. Planning Delivery Grant/future finances

### **Induction Programme**

All Members receive a briefing on the Planning system from the Head of Planning on joining the Planning Committee.

All Members of the Planning Committee receive at least one day per year compulsory Planning training.

The above training focuses on the Planning system and how it is supposed to operate, decision making etc.

Member Champion training should focus more on the work of the Department. What work we do, how we do it, why we do it that way, how well we do it.

The purpose of the training should be to equip the Champion to offer informed opinion on priorities, successes, failures etc, and in which areas should we consider expanding/reducing services etc.

Job shadowing/discussion with staff covering each area of the Dept's work should form the basis of the Champion's training. They will need to understand what it takes to deliver the service.

Regular meetings with Head of Planning

Regular meetings with other Planning staff

Attendance at some team meetings

Following the Planning Committee preparation cycle through would be a valuable exercise: starting with cases they have job shadowed a Planning Officer on, agenda meeting, assembling the agenda, chairman's briefing, attending a Planning Committee meeting from an officers' perspective, post-committee meeting.

For specific issues, visiting other planning authorities to compare practices could also be useful.

Generic Member Champion training should include media training.

It will also cover issues of confidentiality. They will inevitably acquire personal information on staff and sensitive information on contentious cases.

## FORWARD PLANNING (SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT) MEMBER CHAMPION

### Areas of activity covered

#### ▪ ***Sustainable Development***

- providing funding, through the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, for projects that contribute to the environmental, social and economic well-being of the Dales (Sustainable Development Fund);
- contributions to local socio-economic and environmental partnerships (York and North Yorkshire Partnership Unit, Cumbria Fells and Dales LEADER + Programme, and the North Yorkshire Rural Target Fund);
- influencing economic and social policies at local (Local Strategic Partnerships), regional (Regional Development Agency) and national level.

#### ▪ ***Local Plans***

- Preparation of Local Development Framework documents
- Representative role at Regional level

#### ▪ ***National Park Management Plan***

- monitoring, reviewing and publishing revised National Park Management Plan;
- overseeing policy development across the range of the Authority's work to ensure consistency.

#### ▪ ***State of the Park***

- programme of surveys and acquiring necessary data to allow monitoring of performance against National Park Management Plan aims and objectives;
- analysing and distributing data from the 2001 Census.

### Current/Future Issues

1. Completing review of National Park Management Plan
2. Rationalising existing proliferation of Authority plans and strategies
3. Developing YDNPA role in delivery of economic/social funding in the National Park (esp Leader).
4. Preparation of the Local Development Framework
5. Affordable housing initiatives

## **Induction programme**

Briefings from Head of Planning and Conservation & Policy.

Briefing from YDMT on Sustainable Development Fund.

Attend appropriate Senior Management Team (SMT) and Policy Development Group (PDG) meetings to discuss relevant issues.

Attend appropriate departmental meetings

Liaison with Rural Housing Enabler for briefing on affordable housing issues

## CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC CORE MEMBER CHAMPION

### Areas of activity covered

Oversight of the provision of effective support services to the Authority, including personnel, finance and IT.

- **Performance Management**
  - Assessment of the Authority's performance including NPAPA
  - Driving the performance improvement agenda
  - Delivery of the Authority's performance targets
  - Working up ideas on how to report/monitor performance
  - Assistance in the preparation, presentation and implementation of the "climate survey" action plan
  - Assisting and advising on the area of member performance
- **Corporate Governance**
  - Working with officers to develop, implement and monitor the Authority's Corporate Governance Agenda
- **Finance**
  - Assisting officers in working up the budget in line with priorities and working up 'internal' bids to the opportunities fund
  - Developing and implementing the Authority's approach to external funding (there is a question as to whether the member champion for this area of work should have a permanent place on the newly established External Funding Group).
- **Property**
  - Ensuring the effective management and deployment of the Authority's portfolio
  - Assisting officers in the development of any planning applications regarding the Authority's property portfolio
- **Personnel and Training**
  - Assistance with the development of personnel policies
  - Health and Safety issues regarding the Authority's work
  - Officer and member training and development
- **Other areas**
  - Provision of services to Authority members to enable them to perform effectively as possible
  - Oversight of procurement and purchasing

## **Current/Future Issues**

1. Introduction of Corporate Governance Policy and on-going compliance
2. IEG and Website development
3. Development of Procurement Strategy
4. Investors in People (IiP) re-accreditation
5. Review of the NPAPA process and outcomes
6. Strengthen planning and management of the Authority's business
7. Work towards the Equality Standard
8. On-going review of new arrangements for involvement of members
9. Authority's approach to new legislation eg age discrimination
10. Project management; how we do it? How we could/should do it?
11. Development of performance monitoring

## **Induction Programme**

Briefings from key staff: DB, RB, RTD, SF, SJ, PD

Attendance at relevant Senior Management Team, Policy Development Group meetings

Familiarisation with website and session with Kath Taylor regarding website development

Session with Joyce Whitley on procurement policy

Session with Peter Watson on Health and Safety