

Date: 31 July 2007

Report REVIEW OF THE MEMBER CHAMPION INITIATIVE

Purpose of report

1. To review the Member Champion Initiative.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:
 - Best Value Performance Plan Action 99
'continue to develop effective corporate governance..... review the effectiveness of the arrangements for member champions, and implement any changes'

Background

3. A review of the member champion initiative has recently been carried out by the Authority's Solicitor/Monitoring Officer, in his role as current chair of the Senior Management Team.
4. The results of that review are contained in the attached **Annex A**.
5. With one years experience the opportunity to review Member Champion Job Descriptions has also been carried out. These reviews have been carried out by the Lead Officers together with the current Member Champions. The drafts, showing the proposed changes as track changes, are contained at **Annex B**.
6. The report was considered by Chairman and Member Champions Group on 28 June 2007. The comments arising from that meeting are shown in italics after each of the major issues identified at paragraph 32 of **Annex A**.

RECOMMENDATION

7. Members are asked to review the Member Champion Initiative and to consider the proposed changes to the job descriptions.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

16 July 2007

Background documents: National Park Authority Performance Assessment
Appointment of Member Champions – NPA report dated 25.7.06

Review of Member Champions Initiative

Background

1. On 14 February 2007, SMT asked the Solicitor to carry out a review of the Member Champion initiative in line with the target contained in the 2007-08 BVPP.
2. In compiling this report, the Solicitor sought comments from a variety of sources:

Persons asked for comments	Number of comments received
Seven Members who are Champions (or have been until very recently).	5
Seven Members who are not Champions – comprising one member from each group, the Authority Chairman, and the two independent members on the Standards Committee	6
Seven members of SMT	7

Introduction

3. The specific questions raised in the survey are set out below along with the responses to each. Some questions were not asked of all three groups, for obvious reasons (eg non-Champions would not know whether Champions were briefed adequately).
4. Below most questions, there are three paragraphs: the first summarises the responses from Champions; the second the responses from members who are not Champions; and the third the responses from officers. Appendix 1 sets out the role of Member Champions as originally envisaged. Appendix 2 contains a miscellany of points about the Champion initiative taken from a trawl through SMT minutes over the last 9 months.

Responses to the specific questions

Is it useful to have member Champions? Why – or why not?

5. The Champions themselves were perhaps the most hesitant group on this question. One said – “it is very useful for us – but what is the added value for the Authority?”. Another: “I think Champions are useful, even though it’s a bit hard to actually see the benefits”. Champions seem to feel that they are gaining a lot from their role: in terms of their knowledge of the Authority and its workings, improved working relationships with staff, feeling more involved, and feeling that they can make a positive contribution. One commented that “At last I am being involved in the aspects of the National Park which really interest me and in which I have most expertise”. This seems to reflect a general “job satisfaction” among member Champions, sometimes reflecting back on how unsatisfactory they felt their role as a member was previously. There was also some feeling by Champions that officers appreciated the interest shown in their work by Member Champions. Two Champions commented specifically on the degree of commitment needed by both the member and the lead officer.

6. Amongst members who are not Champions, replies were much briefer on the point, although all supported the existence of Champions. As to why they are a good idea, one member said that this fulfilled sound recommendations in the NPAPA report; two said that it was useful to have a named member responsible for an area of work, so that others knew to whom questions could be addressed. A fourth commented that “to me it’s desirable for members generally to become more involved in a wider range of the Authority’s work”.

7. SMT members were also unanimous in saying that Champions were a good thing. Reference was made to the enthusiasm and interest shown by Champions, and the opportunity afforded to officers to talk through pressing and contentious policy issues, and get an insight as to how members are likely to approach them. This “sounding board” role was mentioned by several SMT members. Four SMT members commented on the positive effect on staff morale and motivation: one said that “staff really do appreciate it when [the Champion] comes along to meet them, or participate in events”; another commented that “in terms of trying to improve member / officer relationships, the initiative has been a resounding success”. The point was also made that the staff climate survey showed a marked increase in the proportion of staff who agree that “Members take an interest in my work”. Another point made by more than one officer was the positive effect in terms of enhanced member engagement, and understanding of the purposes and work of the Authority. Another point made was that the Champion initiative has created a clear structure for deciding which member should represent the Authority on particular groups and/or issues. Another comment was that “It opens up another route of dialogue / communication between officers and Members, with all the benefits that can bring including making 'difficult issues' easier to get across, and also making use of members' abilities and meeting more of their aspirations for being a member”. And one last quote on this point: “overall, I think it has been a positive experience. Members join the NPA to get involved. Just sitting on a Committee feels frustrating for some of them. This gives them a chance to make a more active contribution to the work of the NPA. I think that it has been particularly useful in breaking down barriers between officers & members, and building constructive working relationships. This for me has been the biggest plus”.

Is it sufficiently clear what the role involves?

8. One member Champion who responded thought that it was; the others thought that it was not. That was not necessarily a problem, however: “this is a new system, and it needs to evolve. It would have been wrong to be prescriptive about what a Champion should do. It may well be very different for different Champions, dealing with different areas of the Authority’s work”. Another said that “while the role still needs to be clarified, I am not too worried about it, as I think it will happen over time”. Another commented that there had been no problem distinguishing policy and operational issues, with the Champion staying out of the latter. However, there were some problems of clarity identified by Champions:
 - a. “I think that there is a lack of clarity over how the member contributes to decision making processes and to the wider work of the Authority, and certainly a lack of clarity over what role the member has with external partners and organisations”.
 - b. “We are not giving the Champion a particular responsibility [*ie it is not the same as being a portfolio holder in a local authority*] - but I think there has been (and still is?) some confusion over this”.
 - c. “We probably do need to clarify what is expected in terms of time and activity - what exactly will the Champion get involved with? This for the benefit not only of the Champions themselves, but also for the staff, and for everyone else on the outside”.
 - d. Initially it was thought that they would have an ambassadorial role and be the face of the Authority, but this hasn’t happened.

9. Members who are not Champions were generally unclear about what the Champion role involves. However, there seemed to be some support for flexibility so that “they can adjust their focus to deal with matters as they arise”. One member suggested that the role should be redefined annually as it evolves, so that other members – and new members – can be clear what the role involves. Another commented that a lack of feedback from Champions had probably led to other members becoming unsure what they did. The two independent members on the Standards Committee had no idea what Champions did. One said that they had tried to find out via the website, but could find nothing (*though I have to say that searching on the website against the word “Champion” does solve this problem!*).
10. Opinions differed between SMT members on this issue. One said that “there are ambiguities in the role. I’m happy with that. I think we need to leave some flexibility to enable lead officers & Champions to develop a relationship that works for them both. I get the impression that the role has developed differently in each case, according to the enthusiasm & commitment the individual Champions have brought to it, and the nature of the work they get involved in”. Another thought that “the role is clear to me now, although it has taken time to bed down. I suspect, however, that every member Champion will see the role slightly differently and act accordingly”. A third thought that: “It was appropriate to experiment initially, and see what works. At the outset it was recognised that the way in which the role develops will be in the hands of members, and it will be important to share good and bad practice”. One SMT member pointed to the potential friction / uncertainty between the roles of Champion and Committee Chair, and that in reality the latter is not just a person presiding at a series of meetings, but a person who needs to be briefed, and needs a good understanding of current issues. Another mentioned the same issue in relation to the roles of the Corporate Champion and the Authority Chair.

Were Champions given sufficient briefing and training?

11. This question was only asked of the Champions themselves. The clear answer was “yes”, with one member adding that it needs to continue “as it is an evolving role, and we are all learning”.

Has there been a problem in terms of the resources required to service the initiative?

12. This question was only asked of the officers. The general response was “not a problem”. However, the point was made that there was a big initial commitment of officer time to get the Champion up to speed, and if there is frequent turnover of Champions, this could become an issue. One SMT member commented that “we put many officer hours into briefing our first Champions, in the expectation that it was a 'one-off'. If we see routine annual turnover then we may come to see them as temporary fixtures and brief them less well, thereby reducing their usefulness”. Another commented that the initial investment of time had paid off in terms of the usefulness of the Champion’s participation: “[the Champion] can now question us in a constructive manner as a critical friend”. Only three SMT members ventured a view about **how much** time had been spent on the initiative: one had recorded 58 hours, one said not more than one hour per week above what they would do anyway, and the other said “less than half a day” (in total).

What about accountability and reporting back?

13. There was no agreement amongst Champions about the issue of accountability. One Champion said that, as Champions did not have any decision making responsibilities, there was nothing for them to be accountable for. Another perhaps took a similar view when

saying that officers were strong enough to resist member attempts to get too close to policy making. But a third was clear that Champions were accountable to the Authority “and also to the staff they are supposed to be Championing”. There was more agreement on the issue of reporting back. As one Champion put it: “if I do have one reservation, it is about the lack of transparency as to what members are actually doing in their roles. I do think we need to be more rigorous in letting members know how Champions have been involved, what they have been doing... there is the very real possibility of members feeling excluded, of things not being transparent, of members hearing rumours rather than sharing information, and thus the level of uncertainty, even suspicion, gets raised”. Every Champion who expressed a view felt that there was not enough reporting back; there was also a fair consensus that this needed to be by way of some (but not all) Champions reporting back to each Authority meeting, by way of a rolling programme, so covering all areas in turn. Malcolm Petyt’s report to the May 2007 Authority meeting will be the first such report, and it will be interesting to see how other members react – both to its existence at all and to its content.

14. Neither was there much agreement on these issues from members who are non Champions. One said that “I don’t feel I have a great deal of feedback on what’s going on and how involved they really are”, and asked whether the initiative itself was working out as expected. One member favoured regular reports back to Authority meetings by Champions; another said “my own preference would be for reports as and when rather than a regular report for the sake of it”. One of the Standards Committee members suggested Champions reporting on relevant work to the Standards Committee, so there could be a two way exchange of views.
15. The following comment gives a general flavour of the more polite concerns expressed by some SMT members: “this is where I feel things have fallen over a bit. I don’t think the Champions are yet sufficiently accountable. I don’t think they see themselves as being accountable for their areas, and nor do the other members”. Another said that “reporting back/accountability is not something that we have successfully addressed as yet. We need to or the lack of it may undermine the credibility of the Champions system”. A third was blunter still: “the initiative has worked too much along the lines of Champions going off and doing their own thing with lead officers, whilst having a very low external profile, with people generally probably unaware that they exist, and other Authority members unaware of what they do”. Lest this be thought extreme, another SMT member said that accountability had been “Very poor. For me it has been the real downside of the initiative. The member Champions have not helped themselves or this initiative in the woeful amount of reporting back to other members. Members, who are not Champions, but would be supportive of this initiative, find themselves in the dark about progress. It needs to change”. But not all SMT members felt these concerns: another felt that accountability and reporting back “works well”. A large majority of SMT members agreed that reporting back had not really happened, and that it should. But “we and they need to be a bit smarter about them reporting back on issues that they are dealing with. If they were all to turn up with reports for the same meeting it would be pretty tedious for everyone”. One person pushed the whole issue furthest by saying that “personally, I’d like us to move to a position where it is the norm for Member Champions to be presenting papers (other than those on operational matters’) at Authority meetings and to be the ones who other members look to if things are not happening. At the moment, I feel like the Champions have the inside track on what is happening within the organisation but are rarely using that information to drive forward policy and activity”.

Is the amount of turnover a problem?

16. The majority view amongst Champions was that it is a problem, with new Champions requiring more briefing, more time to get up to speed, and potentially different priorities to their predecessor. One Champion raised the issue of blight: once a Champion knows they are going to have to return to the Planning Committee, it is not worth investing their and other people's time and effort to continue the Champion role. Two Champions stressed that being a Champion should not be seen as a short term role: "it takes at least 6 months to establish oneself, so a Champion should not be forced to give up the role in less than two years". The suggestion was effectively that the Planning Committee is put before the Authority horse by the current rules in this regard. Another, however, felt that the reduction in size of the Authority was a one-off factor which had exacerbated this problem at this time.
17. Non-Champions also felt that "the high turnover has been a problem but probably an unavoidable one owing to the changes and reductions in Authority membership and a period of adjustment to a new initiative. I would hope there will now be a period of greater stability". Another said that "the amount of turnover sounds scary and feels wrong". One member suggested a minimum tenure of two years for Champions, and pointed out that a changing membership on Planning Committee can be a problem there, too.
18. Responses from SMT members ranged from "Yes" to "No"! Clearly, officers who had lost a Champion regretted that (and vacancies were seen as a problem too). Others pointed to the loss of the investment made in training and briefing; and "a lot of the benefits are in the intangibles which can only develop once a working relationship has built up between the member Champion and the key officers in the department and this obviously takes time". However, one pointed out that there were at least three different reasons why four of the original Champions had moved on. Another said that the whole initiative could fail if turnover continued to be so high.

Should there be only one Champion for each area?

19. Four Champions responded to this question. Two Champions said only one per area, one said it depends on the issues and individuals involved, and one went into more detail: "I found working with another Champion actually to be of considerable value. It meant that when issues arose, we would have a full and open discussion about it, and explore a range of options (especially as we tended to have opposing views...), which I think helped officers to consider all the possible points that other members might raise. It also ensured that topics were fully explored, rather than the particular view of one individual always dominating. The only issue it raised was the importance of maintaining clear communications between the Champions, and between members and lead officer".
20. Two non-Champions responded: one to say that there should be only one in each area, as where there had been two it had not worked well (*this is not the view of at least one of the two – see above*); the other said that "in some cases it is a good idea to have two, as it shares the load, provides back up, and also gives an alternative view".
21. Four SMT members expressed the view that there should be only one Champion in each area – and I shall breach confidentiality sufficiently to say that this included both SMT members who had worked with two Champions for the same area. However, an interesting alternative was put forward by one SMT member, namely: "I can see that having more than one for any area may be tricky if they don't agree, plus there will be more management required in terms of time etc, but I can also see that having a dedicated Champion for a major project may well work. The 'official' departmental Champion would then not have so much workload yet the officers could still get valuable input".

Are the areas of work about right?

22. Two Champions thought that they are. One thought it depends on whether the Champion feels they can keep a grip on the all thee areas for which they are Champion. The others didn't comment.
23. One non-Champion commented that it was their expectation that members generally would have feedback from Champions on how it was all working "so that we could all assess whether or not the areas or work are right or not. I can't help feeling with smaller numbers and greater involvement from members changes will be necessary". Another said that the areas of work seemed right so far as a non-Champion could tell.
24. The general view seemed to be that the areas of work are about right – although see 22 above. One SMT member commented that "we are going to have to work out how we deal with some areas that don't quite fit, such as climate change". Another made the point that whatever the system, it must have a clear, logical structure, because "what we don't want to see is a system that 'cherry picks' the bits of work that are most interesting/politically high-profile and leaves out the more mainstream stuff". Three SMT members wondered whether it was necessary to have a Development Control Champion and, if it was, whether this role could effectively be taken by the Chair of the Planning Committee. The identity of any Champion for development control is important, because if the Champion is committed to a particular stand point then their views will be of less help in steering officers, because of concerns about the extent to which their views reflected those of the Planning Committee as a whole. The exclusion of the DC Champion from the Planning Committee "causes some difficulty in that it limits the usefulness of the DC Champion. They ought to be a useful ally in improving the performance of the Committee, but can't be an influential figure in a body they aren't part of. Although we have tried to differentiate the Champion's role from that of the planning Committee chairman, I think if both were committed & active they would overlap. Ideally, we would have a good planning chairman who could combine both roles, and be able to use their influence as chairman to see through improvements".

Anything about the initiative which has gone particularly well or badly?

25. One non-Champion commented that the relationship between Champions and officers seemed to have gone well.
26. One SMT member commented that any worries about Champions overstepping the mark into operational matters, or embarrassing the Authority by their actions, had not been borne out. Another pointed out that members who have thrown themselves enthusiastically into the role have loved it, "but the initiative should be achieving far more with **all** the Authority's members". Two more SMT members echoed this point. Another had the following list of things that had gone well: "[it has] helped to (re)motivate a number of members; increased understanding of our work (amongst a few members); improved member/officer relations and the staff's perception of the members; improved relations between members. These are all somewhat 'intangible' but nonetheless important. The challenge is to move this on to the point where the Champions are clearly adding value to what we are delivering on the ground". Another SMT member said that the initiative "has helped to remove some barriers, and bring members in more to corporate ways of thinking".

Other issues raised

27. One Champion said that it is hard for Champions themselves to judge the value of their input, as they have not had feedback on this. A similar point was made by a Champion who said that “it is hard to know whether, just because I am involved and interested, I have actually contributed to the work of the National Park, but it sure beats Planning”. They added that they hoped that they had been a friendly and supportive presence for staff. The comment was also made by one Champion that they had found it difficult to find time to do all that they felt they should, and that members taking on a Champion role need to realise the extent of the commitment.
28. No other issues raised by non-Champion members.
29. An SMT member commented how important it was to continue the principle of Champions and planning committee membership being mutually exclusive, but that this would have to lead to a reduction either in the size of the Planning Committee or in the number of Champions. Another thought “it may be helpful for members to become clearer about what they want out of the arrangement, and also to take on more of an active role in presenting their ideas. Many meetings we hold cover ideas or proposals from officers, which Members critique but don't really embellish”. He questioned whether we have got to the stage where Members are getting their messages across, and Championing particular issues. One SMT member questioned how a lead officer would deal with a Champion who was causing problems or not performing well – there are procedures for dealing with these situations in relation to staff, but not in relation to members.
30. See also Appendix 2 for points which have come up during SMT discussions regarding the work of Champions.

Conclusions

31. There is strong support, in SMT, for the idea expressed by one non-Champion that we need to keep an ongoing working definition of the role. A description was written at the outset – largely encapsulated in **Appendix 1** to this report – and the last thing we want is that the only description of the role is one which is out of date. We also need continually to hang on to certain principles, such as that Champions are not policy makers, executive members or a cabinet, nor can they direct staff.
32. The detail in this report shows a lot of support for the Champion initiative, but also some issues that need to be addressed. These issues were considered at a meeting of the Chairman and the Member Champions. Their comments are shown below in italics.
 - a. The number of members available to be champions, and how the available roles can be defined in the light of that. That inevitably brings in the question of the size of the Planning Committee and the “no overlap” rule.
Resolved, subject to the outcome of the Special Meeting of the Authority on 31 July 2007.
 - b. Within that question of available roles, the question whether these could be more project based in some cases, rather than all having to correspond to BVPP headings.
Happy with current structure although there may be a need for specific task and finish “Champions” to cover some issues that arise where a member’s knowledge may be particularly valuable.

- c. Whether there should be a role of DC Champion, and if so whether it should be combined with the role of Chair of the Planning Committee.
Thought that it was important that the role carries on. A feeling that the role of Chair of Planning was the one that really needed clarifying in terms of responsibilities and that once that was sorted the Member Champion role would be clearer and more readily identified.
- d. How do we deal with more generic issues such as climate change in terms of the roles of Champions?
Not a general discussion on all areas, however it was felt that whilst Climate Change did impinge on a number of Champion areas that it did fit best in the Conservation of the Natural Environment brief although the issue may, from time to time, need to be discussed with other Champions.
- e. Do we adopt a rule of having only one Champion per area of work (however that is defined)?
Unfortunate that Nancy Stedman and Roger Harrison-Topham were not present as they were the only ones that had experienced it. However, the consensus was that it was better to have only one Champion per area.
- f. Should we be looking to develop the Champion role so that they are drivers of policy and activity, and taking a more upfront role?
Members didn't see themselves as drivers of policy. The policies are set by the Authority and they get their opportunity, as do the rest of the members, to have input into that. They felt their role was in working with officers to attain excellence in achieving those policies. Felt that that was where we were at, so did not need to alter anything.
- g. Devising an appropriate mechanism for Champions to feedback to other Authority members on their work.
This was the largest area of discussion and one where members recognised the failings. There was support for Member Champions adding their names to reports where appropriate and indeed at times taking the lead on presenting those papers. To achieve this, Champions need to be made aware earlier of reports that are in the pipeline to come to Committee regarding their "Champions" area. The Chair of the Authority needs to be more alert to those issues where Champions should have the first member input on issues. Press items need to mention Champions more than they do at present. Would be good to have pictures and some detail on their roles of Champions in our own Dales Newspaper.
- h. Would it be useful for the Corporate Champion to be a member of the Standards Committee?
No
- i. Feedback to Champions on their performance.
Agreed that the meetings held to date with Champions, whilst they had been useful, had not worked that well because they had all been an addition to another meeting (i.e. Authority Meeting days) and, whilst this was an admirable aim in terms of member availability, the truth was that good effective discussion had often been curtailed due to the pressures of time. The feeling was that we should hold a quarterly meeting with members having the opportunity to feed in items for the agenda and that we would like an officer to be present to take notes who would then in consultation with the Chairman compile a report back from that meeting.

Member Champions: Who and What are they?

A briefing note for YDNPA staff

Introduction

Our National Park Authority Performance Assessment report in late 2005 identified the fact that Authority Members were devoting too much of their time to the Planning Committee, and that the Authority was consequently losing out on the wider contribution that Members could make to its' work.

After thinking this over, Members decided on a number of changes to the way they work. One of these was to reduce the size of the Planning Committee, from all 26 Members to 15. Members who were not on the Planning Committee could use the time which had been freed up to "Champion" certain areas of the Authority's work.

The role of Members is also developing in other areas: more Members will represent the Authority on Partnerships; the Audit & Review Committee will work on performance review, and members are looking afresh at their role as advocates and representatives – of the Authority, as well as of local communities and interest groups within the Authority.

Who are the Champions?

At the Authority meeting on 25th July, Members were appointed to Champion the seven areas of the Authority's work (as per the Best Value Performance Plan):

- Conservation of the Natural Environment: Deborah Millward and ~~Gina Ramsbottom~~ (lead officer = Gary Smith)
- Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Wilf Fenten (lead officer = Gary Smith)
- Recreation Management: Malcolm Petyt (lead officer = Jon Avison)
- Promoting Understanding: Steve Macaré (lead officer = Annie Galloway)
- Development Control: Nancy Stedman and Roger Harrison Topham (lead officer = Peter Watson)
- Forward Planning: Yvonne Peacock (lead officer = Peter Watson)
- Corporate and Democratic Core: Kevin Lancaster (lead officer = me)

Detailed descriptions of each Champion role can be found at <X:\Secretariat\Secretariat Information\2006 Final Committee Papers\Agendas & Public Reports\Authority 25july06\25july06 Appointment of Member Champions.doc>

What is a Member Champion?

The idea is still in 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. Some principles have however been developed already:

- Member Champions need to be committed and enthusiastic about the area of work in question.
- Member Champions are not policy makers, executive members or a cabinet, nor will they direct staff.
- The arrangements must 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
- The key roles which Member Champions will perform are:
 - To Champion the service within the Authority
 - To represent and Champion the service externally
 - To assist officers with the implementation of the Authority's policy, and to develop future policy proposals for consideration by the Authority and its Committees
 - To report back to the Authority and its Committees on their brief. Processes will 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.

The implications for staff

Initially, the lead officers will be the first point of contact, but all staff are likely to encounter Member Champions sooner or later. Some people will have frequent contact with them; for others it will be occasional. In any case, it is important for all staff to recognise that the Member Champions are giving their time freely (they are paid nothing other than travel and subsistence) to help and support the work of the Authority.

Member Champions do not have any special powers. In that sense, the rules are no different with Member Champions than they are with Members generally. But in practical terms, you may find that you have more contact with Members in future than has been the case in the past.

In the first place, the Member Champions will need training, development and induction to their specialist area, and detailed plans have been drawn up for this. Staff who are involved in this will be informed of the specific details.

In order to work effectively, Champions will need information and briefing from staff; they will want to discuss ideas and initiatives; they will ask questions and make suggestions. Member Champions are colleagues, to be treated with courtesy and respect. In turn, they have to respect the roles of staff, and not make excessive demands on staff time or resources.

Senior Officers will be expected to consult the relevant Champion regularly, but particularly on difficult or sensitive issues where they are taking decisions under the Authority's delegation scheme. This consultation with Member Champions is in addition to, not instead of, consultation with other Members where appropriate.

Member Champions do not have authority to direct staff. They are well aware of this; but if you feel at any time that a Member Champion (or indeed any Member) is instructing you to do something, then point out politely that you have to work to the directions of your line manager and Head of Department, and that, if the Member wishes, you will ask your line manager whether s/he wants you to take the action in question.

As a general rule, all Members are entitled to all information which the Authority has and which is relevant to their role. This will generally *not* include information about individuals, be they members of staff, volunteers, service users etc. Members' roles are such that they do not need this information except in certain specific situations such as disciplinary appeals. If a Member asks you for information which you do not think you should provide, consult your line manager for advice.

When information is given to Members, there is no general restriction on the use they make of it. So, if you give “sensitive” information to a Member, explain to them the constraints – eg that it is confidential to the Authority and must not be disclosed, or that it is embargoed until a specified date.

Member Champions do not make policy. On the contrary, they are bound to observe and represent existing policy, though they may want to promote policy changes (which would have to be agreed by the full Authority).

The principles for relationships between Officers and Members which were agreed in 2000 are still relevant today. Members and Officers should:

- provide a united voice in Authority matters
- have respect and trust for each other and acknowledge their individual expertise
- actively work to improve communications between each other
- adopt a teamwork approach to achieving the Authority’s aims
- adhere to policies or seek to change them through proper process
- when pertinent issues arise, first check the facts with each other, rather than trust hearsay or rumour.

Monitoring & Review of the Champions’ Roles

The Chairman of the Authority, Carl Lis, will meet with the member Champions, initially on a monthly basis. This will 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. A review of the initiative will take place in 2007, and the experience of staff in working with the new arrangements will be an important part of that review.

Conclusion

The establishment of Member Champions for each of the Authority’s main areas of work 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 possess across a wide range of issues.

The establishment of Champions will mean a much closer relationship with staff involved in the management and delivery of the Authority’s work programmes. Flexibility has to be shown by both Officers and Members to ensure that this new arrangement is successful. Members know that the established processes of the Authority can’t simply be overhauled and replaced to ensure they are geared to their personal circumstances. Nonetheless, it is incumbent on both Members and Officers to ensure that the processes established are compatible as far as they can be.

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. Members are also influential people, who can achieve a great deal in terms of getting the National Park's messages across to stakeholders – and to a wider audience. Member Champions are powerful allies for staff to have in going about their work for the National Park, and their commitment should be welcomed.

David Butterworth
26th July 2006

Points from SMT minutes re Member Champions

First 3 months (August – October 06)

Induction process took some time, and the timetable for it slipped in some areas.

Some Champions confused re who their lead officer was, and also “needed guidance as to how to operate within the Champion environment”.

Debate ongoing as to how Champions should feedback to Authority. Initial idea of them reporting on their activities replaced with idea that they would speak on reports which fell in their area of responsibility.

Some Champions needed to be reminded of the difference between operational and strategic matters.

Next 3 months (November 06 – January 07)

Champions “seem to be gathering momentum”. Evidence of some Champions getting their teeth into specific issues.

Concern that Champion initiative might collapse with the reduction in Authority membership.

There is a need for Champions to promote their role to other members more effectively.

Initiative generally seen as going well, with some Champions providing helpful input on some issues.

Last 3 months (February to April 07)

Difficulties in the DC area, where the 2 Champions regularly disagree with each other.

Champion turnover is a significant issue.

“Work continues for them all with positive experiences from all departments”.

Heads of Department found Champions benefited from attending Departmental meetings.

Review of Member Champions Initiative

CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC CORE MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Oversight of the provision of effective support services to the Authority, including personnel, premise, legal, 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 staff, survey action plan
- Assisting and advising on the area of member performance
- Assisting with the development, implementation and Monitoring of the Authority’s environmental performance.

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▪ **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 assisting with major corporate bids to the opportunities fund
- Developing and implementing the Authority’s approach to external funding.

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▪ **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

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Current/Future Issues

1. On-going compliance with Corporate Governance.
2. Website development.
3. Investors in People (IiP) re-accreditation
4. Review of the NPAPA process and outcomes
5. Strengthen planning and management of the Authority’s business.

- 6. On-going review of new arrangements for involvement of members
- 7. Authority's approach to new legislation eg age discrimination
- 8. Project management; how we do it? How we could/should do it?
- 9. Development of performance monitoring
- 10. Assist with the monitoring and delivery of the Authority's targets for staff costs.

Induction Programme

Briefings from key staff: Chief Executive, Head of Finance and Resources, Head of Legal Services/Solicitor, Head of Conservation and Policy, Chair of External Funding Group, Chair of Corporate Climate Change Group.

Attendance at relevant Senior Management Team, Policy Development Group meetings as appropriate.

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Familiarisation with website and session with Comms Team, regarding website development

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Session with Contracts Manager, on procurement policy

Deleted: Joyce Whitley

Session with Head of Planning, on Health and Safety

Deleted: Peter Watson

CULTURAL HERITAGE MEMBER CHAMPION

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Areas of activity covered

▪ **Archaeology**

- action to preserve historic monuments and structures;
- activities to improve knowledge of the historic environment, and help people to realise and appreciate its value and interest (e.g. archaeology day school);
- surveys to monitor the condition of the most important sites and features;
- respond to a wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultations

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Sites and Monuments Record

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▪ **Building Conservation**

- action to conserve and enhance Listed Buildings within the Park, including dealing with significant applications for Listed Building consent;
- assisting Natural England to restore traditional field barns through agri-environment schemes;
- activities to improve knowledge of the historic environment, and help people to realise and appreciate its value and interest;
- surveys to monitor the condition of the NP's most important buildings and structures;
- appraisal, designation and enhancement of Conservation Areas.

▪ **Historic Environment Record**

- maintaining a publicly-accessible, electronic Historic Environment 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. Involving local communities in historic environment work.

5. Future management of Langcliffe Quarry.

Induction programme

Briefings from Head of Department and section heads

Series of site visits

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

Attend appropriate departmental meetings

External groups: Dales Historic Environment Forum; Settle-Carlisle Railway Trust

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/[Planning Portal](#)
 - 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. Performance in processing applications to target times
2. Recruitment & Retention of qualified Planning Officers
3. [Consistency of decision making](#)
4. IT development & support
5. Public expectations/relations [& customer satisfaction](#)
6. Planning Delivery Grant/future finances
7. [Resources for Enforcement](#)

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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 discussion with Head of Planning

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| Regular discussion with other Planning staff

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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. Champions will be likely to acquire personal information on staff and sensitive information on contentious cases.

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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 Development Framework**

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

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▪ **National Park Management Plan**

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

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▪ **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. Monitoring implementation of the National Park Management Plan and publicising progress.
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, including Housing Policies, Minerals & Waste Policies & Statement of Community Involvement.
5. Affordable housing initiatives.

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Induction programme

Briefings from Head of Planning/Strategic Planning Officer 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

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Biodiversity

- research and surveys to inform conservation activity;
- action to conserve and enhance [important](#) species and habitats;
- involving local communities in biodiversity (Local Nature Reserves/[road verges](#));
- monitoring and reporting progress on the local Biodiversity Action Plan;

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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**

- [developing, facilitating and funding](#) woodland management agreements [\(with Forestry Commission, YDMT and others\)](#);
- developing, facilitating and funding new planting and management schemes [\(with Forestry Commission, YDMT and others\)](#);
- 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

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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.

Climate Change

- development of Authority policy and initiatives to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in the Park and adaptation to the impacts of climate change on the Park's special qualities

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 management and creation targets;
6. Developing Authority approach to tackling impacts of climate change on the National Park;
7. Future of moorland/blanket bog habitats

Induction programme

Briefings from Head of Department and section heads

Series of site visits

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

Attend appropriate departmental meetings

External Groups: Biodiversity Forum, Dales Woodland Forum, Dales Advisory Group

Internal Groups: Agriculture Reform Group; Climate Change Working Group

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

- Tourism Partnership (TP, Yorkshire Dales Tourism)
- Turntable social enterprise project
- National Park Centres, Partnership Centres and Park Information Points
- Dales Countryside Museum
- Retail Services
- Survey and evaluation work

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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
- Corporate communications issues including consultations

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Current/Future Issues

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

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Induction Programme

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

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

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Attendance at Departmental and Team meetings, plus attendance at a NPC briefing

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Optional extras

Attend an outreach activity

Attend a Group Leader Visit or Mosaic Partnership Steering Group

Join a school group at DCM

Attend a national Communicators' Meeting

Attend Tourism Partnership meeting

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RECREATION MANAGEMENT MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

▪ **Managing the access resource**

- The Rights of Way Network including Long Distance Trails eg the Pennine Way 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

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▪ **Accessibility and Visitor Management**

- Maintaining the diversity – Whilst the National Park should be readily accessible to as wide a range of people as possible, access to sensitive areas need to be managed in a way that safeguards the particular special qualities and characteristics of that area.
- Access Interchanges, car parks and toilets – how people access the area

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▪ **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 representative roles

- Chair of YDNPA Green Lanes Advisory Group
- YDNPA representative on the NYCC Green Lanes Liaison Group
- Attend and speak to Annula Dales Volunteers meeting
- YDNPA member on Cumbria Access
- Attend Pennine Bridleway Steering Group
- Attend departmental staff meetings
- Member of the CROW Management Plan working group

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Current/Future Issues

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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. Regular work of the Definitive Map Team [NB members of Access Committee already receive a detailed quarterly report of casework and the member champion would not become involved in individual cases.] Assistance in the development of annual work programmes and targets.
6. Role of the Authority in relation to sustainable travel/transport
7. Relationships with County Councils regarding the implementation of Rights of Way Improvement Plans
8. The promotion of the Recreational Charter and specific recreational activities
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. Establish ways of engaging with new volunteers who do not fit the traditional pattern of volunteering, e.g. the young, the less able.
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).

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Induction Programme

Briefings with and spending time 'on the job' 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 Robin group) in order to be able to hear any thoughts DVs might want to share

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Training: Media
 Access Committee training events