

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

28th March 2006**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****1. ENGAGEMENTS**

Since the last meeting of the Authority, the Chief Executive has attended the following:-

(a) Media

- Interviews with Radio York, Fresh FM, Guardian Newspaper, Yorkshire Post and Minster FM all associated with the Financial Settlement.

(b) Events

- Dales Volunteers' Spring meeting.

(c) Meetings

- Mosaic Partnership Steering Group to discuss progress with the project.
- District Audit regarding the Authority's response to the Audit letter.
- 2nd meeting of the CNP sponsored 'Prosperity & Protection Group' (Minutes to appear in MIB)
- English National Park Officers' quarterly meeting.
- ANPA Workshop working group to discuss the programme and arrangements for the forthcoming Cheltenham workshop.
- Quarterly meeting of the BBC Rural Affairs advisory committee.
- Canon Lesley Morley to discuss current Issues.
- Two meetings with the Chief Executive of the Youth Hostel Association to discuss proposed closures of the 3 dales youth hostels.
- The Minister for Rural Affairs to discuss a range of issues, most notably the financial settlement.
- Along with English National Park Officers, the annual finance meeting with officials from DEFRA, CoAG and ODPM.
- District Auditor to discuss the 2006/07 Audit Plan.
- UNISON officials to discuss the potential impact of poor financial settlements.

2. ISSUES FOR MEMBERS' CONSIDERATION**a) Membership of the Authority**

Members may be aware that Mrs Nicky Grace is standing down from the Authority on 31st March, at the end of her current term of office. The usual appointment process has been undertaken by the Secretary of State and has resulted in Mr William Weston being offered and accepting a three year appointment commencing on 1st April 2006.

Mrs Grace, in addition to membership of the Planning Committee, was also a member of the Finance and Resources Committee. The Authority's convention is for a 'new' member to fill, until such time as the Authority re-constitutes its Committees (normally at the annual meeting in July), the committee vacancies of the member they have replaced.

Recommendation:

That, in line with previous practice, Mr William Weston be appointed to serve on the Planning and Finance and Resources Committees, until such time as the Authority re-constitutes its Committees (normally at the annual meeting in July).

b) Consultations on the priorities for the next Rural Development Programme and specific measures for hill farming

DEFRA has recently published two consultation documents on future funding support for agriculture and the wider rural economy:

Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013

The England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) sets out measures for rural development and agri-environment support. The current 7-year programme will finish in March 2007. It is proposed that the new programme will be based on three 'core themes': enhancing the environment and countryside, making agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable, and enhancing economic opportunity in rural areas.

New Uplands Reward Structure

The new arrangements will replace the current Hill Farm Allowance in England. It is intended to continue to support sustainable land management in the uplands and provide public benefits.

The deadline for both consultations is 22 May. It is, therefore, proposed that the Agricultural Reform Group (ARG) be charged with producing the Authority's detailed response, within the framework of the Authority's existing policies. The ANPA Chairs Group has already agreed a national 'line to take' on the Uplands Reward Structure (see **Annex A**), which will form the basis for the Authority's response. As the proposals have significant implications for the National Park, it is proposed that all Members should be invited to attend the ARG meeting should they so wish.

Members will recall that the operation of the ARG was due to be reviewed by the end of March. However, that review was based on a misplaced assumption that the above consultations would have been issued last year, and that the Group would now have concluded its work. In the circumstances, it is proposed that the review now be carried out once the consultations have been dealt with, and reported to Members in July.

Finally, there is currently a vacancy on the Group following the death of Mr Sayer. It is proposed that, as all Members are to be invited to the next meeting, any formal appointment be postponed pending the conclusion of the review of the workings of the group in July

Recommendation:

That

- i) the Agricultural Reform Group be charged with producing the Authority's detailed response to the two consultations, within the framework set by the Authority's existing policies;

- ii) all Members be invited to attend the Group's meeting; and
- iii) the review of the workings of the Group be postponed until July 2007.

c) Member Development Programme – 2006/07

Attached, as **Annex B** to this report, is a programme of member development events for the coming year. This programme consists of regular conferences and workshops, mandatory training that the Authority has decided should take place, and other training and briefings that have been requested/suggested by members and/or officers.

The Authority, in 2002, established the Member Training Panel to oversee the preparation of the annual training programme. That Panel consisted of three members, of which only Mrs Grace and Ms Stedman are still on the Authority (the third member having been Mr Bentley). From 1st April, the membership will be reduced to one current member.

At its meeting in October 2005, the Standards Committee suggested that it should take on a role in respect of Member Training. The debate on that suggestion is yet to be concluded, but, whatever conclusion is reached, it will, in any event, form part of a recommendation to the Authority.

Recommendation:

That:

- i) the Member Development Programme for 2006/07 be noted; and
- ii) consideration of the re-establishment of the Member Training Panel be deferred pending the Authority's future consideration of recommendations on the terms of reference of the Standards Committee.

d) Vacancies on Internal Working Groups and on the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum

At the last meeting of the Authority, it was agreed that a report should be brought to this meeting to enable various vacancies on internal groups and the Access Forum, resulting from the death of John Sayer, to be considered. From 1st April there will also be vacancies arising from the departure of Nicky Grace.

Mr Sayer served on the following internal groups:

- Agricultural Reform Group (a reference to this Group appears earlier in this report)
- Limestone Country Project Advisory Group
- Management Plan Drafting Group on Landscape

Mrs Grace is a member of the

- Management Plan Drafting Group on 'Built Heritage and Historic Environment'
- Member Training Panel

In addition, Mr Sayer was appointed by the Authority to serve on the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum, and any replacement would be appointed for a term of three years.

Earlier paragraphs in this report refer to the Agricultural Reform Group (ARG) and to the Member Training Panel, and provide advice on filling neither of the vacancies on these bodies at the present time.

It is anticipated that the Management Plan Working Groups may need to meet again but probably not until later this summer. It is suggested that those vacancies be not filled at this time, but be reconsidered later in the year.

Recommendation:

That consideration be given to filling the vacancies on the Limestone Country Project Advisory Group and the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum.

e) Employment and Economy in South Lakeland

South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) is to hold a half day event at Kendal Town Hall to apprise members of the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Park Authorities and other partner bodies about Economic Prosperity issues within the district as a whole.

South Lakeland District Council, as the Economic and Prosperity authority, has commissioned a report into employment land availability and would like to discuss its contents at the seminar.

SLDC officers will be available to inform Members about issues such as the M6 Corridor, Junction 36, the availability of employment land within the district and how they affect the National Parks.

They would like to canvass Members as to dates when they would be able to attend.

Recommendation:

That Members' consider the request.

f) Staffing Arrangements

As Members will be aware, the Finance & Resources Committee has requested a full review of the Authority's staffing arrangements, with projections for future costs based on options for these arrangements. This review is necessary in the light of the zero % settlements from DEFRA over a three year period, and the reduction in services that will be necessary as a result. In order to keep as many options open as possible at this time, the Senior Management Team are reviewing very carefully any new recruitment, with the intention of postponing this wherever possible until the review has been completed in the summer. To this end, the recruitment of a part-time Landscape Conservation Officer (budgeted at £23k, including on-costs) has been put on hold until that time.

For existing posts which fall vacant between now and the completion of the review, officers will seek to establish whether temporary arrangements can be made to deliver the most important objectives of those posts in other ways. This is likely to have some short-term impact on some services, but where temporary arrangements cannot be identified, recruitment will continue as normal.

The above arrangements do not represent a freeze on recruitment, but rather are intended to 'bank' options ahead of the review's conclusions and so restrict the problems which the

Authority may have to deal with (specifically, redundancies and their impact on operations, morale and cost).

Recommendation:

Members' views are sought on this approach.

3. ISSUES FOR MEMBERS TO NOTE

a) Europarc Conference 2006

Europarc 2006 will take place on 20th – 24th September in Oxford, hosted by the Cotswolds Conservation Board in partnership with the Chilterns Conservation Board and the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners. The Conference theme for 2006 is "Living Working Landscapes". It will explore how our special landscapes meet the varying needs of conservation, rural industries and recreation – of people who live and work in protected areas and those who come to visit. Workshop themes will focus on a range of issues including farming, biodiversity, sustainable development, rural housing and employment, promoting public enjoyment, heritage management, and harnessing the support of local communities in the management of protected landscapes.

The main conference site will be the Town Hall, and accommodation will be provided in the nearby colleges of Keble and St Catherine's. There will be opportunities to visit significant sites and projects in the surrounding Cotswolds, Chilterns and Wessex Downs AONBs.

In accordance with the Authority's adopted policy on attendance at conferences, places have been booked for the Chairman and Chief Executive. However, should any other member(s) wish to attend (at his/her own expense) they should contact the Secretariat Administrator, who has a more detailed programme for the conference.

b) The National Park Boundary Review - Up Date on Progress

Last year, the Board of the Countryside Agency formally agreed that land between the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District National Parks was worthy of designation as National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

A 'North West Designation Team' has been set up to undertake the process of proposing new boundaries for extensions to the National Parks. However, progress has been slower than had been hoped, and complicated by an unexpected legal challenge to the way in which the Agency applied the designation criteria when it designated the New Forest National Park in 2001.

Although the decision is being appealed, the Countryside Agency is now proceeding much more slowly, and the original timetable has slipped (though the process remains the same). The Agency are first looking at the variation to the Lake District National Park boundary, before starting to look at the variation to the Yorkshire Dales National Park, hopefully, later this year. It should be borne in mind that the Board of the Countryside Agency is not able to take any decision on any draft boundary until the legal implications of the recent legal challenge have been clarified. (This is likely to be through an amendment to the NERC Bill). As it is difficult to predict when these legal matters will be resolved there is no indication, at present, as to when the Public will be consulted on any proposal.

Members had asked that the Countryside Agency maintain regular contact with local communities that may be affected by the proposals, so they know what is happening. The Countryside Agency has just published a newsletter 'Finding the Finest'. This will be sent out regularly throughout the process and explains the nature of the work and progress so far. The newsletter has been sent out to all Parish Councils, TICs/NPCs and libraries, in and close to the area under scrutiny. Anyone wishing to send informal comments at this stage or to be included on the mailing list should contact the North West Designation Team at the Countryside Agency's NW Regional Office.

**DAVID BUTTERWORTH
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Background documents: None
15th March 2006

FUTURE SUPPORT FOR FARMING IN 'LESS FAVOURED AREAS'

Background

EU support for farming in Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) — basically the upland areas — has been in place since 1975. The payments recognise that these areas are at a disadvantage compared to other farming areas because of their climate, topography, altitude and remoteness. In addition, payments have an implicit social function - to maintain viable populations in such rural areas. In England, this support currently comes through the Hill Farm Allowance, which is one part of the England Rural Development Programme 2000-2006.

DEFRA is considering the future of support for the LFAs as part of their emerging proposals for the next England Rural Development Programme (2007–2013). The consultation paper is likely to be published in December.

Likely Consultation Options For Future LFA Support

Baseline – continue with a compensatory payment along similar lines to the current Hill Farm Allowance.

Agri-Environment & LFA element – continue with a compensatory payment but only for producers who have all or most of their holding in one of the main agri-environment schemes (ESA, CSS or the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme).

Uplands Environmental Stewardship Scheme – replace the compensatory payment with a 'ring-fenced' Entry Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme specifically designed for the uplands.

No specific LFA support – end the current additional support.

Consideration

In framing an ANPA response, there are a number of key messages that we need to get across to Government and others:

- the uplands contain land of the highest environmental value, including most of our National Parks, and so provide high public benefit;
- farming, which created and maintains much of the environmental value, is more difficult and expensive (i.e. less profitable) in the uplands than the lowlands;
- extensive livestock farming, which is most under threat from recent reforms of the CAP, is also a crucial part of the cultural heritage of the uplands.

It is, therefore, right that upland farmers who are helping to conserve and enhance our finest landscapes should continue to receive additional public support. However, in delivering that support, we believe that the system of payment should:

- a) be simple for everyone to understand
- b) ensure that additional public support is targeted only to those farmers who are demonstrably providing public benefit
- c) keep administrative costs to a minimum.

Recommendation

It is, therefore, recommended that ANPA supports the Agri-Environment & LFA element option subject to the condition that the current 'Entry Level' Environmental Stewardship Scheme is revised to:

- Make it accessible to a wider range of hill farmers;
- Ensure farmers who cannot enter their common land or shared grazing into the scheme can still qualify for full LFA payments if they enter the rest of their land into the scheme;
- Other schemes and constraints, which have the same impact as 'Entry Level' ESS should also qualify a farmer for HFA.

If these conditions cannot be met (i.e. if significant numbers of upland farmers were effectively unable to enter the new Entry Level Stewardship Scheme and so could not qualify for the additional LFA compensatory payment), it would be better to continue with the current system (i.e. the **baseline** option).

The HFA should be limited to the SDA only.

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2006/07

Month	Date	Venue	Training opportunity
April 06	1 st -2 nd	Grassington	Listed Building Education days
	tba		Induction for two new members
	tba		Planning induction for two new members
	18 th	Yoredale	Training for Planning Chairs
	20 th	Grassington	Policy Development Forum – PROW/Governance
	22 nd	Grassington	Archaeological day-school
	26 th -28 th	Cheltenham	ANPA Workshop
	tba		Mandatory planning training
May 06	tba		Standards Board Roadshows
	11 th	Yoredale	Access issues – PROW surveying, Ease of Use Pls
	tba		Mandatory planning training
	30 th	Yoredale	Authority lunchtime briefing: Peter Annison – Wensleydale Housing Scheme
June 06	tba		General training for chairs of committees (poss – July)
July 06	19 th	DCM Hawes	Policy Development Forum – Policy Priorities
	25 th	Ingleton	Authority lunchtime briefing – tbc
August 06	10 th	Grassington	Access Issues – CROW restrictions update
September 06	tba		Staff Training Days
	tba		ANPA Conference
	20-24	Oxford	Europarc
	26 th	Yoredale	Authority lunchtime briefing – tbc
October 06	tba		ANPA Induction – Plas?
	tba		Great North Meet
	16 th /17 th	Birmingham	Annual Assembly of Standards Committees
	19 th	Grassington	Policy Development Forum – tbc
November 06	9 th	Yoredale	Access issues – tbc
	tba		Dales Volunteers Autumn meeting
	28 th	DCM Hawes	Authority lunchtime briefing – tbc
December 06	tba		Northern National Parks workshop
January 07	tba	Yoredale	Policy Development Forum – tbc
	30 th		Authority lunchtime briefing – tbc
February 07	tba		Yorkshire Tourist Board Conference
	tba		Volunteers Induction
March 07	27 th		Authority lunchtime briefing