

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Public minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Wednesday, 9 May 2007.

Present:

RA Bird, Mrs A Brooks (in the Chair), SHK Butcher, W Fenten, C Hammond, TRN Harrison-Topham, C Lis, Mrs D Millward and W Weston.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

31/07 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2007, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

32/07 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

33/07 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**RESOLVED –**

That pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the consideration of each of the items of business listed in column 1 of the following table on the grounds that each involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 specified in column 2:

Item No on the agenda	Paragraph No
15	1, 3 and 5
16	1 and 4

34/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from A Osborne

35/07 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

W Fenten declared a personal and prejudicial interest in paragraph 15 of Agenda Item 7 which proposed the transfer of the Special Responsibility Allowance from his former role as Chairman of the IEG Working Group to his new position as Chairman of the National E-Government Group.

36/07 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

No declarations of lobbying were made at the meeting.

37/07 DRAFT FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT – YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2007: RESERVES

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Finance Officer.

A member asked that efforts be made to encourage Natural England to speed up the funding of the Pennine Bridleway Project.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) note the contents of the report and member comment;
- (b) the transfer of the Special Responsibility Allowance from the Chair of the National Parks IEG Working Group to the Chair of the E-Government Group be approved; and
- (c) the retention of a contingency reserve of £250k and the transfer of the remaining reserves of £389k to the Opportunities Fund be approved .

38/07 OPPORTUNITIES FUND: SPENDING PROPOSALS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Finance and Resources.

[Members made the following declarations of interest:

- *TRN Harrison-Topham – personal and prejudicial interest as a recipient of financial assistance through the Haytime Project;*
- *C Lis – personal non-prejudicial interest as a trustee of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust;*
- *Mrs D Millward – personal non-prejudicial interest as a member of the Haytime Project Steering Group.]*

In considering the report:

- a member suggested that the wording of “Ilkley to Bolton Abbey off road multi user recreational route” should be revised in particular the words ‘off road’, as this could be misunderstood;
- the Head of Park Management, in response to a member’s question, stated that, whilst he would need to research the estimated number of young people who would be involved in the ‘Go Dales’ project, the success of the project would be evaluated on the basis of what the different parties involved wished to get out of the project. For the Authority that would be in relation to our 2nd purpose of promoting understanding and enjoyment and for Active Craven and Active Richmond it would relate to the involvement of young people and an increase in physical activity.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) an unallocated reserve of £200,000 be created; and
- (c) the bids for spending in 2007/08 set out in Appendix A of the report of the Head of Finance and Resources be approved.

39/07 DRAFT STATEMENT OF FINAL ACCOUNTS (SOFA) 2006/07

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Finance Officer.

[TRN Harrison-Topham declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in the item as a member of North Yorkshire County Council's Pensions Fund Committee.]

In considering the report, members raised a number of issues, including:

A member suggested that it would be helpful if the accounts could be made more meaningful and comprehensible for the general public. He asked who the final guarantor was, adding that the accounts should make it clear where the Authority's money came from.

The Chief Executive responded that whilst the Authority could precept on the constituent local authorities, the 1st guarantor was Defra. He suggested that Item No 7 on the agenda, the draft financial outturn, was an attempt to explain the accounts in more detail. He accepted that the documents could be made more 'readable' and better use made of the Authority's website.

RESOLVED –

That, member and officer comments being taken into account, the Statement of Final Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2007, which will be presented to the Authority on 29 May 2007 for approval and signature by the Chairman, be noted.

40/07 RETAIL SERVICES FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Retail Services Manager.

A number of members commented that they thought there had been a more recent decision of the Authority or of the Committee than that recorded in paragraph 5 of the report, with regard to the way in which the Authority's retail operation was promoted and prioritised.

The Chief Executive reminded members that with regard to priorities, the Authority, in November 2006 had decided that Retail should be a Category E priority (as shown in Appendix B of the Opportunities Fund Spending Proposals report – Item 8).

Whilst noting this, members nevertheless suggested that the issue was more one of attitude and that there was a need for a debate on making the operation more commercial.

The Chief Executive reminded members that, historically, there had been some opposition to the Authority's commercial operation. Counsel's opinion had, however, endorsed the operation as long as there was a link to 'promoting understanding' of the Park.

A number of further issues were raised by members and officers, including:

- suggesting that there was not necessarily any need to review the Authority's priorities, more a need to establish a different framework for staff;

- comparing the way in which other National Parks operated commercially;
- noting that with possible zero financial settlements in the coming years, the need to maximise income for the Authority in order to maintain work programmes;
- the need for members to address the opposition of some local businesses;
- the proposed 'Turntable' project.

The Chief Executive suggested that there were a number of options for members to progress the issue:

- taking members' comments into account go ahead now with a more aggressive retail operation;
- ask the Audit and Review Committee to undertake a review of the service;
- bring a further report to the July meeting of the Authority;
- involve members in the Turntable Project.

RESOLVED –

That, taking member and officer comments into account:

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) Messrs Lis and Weston be invited to any future meetings in connection with the Turntable Project; and
- (c) a further report be brought to the Authority meeting on 31 July 2007, to address the issues raised by members, the constraints imposed or otherwise by the 17 July 2000 minute of the Committee set out in paragraph 5 of the Retail Services Manager's report and the further issues raised in that report from paragraph 6 onwards.

41/07 THE VISITOR – COVER PRICE

CONSIDERED – the report of the Communications Officer.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report be noted and
- (b) the introduction of a donation scheme (Option 2) be approved on a trial basis, with operational details to be agreed with Chief Executive and Head of Finance and Resources, including further consideration being given to increasing circulation, use of the Authority's website and increasing income from sponsorship.

42/07 HEALTH AND SAFETY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Administrative Officer.

In response to member's question, the Head of Finance and Resources undertook to report to the next meeting of the Committee on the Authority's insurance arrangements.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

43/07 STAFFING MATTERS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

44/07 SICKNESS ABSENCE

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

The remainder of business was considered in private.

PUBLIC SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

45/07 PRIVATE MINUTES

The Committee confirmed, as a correct record, the private minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2007 that had been circulated with the agenda. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

46/07 STAFFING ISSUES

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive on issues that had arisen at the Committee's meeting in January when the budget for 2007/08 was being considered. That earlier report had provided information on likely future grant settlements and their impact on staff costs. Having approved a proposal to limit staff costs to 70% of the Defra grant from 2008/09 onwards, members had asked for a further report on containing staff costs within that limit, including the examination of pension scheme contributions, staff benefits and contract additions, freezes on salary progression and staffing levels.

Members agreed to an approach that would allow the above staff costs limit to be achieved and to receive six-monthly reports on progress.