

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

Public minutes of the meeting held at Yoredale, Bainbridge on Monday, 19 February 2007.

Present:

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

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

8/07 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the public minutes of the meetings held on 7 August 2006 and 15 January 2007, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

9/07 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Alastair Davy, of Northern Dales Farmers Market Ltd made a statement to the Committee in relation to the parking for the Farmers Market at Colvend Car Park. His Statement, which had been circulated to members (and a copy of which is in the minute book) stated that the “Market is a Social Enterprise and will be donating upwards of £10,000 along with the Hill Farming Initiative to lifting the profile of the Yorks Dales and the Uplands at the Kilnsey Show”.

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The Chairman thanked Mr Davy for his statement and informed the meeting that it was her intention that the item on “Ad hoc use of Authority Car Parks” would be considered as the first substantive item of business.

10/07 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
20	1 and 3
21	3 and 5
22	3 and 5
23	3

11/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs Bird, Blackie, Ireton and Weston.

12/07 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Members made the following declarations of interest:

Mrs D Millward - a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 20 as she was acquainted with the proprietor of the Coffee Shop.

W Fenten – a personal non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 23, being acquainted with the person making the application for support.

A Osborne – personal non-prejudicial interests in Agenda Item Nos 7 and 14, the former as an employee of Defra, and the latter as a member of the Pension Scheme.

All members declared personal non-prejudicial interests in Agenda Item 17.

13/07 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

Mrs D Millward and W Fenten stated that they had been lobbied on Agenda Item 23.

14/07 AD HOC USE OF AUTHORITY CAR PARKS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Ranger Services Manager.

Members discussed the report and recommendations in detail, raising a number of issues, including:

- there was value in comparing the Authority’s proposals with the policies of District Councils;
- the farmers market at Grassington attracted the public to Colvend – if stall-holders had to pay, it was possible that they might park off-site;
- car park income was the only source of income for the Authority that was not ear-marked or ring-fenced for other purposes. The more that could be generated, the more that other activities could be assisted;
- favouring pump-priming enterprises rather than applying concession;

A proposal that there should be no charge for stall holders at the Grassington Farmers Market was defeated and it was

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted and the proposals set out in the Ranger Services Manager’s report for the rationalisation of officer decisions on the ad hoc use of Authority car parks, based on the following, be endorsed:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Activity Examples</u>
1. No Charge	Public Services, Library Bus, Car Share Club Scheme etc. Small Scale Charitable use, activity check points, local fund raising.
2. Standard Vehicle Charges	Commercial operations, Farmers Market, participants in charity events
3. Agreed Charge or Donation based on duration, loss of income, maintenance considerations	Large scale events, Grassington Festival, Dickensian, Local Shows, Film Companies

15/07 FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT 2006/07: NINE MONTHS TO 31 DECEMBER 2006

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Finance Officer.

In considering the report, members raised a number of issues to which officers responded as follows:

- the Limestone Country project budget would be committed before the end of the financial year;
- an interim paper on retail services would be brought to the May meeting of the Committee; and
- the apparent underspend on the Sustainable Development Fund budget did not accurately reflect that the budget was, in fact, committed.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

16/07 CAR PARK CHARGES AND ENFORCEMENT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Park Management, who added that he preferred yearly incremental changes to the rates rather than, as on this occasion, leaving the rates for several years before applying any changes.

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

- in response to a question, being advised that the tickets machines did not provide change;
- suggesting that at Colvend in particular, the £2 for two hours seemed expensive, as many visitors would have difficulty in parking, buying a ticket, walking into Grassington to shop and returning within that time;
- noting that whilst the increase on the current £2 rate was 10%, that fee had not changed since 2004;
- suggesting that the proposed rates were out of keeping with the rates charged elsewhere, such as Skipton and Pateley Bridge
- reminding the Committee that the Authority had a different remit from other authorities, with national park car parks being a tool 'promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public' (the Authority's 2nd purpose)
- suggesting that warning signs be displayed in the Authority's car parks warning about the possibility of enforcement but reminding visitors that car park income was used in pursuit of national park purposes.

The Chief Executive reminded members that the current power to set car park charges was delegated to the Head of Park Management. If members wished to take back that power, the matter would need to be considered and approved by the full Authority.

The issue of revising enforcement procedure was generally welcomed and comparison made with the enforcement powers of other authorities, which it was believed were not available to the Authority.

RESOLVED –

That subject to member and officer comments being taken into account:

- (a) the revised car park charges for 2007/08 be noted
- (b) subject to clarification by the Authority's solicitor regarding enforcement powers, the revised enforcement procedure described in the report of the Head of Park Management be agreed; and

(c) the suggestion of additional advisory notices in respect of the use of car park fees and the likelihood of enforcement be pursued.

17/07 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Finance Officer.

Members welcomed the proposals, although it was questioned whether it should be ‘Sustainable’ rather than ‘Green’ procurement as set out in the draft Strategy. In response, the Senior Finance Officer stated that whilst the term ‘Green’ had been used it was intended that a wider interpretation should apply, with the strategy aiming to be a flexible adaptable document. It was intended that as and when some results of the application of the Strategy were available, a report would be brought back to members.

RESOLVED –

That

- (a) the Procurement Strategy, as appended to the report of the Senior Finance Officer be approved; and
- (b) the future actions required to implement the Strategy be noted.

18/07 PROPERTY STRATEGY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Projects and Estates Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the Property Strategy as appended to the report of the Projects and Estates Officer be adopted.

19/07 A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF CAR PARKS AND TOILETS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Finance Officer.

Whilst there was some concern at the possible closure of the toilets at Linton and disposal of Wood Lane car park, it was accepted that a further report was needed.

RESOLVED –

That subject to further reports being brought to the Committee in respect of (b), (c) and (d) below

- (a) the car parks and toilets at Aysgarth, Grassington, Malham, Hawes, Buckden, Clapham, Kettlewell, Horton, and Stainforth be retained;
- (b) officers enter into discussions with the landlord at Castle Bolton with a view to transferring or terminating the lease;
- (c) officers undertake further investigations into the practicalities of disposing of Grassington Wood Lane Car Park, and to investigate the potential and practicalities for disposal or leasing of Linton Falls Car Park and Toilets, and

- (d) when the Dent Car Park lease comes up for renewal, take into account the issues raised by the review as detailed in the report of the Projects and Estates Officer.

20/07 PERSONNEL POLICIES

CONSIDERED – the report of the Personnel and Training Officer, who added that the ‘Managing Probationary Periods Policy’ should be amended to exclude former local government or public sector employees.

In considering the report, members commented on some of the policies, including:

- particularly welcoming the ‘Flexible Working Policy’ and commending a 9 day fortnight scheme that he had experience of. He hoped that a report could come back to members in 12 months time to report on which of the flexible working policies had been taken up by staff. He also suggested that the policies needed to be sold to staff;
- in supporting the ‘Draft Career Breaks and Sabbaticals Policy’, noting the response of the Personnel and Training Officer that ‘secondment’ would be considered when the recruitment policy was reviewed;
- expressing surprise that the Assisted Car Purchase Scheme was recommended for removal.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to the ‘Managing Probationary Periods Policy’ being amended to exclude former local government or public sector employees, and a report coming back to members in 12 months time on the take-up by staff of flexible working policies, the policies as set out in Appendix 2 be approved and adopted to take effect as set out in paragraph 1 of the Personnel and Training Officer’s report.

21/07 PENSION SCHEME UPDATE

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

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

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the changes being made to the Pension Scheme, the recent fund performance and the possibility of future increases to employer contribution rates be noted;
- (b) the Chief Executive be authorised to sign the Statement of Policy on Discretionary Compensation (Appendix 1 of the report of the Head of Finance and Resources);
- (c) the revised pension policy discretions be approved (Appendix 2); and
- (d) the Early Retirement Policy be approved (Appendix 3).

22/07 STAFFING MATTERS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

23/07 SICKNESS ABSENCE

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

24/07 SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2007/08

CONSIDERED – the report of the Secretariat Officer.

With regard to the need to review the Scheme, members considered that an independent review would be appropriate, but were prepared to leave the final arrangements to be made by the Chief Executive after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the amendments to the Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2007/2008 in respect of the revised rates of Basic, Special Responsibility and Co-optee's Allowances, as set out in the report of the Secretariat Officer be noted;
- (b) the necessary amendments be made and the Members' Handbook be updated accordingly; and
- (c) an independent formal review of the Scheme of Members Allowances be undertaken, with the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, authorised to finalise the arrangements for the review.

25/07 MEMBER FEEDBACK

CONSIDERED – the report of the Secretariat Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

26/07 **NORTHERN OFFICE SUB-COMMITTEE**

CONSIDERED – the public minutes of the meetings of the Northern Office Sub-Committee held on 26 September 2006 and 15 January 2007.

RESOLVED –

That the public minutes of the meetings of the Northern Office Sub-Committee held on 26 September 2006 and 15 January 2007 be received.

The remainder of business was considered in private.

PUBLIC SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

27/07 **EXTENSION OF ANNUAL AGREEMENT FOR AYSGARTH FALLS COFFEE SHOP**

The Committee considered a report from the Sustainable Tourism Officer on the current position regarding the lease for the Coffee Shop located at Aysgarth National Park Centre.

It was agreed that an extension be granted to the existing legal agreement for the period 1 April 2007 - 31 March 2008 and that officers undertake a review of the legal agreement and rental revenue and bring recommendations back to the committee in due course.

28/07 **PRIVATE MINUTES**

The Committee confirmed, as a correct record, the private minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2006 that had been circulated with the agenda. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

29/07 **NORTHERN OFFICE SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered and received, the private minutes of the meetings of the Northern Office Sub-Committee held on 26 September 2006 and 15 January 2007. The Committee also agreed that the Sub-Committee should now be wound-up as no further meetings would be required.

30/07 **DALES HARVEST**

The Committee was addressed by Ms Pat West, accompanied by Dr Peter Annison, on the subject of Dales Harvest and the request for assistance from the Authority.

In response to questions from members, Ms West stated that

- the requested financial contribution of £5,000 would be directed towards the cost, estimated at £10,000, of publicity, printing and marketing the event;
- no contribution had been received or promised from the District Council, although she was hoping for £2,000;
- a list of volunteer 'helpers' was being compiled, and so far contained 40 names.

Members believed that since the matter had been considered by the Authority at its January meeting there was greater evidence that the Event would fulfil national park purposes. Reference was made to the use of the Dales Countryside Museum and the potential spin-off for the Authority, in addition to opportunities to showcase the Authority's work on the Limestone Country Project and the Red Squirrel Project.

The Committee agreed that the Authority should support the event with a contribution of £5,000, additional assistance/support as requested and that the Authority be further involved through officer involvement in the organisation of the event.