

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting held at Bolton Abbey Village Hall on Tuesday, 29 May 2007.

Present:

R Alderson, RA Bird, J Blackie, Mrs A Brooks, SHK Butcher, G Dalton, W Fenten, TRN Harrison-Topham, KJ Lancaster, C Lis (in the Chair), SR Macaré, Mrs S Marshall, Mrs D Millward, A Osborne, Mrs Y Peacock, Dr KM Petyt, S Shaw-Wright, Ms N Stedman and W Weston.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

45/07 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2007, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

46/07 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

47/07 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

There were no 'Private' items on the agenda.

48/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from C Hammond and D Heather.

49/07 DECLARATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Members made the following declarations of interest:

<i>Member</i>	<i>Interest declared</i>
R Alderson, RA Bird, J Blackie, SHK Butcher, TRN Harrison-Topham, KJ Lancaster, C Lis, SR Macaré, Mrs S Marshall, Mrs Y Peacock, S Shaw-Wright, Ms N Stedman and W Weston	Personal, non-prejudicial interests in Agenda Item 13 as members of District and/or County Councils
C Lis and SR Macaré	Personal, non-prejudicial interests in Agenda Item 12 as Trustees of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust

<i>Member</i>	<i>Interest declared</i>
Ms N Stedman	Personal, non-prejudicial interest, as an employee of Natural England, in the Chief Executive's report (Item No 8) item on the Pennine Bridleway

50/07 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

No declarations of lobbying were made.

51/07 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Chairman.

In response to a number of issues raised by members, they were advised that:

- a suggestion of including a Sustainability check-list for each planning application would be considered;
- the Chief Executive's objectives, resulting from his annual performance appraisal would be circulated to all members;
- a report reviewing the Member Champion scheme would be on the agenda for the annual meeting in July.

RESOLVED –

That the report and further comments be noted.

52/07 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Chief Executive.

[Note: R Alderson referred to the reference in the report to Hudson House and, as Chairman of the Board of Hudson House declared a personal interest.]

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

- enquiring if there was any further news on possible boundary changes;
- in noting that Tom Riordan, the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Forward (YF), would be attending the next meeting of the Authority, looked forward to having the opportunity to question him.

The Chief Executive stated that -

- an announcement had been made that an extensive consultation exercise was to be carried out on possible boundary changes and that a report would come to the next meeting;
- he would report to members on the current position with YF and he would also write to members inviting them to submit questions for Tom Riordan.

The Secretariat Officer stated that the County and District Groups had made the following nominations to fill vacancies on the Planning and Standards Committees:

- County: S Shaw-Wright (Planning) and TRN Harrison-Topham (Standards)
- District: R Alderson (Planning) and Mrs Y Peacock (Standards)

The Head of Park Management reported that confirmation had been received from Natural England that £450,000 would be provided to fund the Authority's Pennine Bridleway work during the coming year.

RESOLVED –

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

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the training on the new model Code of Conduct be arranged for all Authority members at 1pm on 19 July 2007;
- (c) an informal scheme of Member Mentoring be established to provide assistance to new members of the Authority, those new members to be invited to select a Mentor from a list of Authority members who have agreed to make themselves available for such a role; and
- (d) the following nominations to fill vacancies on the Planning and Standards Committees be approved:
 - County: S Shaw-Wright (Planning) and TRN Harrison-Topham (Standards)
 - District: R Alderson (Planning) and Mrs Y Peacock (Standards)

**53/07 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2006/07
END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT ON OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS**

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy.

In response to a number of comments from members, the Head of Conservation and Policy stated that he believed that the printed Local Plan should be available in June, but members would be notified of a more precise date, and whilst a number of customer satisfaction targets had been missed, the information had only just been collected and would need some analysis.

It was hoped that the 'Turntable' project would start to deliver some of the Authority's objectives and some regret was expressed that the North York Moors Authority had withdrawn their support from a project aimed at raising national park awareness with residents of the Vale of York and Teesside.

A member referred to the issues and options paper on housing and hoped that adequate publicity would be given to enable as much public and parish consultation as possible. Members were advised that a series of public meetings were being arranged and that they would be notified of the full consultation process.

RESOLVED -

That subject to member and officer comments the report and the Authority's performance in relation to its objectives and actions in 2006/07 be noted.

54/07 DRAFT STATEMENT OF FINAL ACCOUNTS (SOFA) 2006/07

CONSIDERED – the report of the Senior Finance Officer.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the Draft Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2007 be approved; and
- (b) the Chairman of the Authority be authorised to sign
 - the accounts on page 23 of the Statement of Accounts, and
 - the Statement of Internal Control on page 11 of the Statement of Accounts.

55/07 FINAL BEST VALUE ACTION PLAN 2007/08

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of Conservation and Policy, who added that target No 70 should be deleted from the Annex as this had been achieved.

A member suggested that there should be a target for woodland management agreements as she was concerned that the existing targets were skewed towards new planting rather than maintenance of existing woodland. Members were advised that there would be budgetary implications of such a target and that the Authority could instruct the Finance and Resources Committee to make funding available from the Opportunities Fund.

In response to a member's reference to Target No 63, the Head of Conservation and Policy stated that previously there had been three specific actions which had now been combined into one target. He accepted that this target could be set out more clearly.

The Chief Executive stated there may be a need for further targets to follow on from the consultation on the Issues and Options paper on Housing (Target No 81) and added that a paper would be brought to the July meeting of the Authority on the question of Landscape Character Assessments and their use as Structure Plan guidance.

RESOLVED –

That subject to the further comments of members and officers being taken into account, the Authority's Best Value Action Plan for 2007/08 be approved as the basis for quarterly monitoring by the Audit and Review Committee.

56/07 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO COMMITTEES

CONSIDERED – the report of the Chief Executive.

A member commented on the quality of applicants for the positions of Independent members of the Authority's Standards Committee. He suggested that, as there was a possibility that the Standards Committee could have a greater workload and might need to sit in an 'appeal' capacity, it would be useful to have three independent members of the Committee.

On the suggestion of the Chairman, members considered the options for committee sizes and

RESOLVED –

That at the annual meeting in July 2007 committees be established as follows:

- Finance and Resources Committee and Audit and Review Committees - 11 members each (three members from each of the County/District and Secretary of State groups and two Parish members) – with members to serve on one or other of these two Committees
- Standards Committee – eight members (three Independent members, two County members and one member from each of the District/Secretary of State and Parish groups)
- Access Committee – eight members (two members from each of the four groups)



With regard to the Planning Committee, a member commented that when the original decision had been taken to reduce the size of the Committee it had been agreed that the decision would be reviewed after 2 years (2008), not as was happening after 10 months. He reminded members that the recommendation of the District Auditor to reduce the Planning Committee had not been similarly applied to the North York Moors NPA. Whilst he was content with a committee of 15 members he would not wish any further reduction in size. Members debated the issue at length, making a number of comments, including:

- A member accepted that there had been an initial 2 year review timescale, but questioned why the Committee should be larger than, for example, the Finance and Resources Committee. A paper later on in the agenda reported work from one of the Member Champions. She remarked that the level of commitment was impressive and that it had been one of the elements of the initial decision to reduce the size of the Planning Committee in order to 'free up' time for members to commit to member champion work. If there was not a further reduction in the size of the Committee it would mean that member champions were quite likely to have to act as substitute members of the Committee as well as doing their champion work.
- Concern was expressed for the consistency of Planning Committee decisions if the size was reduced further. A possible reduction in the number champions was mooted in conjunction with Option 3 (Committee reduction to 13).
- There was concern that public confidence in the consideration and determination of planning applications might be affected by any further reduction. An alternative of 12 members was suggested made up of 3 members of each group.
- Support was expressed for Option 4 (11 members). The time commitment required for membership of the Planning Committee was emphasised, together with the need to attend time consuming site visits. A reduced membership would provide the opportunity for more members to take on Champion roles.
- It was pointed out that the Planning Committee was a vital part of the Authority's work and, locally, any reduction would be greeted with disappointment.

A proposal that the status quo (Option 1) be retained was defeated.

A proposal that the Committee be reduced to 13 members with the membership to be made up as far as possible from the four 'Groups' (3 from the County group, 3 from the District Group and a further local authority member, and 3 Secretary of State, 2 Parish and one other) was also defeated.

RESOLVED –

That at the annual meeting in July 2007 a Planning Committee be established consisting of 11 members (three members from each of the County/District and Secretary of State groups and two Parish members).

[Note: Messrs Blackie and Butcher requested that their votes against the above resolution be recorded.]

57/07 YORKSHIRE DALES MILLENNIUM TRUST: ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07

[Note: W Fenten left the meeting for this item, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a Director of a company that may be a recipient of a Sustainable Development Fund grant from the Trust.]

CONSIDERED – the report of the Director of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.

Members welcomed the report and the success of the Trust.

In response to a question about audit trails and lessons learnt from the Trust's work, the Director stated that work was being pursued on ensuring that better audit trails were evident, although he reminded the Authority that when the Trust had been established it had been intended to sponsor some 'risky' projects with a higher potential for failure than might normally have been expected.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

58/07 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH BILL 2007

[The Chairman, having declared a personal non-prejudicial interest, left the Chair and the Deputy Chairman chaired the meeting for the item.]

CONSIDERED – the report of the Chief Executive, who reminded members that the report only addressed the issue of unitary status as it potentially affected North Yorkshire.

Members received two separate presentations from John Marsden, Chief Executive of North Yorkshire County Council and from Peter Simpson and Mike Gardner, Chief Executive of Hambleton District Council and Leader of Harrogate Borough Council respectively, who represented those District Councils in North Yorkshire opposed to the County Council's bid for unitary status.

Mr Marsden made a number of points on the bid for unitary status, including:

- A single voice for North Yorkshire would be beneficial particularly in terms of promoting and/or seeking support for the County's economy and tourism.
- Currently there is duplication of work across the County and Districts which is confusing for the general public.
- The creation of a single authority would result in efficiency savings.
- A unitary authority would give better delivery on strategic issues

- Current inconsistencies across Districts would be eradicated
- The Comprehensive Spending Review was unlikely to ease matters financially and a single authority would be more efficient and effective
- A number of issues would benefit from a unitary approach – such as waste management and the increasing services provided to the elderly population of the County.

He added that the proposals included a Council of 144 members with nine Area Committees and 25 Community Forums. He confirmed that the new unitary authority would not wish to cause a 'political' imbalance for the Authority, but suggested that benefits for the Authority would be:

- only having one tier of local authority to deal with;
 - the proposed process of community engagement would be of assistance for the Authority;
- and
- the promotion of tourism within the area could be focussed on jointly.

In response to members' questions, he suggested that the availability of employment opportunities and the attraction of inward investment were key elements in encouraging young people to stay in the area. He stated that, irrespective of unitary status, the Authority could have a greater involvement in local joint working. He believed that a unitary North Yorkshire, supported by the two National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast would have a strong rural voice that would be able to compete against the urban lobby for funding from Yorkshire Forward and beyond. Overall he suggested that the bureaucratic costs would be less than at present and gave an assurance that the County Council would address any potential for a member imbalance on the new authority.

Mr Simpson addressed members and stated that the District Councils that he represented (Richmondshire District Council was yet to consider the matter in detail) were not opposed to change but fully committed to improving the way two tiers of local government needed to work together. The Districts had commissioned an independent survey (by Ipsos MORI) amongst residents which, amongst other things, had revealed that 77% of residents were opposed to the creation of a single unitary authority and said they would prefer the existing two tier of authorities to work better together.

He also stated that the Boundary Committee (an independent body which assessed a similar proposal under the Regional Assemblies Act) had raised concerns about the likely effectiveness of a single unitary council due to its size and diversity of population.

The Districts were concerned about a number of issues that either formed part of the unitary proposals or were claimed would result from the creation of a unitary authority. These included:

- size – the Districts believed that a unitary authority would be too large to offer equitable and responsive local services to reflect the distinct community identities and needs that differ between urban centres, rural lowlands and the deeply rural upland areas;
- need – many of the improvements identified in the unitary bid were already happening under the existing two tier structure;
- costs – the Districts believed that the estimated costs and savings of the unitary bid were inaccurate and lacked detailed justification;
- support from partners and stakeholders – any proposal was required to show a broad cross section of such support. The Districts believed that the unitary proposal only offered this as an aspiration and the MORI survey showed that a single county based unitary authority was the public's least preferred choice;
- democratic benefits – the unitary proposal would create an authority of 144 members, nine area committees, 25 community forums and 72 ward areas. The Districts questioned whether these arrangements would be any less complex or cheaper than the current arrangements;

- 'voice' – the Districts did not support the County claim that a single voice for North Yorkshire would be more effective regionally than the voices of the several authorities that currently exist.



Members were unsure about the feasibility of a unitary council consisting of 144 members and the supporting decision making structure and whether it would result in improvements for the National Park. Some concern was raised about the likelihood that a new North Yorkshire County Council would appoint 10 of the 12 local authority members. Whilst not giving the County a majority on the Authority, it would certainly be able to wield significant influence.

Members endorsed the proposals contained in paragraphs 19 and 22 of the report and accepted that whatever the outcome of the consultation, the Authority would need to work with any successor authority/ies.

RESOLVED –

That subject to member comments being taken into account including their endorsement of the proposals set out in paragraphs 19 and 22 of the Chief Executive's report:

- (a) a response to the consultation on the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2007 and on the unitary proposals for Cumbria and North Yorkshire be submitted by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Authority, with
- (b) an initial draft response to be prepared after consultation with the Chairman and Member Champion for Corporate and Democratic Core, circulated to all members for comments and any resulting issues of significance to be added to the response.

59/07 DALES WOODLAND STRATEGY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Trees and Woodlands Officer.

A member commented that the management of existing woodlands should be the 'absolute priority'.

The Head of Conservation and Policy stated that the strategy already included an objective to get all semi-natural woodland into good management by 2020. The Dales Woodland Forum would be considering the implications of this objective in more detail at its next meeting, and would be asked to establish annual targets for woodland management.

Members were advised that a report on the adoption of landscape character assessment as supplementary planning guidance would be brought to the next meeting of the Authority.

RESOLVED –

That subject to the member and officer comments being noted, the Authority's Best Value Action Plan for 2007/08 be formally approved.

60/07 CONSULTATION STRATEGY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Head of External Affairs.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) the report be noted; and
- (b) the approach to consultation set out in the report of the Head of External Affairs be adopted.

61/07 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Strategic Planning Officer.

The Chairman reminded members that currently there was no Member Champion for Forward Planning. He proposed that Mrs Yvonne Peacock resume that role.

Members suggested that another “Hard-to-reach group” (paragraph 2.13) could be the self-employed, and that Sedbergh and Hawes Community Offices and Settle Tourist Information Centre be added to the Deposit Locations listed in Appendix 3.

RESOLVED –

That:

- (a) Mrs Y Peacock be appointed Member Champion for Forward Planning until such time as the Authority reviews the appointments of Champions; and
- (b) subject to member comments being taken into account, the Draft Statement of Community Involvement be approved and released for public consultation during August and September 2007.

62/07 DALES COUNTRYSIDE MUSEUM – ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

CONSIDERED – the report of the Museum Manager.

RESOLVED –

That the Dales Countryside Museum Acquisition and Disposal Policy, as appended to the Museum Manager’s report, be approved.

63/07 MEMBER FEEDBACK – ATTENDANCE AT PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

CONSIDERED – the report of the Secretariat Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

64/07 MEMBER FEEDBACK – MEMBER CHAMPION FOR RECREATION MANAGEMENT

CONSIDERED – the report of the Secretariat Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

65/07 PLANNING COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED – the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 13 March and 10 April 2007.

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 13 March and 10 April 2007 be received.

66/07 ACCESS COMMITTEE

CONSIDERED – the draft minutes of the meeting of the Access Committee held on 19 April 2007.

RESOLVED –

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Access Committee held on 19 April 2007 be received.

67/07 FORMER MEMBERS – GINA RAMSBOTTOM AND JAMES KENDALL

The Chairman reminded members that at the recent local authority elections neither Gina Ramsbottom nor James Kendall had sought re-election. On behalf of members he would write to both, thanking them for their contribution to the work of the Authority.