

Date: 29 September 2009

Report: APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS

Purpose of the report

1. To appoint Member Champions for the next 3 years.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendations contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

- ***Corporate Plan objectives***

Objective 20: Ensure the Authority has developed its corporate governance and financial arrangements to ensure the highest public standards are in place, as evidenced through the Annual Governance Statement and an unqualified audit opinion each year.

Action 155: Review the Member Champion Initiative and report findings to the Authority.

Background

2. Members considered a report at the Authority meeting in July on the review of the Member Champion Initiative.
3. The review was quite detailed and consequently members approved a number of amendments to the scheme. The revised scheme is set out in **Appendix A**.

Job Descriptions

4. To assist Members in their consideration of whether they wish to 'apply' for the role of Member Champion, a set of job descriptions for each of the 8 roles has been provided. These have been revised as of September 2009 and are contained at **Appendix B**.

Applications

5. Attached at **Appendix C** are the ‘applications’ that have been received from Members since the matter was considered in July. The recommendation on applications stated that members may provide a written document to support their case for becoming a Member Champion. However, this is not a requirement. Member Champions are able to put their names forward, together with any case they wish to make, at today’s meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

6. That the Authority appoints Member Champions for the 8 areas covered by the Member Champion Initiative, for the period September 2009 to August 2012.

David Butterworth
Chief Executive

15 September 2009

Background documents:

Guidance on the Member Champion Initiative

Guiding Principles

The Authority has established a number of over-arching guiding principles by which the Member Champion Initiative shall be governed. These are:-

- Member Champions need to be committed and enthusiastic about the area of work to which they have been appointed.
- Member Champions are not policy makers, Executive Members or a Cabinet, nor will they direct staff.
- The areas of work for the Member Champion Initiative shall be based on the 'functional headings' with the addition of a climate change category, ie
 - Conservation of the Natural Environment
 - Conservation of Cultural Heritage
 - Recreation Management
 - Promoting Understanding
 - Development Control
 - Forward Planning (Sustainable Development)
 - Corporate and Democratic Core
 - Climate Change
- The arrangements that are established must be appropriate and recognise the resources and capacity of members and officers.
- Up to 2 Member Champions may be appointed for a particular area.
- A member can only be a champion in one area.
- Champions can also be members of the Planning Committee.
- The Chairman of the Authority shall not be a Member Champion.

Key Roles for Member Champions

These have been defined and refined over recent years. They 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 formally report back to the Authority and (as appropriate) its committees, on their brief.
- The roles for each Member Champion to be set out in a formal job description
- The act as a 'sounding board' for officers regarding the discussion of new ideas and initiatives. They are expected to bring the 'member perspective' to these discussions.

Officers will be expected to consult champions regularly, but particularly on difficult or sensitive issues where they are taking decisions under the Authority's Delegation Scheme. This consultation with Member Champions would be in addition to, not instead of, existing formal consultation arrangements with members.

The Scheme

Appointment

- Member Champions will be appointed for a fixed term of three years and be eligible for reappointment unless another member wishes to take on the role at that time.
- If a member's term of office with the Authority ends before the end of the three year period, then a reappointment may be made as soon as practicable after the Member Champion leaves the Authority.
- Member Champions will be appointed by the full Authority at their September meeting. Any members wishing to `apply' for the role of Member Champion, may provide a written document highlighting their relevant experience and their reasons for wishing to become a Member Champion, for consideration by the Authority in appointing to the roles.

Meetings

- the Chairman of the authority will chair Member Champion meetings
- the meetings are an opportunity for identifying good and bad practice, sharing information and monitoring the implementation and development of the Authority's work and the Member Champion Initiative.
- The dates of Member Champion meetings will be set annually, with agendas circulated before the meetings. Member Champions will be invited to submit agenda items
- The Secretariat Administration Officer will provide the Chairman with support in circulating documents and agendas for Member Champion meetings. The Officer will be responsible for taking notes of the meetings.

Reporting back to the Authority

- notes of Member Champion meetings will be included as a `standing item' on the agenda for Authority meetings.
- Member Champions will be required to present at least one written report per year to inform other members of the issues and activities within their area of responsibility. A rota of presentations will be prepared and publicised at the beginning of the year to facilitate this.
- Member Champions will agree, with the appropriate Head of Department, which reports it is appropriate for them to present; and be given the opportunity to speak first in debates on reports within their area of responsibility.
- Member Champions will be required to produce a brief annual report on their activities which will be considered by the Member Champion Group before it is presented to the Authority.

Role of Chairman

- The Chairman of the Authority is responsible for managing the Member Champion Initiative and chairing the meetings of the group.
- the Chairman of the Authority will present the annual report of Member Champion activity to the Authority
- In extreme cases the Chairman of the Authority has the power to ask a Member Champion to step down from their role.

Other issues

- The general principle of Member Champions being quoted as representatives of the Authority in press releases has been accepted by the Authority
- Members should recognise that, if they are appointed by the Authority to be Member Champions in a particular area, there is a range of training, development and induction that they will need to undertake.

CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Biodiversity

- promoting Authority activity to conserve and enhance important species and habitats;
- assisting with involving local communities in biodiversity conservation;
- assisting with development and monitoring of local Biodiversity Action Plan;

Farm Conservation

- promoting Authority activity to assist farm businesses, and support delivery of national agri-environment schemes (esp Environmental Stewardship);
- assisting with the development of new initiatives and policy

Trees and Woodland

- promoting Authority activity to encourage new woodland planting and management schemes (with Forestry Commission, YDMT and others);
- assisting with the development of new initiatives and policy

Geodiversity

- promoting Authority activity to help conserve and enhance the distinctive geology of the National Park;

Yorkshire Peat Partnership

- promoting Authority activity to support the restoration of degraded peatland

Current representative roles

1. Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Forum
2. Dales Woodland Forum

Current/Future Issues

1. Impact of CAP reform on the environmental and economic viability of farming;
2. Ongoing development of relationship and joint-working with Natural England especially in relation to delivery of national agri-environment schemes;
3. Securing funding needed to meet woodland management and creation targets;
4. Development of new Local Biodiversity Action Plan for next 10 years
6. Action to tackle key species that are not 'stable/increasing' – notably Hen Harrier.

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 meeting.

CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Archaeology

- promoting the Authority's work to preserve historic monuments and structures;
- assisting in the development of policy and practice;

Building Conservation

- promoting the Authority's work to conserve and enhance Listed Buildings at risk and traditional field barns;
- liaising with local communities as part of the designation, appraisal, and enhancement of Conservation Areas.

Historic Environment Record

- promoting the value and interest of the historic environment amongst Members and the general public.

Current representative roles

1. Yorkshire Dales Historic Environment Group

Current/Future Issues

1. Workload on keeping Conservation Area information up-to-date.
2. Ensuring historic environment is not overlooked in 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 major industrial heritage sites inc. Langcliffe Quarry and Mealbank Quarry.

Induction programme

Briefings from Head of Department and Senior Historic Environment Officer.

Series of site visits.

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

Attend appropriate departmental meetings.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Managing the access resource

- The Rights of Way Network including Long Distance Trails e.g. 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

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

Sustainable Transport

- Sustainable Travel Partnership – including travel options and information
- Advisory road hierarchies and traffic management
- Local Transport Plans

Access for All and Healthy Living

- 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
- 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

1. Chair of YDNPA Green Lanes Advisory Group
2. YDNPA representative on the Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum
3. YDNPA representative on the NYCC Green Lanes Liaison Group
4. Attend and speak to Annual Dales Volunteers meeting
5. YDNPA member on Cumbria Countryside Access
6. Member Pennine Bridleway Steering Group
7. Member Pennine Way Steering Group
8. Attend departmental staff meetings
9. Member of the CROW Management Plan working group
10. Member of the Three Peaks Steering Group
11. Member of the Go Dales Steering Group

Current/Future Issues

1. Management of recreational vehicular use of unsealed routes
2. Development of the 3 Peaks Project as a fundraising vehicle and model.
3. Promotion and adoption of the revised Integrated Access Strategy 'Special Qualities and Experiences
4. Delegation agreements with County Councils covering public rights of way management
5. Public rights of way maintenance programmes, particularly the development of annual maintenance plan.
6. 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.
7. Role of the Authority in relation to sustainable travel/transport
8. Relationships with County Councils regarding the implementation of Rights of Way Improvement Plans
9. The promotion of the Recreational Charter and specific recreational activities
10. Planning for the management of increasing recreational uses e.g. mountain biking
11. Health agenda and determining the Authority's role in encouraging greater participation in sport and recreation in line with Government targets
12. Overview of development and implementation of externally funded projects e.g. Pennine Bridleway, Go Dales.
13. Establish ways of engaging with new volunteers who do not fit the traditional pattern of volunteering, e.g. the young, the less able.
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).

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.

Training: Media.

Access Committee training events.

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. This is a new strategic partnership and is evolving quickly. The MC is a representative on the Board and must be able to diplomatically yet forcefully and accurately represent the Authority's position. This work is increasingly involving Welcome to Yorkshire (WtY) and the MC may be required to attend WtY meetings.
- National Park Centres, Partnership Centres and Park Information Points. MC advice and assistance is required when making decisions about future developments.
- Dales Countryside Museum including the new developments. The MC is represented on the member officer working group involved in taking this major project forward. This may involve meeting YF, HLF and other potential funders.
- Retail Services including advice on the direction of the service.
- Survey and evaluation work. Making sure we are using these to the best advantage.

Outreach and Education

- Mosaic national project with Campaign for National Parks, Youth Hostel Association and all other English NPAs. The MC is required to represent the Authority at the national annual event and/or the annual group leader visit within the YDNP.
- Events Programme including helping to broaden the range of participants by marketing to new audiences. Potential strategic links to other government agendas e.g. health.
- Education Services including the emerging partnerships with Natural England in this area of work.
- Outreach programme including Dales Experience. YDNPA is regarded as a leader in this field and the MC would ideally be able to help us keep the momentum going and develop new initiatives to ensure we stay 'ahead of the game'.

Corporate Communications

- The MC is required to advise and assist in ensuring the Authority speaks and listens appropriately to our audiences in line with our adopted policies.
- Media including which to target and monitor
- Website and new media including new social networks and ways the Authority should be involved
- Publications including Dales and The Visitor
- Interpretation including static interpretation and NPC interpretation
- Corporate Identity and branding including how to develop the process of introducing the ram's head NP logo to NP businesses

Current Representative roles

1. YDNPA rep on Yorkshire Dales and Harrogate Area Tourism Partnership Board.

Current/Future Issues

1. Each of the three areas covered above are always developing. The member champion should be able to advise and assist in these processes.

Induction Programme

Briefings with HOD and Team Leaders on each of the three areas of work - half a day each.
Site visits to key sites including Colvend, NPC, Partnership Centres, a couple of Park Information Points, Retail Services and DCM.

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

Optional extras:

Attend an outreach activity.

Attend a Group Leader Visit or Mosaic Annual Event.

Join a school group at Malham or DCM.

Attend a national Communicators' Meeting or national Sustainable Tourism officers meeting.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Oversight of the work of the Department, 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 representative roles

None

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. Housing and Planning Delivery Grant/future finances
7. Resources for Enforcement

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 focuses 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/induction is to equip the Member Champion with the knowledge /information required so that they can offer informed opinion on priorities, successes, failures etc, and in which service areas we might consider expanding/reducing 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.

Regular discussion with other Planning staff.

Attendance at some team meetings.

Following the Planning Committee preparation cycle through would be a valuable exercise: starting with cases on which they have job shadowed a Planning Officer, 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 may occasionally 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.

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, regional and national level.
- Supporting development of renewable energy schemes, esp. hydro-electric

Local Development Framework

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

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.

State of the Park

- programme of surveys and acquiring necessary data to allow monitoring of performance against National Park Management Plan objectives;
- analysing and distributing data from the 2001 Census.

Current representative roles

1. North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board.
2. National Park Management Plan Steering Group (observer).

Current/Future Issues

1. Monitoring implementation of the National Park Management Plan.
2. Developing YDNPA role in supporting development of renewable energy in the Park.
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.
6. Housing and Planning Delivery Grant/future finances.
7. Influencing the developing regional and sub-regional arrangements following the Sub-national review (SNR).

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.

CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC CORE MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Oversight of the Authority's corporate governance and performance management arrangements, and provision of effective support services to the Authority, including personnel, premises, legal, finance and IT.

Performance Management

- Assessment of the Authority's performance including National Park Authority Performance Assessment (NPAPA)
- 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

Corporate Governance

- Working with officers to develop, implement and monitor the Authority's Corporate Governance arrangements

Finance

- Assisting officers in working up the budget in line with priorities and assisting with major corporate bids to the opportunities fund
- Assisting Officers with developing and implementing the Authority's approach to external funding.

Property

- An overview of 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 as effectively as possible
- Oversight of procurement and purchasing

Current Representative Roles

1. NPA representative on the Electronic Government Group

Current/Future Issues

1. Review of the Corporate Governance policy.
2. Website development
3. Investors in People (IiP) re-accreditation
4. NPAPA 2010/11.
5. Authority's approach to new legislation e.g. age discrimination
6. Development of performance monitoring
7. Assist with the monitoring and delivery of the Authority's targets for staff costs.
8. Developing the Authority's role within the region and sub-region.
9. Developing proposals for Member Appraisals
10. Reviewing the appointment process for Parish members.
11. Overview of Risk
12. Overview of the Authority's committee structure

Induction Programme

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

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

Familiarisation with website and session with Communication Team regarding website development.

Session with Head of Finance & Resources on procurement policy.

Session with Head of Planning on Health and Safety.

CLIMATE CHANGE MEMBER CHAMPION

Areas of activity covered

Authority operations

- Assisting with the development, implementation and monitoring of the Authority's environmental performance.

Climate change

- Assisting with the development of Authority policy and initiatives to encourage others to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions
- Assisting with the development of Authority policy and initiatives to help adapt to the impacts of climate change on the Park's special qualities

Renewable energy

- assisting with the development of Authority policy and initiatives to encourage uptake of appropriate renewable energy opportunities

Current representational roles

1. Climate Change Working Group (internal)

Current/future Issues

1. Further improvements to the Authority's own estate/operations.
2. How best to support uptake of renewable energy in the Park.
3. Development of a climate change adaptation strategy.

Induction programme

Briefings from Head of Conservation and Policy, Head of Planning and Head of Finance and Resources.

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

Attend appropriate departmental meeting.

Application for Member Champion for Conservation of the Natural Environment

When I accepted the post of temporary Member Champion for Conservation of the Natural Environment in May 2009 it was with a fair amount of trepidation. I am not an expert in any of the areas involved – I am not a biologist as the last Member Champion was – but what I did bring to the role was my love of the countryside and an enthusiasm to learn more.

I have attended all the monthly team meetings of the department. I have also been on a farm survey with Helen Brady, looked at the peat project with Adrian Shepherd and Tim Thom, red squirrels with Ian Court, grass verges with James Ferguson, discussed the hydro schemes with Moya Turrell, and had briefings with the Head of the Department, Gary Smith. All of which has increased my knowledge and understanding of the work of the department and enabled me to introduce three papers presented to the last Authority meeting from natural environment officers. Member Champions should be able to help officers implement the projects and actions required by the decisions made by Authority Members. I hope that Member Champions can, by communication and actions, help to maintain the excellent moral that we have at present in the Authority. I believe Member Champions should all report fully at their meetings and be able to help the Chairman of the Authority have a more in depth understanding of the complete operations in the Authority.

I would appreciate being voted to be Member Champion for the Conservation of the Natural Environment. I believe I can champion the work of the department not only to you the Members but in a wider role, to other departments in the Authority, to partners, through publicity to the public.

Andrew K Colley

Application for Member Champion for Conservation of Cultural Heritage

I would like to submit an "application" for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Member Champion Role within the Authority.

I studied Ancient History and Archaeology many thousands of years ago at University College London - when I was in my "Salad Days".

I have had a lifelong interest in the historic and cultural environments and have recently been involved with the Station (built) and Richmondshire Open Spaces Appeal (Agri) within the boundaries of my Division. I am also hoping to be involved in the restoration project for the Georgian Grandstand in Richmond.

I am particularly interested in the role which Cultural Heritage could have in respect of sustainable development and tourism.

Stuart Parsons

Application for appointment of Member Champion for Recreation Management

In accordance with Minute 76/09 (d) of the meeting of the Authority on 28 July 2009, I wish to apply for the post of Member Champion for Recreation Management.

I was appointed to this role in July 2006, so according to section (e) of the above minute my term is now complete. However, I believe that I can best serve the Authority by continuing in this position, and I therefore ask to be re-appointed for the period ending on 31 March 2012, at which date as a Secretary of State member I shall have to retire after the maximum term of ten years.

In support of this application I submit that part of my *curriculum vitae* which details my involvement in organisations relating to recreation and the countryside. I also refer to the report I submitted to the July meeting of the Authority about my recent work as Member Champion.

Malcolm Petyt

Malcolm Petyt: Voluntary Work

a) Youth Work

1957-59	Troop Leader, 37 th Bradford West Scouts
1977-79	Venture Scout Leader, 71 st Reading Sea Scouts
1979-86	Scout Leader, 71 st Reading Sea Scouts
1987-95	Water Activities Adviser, East Reading Scouts
1986-96	Volunteer First Mate, Ocean Youth Club

b) Countryside Conservation

Chiltern Society Rights of Way Group

1974-99	Parish Representative (Rotherfield Greys) & Area Chairman
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Ramblers' Association

1975-82	Footpath Secretary, Henley RDC Area
1978-2003	Appointed to Council of National Trust
2000-present	Publicity Officer, Lake District Area
2000-2002	Member of Kendal Group Committee
2001-present	Access Officer, Lake District Area
2003	Elected a (national) Vice-President

National Trust

1978-2003	Member of Council [Trustee] (nominated by Ramblers' Association)
1983-2005	Member of Properties Committee
1987-2002	Member of Executive Committee
1987	Member of Commons Working Party
1991	Member of Rights of Way Working Party
1992	Member of Communications Working Party
1993-95	Member of Access Working Party
1999-2003	Member of Constitution Standing Committee
2002-2003	Member of Council Working Group on Stonehenge

Campaign for National Parks

1999-2004 Member of Council (nominated by National Trust)
2004-2008 Member of Council (nominated by Friends of the Lake District)
2008-present Member of Council (co-opted from Yorkshire Dales NPA)

Yorkshire Dales Society

2000-present Member of Council of Management [Trustee]
2002-2004 Vice-Chairman
2004-present Chairman

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

2002-present Member appointed by Secretary of State
2002-2003 Vice-Chairman of Public Rights of Way Committee
2005-2007 Vice-Chairman of Access Committee
2006-present Member Champion for Recreation Management
2007-2008 Deputy Chairman
2008-present Deputy Chairman of Audit & Review Committee

Friends of the Lake District

2000-present Member of Executive Committee [Trustee]
2002-2008 Chairman of Personnel Committee

Lake District National Park Authority

2000-2001 Member of Interim Local Access Forum
2002-present Member of Local Access Forum

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Member Champions

I would like to continue as Member Champion for Planning at the YDNPA. I have held this position for the last 2 years and I believe I can claim I have been successful in the role.

I see the task as providing an interface between the Planning Service and those that engage with the planning process, particularly when the relationships run into difficulties. In the latter category I include planning applicants, their agents, objectors, and those who fall under the remit of the enforcement regime.

Working at this interface can be tricky at times and it does require both patience and persistence to deliver a result that goes some way to suit all sides in the equation.

For example my involvement in the Neddy House, Grinton application, which had the added complexity of an authority that had superior planning powers to the YDNPA but operated at arm's length to the planning process – English Heritage – engaged the key players (including myself) in 8 meetings, countless telephone calls, and incessant e-mailing.

Whilst it would be wrong to claim everybody walked away overjoyed from the engagement, which at times proved to be quite brutal, a compromise way forward was charted, and with a modicum of goodwill on all sides it was made to happen.

I was pleased to note that passing through Grinton the other day that builders were at last on site, and soon Neddy House will be occupying its rightful place gracing the street scene in this attractive village, and providing an excellent home for a young family. A good result then for the cause of the built heritage in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and the local community, caring people who were at a complete loss to understand what was going on and felt the planning process was letting them down, will be delighted.

I consider it of utmost importance, especially in the age of planning consultants, who can be very leaden footed on the accelerator when charging their fees, that everybody should be provided with the essential information to best present their case, whether or not they are in the position to afford expert assistance.

The planning process is complicated enough as it stands, has recently become even more complex, and many people only encounter it once or twice in their lives. They quickly become disillusioned if they find it impenetrable, as some do.

So in the last 2 years I have advised a large number of applicants, objectors, those subject to enforcement, how best to present their case, and in doing this, I have endeavoured to explain to them the 'tricks of the trade'. It is entirely possible to offer this advice without compromising my position to vote as I consider appropriate when the planning application or enforcement case is discussed at the Planning Committee.

I simply tell those seeking my advice that advising them on presentation and process does not mean I will be supporting their case when it comes to the Planning Committee. I advise them in all cases I shall do what I think best on the day, on the basis of what is presented to me at Committee, the contributions from my fellow members, and last and not least, my own judgement.

This straightforward approach pays dividends especially as Member Champion for Planning I have been often contacted by both applicants and objectors over the same application, and clearly it is impossible to satisfy both causes. This has not prevented me advising impartially each of them individually.

I have worked very closely with our Planning Officers and their assistants, including our Enforcement Officers. Whilst perhaps at first there was a degree of dynamic tension in our relationships, I believe my role has now been universally accepted as having value to them in the work that they do. I in turn have come to appreciate the difficulties that they have to deal with on a daily basis, and the likelihood that in dealing with them some aspirations somewhere may have to be dashed.

In short having a Member Champion for Planning has been a very useful exercise in communication between Members of the YDNPA and Officers, in understanding each other's position, in that part of the work of the Authority where our respective roles most often come into conflict.

Occasionally I have been asked by officers in the Planning Service whether there is any way I can help out in communicating with members of the public engaged in the planning process when relationships have broken down. I have been pleased to do this because it of no assistance to anybody that this position continues.

In particular this aspect of the role has been important in enforcement cases, and I think I can claim some success in bringing some long standing cases to an end by convincing those subject to enforcement that the way forward is to take their issues through the planning process. On other occasions officers have been ready to listen to a point of view perhaps they had not properly considered in the past, and some enforcement cases that might be classified as irritatingly minor, have been correctly closed as Inexpedient to pursue.

Over the last year I have been consulted on several occasions with regard to the restructuring of the Planning Service, and the new structure was implemented on July 1st. I strongly believe what has been put in place will improve the experience of those who come into contact with the Planning Service, will enhance customer care, and will make generally planning much more efficient.

The idea of applicants and objectors being able to deal with a planning team as the application passes through the various stages of the process is intended to remove the tensions that sometimes can arise in the old one to one system, where they dealt with a single planning officer. It will also make for a smoother and more seamless process.

One of the reasons I wish to be re-appointed Member Champion for Planning is to oversee the implementation of the new planning service re-structuring over the next few months to ensure it will deliver the beneficial objectives and outcomes it is intended to do.

In conclusion I should say that many, many planning applications happily pass through the system without experiencing any difficulties whatsoever, and never cross the radar screen of the Member Champion for Planning. Thank Goodness, as there are only 24 hours in any one day !!!

John Blackie

Member of the YDNPA
County Councillor (Independent) for the Upper Dales

16th September 2009

Application for Member Champion for Forward Planning

I would like the YDNPA members to consider my nomination to continue as Member Champion for Forward Planning.

The YDNP Development Framework on the Affordable Housing has still a long way to go before the policy is ready for inspection. The next year will be vital to ensure the policy is sound. We are now reaching a crucial time with the Draft Policy coming to members in January which will follow with consultation with the Public.

My role as member champion will be to ensure we keep on target with our timescale. To help officers with the consultation and meet with the public if necessary during the consultation period. As Chair of Housing group ensure we cover all issues and that the policy is sound.

During the last year I have attended Meetings with the Parish councils, as well as Public meetings and taken on board there concerns and tried to put forward what YDNPA is trying to achieve to help communities with housing issues.

As with all new policies, some residents are sceptical of their delivery and as member champion I will defend our position on the policies.

I have concentrated on LDF, because at this time it is a big role on its own.

Yvonne Peacock