

## ITEM 4

### EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

**MINUTES** of the a meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday 19 July 2005 at 10.30 am in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

#### PRESENT

Mrs A Amory (Deputy Chairman, in the chair)  
Mr J C Edwards (Second Deputy Chairman)

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Mrs J Clark        | Mr R Morrison-Smith |
| Mrs A M Clitheroe  | Mr M J Pile         |
| Mr M A Collins     | Mr F Rawle          |
| Miss A Davis       | Miss E I Stacey     |
| Mr W J Dyke        | Mr M E Taylor       |
| Mr I Galloway      | Dr J F Travis       |
| Mrs A M Foxhuntley | Mr R J Webber       |
| Mrs C M Lawrence   | Mr B O Windsor      |
| Mr R J A Martin    |                     |

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F J Bray, Mr J Dallyn, Mr M Gammon, Mr D E Gladding, Ms D Kershaw, Mr S J Pugsley (Chairman) and Mr F G H Tucker.

#### 18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

#### 19. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Agenda Changes:** Members supported changes in the agenda for this meeting:-
  - At the request of Mr Martin, to take the report on English Upland Farming (Minute 30) prior to the report on the Moorland Initiative (Minute 31), as the future of upland farming was likely to have a bearing on the Authority's approach to the moorland initiative; and
  - The supplementary agenda item, presentation on CareMoor for Exmoor, being taken after the report on Open Access. In the event, however, the item had to be deferred to a later date because of time constraints (Minute 34 below).
- **National Park Authorities Performance Assessment:** The members of the Peer Review Team, visiting the National Park over the week of 18-22 July 2005 to assess the Authority's self-assessment of its performance, were welcomed. Immediately on the rising of this meeting, members would meet individuals from the review team in small groups to discuss the Authority's performance.

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- **‘Me in My Exmoor’ (MIME):** This project which had engaged young people across the National Park in recording their, and other residents’, experiences of current and past life (providing a cultural snapshot of life on Exmoor) would present its resulting films at an ‘end of project’ celebration at Exmoor House on Friday, 23 September 2005 at 7 pm, and all Authority members were invited to attend. The project had been funded by the Sustainable Development Fund and Young Roots (Heritage Lottery Fund), and there had been significant involvement from the Authority’s Education Team.

## 20. MINUTES

### (1) Confirmation

The Minutes of the Authority’s Annual Meeting held on 7 June 2005 were signed as correct, subject to the third bullet point of the pre-ambule to Minute 8 – Exmoor National Park Authority Meetings - being amended to read:

*The Authority had representation at the regional level on the Regional Assembly (a member) through nomination rights and the Regional Development Agency’s Rural Board (National Park Officer) by invitation.*

### (2) Matters Arising

#### • Minute 6(2) – Local Businesses Affected by the Hunting Ban

There was to be a further meeting on Thursday, 21 July 2005, involving representatives of the Authority, West Somerset District Council and the Regional Development Agency (RDA), to examine possible funding avenues to help local businesses, although there was still no specific money for Exmoor.

The RDA had, however, already confirmed its intention to allocate ‘top up’ funding of £100k for three years to both the Exmoor and Dartmoor Sustainable Development Funds (SDF). Also, the Agency was keen not to impose conditions or requirements on how the money should be allocated. The Authority would need to engage the Independent Grant Advisory Panel on how the Fund could be used more strategically to support the local economy, with consideration needing to be given to whether funding should remain with existing themes or involve others, e.g. possible support for farm diversification schemes.

There were member comments about encouraging new SDF applications through publicity on successful schemes and the processes involved, and whether the independent panel required additional training. In response, the National Park Officer explained that there had been widespread publicity about the Fund and its successes and he felt the Independent Panel had the necessary skills and abilities to rigorously examination applications. The Panel investigated the viability of proposals intensively and many applications had been referred back to applicants for further thought and re-submission.

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An update report on SDF would be brought to the Authority's next meeting.

Reference had been made at the Authority's meeting on 26 April 2005 to a presentation given at this year's ANPA Workshop by the New Economics Foundation (see Minute 93). The Foundation undertook investigations into local economies to see how they worked and how they could be enhanced through encouraging spending within the local communities. They had expressed interest in doing some work on Exmoor but there was a cost involved. It was proposed to raise the issue with the RDA on 21 July. They had previously expressed interest in funding a local economic study.

- **Minute 85(2) – Proposed Removal of “Underside” Payphones in Exmoor National Park**

The Planning Committee, at its meeting on 5 July 2005, had raised strong objection to BT's proposed removal of the Martinhoe payphone and the cash payments facility at 16 payphones across the National Park. It was noted that so far there had been a lack of response from BT to those Parish Councils which had raised objections and members asked the officers to pursue a response from BT to the Authority's objection.

- **Minute 15 – Hedgerow Management**

Subsequent to the last meeting, Sir Anthony Acland had asked how the Authority intended to proceed on securing greater protection for hedgerow trees. Members felt that there needed to be more discussion on the issue informally, as there were some differences of opinion on the extent of hedgerow tree protection and how it should be achieved (see also Minute 24 below). The Head of Conservation and Land Management suggested that the Exmoor Society's landscape group could be involved to identify hedges of particular importance which required secure management.

21. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

22. **APPOINTMENTS**

**RESOLVED:** to appoint members to serve on the following outside bodies as follows:-

- Somerset County Council's Scrutiny Sub-Committee- Mr M A Collins, sub Mrs A M Foxhurtle.
- The Lynton and Lynmouth Traffic Management Group – Miss A Davis and Dr J F Travis, with the two members deciding between themselves which of them will be the representative and the sub.

(NB. The Head of Recreation and Tourism being the lead officer for both bodies).

23. **MERGING OF THE EXMOOR CONSULTATIVE FORUM WITH THE EXMOOR DISTRICT AND PARISH FORUM**

The Authority was asked to consider whether to merge these two Forums in view of declining attendance levels at both meetings, the similarity of the meeting agendas and additional mechanisms now being in place for some of the more specific consultations. If agreed, the Authority was also asked to appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the new Forum.

Both existing Forums had discussed the principle of merger at their June 2005 meetings and unanimously supported the proposal. It had been suggested at the Consultative Forum's meeting that the new Forum be called the *Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum*.

Mrs Amory suggested that, at some stage, the Authority should give consideration to the setting up of a Youth Forum.

**RESOLVED:** (1) to merge the Exmoor Consultative Forum with the Exmoor District and Parish Forum into one body, which shall be called 'The Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum';

(2) to appoint Mr W J Dyke as the new Forum's Chairman and Mrs A Amory as the Vice-Chairman; and

(3) that the new Forum shall assume the meeting dates set for the Exmoor Consultative Forum, but the new Forum to be asked to decide at its meeting on 4 November 2005 whether it wishes the timing of future meetings to be altered.

24. **MEMBER TRAINING**

The report of the Head of Business Management asked members to confirm the member training programme for the period to June 2006.

Members were supportive of the proposals. It was also acknowledged that further ad hoc workshops could be added, if necessary, and that, with prior arrangement through the Chairmen of the main meetings or the National Park Officer, it would be possible for other issues to be discussed informally on the Tuesdays following Planning Committee meetings. However, it also needed to be borne in mind that there were various steering groups where it may be more appropriate to discuss many issues, for example, planning matters should be taken through the Local Development Framework Advisory Group.

As referred to in Minute 20(2), third bullet point, members wished to discuss hedgerow trees further.

In response to member comment, the National Park Officer confirmed that the Conservation Area Appraisals training (proposed as part of the Cultural Heritage session on 10 January 2006) would include how Conservation Areas were identified and following the Appraisals how they would be protected, and also that the next meeting of the Authority would be likely to be the best arena for members to discuss what areas may be appropriate for the additional funding allocated to SDF by the RDA.

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It was noted that the recently appointed members to the Authority had received the necessary documentation on standards and the Code of Conduct and most of them had received training through the authorities appointing them to the National Park Authority. It was, therefore, felt that, until any changes were made in this area by the Standards Board, there was no need for a training session. If any members had any queries on any aspects, they were asked to contact the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.

**RESOLVED:** to agree the Member Training Programme proposed for the period to June 2006, as follows:-

- **2 August 2005**                      **Information**  
Freedom of Information Act  
Information Provision (publications, web site)  
National Park Centres/Local Information Points
  
- **1 November 2005**                **Conservation**  
Biodiversity Action Planning  
Managing SSSIs/NNRs owned by the authority  
Exmoor Pony Management  
Hedgerows (informal discussion rather than training)
  
- **10 January 2006**                **Cultural Heritage**  
Archaeology  
Conservation Area Appraisals
  
- **4 April 2006**                      **Promoting Understanding**  
Social Inclusion  
Education Services

25. **INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

The report of the Head of Business Management informed the Authority of the successful outcome of the recent Investors in People re-recognition review.

It was noted that the reviews had to take place no longer than three yearly intervals, but they could be earlier if the Authority requested it. The National Park Officer mentioned that the potential for further development set out in Section 3 of the report would be taken forward through the improvement planning process as part of the performance assessment of the Authority.

**RESOLVED:** to note with pleasure and pride the Authority's achievement and continuing recognition as an Investor in People and to convey congratulations to all staff.

26. **RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

The Authority received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 7 June 2005.

27. **EXMOOR CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

The Authority received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Exmoor Consultative Forum held on 15 June 2005.

Under Minute 2, second bullet point, Design Guide, there was discussion about the workshops that had been held recently. The debates had been constructive on the issues

to be taken forward and those attending had been engaged in the process but disappointment was expressed over the low attendance levels. The reasons for this were unclear, given that the 'planning for real events' some years earlier had been widely supported. One suggestion was that the topics identified by the consultants may not have been relevant enough for the wider public.

In response to member comment regarding Minute 2, fifth bullet point, Car Parking, the National Park Officer said that it was up to Dulverton Town Council to make a formal request to the Authority if they wished to use the car parking area at the front of Exmoor House for public parking on weekends and public holidays.

28. **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITIES BILL**

The Authority considered the report of the National Park Officer which advised members of this Bill currently passing through Parliament. It would have significant implications for the Authority and these were described.

Appendix 2 to the report set out a briefing note from the English National Park Authorities Association for the Committee Stage of the Bill on the issues affecting National Parks. A particular concern was Section 57 regarding the future appointment of members to NPAs. A more flexible approach was proposed by the government, which the Association supported, but it also wished to see more local involvement in the process and the safeguarding of minimum proportions of the different categories of membership. The response from Defra was disappointing. Apart from the Broads Authority, the proposals did not provide for increased local participation in the process, save that all principal local authorities within NPA areas would be consulted before any changes were made, or give much support to maintaining the relative levels of membership from the different categories. All that was offered was that principle authorities were guaranteed the bare minimum of one seat and the number of members appointed locally through principle local authorities and parish councils would be greater than nationally appointed members. Lobbying from various sources would continue, including a possible further approach from the Association and, following the Authority's suggestion, all of the local MPs would be contacted to enlist their support.

The National Park Officer thought that the government's reluctance to increase flexibility into the appointments process may be due to the possibility of Regional Assemblies becoming elected bodies and being entitled to appoint members to National Park Authorities.

It was suggested that were Section 62 of the 1995 Environment Act to be strengthened to require relevant organisations to "further" National Park purposes, rather than 'have regard to' National Park purposes, it should also include mobile telephone operators and that the strengthening of the Section could mean utilities such as BT and the electricity companies being required to underground more of their cables thereby benefiting the landscape.

The proposed changes to vehicular rights on public rights of way, and the protection of the interests of property owners, were welcomed by members. On future policing, the National Park Officer said that it had been demonstrated in North Devon that, where major incidents of the unauthorised use of motor vehicles occurred, the Police were willing to be involved.

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**RESOLVED:** to note progress in the Bill, endorse the approach being taken in relation to matters that will directly affect the Authority and delegate further responses as the Bill progresses to the National Park Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Authority.

29. **THE COMMONS BILL AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EXMOOR**

The report of the Head of Conservation and Land Management informed members of the content of the Commons Bill and its implications for Exmoor.

Subsequent to the report, the officers suggested that the Authority could also lobby for a new national advisory body to advise the government on the regulations and implementation of the proposed changes, with regional groups feeding into the process. This had been a suggestion from a previous consultation on commons legislation. Members, however, did not support the creation of an additional national body at this stage, as it was felt other existing bodies were able to undertake the advisory role.

Members were supportive of the proposals for commons associations and for preventing the severance of common rights, but disappointment was expressed that there was no requirement for commons registers to be updated. The Devon and Somerset registers were very out of date. A suggestion was made that the Authority should press for them to be updated and for the Authority to be responsible for a register within its area. In response, however, it was pointed out that the holding of commons registers could be onerous and, for land management purposes, the proposal for commons associations to keep records of grazing stock should meet the Authority's requirements. It was also likely that the commons associations would in time gather information on other rights of common.

Concerning the proposal that the Authority should lobby for the powers of other local authorities to be extended to National Park Authorities, the National Park Officer said that proposals would be developed for submission to the Association of National Park Authorities.

**RESOLVED:** to note the content of the report and authorise the National Park Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Authority, to lobby for the powers of other local authorities in the Bill to be extended to National Park Authorities.

30. **THE IMPACT OF COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY REFORM ON ENGLISH UPLAND FARMING – A REPORT BY THE NATIONAL TRUST**

The report of the Head of Conservation and Land Management informed members of research undertaken by the National Trust on the impact of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on English upland farming and discussed how the Authority might lobby for changes to agricultural support for the uplands.

The National Trust's report, which examined its own upland farms only, demonstrated that through CAP reform upland farming faced severe falls in income. The study covered a representative sample of upland farms and so its conclusions could be expected to apply generally to upland areas. The separation of farm support payments from agricultural production could lead to the loss of grazing stock, which would have implications for the future management of uplands, affecting both landscape and wildlife. This would be

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particularly relevant for the future of Exmoor's moorlands, and, therefore, have implications for the Authority's Moorland Initiative (see Minute 31 below).

The feeling of members was that the levels of support payments for upland farmers must be maintained. The reductions proposed could have severe consequences not only for the moorland areas, but also for the ability of upland farmers to operate within the market place. In addition, it was considered important for the Authority to ensure that evidence based information on the effects of the proposed CAP changes on Exmoor upland farms and the implications for the local economy was gathered to ensure that a credible case could be presented to the government. In response, the National Park Officer explained that it was proposed to revisit the findings of the State of Farming on Exmoor report and to engage the University of Exeter to undertake a sample survey of farms on Exmoor and Dartmoor to assess how they were likely to be affected by payment changes, in terms of their farming enterprises and also the effects on moorland areas. The National Trust would also be engaged in the process regarding their upland farms in the region. The National Park Officer also suggested that the Authority's Farming and Land Management Group needed to discuss the detail.

**RESOLVED:** to note the conclusions of the research and to authorise the National Park Officer to work with Dartmoor National Park Authority and the National Trust to gather information on the impact of proposed changes in financial support for upland farms in the South West region and, armed with this data, to work with the Association of National Park Authorities to lobby government to seek to secure enhanced payments for livestock farming in the uplands, which is so vital to the achievement of National Park purposes.

### 31. **THE EXMOOR MOORLAND INITIATIVE 2005 UPDATE**

The Head of Conservation and Land Management's report updated the Authority on progress with some of the strands of the Exmoor Moorland Initiative since the last report on 26 April 2005.

Paragraph 6.3 of the report set out the planning strategy that was likely to be required to secure Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) support for the Initiative. In response, Mr Martin suggested that this work arising from the recommendations of the Exmoor Society's commissioned report on the State of Exmoor's Moorlands was diffusing the progress necessary to secure the key objectives of the Initiative, which he identified as obtaining more whortleberry, heather and wild herbs on Exmoor's moorlands and less gorse and bracken. He felt that much of the planning work for funding should be undertaken by others, so that the Authority could concentrate on these key objectives. Whilst acknowledging Mr Martin's comments, the Head of Conservation and Land Management explained that the report produced for the Exmoor Society had widened the debate and set out a range of objectives which the Authority was seeking to push forward. The report had been particularly important in getting landowners and others to value moorland areas and to participate in achieving the objectives, which was as much about landscape as it was vegetation. The activities referred to in paragraph 6.3 were necessary to secure funding and the long term future of the moorlands; empirical evidence being an important factor. HLF money would be the precursor for the Initiative's development and, in the longer run, it was hoped to draw further funding from streams available through Defra (ESA and the new Environmental Stewardship scheme) and English Nature (the SSSI). These schemes would ultimately be funded by Natural England.

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In response to other member comment, the Head of Conservation and Land Management said that the Initiative would investigate the wider role of moorlands beyond the individual units, including maintaining the agricultural economy so that sufficient livestock were available to graze the moorland areas. He was also reasonably optimistic that HLF money would be forthcoming, as a result of informal discussions with some of its representatives recently. On the work proposed for individual units which the Moorland Initiative Board would shortly be leading on, the National Park Officer explained that it was an important facet of the project and provided a focus for the rest of the programme.

**RESOLVED:** to note progress with the Exmoor Moorland Initiative, particularly the establishment of the Exmoor Moorland Initiative Board as agreed at the Authority's meeting on 26 April 2005.

32. **NEW HORIZONS PROJECT**

The report of the National Park Officer advised members of proposals for a new Learning, Leisure, Health and Business Centre project for West Somerset and sought views on ways in which the Authority might wish to offer support to it. He added that, while the project base would be Minehead, it would provide an important service for Exmoor and have links to the National Park. The Authority's involvement would ensure that it achieved benefits for Exmoor and a key element was outdoor activities (including training and skills acquisition), for which the National Park was ideally suited. However, it was not envisaged that the Authority would provide financial assistance for the building. In any case, the project was already reaping success on this aspect, with £10.2m having already been raised.

**RESOLVED:** (1) to welcome and support the project and the Authority's level of involvement as already communicated in a holding reply to the project sponsors from the National Park Officer, as set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of his report; and

(2) to nominate Mrs Foxhuntley, Mr Webber and Miss Stacey to meet with the lead project sponsor to discuss the potential for joint working (NB. Mr Webber would be able to comment with a dual hat as he also represented West Somerset District Council in relation to the project).

33. **UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING OPEN ACCESS ON EXMOOR**

The Authority considered the report of the Head of Recreation and Tourism which updated members on the progress on implementing open access provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 within the National Park.

**RESOLVED:** to note the tasks that have been, or are being, undertaken for the implementation of the open access provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the progress which is being made in that respect.

34. **CARE MOOR FOR EXMOOR – NEW ENVIRONMENTAL FUND**

This item was deferred to a later date.

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35. **MEMBERS' REPORTS**

Two reports were tabled from Mrs Amory. The first covering meetings of the Regional Spatial Strategy Steering Group (14 July 2005) and the South West Regional Assembly (15 July 2005) and the second on meetings of English ANPA (Association of National Park Authorities) and ANPA UK held on 12/13 July 2005.

Mr Webber mentioned that a recent meeting of the Somerset Strategic Planning Conference had discussed housing numbers in the Regional Spatial Strategy, including the provision of affordable housing. He questioned how the Authority would effectively deliver affordable housing within the National Park, given that the government's approach was to include affordable housing on the back of market housing developments through the planning gain mechanism, which in the National Park was not possible. He added that to maintain sustainable communities, with a balance of population, it may be necessary for the Authority to re-think its policies in order to secure the level of affordable housing required.

In response to a suggestion from Mrs Amory that the Authority may wish to respond to the Crossrail project proposals, set out in her first report, which was likely to have effects on rail services to the South West region for a considerable period and have implications for the regional economy, the National Park Officer said that comments should properly be made by the affected District Councils and the Regional Assembly, to which the Authority could give its support.

36. **OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY**

The Chairman authorised the Head of Planning and Community raising an urgent item, the reason being self-explanatory.

There was the need for meetings of the Local Development Framework Advisory Group and the Design Guide Steering Group to be held on 2 August 2005, following the Planning Committee's meeting and prior to the member training proposed for that day (NB. In the event, the training preceded the group meetings). The purpose of the Design Guide meeting would be to consider the outcome of the recent community workshops and receive a briefing on the upcoming stages. The Local Development Framework Advisory Group meeting would consider housing projections for the Regional Spatial Strategy and the forthcoming LDF Core Strategy.

(The meeting closed at 1.19 pm)

Chairman