

23 April 2002

## EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday 23 April 2002 at 2.15pm in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton

### PRESENT

Mr S J Pugsley (Chairman)  
Mrs A Amory (Deputy Chairman)  
Mr J C Edwards (Second Deputy Chairman)

Mr F J Bray  
Miss S R Cassell  
Mr M A Collins  
Mr J Dallyn  
Mrs A M Foxhantley  
Mr M Gammon  
Mr D E Gladdin  
Mr M H Knight  
Mrs C M Lawrence  
Mr R J A Martin

Mr A Moore  
Mr R Morrison-Smith  
Mr E Nightingale  
Mr F Rawle  
Mr M Robins  
Miss E I Stacey  
Mr M E Taylor  
Mr R J Webber  
Mr J Yabsley

Apologies for absence were received from Mr W J Dyke, Mr M J Pile and Mrs M Russell

#### 86. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were disclosed

#### 87. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements

#### 88. **MINUTES**

##### (i) **Confirmation**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 5 February 2002 were signed as correct

##### (ii) **Matter Arising**

Minute 81 – Our Protected Past : An international Conference at the University of Exeter.

Members were informed that this Conference had now been cancelled.

(See also Confidential Minute 103 or its Summary below).

89. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

90 **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Authority received the minutes of the Standards Committee held on 5 February 2002.

The recommendation in Standards Committee Minute 7(1) was taken with Minute 90 below.

91. **CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Authority considered the recommendation of the Standards Committee, by Minute 7(1) of its meeting held on 5 February 2002, that the Model Code of Conduct contained in the schedule to the National Park and Broads Authorities (Model Code of Conduct)(England) Order 2001 be adopted. Copies of Code were circulated to each member attending the meeting (copies would also be posted to absent members). Each member was asked to sign a written undertaking within 2 months that they would observe the code and any revisions, and also to complete a form registering their interests within 28 days.

**RESOLVED:** to adopt the Model Code of Conduct as presented.

(NB. Details of the Register of Members Interests would be published on the Authority's website, and would be updated promptly upon notification from members of any changes to their interests).

92. **RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

The Authority received the Minutes of the Resources Committee held on 5 March 2002.

The recommendation in Resources Committee Minutes 35(1) was taken separately.

Members expressed the hope that in the wake of the Foot and Mouth crisis, various recovery projects would be eligible for external funding from sources such as Objective 2. The National Park Officer told members that, to be acceptable, projects had to be tourism related and have the clear potential to bring economic benefits to the area.

Members pointed out that the appendix mentioned in Minute 35(1) setting out the detailed core and discretionary budgets for 2002/03 had not been printed with the Minutes that were circulated. Some members not on the Resources Committee commented that they were keen to see funding trends. The Head of Business Management replied that he would circulate the appendix during the meeting. However, the appendix showed budget cost centres and members would get a better view of overall expenditure trends from the final version of the Best Value Performance Plan which aggregated expenditure into functional areas.

The National Park Officer told members that interviews for the post of Head Ranger had now taken place and Senior Ranger, Mike Leach had been appointed Head Ranger.

(Consideration of the Agenda Item Budget 2002/03 was deferred until later in the meeting).

93. **EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY LOCAL PLAN**

Members were told that a special meeting was needed to agree the Revised Deposit Local Plan. The suggested date was the earliest possible that would give sufficient time for officers to meet with objectors to negotiate in order to try to reach agreement on the content of the Plan. Members who would be unable to attend were asked to make known in advance any comments they wished to make.

**RESOLVED:** to hold a special meeting of the Authority on Tuesday 18 June at 2:30 p.m. at Exmoor House, Dulverton, to agree the Revised Deposit Local Plan for Exmoor.

94. **ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES**

The Authority received the Minutes of the Executive Meeting of the Association of National Park Authorities held on 26 February 2002.

Members agreed that regular updates on the work of the Association were helpful and noted these would be circulated to members but that there was still room for improvement in the way it promoted its activities. The National Park Officer said that he had been involved with ANPA on ways to improve its communications.

It was noted that the Association had submitted to Government a paper on Meeting Local Housing Needs and members expressed the hope that the response from Government would be known in time to be taken into account in the current work on the Revised Deposit Local Plan for Exmoor.

With regard to the ownership of rights to pasturage on Commons, Mr Collins said that he had received a letter from the Government, which intended to make an announcement on this issue in the Spring.

95. **AN ECONOMIC STATEMENT FOR EXMOOR**

Members received a draft statement on the potential for the future development of the economy of the National Park in ways that were compatible with and help achieve National Park purposes. A map was shown to members that portrayed a programme of projects to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of Exmoor, together with a series of project proposals to enhance the visitor experience and improve understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities.

Members agreed that it was a very useful document. It was suggested that it would be useful to include mention of any barriers to the development of the Exmoor economy.

The Chairman invited Mr Michael Hawkins, Chairman of the Exmoor Society, to make a statement to the Authority. Mr Hawkins said that, as the issue of hunting was a very significant to Exmoor and its economy, the Exmoor Society felt that the Authority should ensure it responded to the Government consultation on this matter.

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The National Park Officer acknowledged this, and replied that it was important to have thorough information before getting into dialogue with Ministers. He anticipated the Economic Statement would prove helpful in this.

It was envisaged that public consultations would be held on the Statement and map at various locations within Exmoor, on a 'planning for real' type approach. Other agencies would also be consulted in due course.

**RESOLVED:** to hold a seminar for members at 10.30 a.m. on 18 June at Exmoor House so that members can consider further the draft economic statement, together with the accompanying map of projects, in advance of wider consultations being held.

96. **TRAFFIC SIGNS TO TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND FACILITIES IN ENGLAND – GUIDANCE FOR TOURIST SIGNING. CONSULTATION BY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS**

Members received a report from the Team Leader of Recreation & Tourism detailing proposed comments by way of response to a Government consultation on proposed changes to the policy and procedures relating to the highway signing of tourist destinations.

Although there were no trunk roads on Exmoor, members felt it was important for the National Park to be signed from major roads in order to attract visitors into the National Park and so support the local economy.

Members felt that signing from local roads should not be made prohibitively expensive for small business and, in particular, signing should be to quality attractions with a balanced number of signs.

**RESOLVED:** to respond to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions consultation in accordance with the comments made in the report.

97. **WEST SOMERSET MINERAL RAILWAY**

Members received a report from the Head of Conservation and Land Management on progress to conserve and enhance the former West Somerset Mineral Railway.

In reply to a question, the National Park Officer said that under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act the Authority had to produce path improvement plans and the opportunity would be taken to link this site into the network of footpaths both inside and outside the National Park.

**RESOLVED:** (1) to note the work carried out in 2001/02 to safeguard the remains of the former West Somerset Mineral Railway and confirm support for continuing efforts to secure its conservation, understanding and enjoyment; and

(2) to arrange a site visit for members.

98. **PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY**

Members received details of a House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee Inquiry into appointments to public bodies.

**RESOLVED:** to respond to the Inquiry that the Authority is content with present arrangements and considers that those members of the Authority appointed by the Secretary of State make an important contribution to the Authority's work.

99. **TREASURY POLICY ARRANGEMENTS**

Members considered arrangements for 2002/03 in the light of changes to the CIPFA Code of Practice in Treasury Management in Local Authorities and because Somerset County Council was still in the process of considering the implications of these changes.

**RESOLVED:** to continue Treasury Management arrangements adopted for 2001/02 contained in Minute 8 of the 17 April 2001 meeting for the first half of 2002/03 or until such time as revised arrangements can be adopted.

100. **MEMBERS' REPORTS**

Members noted:

- (i) A report from Mrs A Amory on the South West Regional Assembly on Planning and Transport Group held on 19 February 2002.

Mrs Amory reminded members that Exmoor National Park Authority had a representative on the Planning & Transport Group while Dartmoor National Park Authority was represented on the Environment Sub-Group.

- (ii) A report from Mr M A Collins on the Somerset County Council's Environment and Transport Policy Panel held on 12 March 2002.
- (iii) A report from Mrs A Amory on the Council for National Parks meeting held on 18 April 2002.

101. **BUDGET 2002/03**

Members considered the Recommendation of the Resources Committee held on 5 March 2002 to adopt the Core and Discretionary Budgets for 2002/03 within the agreed net budget of £2,943,765.

It was pointed out that the Resources Committee had already scrutinised the proposed budget for 2002/03.

In reply to a question, the Head of Business Management said that while support services such as Information Technology were shown under that heading, in reality, much of this equipment was used by front line services and enabled them to provide a more effective service. The Best Value Performance Plan would show the cost of services with all support costs identified.

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**RESOLVED:** to adopt the Core and Discretionary Budgets for 2002/03 within the agreed net budget of £2,543,765, as set out in the appendix to the minutes of the Resources Committee held on 5 March 2002.

102. **CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**RESOLVED:** To pass a resolution pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business arising and that the following information will be considered which is exempt information as presented in Schedule 12A of the Act:-

7 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority).

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### **SUMMARY OF MINUTE 103**

#### **MOORLAND MANAGEMENT**

Members were told that a heather regeneration proposal was in jeopardy because of a decision taken by DEFRA. The Chairman had been asked by the Authority's Land and Property Advisory Panel to write to the Secretary of State.

### **SUMMARY OF MINUTE 104**

#### **Farmed Land Rents**

Members received a report from the Head of Conservation and Land Management on the outcome of rent and fee negotiations on two National Park properties.

**RESOLVED:** (1) to increase the rent on one property but the rent increase should be abated until Lady Day 2003, and the increase then phased in over two years;

(2) that the Land and Property Advisory Panel make a site visit in due course to one of the properties; and

(3) that on the other property the grazing licence fee be changed from 1 April 2002.

(The meeting closed at 4.42 pm)

Chairman