

ITEM 9

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

15 November 2005

PROPOSED IRONMAN UK TRIATHLON EVENT ON EXMOOR - 18 JUNE 2006

Report of the Head of Recreation & Tourism

Purpose of Report:

To inform members of the proposed Ironman UK Triathlon event to be held on Exmoor on 18 June 2006 and to consider the positive and negative impacts of the event on Exmoor.

Legal Implications including Human Rights Act 1998:

None. The event does not legally require the consent of Exmoor National Park Authority.

Financial Implications:

Officer time spent in liaising with event organiser (predominantly Recreation Manager and Sustainable Tourism Officer)

National Park Objectives:

Objective 11/2: To ensure recreation activities are compatible with the principle of quiet enjoyment and the activities of persons living and working in the National Park and seek to achieve harmony between the recreation and conservation purposes of the National Park.

RECOMMENDATION:

To: AGREE that Exmoor National Park Authority does not object to this event being run on Exmoor and will work with the organisers to ensure the maximum benefit to the area with the minimum of disruption to those not involved in the event.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 IRONMAN UK Events Ltd is a South West based not-for-profit organisation. It currently holds the 15 year licence to run Ironman events in the UK.
- 1.2 IRONMAN UK Events Ltd wish to run their '70.3 IRONMAN Event' (a half-distance IRONMAN event) on Exmoor based at Wimbleball Lake on Sunday 18 June 2006. This event involves swimming 1.2 miles in the lake, cycling 56 miles on tarmac roads around the area and running 13 miles on a mix of roads and tracks.
- 1.3 This event has the potential to bring a lot of visitor spend to Exmoor and to raise awareness of the area to a large number of visitors and people watching the event on television. There is some potential to disrupt local people and other users of the area due to the use of public roads for cycling and running.

2. BACKGROUND – THE EVENT

- 2.1 The event will involve 1,500 competitors and approximately 10,000 spectators. This is a qualifying event for the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championships in Florida. 100 athletes from the Exmoor event will go to Florida.

- 2.2 In 2005 IRONMAN UK filled faster than IRONMAN races in the traditional IRONMAN strong holds of Germany, Austria and France. All 1,500 spaces will be filled many months before the event starts. This triathlon type event is extremely popular at present.
- 2.3 The event will be based on the South West Lakes Trust site at Wimbleball Lake. The event only lasts for one day, but most riders will arrive and require accommodation from the Friday. Most competitors will also visit the area before the event to practice the cycling and to look at the lake.
- 2.4 A similar event has been run by the company in Sherborne, Dorset for the past two years. Athletes from 37 different countries competed at the 2005 event in Sherborne. Local businesses have reported great financial benefits from hosting the event in their area, with increased trade for many weeks before the event, as well as on the actual weekend of the event.
- 2.5 The event will require the temporary closure or restriction of roads in the Brendon Hills area on the morning of the event until around 12:30pm. There will be disruption in the area due to increased traffic for the whole weekend, although this will be managed and controlled by the event organisers who have a wealth of experience in this aspect of event management.
- 2.6 The 2004 event in Sherborne achieved 280 media articles, totalling an equivalent advertising spend of £10 million. The event is televised on both Channel 4 and Sky Sports.
- 2.7 For the running section, the organisers have agreed to avoid sensitive sites such as Haddon Hill, and will work with Exmoor National Park Authority staff to find a sustainable route. For example, Kennisham Hill could be a suitable area, subject to the consent of the Forestry Commission.
- 2.8 The event organisers have a proven track record of running such events successfully in sensitive locations similar to Wimbleball and the Brendon Hills.

3. **CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 It is considered that the event will be extremely positive for Exmoor and its communities. The positive publicity and awareness-raising of the area to a large audience will be of great benefit to the promotion of the area as a destination.
- 3.2 It is therefore recommended that Exmoor National Park Authority does not object to this event being run on Exmoor and undertakes to work with the organisers to ensure the maximum benefit to the area is achieved with the minimum of disruption to those not involved in the event.

Paul Hawkins
Recreation Management Officer
1 November 2005