

(7 October 2003)

## EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of a special meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday 7 October 2003 at 12 noon 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	Mr M H Knight
Mrs J Clark	Mrs C M Lawrence
Mrs A M Clitheroe	Mr R Morrison-Smith
Mr M A Collins	Mr M J Pile
Mr W J Dyke	Mr F Rawle
Mrs A M Foxhantley	Mr M E Taylor
Mr M Gammon	Dr J F Travis
Mr D E Gladding	Mr R J Webber
Brigadier M Hodson	Mr J Yabsley

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Dallyn, Mr R J A Martin and Miss E I Stacey.

#### 54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

#### 55. MINUTES

**Confirmation:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 2 September 2003 were signed as correct.

(NB. Any Matters Arising would be considered at the Authority's next meeting on 18 November 2003)

#### 56. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) **Informal Meeting with Exmoor's three MPs:** Following some member concern that there should not be split meetings with Exmoor's MPs, there would now be a single meeting with all three on Friday 23 January 2003 at 2 pm in Exmoor House. However, the Chairman may not be present because of family commitments.
- (2) **National Parks Conference, 1-3 October 2003, Brecon Beacons:** The key speaker at the Conference, Alun Michael, Minister for Rural Affairs, had indicated the following regarding the National Parks Review: -
  - It was his intention that the size of National Park Authorities would be reduced to between 20 and 25 members and the proportion of national members increased. This would undoubtedly mean a reduction in the number of County and District Council members and Parish members.
  - He proposed that National Park Authorities would continue to be able to appoint Chairmen from within their membership and he would not seek to require the appointment of independent Chairmen.

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There would be a resume of other matters emerging from the Conference at the Authority's meeting on 18 November 2003.

57. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were two public questions, which were taken with the item in Minute 58 below.

58. **PROTECTION OF HISTORIC ROAD LINE: PORLOCK RELIEF ROAD**

The Authority considered a report by the Head of Planning and Community on: -

- the decision of Somerset County Council, as part of its Roads Review, to abandon the safeguarding of the route of the Porlock Relief Road,
- the implications for the protection of part of the line of the Relief Road for local access in the Local Plan Review, and
- the proposal that the local access road be dropped from the Plan but be re-considered next year when preparation would commence on the new Local Development Plan Framework.

**Public Questions**

Mr M Jones, Chairman of Porlock Parish Council, said that there was the need for the line of the local access road to continue to be protected to provide a route for lorry tankers accessing the local sewage works, which often involved more than one lorry per day. Since the sewage treatment plant had been built these lorries had accessed it through a housing estate which was unsuitable. He suggested that funding for the construction of the road could be available if the Authority's housing policy were to be relaxed to permit private housing on land beside the road line.

Mr Latham, a member of Porlock Parish Council but speaking in a personal capacity, said that the existing line of the local access road affected his property and a more suitable alternative may be found through the new Local Development Framework. He, therefore, did not wish to see the line to continue to be protected.

**The Authority's Consideration**

There was lengthy debate on whether the abandonment of the line of the local access road in the Local Plan Review was likely to result in the permanent loss of the route. A minority member view was that it would and there was a proposal from Mr Edwards for the line to be retained in the Plan, together with the Authority and West Somerset District Council being asked to work jointly to enable the road to be constructed through: -

- a scheme for the development of the area to provide open market housing and industrial development (including the possible relocation of the Porlock abattoir), and
- accessing other avenues of potential funding.

In response, the officers said that the deletion of the line of the access road in the Local Plan Review would not result in its being lost for all time. Any development of the area would almost certainly require access along the corridor of the road line, as

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there was no other suitable access. Also, the retention of the access road part of the road line in the Plan, following Somerset County Council's decision to no longer safeguard the full Porlock Relief Road route, would extend the Local Plan Inquiry due to start in November (subsequently altered to December) 2003 and be likely to delay significantly the adoption of the revised Local Plan and its policies. There had been no consultation etc through the Local Plan process on other issues raised in connection with the access road, such as open market housing to fund it, which may mean the inquiry would have to be adjourned. However, were the access road to be given further consideration through the Local Plan Framework, in an Action Plan for Porlock, this would allow a proper analysis and evaluation of its need, with accurate costings and full consultation etc.

Reference was made to Wessex Water having lodged a bond towards the provision of the Relief Road, when its sewage plant was built, which Mr Edwards thought was now worth about £80,000. The officers, however, suggested that this amount was small when compared to the cost of the access road which would be likely to be in the region of £1m.

Most members supported the officers' assessment of the situation as set out above and it was **RESOLVED** to:-

- (1) cease to protect the line of the Porlock Relief Road in the National Park Local Plan Review, as requested by Somerset County Council as the highway authority;
- (2) not safeguard land for a local access road in Porlock (for the reasons set out in Part 3 of the report – the full report is appended to the signed copy of these Minutes); and
- (3) re-assess the need for a local access road for Porlock in an Action Plan for the village under the new Local Development Framework.

59. **CONSULTATION ON SPEED MANAGEMENT SCHEME FOR ALLERFORD, BOSSINGTON AND SELWORTHY**

The Authority considered a report by the Head of Recreation and Tourism on a consultation by Somerset County Council for a scheme to introduce speed limits in Selworthy, Bossington and Allerford and a recommended response.

There was particular concern about the proposals on the A39 for a 30 mph limit along the Holnicote Straight and a 40 mph limit just beyond Allerford to the 30 mph limit at Porlock. It was felt that the nature of these stretches of the road required the limits to be the opposite way round, for example, vehicles travelling at 40 mph over New Bridge between Allerford and Porlock would be likely to result in more accidents on the bridge. The extent and nature of the signing proposed was also an issue. The need for distinctiveness in the design and signing of schemes in protected areas was highlighted, which Mr Dyke, as a member of Somerset County Council's Commission established to review speed management in the County, supported. He also favoured communities being given the speed limits they wanted.

In addition, it was felt that the two County Councils needed to work together to achieve appropriate and effective highway signing throughout the National Park.

**RESOLVED:** (1) to raise objection to the details of the proposed speed limits as shown in the Traffic Regulation Order;

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(2) to object to the use of standard speed limit signing within the National Park area and Somerset County Council is asked to re-design the signing associated with the scheme to reflect the sensitive nature of the environment in consultation with the National Park Authority;

(3) to ask Devon and Somerset County Councils to consider how effective highway signing can be achieved within the National Park, while maintaining its distinctiveness, and to discuss this with the National Park Authority with a view to the introduction of highway signing guidelines; and

(4) to ask Devon and Somerset County Councils to commit themselves to an accord on consultation with the National Park Authority concerning signing and other highway design matters in the National Park (the drafts of which had previously been sent to them); and

(5) to seek an assurance that the views of local communities will be taken into account in the development of all traffic speed management proposals.

60. **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 61**

### **Tenure of National Park Authority Owned Land**

The Authority considered a confidential report by the National Park Officer concerning negotiations with someone having tenure of Authority owned over a suitable form of legal agreement to enable them to enter that land into the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Scheme. That someone, whilst previously wishing their existing grazing licence to be varied to enable entry into the ESA (which was not acceptable to DEFRA), had subsequently indicated that they would be willing to take up a Farm Business Tenancy so that it could happen. They would not, however, agree to take on responsibility for maintaining boundary fencing, which was an essential element of the tenancy and was a provision of other such tenancies.

The Authority's resolution stated that it was willing to enter into the Farm Business Tenancy with the someone concerned to accord with existing policy, including transfer of the responsibility for maintaining the fences.

(The meeting closed at 1.15 pm)

Chairman

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