

23 July 2002

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday 23 July 2002 at 10.30 am in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

Mr M A Collins (Chairman)
Mr R Morrison-Smith (Vice-Chairman)

Mr J C Edwards	Mr S J Pugsley
Mr W J Dyke	Mr M Prowse
Mrs A M Foxhuntley	Miss E I Stacey
Mr M H Knight	Mr M E Taylor
Mr M J Pile	

Observer: Mrs A Amory.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

5. MINUTES

(1) Confirmation

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 23 April and 11 June 2002 were signed as correct.

(2) Matter Arising

Minute 44 (23 April 2002) – Best Value Performance Plan/Business Plan 2002/03

In response to a comment suggesting the need to link expenditure to National Park Management Plan objectives, the National Park Officer advised that the Best Value Performance Plan did show these objectives in relation to all of the proposed activities.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at this point in the meeting.

7. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer on the outturn for 2001/02 and the position on reserves at 31 March 2002.

In response to comment, the National Park Officer explained that the costs of Simonsbath Sawmill had been included in the accounts under the Woodlands and Trees budget heading because of its close association with the management of the Authority's Woodlands, but would in future be recorded under the heading for the historic environment.

The Chief Finance Officer explained that the General Reserve of £100,000 was available to ease the peaks and troughs of cash flow and to assist in meeting any

unforeseen or exceptional items of expenditure. It was not, however, intended for opportunity purchases.

RESOLVED: to note the financial performance for 2001/02 and approve the adequacy of reserves at 31 March 2002.

8. **AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chief Finance Officer's report informed the Committee on the internal audit activity and the external audit for 2001/02.

It was noted that e-government had been identified as a medium risk by the external auditors as it was a new activity where the actual risk involved could not yet be fully evaluated.

RESOLVED: to note: -

(1) the internal audit activity carried out in 2001/02 and the programme proposed for 2002/03; and

(2) the arrangements for the audit of the 2001/02 Accounts and the Best Value Performance Plan for 2002/03.

9. **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR NATIONAL PARKS**

The National Park Officer's report informed members of the new Sustainability Development Fund provided by DEFRA and sought support for a proposed approach towards the management of the fund on Exmoor.

The National Park Officer explained that discussions with local and regional partners, such as the County and District Councils, the Regional Development Agency and the Government Office for the South West, may deliver additional resources which would permit funding under the scheme to be spent more widely, possibly under specific themes. He also referred to the possibility of a single Grant Advisory Panel covering both Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks. Statutory National Park objectives would underpin the scheme.

Some concern was expressed about whether an enlarged funding area could reduce the level of assistance for projects on Exmoor and delay implementation. However, members accepted the National Park Officer's comments that initially the scheme would be run solely on Exmoor, allowing early operation and an assessment to be made of its take up and benefits for the area, and this would not be prejudiced by negotiations with other organisations on widening the scheme.

It was suggested that composition of the ultimate Grant Advisory Panel should be by open advertisement, and the importance of the scheme having community ownership and the involvement of young people and groups was also emphasised. In addition, comment was made that the scheme should not duplicate projects which the two District Councils were currently involved in.

RESOLVED: (1) to appoint an interim Grant Advisory Panel to advise the National Park Officer, comprising the Chairman of the Resources Committee, Mr Morrison-Smith and Miss Stacey, which shall: -

- Advise on the development of suitable criteria and application procedures for the Sustainability Development Fund on Exmoor, in conjunction with local and regional partners.

- Advise on the most appropriate format for the Grant Advisory Panel and the most suitable approach for the recruitment of the Panel.
- Advise on early applications to the new Fund until such time as the full Grant Advisory Panel is appointed;

(2) to approve the appointment of a Sustainable Development Officer 50% funded from the Fund and 50% by the Authority to undertake the joint duties set out in the DEFRA guidance and outlined in section 4 of the National Park Officer's report; and

(3) to agree that the National Park Officer shall undertake discussions with the Dartmoor National Park Officer and other local and regional partners to seek ways to promote the fund and secure additional benefits to Exmoor.

10. **BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF RECREATION MANAGEMENT**

The Committee considered the content of the updated Best Value Performance Review of Recreation Management and Action Plan, together with covering report by the Head of Recreation and Tourism.

In response to comment, the National Park Officer explained that a review of car parking in the Valley of Rocks did not form part of this Best Value Review, and that no action would be taken there without the full involvement of Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council and other interested parties.

It was noted that there would be monitoring to see if a litter problem arose from the proposal in Action Plan point 4.6.6 to remove litter bins from car parks and other sites. However, experience in other areas suggested that the absence of bins did encourage people to take their litter away.

RESOLVED: to approve the Best Value Performance Review of Recreation Management main report and Action Plan, subject to the linking of Action Plan point 5.5.7 to point 5.1, in view of the steps already being taken by the two District Councils to rationalise and divest responsibility for public toilet provision and maintenance.

11. **SIMONSBATH SAWMILL PROJECT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Conservation and Land Management which outlined recent progress on the Project, invited members to agree to proceed with the restoration of the weirs and leats, and set out the potential budget implications. Details of the current budget were circulated at the meeting, which showed that the Project was currently in balance.

RESOLVED: (1) to note progress with the Simonsbath Sawmill Project;

(2) to authorise the National Park Officer to sign a contract with Bluestone for the works to restore the weirs on the River Barle and River Bale; and

(3) to note the budget position of the Project and endorse all efforts to minimise this, including seeking to attract funding from other sources.

12. **FUNDING ISSUES**

The Chief Finance Officer's report brought three matters before the Committee that had funding implications.

RESOLVED: (1) to refer a request from the Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales) for match funding of £10,000 per annum for three years towards their "Tourism Without Traffic" project to the newly formed Sustainable Development Fund Interim Grant Advisory Panel;

(2) to take out silver level Corporate Membership of the Two Moors Festival for 2002 at the cost of £250, which provides for the Authority's name to be printed in the Festival programme and entered on the festival website, together with two complimentary tickets to a concert of the Authority's choice; and

(3) that in respect of the future provision of toilet facilities at Blackmoor Gate –

- the National Park Officer be delegated authority to make a decision, in consultation with the following group of local members – Mr Dallyn, Mr Knight, Mr Pile and Mr Prowse; and
- prior to the decision being taken, the National Park Officer and the group of local members be asked to evaluate the situation on the ground and hold discussions on the way forward with Parracombe and Kentisbury and Trentishoe Parish Councils.

13. **MEMBERS ALLOWANCES**

The report of the Head of Business Management set out the allowances paid to members in 2001/02.

RESOLVED: to note the publication of a schedule showing the allowances paid in 2001/02.

14. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXMOOR CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

The report of the Head of Business Management provided information on the recent review of the membership of the Consultative Forum.

RESOLVED: to note the changes in the Consultative Forum's membership as set out in the report.

15. **PERSONNEL UPDATE**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Business Management which updated members on personnel matters.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the update; and

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(2) to appoint a small group, comprising the membership set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report and the addition of Miss Stacey, to make recommendations for a new grading structure for the Authority as part of the Job Evaluation Exercise being carried out in 2002/03.

(The meeting closed at 12.30 pm)

Chairman

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