

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Minutes of a meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday 5 February 2002 at 2.15 pm 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 Foxhuntley

Mr M Gammon

Mr D E Gladding

Mr M H Knight

Mrs C M Lawrence

Mr R J A Martin

Mr R Morrison-Smith

Mr M J Pile

Mr F Rawle

Mr M Robins

Mrs M Russell

Mr M E Taylor

Mr R J Webber

Mr J Yabsley

A apologies for absence were received from Mr W J Dyke, Mr A Moore, Mr E Nightingale, Mr M Prowse and Miss E I Stacey.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Edwards declared an interest regarding a letter received from Mr Philip Griffin responding to Local Plan proposals on land east of Doverhay Place, Porlock (see Minute 76 below).

Mrs Foxhuntley declared an interest in respect of Minute 77, Council Tax: A Consultation Paper on Proposed Changes for Second Homes and Long Term Empty Homes. She owned a property which could be affected but, as it was outside of the National Park, she remained in the meeting when the item was considered.

67. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) **National Park Management Plan:** The Management Plan had now been published and was being sold for £10.00 per copy.
- (2) **Joint Training/Workshop with Dartmoor NPA:** The two day joint training/workshop event with Dartmoor NPA in January, a large part of which had been organised at the request of the Countryside Agency, had been a useful learning experience for those attending and had been important in developing liaison between the two Authorities, which the Agency wished to encourage.
- (3) **Lord Carnarvon:** Mr Edwards had recently attended his memorial service on behalf of the Authority. He had close connections with the Pixton family and had produced the Porchester Report in 1977, which had resulted in significant changes for the administration of Exmoor and other National Parks.

68. **OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY – REPLACEMENT BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIVER QUARME, HOE FARM, WHEDDON CROSS (PARISHES OF WINSFORD AND EXTON) (PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 6/40/01/110)**

Urgent authority was required for the determination of this application to be delegated to the National Park Officer, in consultation with a small group of members. The urgency arose as the existing bridge across the River Quarme was in an unstable condition.

RESOLVED: that, notwithstanding the scheme of delegation to the National Park Officer in respect of the determination of planning applications in relation to unwithdrawn objections by third parties, to delegate the determination of a replacement bridge across the River Quarme, Hoe Farm, Wheddon Cross (application no. 6/40/01/110) to the National Park Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee and the following members - Mr Bray, Mr Edwards and Mr Rawle.

69. **MINUTES**

(1) **Confirmation**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 20 November 2001 were signed as correct.

(2) **Matter Arising**

Minute 52(3) – The Regional Assembly

It was noted that the Assembly's Social and Economic Partners Group (SEPs) was likely to meet shortly to consider the Authority's request for membership of that Group. In addition, with Dartmoor NPA, approaches had been made to the Regional Assembly's Chief Executive for each NPA to be allocated places on three sub-groups as of right, rather than the need for the NPAs to have to seek representation through one of the political groupings or the SEPs group. The difficulties this Authority was encountering in securing adequate representation had also been raised with two local MPs.

It was also suggested that a forthcoming government White Paper on regional devolution may address the role of National Park Authorities in Regional Assemblies.

70. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

71. **MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**

(1) **Standards Committee – Appointment of Independent Member**

The Authority was asked to agree the Standards Committee's recommendation regarding the appointment of an independent member on the Committee.

RESOLVED: to appoint Mrs Susan Mew.

(2) **Somerset County Council's Environment and Transport Policy Panel**

RESOLVED: to confirm the appointment of Mr Collins as the Authority's representative on this Panel for the remainder of the Authority year.

72. **SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED MEETING DATES FOR 2002/03**

RESOLVED: to note the schedule of meeting dates for 2002/03.

73. **RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

The Authority received the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 8 January 2002.

In respect of Minute 21(2), Membership of the Exmoor Consultative Forum, the Chairman of the Committee (Mr Collins) reported that the review of the Forum's membership was likely to result in the loss of about eight members (including organisations and Members with Special Knowledge).

In response to comment regarding Minute 27, Victoria County History, the Head of Business Management said that, at the time of the Resources Committee's meeting, no request for additional funding had been received from the Exmoor Oral History Project and so no reference to it had been included in the Minute. However, such a request had now arrived.

74. **DISTRICT AND PARISH CONSULTATIVE GROUP**

The authority received the Notes of the meeting of the District and Parish Consultative Group held on 26 November 2001. In the attendance list, the reference to Mr R J Webber being a representative of "Exton Parish Council" was amended to "Cutcombe Parish Council".

75. **BUDGET FOR 2002/03 AND THE ISSUE OF THE LEVY**

The Authority considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer on the National Park Grant settlement for 2002/03 and was asked to approve the issue of the levy on the four local authorities.

There was comment about the need for the Authority to pursue the conservation of the natural environment (its first purpose) and a questioning of whether there was the need for a large sum to be allocated to access measures under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW Act), given that large areas of the National Park already had open access. In response, the National Park Officer explained that the Authority was able to meet its first purpose through its own budget and included nature conservation objectives across the board but also via funding sources available from other bodies for private land. He added that there was still a significant land area to be opened for access and a process to be followed which would require funding. A sum of money had been specifically allocated in the Grant settlement for the CRoW Act's access provisions.

RESOLVED: (1) to note and warmly welcome the National Park Grant settlement for 2002/03; and

(2) to approve the issue of levy to the four local authorities:

£262,033 to Somerset County Council and to West Somerset District Council, £104,813 to Devon County Council and to North Devon District Council.

76. **LOCAL PLAN REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

Members were informed that the Working Group was continuing to examine the response received on the Deposit Local Plan and that a report would be brought to the Authority's meeting on 23 April 2002. (NB. Subsequent to the meeting, it was proposed to take the Local Plan to a special meeting of the Authority).

All members had received a letter from Mr Philip Griffin regarding proposals in the draft Local Plan for land to the east of Doverhay Place. The National Park Officer would be responding to the points raised, and the response would be copied to members. During the reference to Mr Griffin's letter, Mr Edwards withdrew from the meeting, having previously declared an interest (see Minute 66 above).

77. **COUNCIL TAX: A CONSULTATION PAPER ON PROPOSED CHANGES FOR SECOND HOMES AND LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES**

The Authority considered the report of the Head of Planning and Community which set out a suggested response to this consultation paper.

RESOLVED: to agree the proposed response set out in section 2 of the report, subject to the following amendments: -

- In paragraph 2.3, the Council Tax rate for second homes and long-term empty properties should be 100%, as for all other house owners.
- In paragraph 2.5, the response to indicate that the additional funds generated through increasing the Council Tax for second homes and long term empty properties should be retained by the local authorities for community purposes, which could include housing.

78. **PLANNING GREEN PAPER**

The report of the Head of Planning and Community outlined proposed changes in the government's Planning Green Paper and suggested a response.

RESOLVED: to agree the proposed response to the Green Paper set out in section 2 of the report, subject to the following: -

- Expand paragraph 2.10 to emphasise that NPAs should play a full role in the development of any sub-regional planning or economic development strategies. Also refer to the need for NPAs to have direct representation on sub-regional planning bodies.
- In respect of the 'Consultation paper on Use Classes Order review' (paragraph 2.31), to defer a response for further separate discussion within the timescale of the Use Classes Order consultation.
- In paragraph 2.40, to suggest that standard planning application fees should be set regionally, and delete the reference to "national levels".

79. **CONSULTATION ON DEFRA AND COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY PROPOSALS FOR REGULATIONS AND GUIDANCE ON EXCLUSION AND RESTRICTIONS UNDER PART 1 OF THE COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT (CRoW) ACT 2000**

The report of the Team Leader, Recreation and Tourism proposed a response to these two consultation papers, and sought members' views.

RESOLVED: to endorse the response to the consultation as set out in the report, and to ask the Resources Committee to consider the cost implications of implementing CRoW.

80. **Foot and Mouth Disease: Lessons Learned Inquiry/Report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food – Summary and Timetable of Recommendations to Government/NFU's Initial Reaction to the Policy Commission's Report**

The Head of Park Management's report informed the Authority of the first public meeting held by the Lesson Learned Inquiry and indicated that a written submission was also proposed. A summary report/timetable of recommendations of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food and a paper setting out the NFU's initial reaction to the report were circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the approach to formal responses to the Lesson Learned Inquiry and the Policy Commission's report be considered by the Authority's Future of Farming Working Group and the Farm Policy Working Group.

80. **REVIEW OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS**

The Authority considered the report of the Head of Park Management which updated members on the current arrangements for the making of Tree Preservation Orders and sought agreement for a review of Orders previously made.

RESOLVED: to note the current arrangements for making Tree preservation Orders and to support the proposed review of all Orders previously made.

81. **OUR PROTECTED PAST: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER**

The report of the Head of Park Management invited member nominations to attend an international conference being held in Exeter in July 2002.

RESOLVED: to appoint the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to attend the Conference in July 2002 (Any other members who wished to attend were asked to inform the Chairman or the National Park Officer).
(Subsequent to the meeting, the conference was cancelled).

82. **MEMBERS' REPORTS – ANPA HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING (10 DECEMBER 2001)**

The Authority noted a report from Mr Webber on a recent meeting of the ANPA Housing Working Group.

83. **OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY**

The Chairman authorised the following items being taken as matters of urgent business. The reasons for the urgency were self-explanatory.

(1) **Black Environment Network/CNP's Multi-Cultural Initiative**

Following indications from the government that the needs of communities should be targeted/supported rather than separate ethnic groups (in response to a report on the Oldham and Brixton Riots), Mr Martin asked for a review of the Authority's support for this initiative. The Chairman advised that his request and reasons for the review should be fed in for discussion at an appropriate future time.

(2) **Legal Decision on Commons**

There was discussion about the potential legal implications of a recent decision in the House of Lords that common rights could be sold. There was concern about the effects it could have on the future stocking and management of commons. The National Park Officer advised that the matter was being pursued through ANPA.

84. **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 an particular person (other than the authority)

5 February 2002

SUMMARY OF MINUTE 85

MOORLAND MANAGEMENT

Further to the summary of Minute 65, the Moorland Panel had been consulted on the heather regeneration proposals on a large area of NPA owned land and Authority members had received a presentation on the details and be given the opportunity to visit the site. The confidential report of the Head of Park Management before members recommended that the proposals be supported.

The proposals for heather regeneration were supported, subject to certain constraints. The management of the area was to be outlined and detailed in a revised management plan, and the Authority agreed to support the tenant's case in negotiations with DEFRA.

(The meeting closed at 4.32 pm)

Chairman

ENPAMINSFeb2002