

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

26 APRIL 2005

NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Report of the National Park Officer

Purpose of Report:

To advise members of the Performance Assessment process for National Park Authorities including the review visit to Exmoor in July 2005

Legal Implications including Human Rights Act 1998:

None

Financial Implications:

The Authority has budgeted £10,000 towards assistance in putting together its self-assessment report and £15,000 towards the formal NPAPA review visit in accordance with the national scheme for NPAs.

National Park Purposes:

Effectiveness in achieving National Park purposes is a central element within the Performance Assessment process.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is RECOMMENDED that the Authority NOTES the arrangements being made to undertake the requirement for a performance assessment of Exmoor NPA.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The NPA Performance Assessment process has been agreed following extensive discussion with the Audit Commission, ODPM and Defra. In outline, the process has four stages:
1. A **self-assessment** of performance by the NPA setting out strengths/achievements and weaknesses/issues, together with an action plan setting out a short, medium and longer term programme of improvements.
 2. A visit from a 'peer' review team comprising a lead member from SOLACE Enterprises (the selected contractor to manage the process for all English NPAs); a chief executive from a district council, and a chief executive, senior officer and NPA member from three other NPAs. The visit will operate over four days and will consider a range of evidence including the Authority's self-assessment report. During the time at the Authority, the visiting team will wish to meet with a range of members, staff, partner representatives and other organisations to enable them to receive a range of views about the Authority's performance and to help 'test' its self-assessment.
 3. Report from SOLACE Enterprises setting out the key findings.
 4. A 'round table' discussion with leading members and officers from the authority, auditors, Defra etc. to consider the authority's response to the review report and help with improvement planning.
- 1.2 The Exmoor review visit will run from 18 July to 22 July 2005. An outline timetable for this process is attached at Appendix 1.

2. SCOPE OF THE NPAPA REVIEW

2.1 The self-assessment and review process is based around a 'Key Lines of Enquiry' document (KLOE) that is tailored to the statutory role and activities of NPAs and is set out under 9 headings:

- Quality of Vision
- Quality of Authority's Plans
- Setting Priorities
- Organisational Capacity
- Learning Ability [of Authority]
- Performance Management
- Achievement in Delivery of NP purposes and duties
- Achievement in Improvement of NP purposes and duties
- Developing the Effectiveness of Organisation

2.2 The performance assessment is a requirement from Defra and could be perceived as an imposition; however, the process provides an excellent opportunity for the Authority to set out the things we have achieved and do well, and to reflect on opportunities for improvement and more effective working. Significant changes have been made in the internal organisation of the Authority over the past few years and this is a good time to assess the effectiveness of these changes and set out improvement priorities for the next few years that will undoubtedly see new challenges and opportunities.

3. SELF-ASSESSMENT

3.1 We have commissioned the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) to help us in carry out our self assessment effectively, and to give an opportunity for all staff and members to contribute to the assessment process. The timetable agreed with IDeA is based around an intensive piece of work during April in 5 stages:

1. Workshop with members (held on 11 April).
2. Briefing for staff 'Review Leaders Group' who will work with IDeA to support and facilitate discussions in our staff teams.
3. Seven half-day sessions involving all staff and focusing on the 9 headings set out above.
4. Work with a group invited from the voluntary and community sectors to provide an external perspective on our performance.
5. Summary report extracting findings from the series of workshops to help inform our final self-assessment report.

3.2 Other activities that will help in assessing our performance include a pilot regional study with Carol Sompter from Forum for the Future. Carol has already commenced involving staff, members and outside groups in a 'sustainability appraisal' for the National Park and the specific contribution being made to sustainability in Exmoor by the Authority. Carol's work will feed into our self-assessment report and, later in the year, into the commencement of the National Park Management Plan review.

3.3 In addition, in May, there will be a review of the Authority's Investors in People accreditation that will also provide an input into our self-assessment and future improvement plans.

Nigel Stone
National Park Officer
11 April 2005

Background papers on which this report, or an important part of it are based, constitute the list of background papers required by Section 100 D (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to be open to members of the public comprise:-
- Key Lines of Enquiry for corporate assessment of National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority

APPENDIX 1

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE FOR EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT REVIEW TEAM VISIT LED BY SOLACE ENTERPRISES (AS AT 11 APRIL 2005)

Date	Event
Thursday 12 / Friday 13 May	NPAPA Training for Review Team members to be attended by NMS, CMF, Arabella Amory
Week beginning 23 May	Contact with SOLACE Enterprises to plan Exmoor review visit
<i>Wednesday 25 / Thurs 26 May</i>	<i>Investors in People review</i>
Thursday 26 May	Management Team workshop to prepare self-assessment draft using KLOE
Friday 17 June	Complete self assessment documentation and evidence gathering
Friday 1 July	Last date for sending self assessment information to review team members
Friday 8 July	Finalise visit programme with SOLACE Enterprises (Exmoor review being led by Ken Lloyd)
Week beginning 18 July	Review team visit – led by Ken Lloyd (SOLACE Enterprises) and with 1 local authority Chief Executive and 1 NPO, 1 member and 1 officer from other National Park Authorities
By Friday 5 August	Review team report
Week beginning 22 August	‘Round table’ meeting to review report findings and commence improvement planning process. Includes review team leader, auditors and Defra representative etc.