

## EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

27 APRIL 2004

### MEMBERS' REPORTS

**Purpose of Report:** To receive updates and reports on meetings and events attended by Members as representatives of the National Park Authority.

#### 1. **SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING 12 MARCH 2004 – Report from Arabella Amory**

##### 1.1 **RDA Monitoring**

1.1.1 The Regional Assembly has been given the responsibility by Government to scrutinise the work of the SW Regional Development Agency. At the meeting the SW RA Scrutiny Panel reported back on the role of the SW RDA in supporting Business Development in the Region. It also alerted Members to the Regional Strategic Review on Broadband Communications Technology.

1.1.2 The Panel identified a number of concerns:

- The need for a vision for business development in the SW
- The need for clearly articulated priorities supporting regional objectives and guiding business support organisations
- The need for SW RDA to co-ordinate delivery of business support

1.1.3 Further concerns were expressed by Members of the Assembly during the meeting:

- Need for more joined-up strategy to their business support through Business Link.
- More sub-regional partnerships needed to administer local delivery of Regional funds.
- Concern at the SW RDA's attitude to 'sustainable' development.
- The need to make funds more accessible.
- Maintain robust monitoring of the RDA and of GOSW.
- The report submitted by the SW RDA on its own performance is the same report as prepared for the DTI and did not address SW Regional priorities.
- In the future all reports needed clear Performance Indicators.

##### 1.2. **Broadband**

1.2.1 The Scrutiny Panel will be carrying out a review with a workshop on 22 April 2004. The Review will assess how infrastructure can be improved in the South West. A questionnaire has been sent to Assembly Members (including ENPA).

##### 1.3 **Regional Tourism Strategy**

1.3.1 We had a presentation from Malcolm Bell, Chief Executive of SW Tourism. This was to

draw our attention to the consultation document 'Towards 2015' which will shape '...a new strategic approach to develop a high quality sustainable tourism industry in South West England'. Exmoor is included in the Somerset sub-region for the purposes of destination management and promotion.

#### 1.4 **SW RA Environment Strategy**

1.4.1 This was introduced by Pat Hockey, Chair, and Mark Robins, Member, of the Environment Group. The Strategy sets out to: provide vision and aims for the environment in the future, identify pressures threatening the environment and identify key issues to be tackled. It will be launched in June of this year. The broad thrust of the document was endorsed by the RA, subject to one or two amendments mainly relating to urban environmental assets and better co-ordinating with neighbouring South East Region.

#### 1.5. **Genetically Modified Crops Production**

1.5.1 The Social, Economic and Environmental Partners (SEEPs) produced a paper on the social and economic impact of GM crops in the South West. The key issue is attempting to protect the strong brand image of the SW for quality food production based on local and organic sourcing. The possibility of cross-pollution within the food processing chain threatens this brand image and hence the Region's growing market, whether or not cross-pollution can be proved or disproved scientifically.

1.5.2 The purpose of this awareness raising within the Assembly is:

- To influence the RDA and other partners to take account of these issues in implementing Regional Strategies.
- To inform a debate within the Region on whether or not it should join those Regions of the EU which are declaring they will not accept further GM crop development pending further research and public acceptance.

1.5.3 The RA voted that the report be considered by the Regional Futures Group then brought back to the full Assembly. The Group should also consider the liability aspect of 'polluter pays'.

*If anyone would like any further information on the above reports, please contact Arabella Amory, Deputy Chairman of Exmoor National Park Authority.*