

7 June 2005

ITEM 3

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Resources Committee of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday, 7 June 2005 at 12.40 pm in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

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

Miss A Davis	Miss E I Stacey
Mr W J Dyke	Mr M J Pile
Mr J C Edwards	Mr M E Taylor
Miss A M Foxhuntley	Dr J F Travis
Mr M Gammon	

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

On the motion of Dr Travis, seconded by Mr Pile, Mr M A Collins was re-appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

On the motion of Mr Collins, seconded by Miss Davis, Mr R Morrison-Smith was re-appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

3. MINUTES

(1) Confirmation

The Minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 26 April 2005 were signed as correct.

(2) Matter Arising – Minute 32(2) – Budget for 2005/06

In response to comment about whether the other National Park Authorities had agreed a joint approach to Defra over future funding for access funding and its allocation, the National Park Officer reported that the matter had been discussed at the National Park Officers Group and the Yorkshire Dales NPA had prepared a paper, with a detailed set of proposals. However, the Group could not reach agreement over the proposals and, as a consequence, the matter had been referred back to Defra. That being the position, the National Park Officer had written directly to Defra to make a case for the same level of access funding for Exmoor. The Committee supported this course of action.

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4. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

5. **SOMERSET BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST – TITHE BARN, DUNSTER – LOAN GUARANTEE**

The report of the Chief Finance Officer recommended the Committee to agree that the Authority act as guarantor of a loan being taken out by the Somerset Building Preservation Trust in connection with the renovation of the Tithe Barn at Dunster, subject to a set of conditions to minimise the risk. Subsequent to the publication of the report, however, a letter had been received from the Somerset Building Preservation Trust requesting that the Authority act as guarantor of the loan for the Dunster Tithe Barn Trust which was managing the project.

Whilst the Chief Finance Officer had been prepared to recommend the original request as the Somerset Building Preservation Trust had a proven track record in building restoration projects, less was known about the Tithe Barn Trust and the risk in acting as guarantor was likely to be greater. However, if the Authority now decided not to act as guarantor, the project may not proceed.

Members felt that, before consent could be given, more information was needed about the Tithe Barn Trust and its standing with the building, the element of risk and whether it would be able to meet the Authority's conditions. In particular, it was suggested that details of its budgets and cash flows, and also the competence of its treasurer/finance officer, needed to be known.

The officers suggested that deferring a decision, pending the receipt of information from the Tithe Barn Trust, was not an option as the Trust was ready to proceed with the project having secured all of its necessary grants and planning permission. It was, therefore, **RESOLVED** to approve the principle of the Authority acting as guarantor for a loan for the Dunster Tithe Barn Trust in connection with the Tithe Barn's renovation, but to delegate the final decision to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Committee's Chairman, subject to his being satisfied with the information provided by the Trust and the level of risk being minimised, and the conditions set out in paragraph 1.4 of the report.

(The meeting closed at 1.05 pm)

Chairman