

ITEM 12

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 27 JUNE 2006

DEVELOPMENT OF EXMOOR HOUSE

Report of the Head of Business Management

Purpose of Report:

To seek the agreement of members to the carrying out of feasibility studies on the options for the development of Exmoor House.

Legal Implications including Human Rights Act 1998:

Environment Act 1995

Financial Implications:

Resource requirements to develop would have to be considered and incorporated into future spending plans.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Resources Committee AUTHORISES the National Park Officer to carry out feasibility studies and produce options for the future development of Exmoor House including entering into discussion with Somerset County Council and West Somerset District Council.

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1. Over the years many improvements and alterations have been made to Exmoor House, which is a Grade 2 listed building, often to meet legal obligations and requirements. Because of limitations of space it has been necessary to locate a number of staff above the National Park Centre (referred to as the Town Centre Offices) in Dulverton which is not an ideal working arrangement. Exmoor House is at full capacity and opportunities to improve the facilities for staff, members and members of the public further are extremely limited and difficult.
 2. There are a number of important issues surrounding Exmoor House and its facilities and services that have been raised from time to time including:
 - the need to improve the meeting accommodation for Authority and Committee meetings which meets the expectations of the public and members,
 - the provision of facilities for members,
 - the provision of some small meeting rooms where working groups could meet and where discussions could be held in private with members of the public who visit Exmoor House,
 - improved staff welfare facilities including first aid and other Health and Safety best practice,
 - additional office accommodation so that all staff can be based in the same location,
 - addressing the outdated heat and power sources through a renewable energy scheme linked to a carbon neutral objective.

3. The Red Cross have recently vacated the store where they kept their equipment and appliances which has provided an opportunity to re-organise the Authority's filing and archiving arrangements. The aspirations set out in 2 above cannot be fulfilled within the existing building and it is recommended that a review should be undertaken of current and future requirements. Members are therefore asked to authorise the National Park Officer to carry out feasibility studies and produce options for the future development of Exmoor House including entering into discussions with Somerset County Council and West Somerset District Council.

Charles Burrows
Head of Business Management
16 June 2006