

North York Moors National Park Authority Scrutiny Meeting

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on 13 July 2015.

Present:

Malcolm Bowes, David Chance, Ena Dent, Alison Fisher, Bryn Griffiths, David Hugill, Heather Moorhouse, Caroline Patmore, Clive Pearson, Ted Sanderson, Andrew Scott, Jeremy Walker.

Apologies:

Lesley Atkinson, Jim Bailey, Guy Coulson, Michael Dick, Janet Frank, Christopher Massey, Sarah Oswald

Officers in Attendance:

Andy Wilson (Chief Executive), Irene Brannon (Director of Corporate Services), Richard Gunton (Director of Park Services), David Renwick (Director of Conservation), Mark Hill (Head of Development Management), Vanessa Burgess (Committees Officer)

Copies of All Documents Considered Are In The Minute Book

01/15 In the absence of Jim Bailey, NPA Chair, Malcolm Bowes took the chair as NPA Deputy Chair

Malcolm Bowes welcomed Clive Pearson, newly appointed Authority Member for Scarborough BC. Mr Pearson replaces Herbert Tindall.

02/15 **Minutes**

Resolved:

That the public minutes of the meeting held on Monday 14 July 2014, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

03/15 **Members Interests**

Members were reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interests relating to any agenda item prior to its consideration.

04/15 **Review of 2014/15**

Considered:

The report of the Senior Management Team

Andy Wilson, Chief Executive gave members some background to Scrutiny meetings, informing members that the Authority considered that being open to scrutiny and comment was good practice and that the Authority was required by Standing Orders to do some form of Scrutiny once a year.

The Chief Executive informed members that it had been a tough year for the Authority re: workload and that this was due to major restructuring/downsizing within the organisation plus the huge amount of time and effort that had been given over to the York Potash Planning application. The Chief Executive continued by saying that last year the Authority was able to tap into more of members' knowledge and expertise and there was more joint working with members which greatly benefited the Authority. The Chief Executive thanked all members for their invaluable input.

Senior Officers made the following statements to members as a starting point for discussion:

Director of Corporate Services – Irene Brannon spoke of the huge challenges last year. With regard to the Business Plan, it had been challenging to act in a strategic role due to operational commitments.

Director of Conservation – David Renwick reminded members of the positive opportunity the TEL project offered and advised that the delivery phase would hopefully begin in October. However, this could add considerable workload pressures to staff in the Conservation dept. and in turn this could have an impact on other areas of work delivered.

Director of Park Services – Richard Gunton spoke similarly about the difficulties in 2014, major change, loss of colleagues and projects. He advised members that the aim now was to focus on priorities and concentrate on the work areas which make a difference and be clear about managing expectations.

Head of Development Management – Mark Hill informed members that the Planning dept had had a very hard year workwise, due to the Potash application, the Helmsley Plan and work related around Shale Gas. Mark Hill advised members that the Authority should know within approximately 6 weeks if the workload relating to Potash will slow a little or increase again. With regard to Local Plan work, members needed to decide the scale of this work required in future priority meetings. Workloads could also be reduced by relaxing some levels of enforcement work.

Malcolm Bowes, as Chair of Scrutiny, made the following comments:

- Hard for members to fully understand the pressures and time staff had spent on the Potash application, well done to all for getting through it.
- Time of huge change, which has affected ways of working and staff morale.
- Members had commented as part of their appraisals, how well Authority staff had coped with the recent organisational change and the good level of work achieved despite the changes. Well done to all.

Members' discussions centred round the following:

- The TEL project and why the project included Kildale, but hadn't been extended to include areas such as Great Ayton or the Captain Cook Monument?
- More information as to why the business plan was extended for one year, rather than a full review.
- Further Potash work, implications for Officers time commitment/work involved.
- Areas of work where the Authority members could possibly help more?
- Potash consultants, what kind of specialism would be required, for how long and at what cost to the Authority?
- Possible member working group re: Potash
- Future for NYMNPA, the needs of the mining industry would have to be taken into consideration.
- Need to update the Local Plan, becoming increasingly urgent. Policy framework used in Planning Committee rather dated.
- Role of/special nature of the NP's, the need for more joint working.
- Promoting the NP, members need more information on the bigger picture

David Renwick, Director of Conservation informed members that the TEL project was limited by area, landscape character. Also the TEL project didn't want to impinge on the River Leven Landscape Partnership work.

The Director of Corporate Services advised members that a decision had been made in December 2014 to just extend the current Business Plan for a further 12 months. The Authority had intended to do a full review, but due to the uncertainties surrounding the financial situation officers had decided to just extend the existing plan. It gave the Authority an opportunity to step back and think about a new Business Plan, making sure it was fit for purpose.

The Chief Executive advised members that the Authority was currently interviewing for a Consultant to help with future Potash work if it goes ahead so there would be fewer demands on staff time. The Authority needed to appoint someone quickly, so was currently seeing individuals suggested by other National Parks and Specialist Consultants found via desk research. If the current Potash situation led to a judicial review or the application was called in by the Government, there would be further cost/time implications for the Authority, so there was a need for the Authority to try and secure some level of financial support to help with any additional costs. It was hoped however, that the 106 would help cover costs as well.

Mark Hill, Head of Development Management advised members that if the Government called the Potash application in, then it was up to the Authority to decide how to fund. If the application went to a Judicial Review but failed, then the Authority would have to go through the whole application process again. Mark informed the members that the Authority needed a specialist with a good technical knowledge of mining to assist with future applications and to police planning approvals.

The Director of Corporate Services, Irene Brannon advised members that this complex work required immediate support and had highlighted that this could result in potential procurement issues and therefore suggested, as an item of Other Business, that members agree to suspend Standing Orders delegating power to the Chief Executive to negotiate appropriate arrangements to provide specialist support to satisfy this short term need. She advised members that there was flexibility in the budget to support this.

Discussion followed around a number of issues relating to planning. Officers needed to understand the priorities members have in relation to future planning issues, so the Authority can prioritise workload and resources. It was suggested that an officer/member event be arranged at some suitable point in the future to discuss these issues further.

Action: Senior Officers to arrange an opportunity for continued discussion.

Referring to member comments regarding the role of/special nature of NP's, the Chief Executive told members that he did feel that NP's had lost sight of the bigger picture as most were spending time and energy looking at commercial sponsorship.

David Renwick, Director of Conservation informed members about a new publication 'so much more than the view' produced by AONB's and NP's.

Action: Vanessa Burgess to e-mail members a link to the document.

Discussion followed on the Local Plan and also affordable housing.

In relation to NPPF, the Local Plan and local market housing, the Chief Executive asked members to consider what things were critical to look at.

Mark Hill informed members that the current plan dated 2008, was actually written back in 2003, so some of the Authority policies were now at odds with some of the Plan's content. Systems had been streamlined. A Local Plan usually took approximately 5 years to complete, but Mark Hill informed members that it might be possible to complete the work in approximately 3 years.

Members were supportive of the idea of a working group in relation to 106/Potash and also maybe a discussion on NPPF with Chris France, Director of Planning either as part of a discussion at Planning Committee or at a separate event.

<p>Resolved: Members commented on the review of 2014/15 and discussed the issues raised for the future.</p>
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05/15 **Other Business**

The Chair ruled that the following item could be considered as a matter of urgency:

Members resolve to suspend standing orders in relation to this item and delegate to the Chief Executive the power to negotiate appropriate arrangements to provide specialist support in relation to work to complete the York Potash application to the decision notice stage.

<p>Resolved: Members agreed to the suspension of standing orders, delegating power to the Chief Executive to negotiate appropriate arrangements to provide specialist support in relation to work to complete the York Potash application to the decision notice stage.</p>
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Malcolm Bowes as Chair of the Scrutiny meeting thanked everyone for their attendance and commented on the good discussions around the table.