

North York Moors National Park Authority Meeting

Public Minutes of the meeting held at The Old Vicarage, Helmsley on Monday 30 July 2018.

Present:

Leslie Atkinson, Jim Bailey, Malcolm Bowes, Janet Frank, Christopher Massey, Heather Moorhouse, Sarah Oswald, Caroline Patmore, Clive Pearson, Ted Sanderson, Andrew Scott, Jeremy Walker, Andy Breckon (Independent Member)

Apologies:

Ena Dent, Michael Dick, Guy Coulson, Alison Fisher, David Hugill, David Jeffels, Stuart Parsons,

Officers in Attendance:

Andy Wilson (Chief Executive), Briony Fox (Director of Polyhalite Projects/Acting Director of Conservation), Simon Baum (ICT Manager), Richard Gunton (Director of Park Services), Chris France (Director of Planning), Michael Graham (Assistant Director of Park Services, Karen Iveson (s151 Officer), Peter Williams (Head of Finance), Matthew Moore (Audit Manager), Debbie Trafford (Head of Recreation and Ranger Services), Sandra Strickland (Accountant), Jo Swiers (Performance Officer), Vicky Taylor (Administrative Assistant).

01/18 **Members' Interests**

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

02/18 **Letter of Representation and External Audit Report**

Considered:

The report of KPMG Auditors

Mathew Moore informed Members that there was nothing extra to the audit standards to report. Members asked why the External Audit document was incomplete. Mathew explained it was due to the pressure of the new shorter timetable and increased requirements from the Government regarding pension assets etc. adding to workloads. He added that there were no issues, stressing the full report would be with us by 31 July 2018 and congratulating the Authority on meeting the deadline. A short discussion took place on the way related party transactions were dealt with suggesting a sample test.

<p>Resolved: The Letter of Representation and External Audit Report were signed off.</p>

03/18 **Statement of Final Accounts 201718**

Considered:

The report of the s151 Officer
Karen Iveson gave a presentation highlighting the challenging timetable which was met by the end of May.

The Authority broke even this which is a good achievement. Jeremy Walker congratulated Karen Iveson and team for completing the close down on time. He also observed it had been a balanced year with expenditure down due to grant schemes. Members also commented on the challenges associated with core and project related staffing costs. There was also a conversation about how the narrative reads in layman's terms, it was agreed that Karen would add a note to page 70 emphasising the difference between reserves, that are useable and those that are not.

Action Point: KI to add note, categorising reserves

Andy Wilson thanked both the Authority's and NYCC's Finance teams.

<p>Resolved: Members approved the Statement of Final Accounts for the financial year end 31 March 2018.</p>
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04/18 **Progress towards Targets and Desired Direction of Change in the National Park (Verbal Presentation by Directors)**

Considered:

The report of the Chief Executive and the Performance Consultant

Each Director, Simon Baum, ICT Manager stood in for Ian Nicholls, Head of Corporate Services, gave a brief presentation highlighting key achievements, main challenges and looking ahead to the coming year.

Jo Swiers, Performance Consultant gave a brief overview explaining what targets mean to the Management Plan pointing out that not all targets could be met due to other organisations involvement and those targets with a target date of 2017 need looking at and potentially reset. Members made the point we should be careful of the extent to which we scrutinise and accept there are some factors we can't influence and asked what are we going to do about out of date statistics. Jo explained the Management Plan is refreshed every 5 years while our Business Plan targets could be looked at as necessary.

Andy Wilson mentioned it was difficult to know how some of the environmental targets were performing as DEFRA/its agencies no longer collected some of the key figures. Social indicators are good with some exceptions; we need to work closer with Natural England and partners. Members spoke of the recent funding good news story concerning broadband in the National Park.

Conservation – Briony Fox, Director of Polyhalite, on behalf of David Shaw, Director of Conservation highlighted the following

- PAWs is going well although it will be challenging getting landowners on board in the future
- River Esk funding has now finished and we need to look at how we keep up with the progress achieved.
- Some woodland creation schemes are suffering from a lack of take up – one reason put forward is the relatively complex application process. We need to look at this, working with partners to progress.
- There is still a lot of work to do for Ryevitalise prior to submission. More work is being undertaken on the funding streams and opportunities for additional in kind support for example, through volunteering is being investigated.
- A Member pointed out the excellent work on monuments.

A Member asked about negotiating deals after Brexit stating the issues with modern farming and its effect on conservation of land. Briony reported on the work the Authority is doing in collaboration with other National Parks on future farm schemes and spoke of learning from previous farm schemes, one suggestion is 'payment by result'.

The Chair told of Lord Gardiner's visit, which has been positive and complimentary.

There was further discussion surrounding setbacks with the Ryevitalise Project, recognising issues with documentation and staffing. The HLF meeting had gone well and there is a plan in place. Officers are confident that the submission deadline can be met.

Andy Wilson mentioned liaising with CNP over their recent press release on wildlife in National Parks and pointed to inaccuracies in terms of reporting the NPA's plans and misleading use of statistics.

Park Services – Richard Gunton, Director of Park Services highlighted the following:

Delivery against almost all Business Plan actions and targets is progressing very well, particularly against the two strategic priorities

- The Education Team and Youth Engagement Team are exceeding all targets. , For the first time over 18,000 Education contacts had been achieved.
- The new Youth Engagement Officer had achieved over 1300 contacts in the first year which is well ahead of target.
- The Explorer Club was going from strength to strength and now had a waiting list. The outcome of a bid to HLF to expand the initiative is awaited.
- A huge amount of work is underway delivering tourism and promotion aspirations and all performance targets in this area are being met or exceeded.
- RoW indicators currently show that the quality of the network is being maintained. However, changes to ways of working, resourcing and staffing will have a longer term impact. This is considered in more detail in a separate report.
- One area where Business Plan targets are not being achieved is increasing access for all. The target of providing 5km of additional disabled access is not as clear as it should be.. It was agreed that a clearer, stretching target should be agreed, with full input from the National Parks Disability Advisory Group. These issues have been highlighted and discussed at both DAG and ARB Forum. A report on this subject will be brought to a future meeting
- Delivery of the Volunteer Strategy was now strong. Volunteers are now helping in a growing number of ways, including Planning and IT and a growing number of Volunteer leaders were being trained.
- The proposal to measure regional awareness has been delayed pending the completion of the Communications Strategy and receipt of the first year's greatly enhanced monitoring of visitors and the tourism economy via the Section 106 agreement. A report with recommendations as to how this can best be measured will be brought to a future
- A current and future challenge will be delivering aspirations relating to core work (rights of way, visitor centres, alongside a growing project based workload

A Member commented on the excellent work happening. Asked about the difficulty of balancing core and project work and the possibility of recovering core costs within project funding, Richard said that part of the answer would be to prioritise applications to funds that allow core costs to be included in the bid and be thorough in including sufficient staff costs to ensure delivery without unsustainable disruption to core activity.

Polyhalite – Briony Fox, Director of Polyhalite highlighted the following:

- This is a new project with its own delivery action plan. Targets don't necessarily apply to the Business and Management Plans.
- A constructive working relationship with Sirius.
- The s106 woodland scheme had better take up than other woodland creation schemes such as Stewardship. The Core Policy D planting is long term and ambitious and the authority needs to be planning ahead to ensure that targets can be met in the future. A lot of hectares needed to be planted making the long term identification of the management of woodland creation sites something to be aware of.
- There would be bigger time constraints on the team as the project progressed.

A Member asked about the risks to the funding and how risk is managed. Briony informed members about the security arrangements in place through the s106 and that money for long term arrangements such as woodland creation did not commit the Authority beyond the security in place.

A paper would follow in the autumn to explain to members how the woodland creation funding has been applied to date and how good value for money is ensured. It will also look at a framework for the future that builds in flexibility to the woodland creation programme. This is necessary to ensure our long term targets are achieved.

Planning – Chris France, Director of Planning highlighted the following:

- Local Plan was out to consultation with drop in sessions organised at various villages.
- Minerals & Waste Joint Plan had been a long and time consuming process but was now almost at completion with the end of the Public Examination. Now awaiting the Inspector's judgement on whether the Hearing needs to be re-opened in the light of recent Ministerial Written Statement on Shale Gas..
- Pleased to have 6 out of 8 Conservation Areas Appraisals completed.
- The government changes to the planning system have placed extra demands on staff.
- Impact on effectiveness of Enforcement and reduced income from cessation of Enforcement Cost Recovery Scheme had caused a small income 'hole' with cases going up.
- National Challenges arising from changes to policy & regulations – NPPF, White Paper etc. There was some discussion as to why the wording 'Highest Status of Protection' was dropped from the paper, it had apparently been due to 'too many words', it has now been re-instated.
- There will be some pre-application meetings with Boulby Mine prior to an application expected in 2020. A Member asked for further details, Chris explained their Planning Permission expires in just over 4 years' time, an application would most likely cover mining only polyhalite. All mining would be under the North Sea.

Members asked about the roll out of telecommunications/BB development and Emergency Services Network and additional 4G coverage. Chris explained it was a complicated process with masts being upgraded as opposed to replaced where possible. Out of 9 new sites needed all but 2 were good and these could be negotiated. Airwave are currently upgrading their masts. He added Planning were receiving lots of applications for smart metres providing further issues.

Broadband was discussed, cover is getting better with BT putting some extra money where there are issues

Corporate Services – Simon Baum, ICT Manager highlighted the following:

- Corporate Services has a hand in all things achieved by the Authority, adding pressure to core services.
- Absence/departure of key staff has resulted in delays to reviewing Finance system to better meet users' needs, facilitate decision making. Members discussed the significant changes within the Finance team asking if we need more core resources. Andy Wilson replied that the collaboration was working well, but there was need to manage any future issues and look at a more flexible approach to working.

The Chair said the work of core staff didn't go unnoticed and gave thanks to the Corporate Team

Resolved: Members reviewed and commented on the attached document which provides information progress against 40 targets in the National Park Management Plan, and an overview of performance of a number of organisations.

Janet Frank, Christopher Massey left at 12.00
Sarah Oswald, left at 12.40

05/18 **Rights of Way Programme Review**

Considered:

The report of the Head of Recreation and Ranger Services and the Performance Consultant

Jo Swiers, Performance Officer gave Members a brief introduction. Each year Members will choose a topic they wish take an in depth look at. This year it's the Rights of Way Programme Review. Jo explained it was one of the Authority's biggest expenditures and a lot of work had been done by Debbie Trafford, Richard Gunton, Andy Wilson and Alan Hume (Debbie's Yorkshire Dales National Park equivalent) who was able to share the YDNP experiences.

Debbie Trafford gave some key points to give everyone a better understanding regarding the delivery of the RoW and the work carried out by the Ranger Service.

Overall it is a healthy picture and the Ranger Service are doing a good job, maintaining high standards; however there are some 'pinch points'. Our rangers are extremely busy and have a wide range of responsibilities to carry out across a large geographical area. Additionally, the demands of external projects are pulling rangers away from their core roles. Charging for staff time does not solve the problem.

The Ranger Service is at 'peak volunteer'. We do a vast amount of good work with volunteers, but it requires time and effort to organise and we have no capacity for increased volunteer numbers. . We are not statutorily responsible for Rights of Way; this lies with the County Council/R&CBC but we elect to use part of our Defra grant to carry out maintenance and improvements of the Rights of Way network. Debbie explained we have an excellent working relationship with NYCC but they are under resourced to cover the whole of North Yorkshire..

Ted Sanderson asked why a RoW near him wasn't maintained, Debbie explained it was NYCC's responsibility and would talk to NYCC on his behalf.

A brief discussion took place surrounding car parks and their management. DT said recommended a review of car park management as it is a major source of income for the NP.

Debbie talked through the 13 recommendations and discussions took place around each recommendation. Weekend working will be addressed by a report to be written in September. The recommendations were all agreed by members.

Action Point: DT to follow up RoW issue with NYCC

Action Point: DT to include information on weekend/seasonal staff in report to next report to NPA

Resolved: Members reviewed and commented on the attached report.

6/18 **Other Business**

The Chair ruled that the following items could be considered as a matter of urgency, in order;

Andy Wilson mentioned National Park Review dates were 13, 14 September.

The Chair spoke of the UK National Parks Charity proposal, stating some National Parks seemed prepared to go along with it without those that hadn't agreed to it. Further talks required.

A copy of all presentations can be found in the relevant e-file

.....(Chair)
1 October 2018