

North York Moors National Park Authority

24 September 2012

Authority Forums

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the Authority's existing and new forums and receive feedback from Members on Officers' ideas and recommendations.

2. Background

2.1 Parish Forums

- 2.2 In 1994 the National Park established Parish Forums, and, meeting four times per year, these became a regular and important opportunity for the Authority to liaise with Parish Councillors within the Park.

- 2.2 Parish Forums have been popular and enjoyed a great deal of success over the years and many key topics have been debated at this local level. Parish Councillors have valued the opportunity to speak with Members and Officers, Officers have found the forums both useful as a networking tool and in the chance that this gives them to get a good understanding of issues as a 'grass roots' level. Having the Chief Executive and/or Chairman of the Authority attending the meetings together with other Members and staff and being accessible is of huge benefit.

- 2.3 When Members were discussing the committee structure at the Evening Seminar last year, they asked Officers to consider how the Parish Forum could be refreshed and reinvigorated without losing their current strengths.

3. Current Situation and Proposals

- 3.1 Successful and popular though the forums have been, the last couple of years have seen attendance fluctuate depending on agenda items. Both the National Park Management Plan and Business Plan highlight the need for more community involvement in achieving priorities, with the Business Plan stating that 'Parish Forums will be strengthened and publicised as open to the public in association with Parish Councils'.

- 3.2 Increasingly the agenda is pulled together by Officers with Parish Councils asking questions (sent in advance) to be answered as the meeting. It is expected that in the future the Convenor will take a more proactive role and discuss the agenda with the Chair and Parish Member of the forum. It is anticipated that future agendas will include a speaker, National Park item of interest and local issues.

- 3.3 Publicity for each round of meetings is by way of a poster sent to the Parish Clerks with parishes within the relevant forum area, requesting that it be put on the parish notice board. Agendas are sent out two weeks before the meeting, again to the clerks. Dates of meetings are given in Moors Messenger in a low profile manner.

- 3.4 Officers' initial ideas for re-invigorating the Parish Forums and making it clearer these are public meetings include:
- Setting all dates and venues for the forthcoming year and publicising these on the Authority's website and on the front page of each November issue of the Moors Messenger.
 - Liaising with the local newspapers – Whitby Gazette, Scarborough Evening News, Ryedale Mercury, Malton Gazette and Herald and the Darlington and Stockton Times to publish dates of meetings.
 - Make contact with Parish Clerks, especially clerks whose councillors do not regularly attend the forums and discuss why this is and how we can get councillors to attend.
 - A guest speaker to attend all the forum to speak on a specific topic.
- 3.5 It is proposed that in the future forums will be asked to give their views on local spending priorities for two of the Authority's grant schemes thereby giving residents of the park a voice in how money in their area is spent. (see Conservation Grants paper).
- 3.6 The Convenor of the Forum will be a Director from the Authority, presently Director of Corporate Services (Northern Area Parish Forum), Director of Planning (Southern Area Parish Forum), Director of Park Services (Western Area Parish Forum) and Director of Conservation (Coastal Area Parish Forum). Members of the Authority are assigned a Parish Forum to attend and it is not envisaged that this would change.
- 3.7 Parish Members attend their relevant Parish Forum and update the forum on matters facing the Authority at the current time. As previously discussed, it is recommended in the future that these Members then feedback to the next Authority meeting on issues arising from the forum.
- 3.8 An item for Members' consideration is whether District/Borough Councillors, County Councillors with wards within the Park should be invited to attend the forums, Officers would welcome views from Members on this (some attend at present as Parish Councillors but are not invited in their wider role).
- 3.9 Views from Members are also sought as to whether three rounds of Parish Forum meetings a year would be required, as well as a Community and Joint Parish Forum.
4. **Joint Parish Forum**
- 4.1 The Joint Parish Forum meets on an annual basis within/adjacent to the Park. All Parish Councillors and Members are invited to attend and these events have proved to be very popular. Officers are therefore not recommending any changes to their format.
5. **Community Forum**
- 5.1 Within the Business Plan an annual community forum has been proposed, this is in addition to the Parish Forums and the Joint Parish Forum.
- 5.2 It is expected that the first forum will be held **as a trial** in Spring 2013 **in conjunction with the Parishes**. It is envisaged that this forum would reach out to all residents within the Park including making contact and engaging with various groups/clubs that do not regularly get involved with the Parish Forums. The aim would be to encourage participation in public life, especially Parish Councils. Groups including Young Farmers, Scouts, Guides, Country Women Association, youth clubs, sports and social clubs, small business owners could be invited.

It is anticipated that Officers will work with that the Parish Clerks who will be able to help pull together a list of groups that meet within their parish.

5.3 The agenda for these meetings will include a popular speaker, items of National Park interest and a session on promoting civic engagement.

5.4 Members' views are sought on the outline proposals for a Community Forum detailed above. Any repeat of the Forum would obviously depend on the success or otherwise of the first.

6. **Authority Forums**

6.1 As agreed by Members in December 2011, two new forums have been formed to replace the Access and Information Committee and the Conservation Committee, namely the 'Awareness, Recreation and Business Forum' and 'Conservation and Land Management Forum'. Members were appointed to these forums at the AGM in June this year. The forums will be organised by the Director of Park Services and the Director of Conservation respectively. The Forums will allow Members, informed by external advice, to influence future activity. They will provide an occasion to explain to others what the Authority does. They will be able to scrutinise current activity, and, via site visits, involve Members in the operational details of officers' work.

6.2 The Forums will generally be held with a morning start at 10am, but this may change depending on the subject matter and the people to be invited. It is expected that many meetings will require a site visit to be made to enable discussions to take place on the ground and provide visual assistance. Meetings may be held in a location close to and convenient for the site rather than the Authority's committee room.

6.3 For the first meeting of each of the forums, the relevant Director has set the subject and decided whom should be invited, but in the future Members will decide the topics and the external representatives (agreed maximum of 12). It is anticipated that there will be some semi-permanent external Forum Members. The North York Moors Local Access Forum will only hold two meetings a year and it is anticipated that some of its existing Members will be on the new, wider Forum.

6.4 Paperwork for the forums will be deliberately light and consist of an agenda front page showing how the meeting will be run. On some occasions there will be no additional paperwork. Note taking will be undertaken by an officer. No formal minutes will be done and action notes of the meeting are limited to one sheet of A4.

6.5 The dates and topics for the first meeting of the two forums has been determined as follows:

- Awareness, Recreation and Business Forum to be held on the 8 October, subjects to be 'Promoting the National Park' and 'Helping target groups access the National Park, post Moorsbus'.
- Conservation and Land Management Forum to be held on the 28 November, subject 'Planted Ancient Woodland Sites'.

6.6 Members of each forum will need to meet in advance of their forum to decide upon a Chair and Lead Member (who should be one and the same).

7. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

7.1 There are no financial or staffing implications.

8. Sustainability Appraisal

8.1 A Sustainability Assessment is not required because the report is an administrative Issues report.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 There are no legal implications.

10. Recommendation

10.1 That Members:

10.2 Views on proposals for the parish forums and the new community forum are sought;

10.3 Comment specifically on whether District/Borough Councillors and County Councillors should be invited to attend the Parish Forums.

10.4 Views on the two new Authority forums be sought.

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Background papers to this Report

File ref

1.