

**North York Moors National Park Authority  
Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee**

**3 February 2014**

**Information Communications Technology Update**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update Members on work currently being carried out to support and develop the Authority's Information Communications Technology.

**2. EGG Group Annual Meeting**

- 2.1 The NPAs' annual e-Governance Group meeting was held in late November. This is the annual meeting to discuss the key issues over the last year and the budgets and plans for the following year.

- 2.2 It was decided that the annual full membership should remain the same.

- 2.3 There have been a number of service issues with the company that provides our online web mapping (One Bright Space) and agreement was made to look for alternative companies to provide support for the existing system.

- 2.4 Warranty on the Portal owned hardware is coming to an end in October 2014 so we are going to look to review the way we currently host the Portal infrastructure and look at the next steps forward.

- 2.5 There have been a couple of changes to membership of the Portal with the New Forest dropping from full members down to associate and the Broads are expected to become full members in April 2014.

- 2.6 It was recognised in the meeting the good work Sandra Kennish (NYMNP GIS Officer) had done in getting the shared Portal infrastructure and systems in place for INSPIRE compliance for all the National Parks.

**3.0 NYMNP website Refresh**

- 3.1 In October last year it was decided to refresh the main website, so the design will change but the content will all still be there it just might be in slightly different place and have a different look. There were two main drivers for the decision to refresh the design these were:-

4.1.1 We felt the visiting section needed an updated look and feel to be more engaging and inspiring.

4.1.2 Since the last redesign the statistics for our site have shown a steady increase in page views coming from tablets and smartphones.

- 3.2 Since this decision was made a small working group has worked together along with the project stakeholder (Director of Park Services) to analyse how our current website is viewed, research other websites, and engage our users to comment on what works and what doesn't on the current site. The refresh has been designed around how users interact with our current website rather than how we think they should interact.

3.3 In mid November we chose Reading Room to be the company to refresh the design, since then we have had a number of meetings with them to agree mood boards, discuss design concepts and website navigation.

3.4 The go live date for the design refresh is 17<sup>th</sup> of April and as you can appreciate this is a very tight timescale to deliver to.

#### 4. **Cost of Production of Member Committee Papers**

4.1 Officers have been considering the issues involved in determining the best balance between using electronic and paper mechanisms for producing and distributing committee papers to Members, officers and the wider public. This is in the context of having achieved a commendably low cost IT cost per head of staff.

4.2 The current intent of this work in relation to Members is to:

- Ensure that information is communicated to Members in the most effective way so that it is read and absorbed.
- To ensure that the Authority is not open to legal action or reputational damage and complaints as a result of the systems of communications that it uses
- Reduce the cost of the system as far as possible compatible with the previous bullet points and taking staff time fully into account.
- Provide a system Members' as a whole find most convenient.

4.3 The process of transition from a paper based to an electronic based system of production and distribution has been underway for some time. Officers are of one mind that at some point in the future the Authority will rely much more heavily on electronic means of communication than it does at present. In assessing the next steps forward officers are keen to avoid the situation where significant dual systems are run since this could readily produce a situation where costs are increased rather than reduced.

4.4 It is suggested that the following factors need to be taken in to account in deciding the next steps forward.

- The inability with current budgets to provide either hardware for Members' IT use or support for the use of Members' own equipment in their homes.
- The desire not to be seen to be far behind in introducing new technology
- The limitations of mobile and broadband connections in some of the locations where Members live
- The fact that some Members do not at present have broadband connections and do not desire these
- The possibility that in at least some instances electronic communications will be less well read than paper ones
- The need to protect the Authority from complaint and legal challenge arising from a perception or reality that Members have not read the information which they needed to have read to make a sound decision
- The need to deal with issues such as confidentiality of certain communications in an effective but not too time consuming fashion

4.5 It is possible to foresee a point in the not too distant future when all its Members would naturally assume that the Authority would be communicating with them electronically and would be happy for their own private broadband connections and laptops/tablets to be used for this purpose. Officers wish to float the idea with Members that it might be advisable to agree some point in the future when it was expected that this point would be reached.

If agreed, potential Members could in the future be alerted in advance to this. This would allow planning for a fundamental switchover from a primarily paper to an almost entirely electronic system of communication (“almost entirely” because it is envisaged that some of the most confidential documents will continue to be distributed in hard copy).

- 4.6 The savings to be made from reduced paper, postage and printing costs and the staff time associated with these would not be realised until this point but costs of running two systems would have been avoided. The sums involved are small. The saving on printing and postage would only be in the region of £2,500 annually (staff time figure not available but it is not great).
- 4.7 Members will be aware that introducing electronic distribution is *not* cost free. It has the capacity to cost more in IT staff time, certainly in development time than it saves in printing and postage unless an effective and uniform system is introduced to a willing group of recipients..
- 4.8 In the immediate future, it is possible to offer the following service to Members who wish to receive committee papers electronically. Committee papers can be put in to pdfs and emailed to any Member who requests this. They would then be removed from the paper circulation list. The pdf will be subject to a password and will have a maximum size of 20mb. This is an internal and external size limit for emails and will mean multiple pdfs and emails would be required for large agendas. It is hoped that this system could be introduced by the end of this March 2014.

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. **Recommendation**

- 6.1 That the work being carried out to support and develop the Authority’s ICT be noted.
- 6.2 Members give initial views on electronic delivery of agenda papers.

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