

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 5 December 2014

Present: Mr Barker, Mr Harper (Chairman), Mr P Hitchins, Mr J Hockridge, Mr M Jeffery, Mr J Kidner, Mr D Lloyd, Mr J McInnes, Dr I Mortimer, Miss D Moyse, Mr J Nutley, Mrs N Oakley, Mr M Retallick (Deputy Chairman), Mr P Sanders, Mr Shears, Mr P Vogel, Mr D Webber

Apologies: Mr Ball, Mr Gribble

3031 Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 5 September 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2014, were signed as a correct record.

3032 Declarations of Interest

Mr Nutley declared a personal interest in the matter to be raised under public participation by reason of previous contact.

3033 Public Participation

Due to late running of the Authority meeting it was agreed to bring forward the public participation ahead of the Chairman's report.

Speaker: Kathryn Hughes

Ms Hughes referred members to the documentation she had previously submitted including a complaint letter to European Commission from Totnes Town Council and a letter to Dartmoor National Park Authority from Buckfast Community Forum of which Ms Hughes is a Member.

Ms Hughes informed Members that Buckfast Community Forum wish the Authority to discuss the matter with a view to the Authority agreeing to send a letter of support to the European Commission into alleged breaches of evidence regarding the Devon County Council planning decision for Planning Application 2013/03520/COU submitted by Gilpin Demolition Group Limited in relation to Whitecleave Quarry, Buckfastleigh.

Totnes Town Council's letter of complaint to the European Commission states that the decision of Devon County Council is an infringement of the EU Habitats Directive Articles 6 and 12 and that conditions of a previous planning permission appear to have been breached.

Buckfastleigh Community Forum very much support Totnes Town Council's position on this matter. Ms Hughes confirmed Buckfast Community Forum have approached Dartmoor National Park Authority, as the South Hams SAC ('Special Area of Conservation'), composed of 5 interconnected SSSIs ('Site of Special Scientific Interest') with significant Greater Horseshoe Bat maternity roost;

Signed

Date 9/1/15

located over 5 local authority areas in South Devon, of which Dartmoor National Park is one such authority.

This SAC provides a protected habitat for the Long Eared Bat and as such is an important flyway and sustenance area for this species. The Greater Horseshoe Bat, a protected species, is known to use the quarry site.

Ms Hughes reported that it is an internationally important site and the bats are susceptible to disturbance.

Ms Hughes asked the Authority to support Totnes Council in writing to the European Commission.

The Chairman stated that the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) will respond within 14 days.

3034 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that the Business Forum held on Wednesday 3 December was very well attended by local small businesses and in fact was oversubscribed. He thanked those that had attended and the presenters.

He also advised Members of the National Park Forum where the issue of Members attendance at Parish Council meetings was raised. The importance of Member (as well as staff) engagement with Parish/Town Councils was noted, as was the need for District/Borough Council members.

The Park Protector Awards took place at Princetown. The Chairman also reported to Members about the Visit Devon Tourism Awards where National Park Visitor Centres won Gold Award for 'Tourist Information Service of the Year' 2014

The Chairman has also attended the National AONB meeting and the Dartmoor Steering Group – where a robust argument was put forward to Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding Holming Beam Hut.

He reminded Members that the Junior Rangers launch is taking place tomorrow (Saturday 6 December).

Members asked for their congratulations to be passed on the Visitor Centre management and team, for their commitment and enthusiasm. Also to congratulate the Retail officer on how well the new 'Dartmoor Range' of goods is selling.

Members need to make it clear, when attending a Parish/Borough Council Meeting that they are also there as a representative of Dartmoor National Park Authority.

It was expressed by Members that Parish Councils may need reminding if they have any concerns, they are free to contact Members at any time.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) confirmed he will recirculate the list of Parish Link Members.

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Members expressed their congratulations to Head Ranger and his team in achieving Community Safety Accreditation Training.

3035 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer), reported that following the consultation of the National Park Authorities regarding Section 106 planning obligations, the Government has announced that a lower threshold will be introduced in National Parks.

The Director of Planning confirmed this is on the agenda for the Planning Panel meeting on 12 December 2014.

3036 Charging for Pre-Application Advice

Members received the report of the Director of Planning (NPA/14/047)

The public consultation is complete and the comments received have been assessed. The overall response is general acceptance. Applicants do not mind paying for advice as long as it is quality advice and it is timely.

A Member was not in agreement and felt extra charges on top of planning fees are not reasonable and it may discourage business, and therefore jobs, into the National Park.

The Director of Planning confirmed that in terms of equity and fairness, if applicants do not seek advice, the Authority is not seeking to use this reason as a reason for refusal.

A Member raised the fact that the pre-planning advice as part of the Hill Farm Project was a good way of engaging with farmers.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) confirmed that drop in sessions for specified audiences would still be possible.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed to adopt the proposed charging scheme for pre-application advice with such charges to be introduced from 1 April 2015.

3037 National Park Enterprises Limited

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/14/048)

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) reported that the Authority has already suffered cuts and by the end of this Parliament will have seen a real terms reduction in its income of over 40%. What was originally forecast a six year squeeze by the Government on public sector spending will now be minimum eight year squeeze.

The government is encouraging National Park Authorities (NPAs) in England to look at other sources of income including commercial sponsorship/income from business.

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Date 9.11.15

Recognising the collective value of the National Park brand, the Chairs of the UK NPAs asked officers to develop proposals for a 'delivery vehicle' to take forward this agenda and develop the 'Britain's Breathing Spaces/National Park brand' for the collective benefit of all 15 NPAs across the UK.

It is proposed to create a standalone company, limited by guarantee, to be known as National Park Enterprises Limited. The members of the company (equivalent to shareholders) will be the 15 NPAs in England, Wales and Scotland. Any monies will be shared equally between all 15 NPAs.

It is proposed that the company will have up to 7 Directors, 4 to be appointed from members of NPAs (but not necessarily NPA Chairs). A further 3 Directors are to be appointed as "independent" Directors appointed for their knowledge, skills, experience and connections with a view to bringing expertise into the company. The mechanism for appointment for these Directors is not yet settled.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) reported that the venture is not without risks. He confirmed that the Authority has put £10,000 matched by all the other National Parks towards the costs of establishing and operating the new company in 2014/15 with another £10,000 per National Park to be allocated in the respective Medium Term Financial Plans.

If income received from the current commercial sponsorship arrangement with Reckitt Benckiser is factored into the equation then the net cost to the Authority in 2014/15 will be £4,000 (Dartmoor National Park Authority is to receive a minimum of £6,000 from the Airwick sponsorship programme in 2014/15).

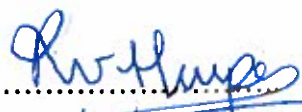
Members expressed concerns about the need for active oversight of financial implications and the lack of a business plan.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised Members that there were still a number of decisions to be made. For example, no agreement has yet been reached on how Directors are to be appointed; it will be for the company to decide. He confirmed the company will exist as a separate entity. It will be the company who decides on potential sponsors and these mechanisms are not yet written. Whilst there remain concerns about the company and how it has come together, in his view the risks in taking the proposal forward are acceptable.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) reported that the company could provide a good revenue stream, but there is an initial investment in time and money for this to work. The indications are that the company would break even and move into profit by Year 2. The Chairman has to vote this month whether the Authority wishes to be a part of this company or not.

The National Parks Foundation in the USA is a potential model for the new company: it is the official charity of America's National parks and has commercial partners ranging from Google to Disney (www.nationalparks.org).

A Member expressed reservations, feeling the American National Parks example is not a good one. The Member felt it would be better to have a partnership with Exmoor.

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The liability for the Authority is capped at £1 and our financial contribution is an initial £10,000 with the potential for an additional £10,000 subject to business case.

A Member asked how the remuneration would be determined for Executive Directors and stated that 'not for profit' does not mean does not pay tax and that tax advice should be sought.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) confirmed that the four Directors from National Parks will receive expenses only and just the three independent Directors will be remunerated.

Mr Vogel asked that it go on record that he was not in agreement with the decision.

The recommendation was duly proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED: that Members:

- (i) note the proposal to establish a jointly owned company with other UK national Park Authorities to develop opportunities for commercial sponsorship; and
- (ii) authorise the Chairman, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to complete the necessary documents to enable Dartmoor National Park Authority to become a member of the proposed new company.

3038 Tree preservation Orders and Section 211 Notifications (Works to Trees in Conservation Areas) Determined under Delegated Powers

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/14/049)

RESOLVED:

Members noted the content of the report.

Signed

Date 9/1/15

