

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE

12 January 2010

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK NATIONAL PARK COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ON ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Report of the Head of Planning and Community

Purpose of Report: To inform members of the Committee on the process for the Local Development Framework Issues and Options Community Consultation.

Management Plan Objectives:

The Exmoor National Park Local Development Framework development plan documents contain policies which guide the use and development of land, framed to ensure they are consistent with, and further, National Park purposes.

Legal and Equality Implications:

Section 65(4) Environment Act 1995 – provides powers to the National Park Authority to “do anything which in the opinion of the Authority, is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to-

- (a) the accomplishment of the purposes mentioned in s. 65 (1) [National Park purposes]
- (b) the carrying out of any functions conferred on it by virtue of any other enactment.”

Exmoor National Park Authority is required to produce and consult on a Local Development Framework in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Local Development Framework will form part of the development plan for the National Park, the first consideration in determining planning applications which, by law, must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Financial and Risk Implications:

Consultation arrangements have been budgeted for in the Local Development Framework budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report as the basis for community consultation events on Local Development Framework issues and options.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper sets out the process for consulting communities. The consultation will inform the preparation of the Exmoor National Park Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.2 Two stakeholder events and a stakeholder meeting were held in December 2008 and January 2009 to scope issues and options for the LDF core strategy and development policies. The issues, set out in short topic papers for stakeholders to consider and develop, were based on (though did not replicate exactly) the challenges and issues from the Exmoor National Park Management Plan. The outcome of those events and the responses to a stakeholder questionnaire were presented to the Committee on 3 March 2009.
- 1.3 The Planning Policy and Community team has since continued work on building a body of evidence including developing the issues and options provided to and contributed by stakeholders. As the evidence base has developed and in response to some stakeholder views, the wording of issues presented to stakeholders and the topic headings have changed to some extent.
- 1.4 A key part of the evidence base is to be able to demonstrate thorough community consultation. Planning Policy Statement 12 requires that the Authority offer people and organisations an opportunity to influence policy content at an early stage. In order for the Authority's Core Strategy document to be deemed 'sound', it should be founded on a robust and credible evidence base and the Authority is required to demonstrate how that evidence base has been achieved and how it has invited participation in the consultation process.
- 1.5 The next step is to invite views on priorities for the LDF issues and options from Exmoor communities. The feedback and views received, together with the results of the stakeholder events and evidence base, will be used to develop a Core Strategy 'preferred strategy'.

2. CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Members have considered the development of the evidence base and the proposed approach to community consultations at a number of LDF Advisory Groups (LDFAG) held in September 2008 and February, June, October and November 2009. The arrangements of the proposed community consultation events have been arrived at through close working with Members of the LDF Advisory Group. A set of principles for the consultation events has been agreed:
 - To build on the achievements of the National Park Management Plan;
 - To retain the interactive nature of 'Planning for Real' seeing it as the starting point and seeking to develop it based on 'where we are at now' and inviting comments and suggestions for changes;
 - That the process should be thorough and comprehensive to avoid the need to revisit issues at a later date;
 - That it should be inclusive and held at different times of day;
 - To ensure opportunities for participative, non-verbal responses;
 - That it should have a 'drop-in' format;

- To use local halls and businesses;
- To use maps to enable the required spatial approach;
- To seek to identify the needs and aspirations of communities;
- That a means should be found of seeking the views of those living in larger settlements outside Exmoor. (Consultation events were not thought to be appropriate for this purpose).
- Those parishes on the fringe of Exmoor and split by the National Park boundary should also be included in the consultation process.
- To involve a range of staff and Members; and
- To maintain momentum and be as compressed as possible.
- The LDF consultation, including the events, to be publicised under the title 'Your Future Exmoor' with a specific logo to ensure that LDF consultation is as recognisable as possible.

2.2 In addition to holding a series of consultation events, Members were also of the view that:

- There should be links with schools/engagement with younger people particularly in the 14-25 and under 35 age groups;
- Methods, locations and timings should be accessible, e.g. to parents of young children;
- There should be a variety of mechanisms for responses; and
- Consultation with key interest groups should be through 'focus groups'.

3. **CONSULTATION TO DATE**

3.1 Youth Consultations: As well as the stakeholder events, consultation with young people has been carried out by the Planning Assistant at all the schools within the National Park excepting Dunster, which is due to happen in January 2010. Consultation with a group from West Somerset College took place earlier in December and will be followed by work with Petrock College (North Devon) and Ilfracombe College. The results of the school workshops will be displayed at the parish consultation events.

3.2 Questionnaire: Two questionnaires have been distributed – one was included with the November edition of 'Parklife' in a fold out freepost format, the other specifically aimed at visitors. The 'Parklife' questionnaire was distributed to all households in the National Park and some postcode areas outside the boundary including parts of Barnstaple and Minehead.

4. **PROPOSED CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

4.1 Following discussions at LDF Advisory Group meetings, Members and Officers attended Parish/Town Council meetings in the summer/autumn of 2009 to introduce the idea of holding consultations and to seek invitations from Parish Councils for the National Park Authority to organise events in and for their communities. All those parish/town councils with main settlements have requested

an event. It is therefore planned that a series of 21 'drop in' events be held aimed at specific parishes starting on 18 January and running until Easter. The settlements and event dates are set out in the appended leaflet.

4.2 By the time that this paper is discussed at Planning Committee, a pilot event will have been held on the afternoon of 11 January for staff and Members (Members have been notified of the date previously). This should give an idea of the format, act as a 'training event' for those involved and enable minor adjustments to the content.

4.3 Event Organisation: The arrangements for events to be as follows:

- The National Park Authority will visit parishes with smaller communities for part days, with duplicate 4-hour events held in each parish on the same day (early/mid afternoon and mid afternoon/early evening e.g. Exford/ Withpool, Bridgetown/Winsford). Maps of both parishes will be available at both events and residents of the two parishes will be invited to attend the event that is most convenient to them.
- Some parishes will have a 'stand alone' event over part of a day.
- Residents of those parishes without a main settlement, including those parishes split by the National Park boundary, will be invited to an event in a nearby parish.
- All-day events are proposed in the three larger settlements of Dulverton, Lynton/Lynmouth and Porlock.

4.4 Format of the Events: The basis of the community consultation will be a series of issues and options divided into the following themes: Natural Environment, Cultural Environment, Settlements, Climate Change and Natural Resources, Economy and Employment, Housing, and Infrastructure and Transport.

4.5 Each theme will be presented on large format boards around the room or hall with opportunities to select the options using pins (to show numbers) and post it notes for comments. In addition there will be:

- A short summary of key issues raised at 'Planning for Real in 1999/2000 and an update on actions since then.
- Issues for each theme, together with a series of options, and opportunities for people to give views on their preference. Some of these issues will be divided linked to:
 - A map of the National Park;
 - A map of the parish(es); and/or
 - A detailed map of the settlement.
- Key facts, figures and photos will be included as part of the event.
- National Park Authority staff and Members are invited, as are external staff and members (e.g. North Devon Council and West Somerset Council policy officers, representatives from the County and District Councils, the Highway Authorities and Police Authorities).

- Where there is a choice of venue in a parish the most accessible has been chosen and will include a 'children's corner' to enable parents/children's carers to participate more easily. Refreshments will also be provided.
- 4.6 Publicity: All Parish Councils have been sent a letter confirming the date and location of their event and including a leaflet. This leaflet has been drawn up explaining the reason for holding consultation events, a summary of the main planning policies in force and a list of all consultation events and the parishes to which they relate. As well as being sent to parish and town councils, it is being made widely available at local shops, information points, libraries and on the Authority's website. In addition, posters are being distributed to parish councils, articles are being included in parish newsletters, press releases will be sent out in the week of the event(s), and a reminder in the form of a postcard sent to all households in the parish in the week of the event.
- 4.7 In summary, therefore, the consultation events will:
- Feedback on action since 'Planning for Real';
 - Set out key issues and options by theme highlighting those which are the current approach;
 - Invite community views on spatial issues (using maps) in their parish/the National Park.
 - Display work on key issues by children at the local first/primary school(s);
 - The events will provide an opportunity for people to be advised of future LDF consultations and to seek volunteers for focus groups.
- 4.8 It will also be important to capture any views or opinions not specifically related to the LDF process and ensure that these are directed appropriately.
- 4.9 Feedback to communities will be provided for each event and will be available in the parish(es) and on the website.
- 4.10 Focus/Topic Group Events: Focus group events are scheduled to follow the consultation process. The precise number of events will be decided following the outcome of the community events and once the number of potential participants is clearer. It is envisaged that these events will help to develop the feedback from community events and to provide more detail. It is planned that the participants will be a combination of stakeholders, including those involved in the original stakeholder events, and volunteers from the community.

Ruth McArthur
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20 December 2009

Background papers on which this report, or an important part of it are based, constitute the list of background papers required by Section 100 D (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to be open to members of the public comprise:-

- Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning: Communities and Local Government June 2008
- Plan Making Manual: Planning Advisory Service June 2008
- Exmoor National Park Management Plan