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ITEM 6

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES of the meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday, 19 April 2011 at 10.30am in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

Mr W J Dyke (Chairman)	
Miss A V Davis (Deputy Chairman)	
Mrs A M Clitheroe	Mr R Milton
Mr R C Edgell	Mrs F Nicholson
Mr J Freeman	Mr M J Pile
Dr S Head	Mr S J Pugsley
Mrs S Hibbert	Mr F Rawle
Mr N Holliday	Mr R J Webber
Ms D Kershaw	Dr J Wibberley
Mrs C Lawrence	Mr J Yabsley

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M A Collins and Mr I Rigby.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were no declarations of interest.

58. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The meeting was advised that Mr Alan Collins would not be seeking re-appointment as a Parish Member of the Authority following the District and Parish elections in May. Members joined the Chairman in thanking Mr Collins for his commitment to the Authority over the last 15 years and in particular for his skilful chairmanship of the Resources and Performance Committee since 2000. The Chairman also thanked Mrs Suzette Hibbert and Mr Neil Parbrook, who were not standing for re-election as District Councillors, for their valuable contribution to the work of the Authority.
- Dr Graham Wills, Head of Conservation and Land Management, would shortly be retiring from the Authority after 20 years service. On behalf of Members, the Chairman expressed thanks and appreciation to Dr Wills for his dedication to the conservation of Exmoor and wished him well for the future.
- The next meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee had been rescheduled from 21 June to 12 July 2011 so that new Members appointed to the Committee at the Annual meeting on 5 July could attend.

59. MINUTES

- Confirmation:** The Minutes of the Authority's meeting held on 15 February 2011 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
- Matters arising:** Minute 53 – Resources and Performance Committee. It was confirmed that financial regulations required the full market value of the Authority's assets to be set out in the statement of accounts. For clarity, the

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accounts would in future include as a footnote the negative effect on values of the encumbrances to which the majority of the Authority's assets were subject.

60. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- (1) In relation to agenda item 4 – Minutes of the meeting of 15 February 2011 – Mrs M Groves, Exmoor Uprising, requested confirmation that the Annual Open meeting to be held in September would provide opportunity for members of the public to ask questions about any matter relating to the work of the Authority. The Chief Executive advised that this was exactly what was proposed.
- (2) In relation to agenda item 6 – Resources and Performance Committee – Mrs M Groves and Mrs S Westcott of Exmoor Uprising presented a petition opposing works at County Gate to demolish the existing toilet block and to convert the walkers' shelter to new toilet facilities and requesting financial details of the scheme.
- (3) Also in relation to agenda item 6 – Resources and Performance Committee – Mrs M Groves, Exmoor Uprising, said that the Discretionary Budget Sub Committee should have a membership of at least 12 and that meetings should be open to the public. Mrs Groves also considered that all Members of the Authority should be appointed to the Resources and Performance Committee, as was the case with the Planning Committee.

61. RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

The Authority received and noted the draft minutes of the 1 March 2011 meeting of the Resources and Performance Committee.

The Authority's Consideration

It was agreed the minutes should clarify that savings reflected in adjustments to the Core Budget included reductions in the annual special responsibility allowances paid to some Members as distinct from the annual basic allowance paid to each Member.

The Chief Executive advised that the creation of a Discretionary Budget Sub Committee of the Resources and Performance Committee was intended to open up the process of accessing funding from the Authority's discretionary budget and to achieve a transparent mechanism through which communities and voluntary organisations could apply for funding alongside bids to support Authority projects. It was confirmed that meetings would be open to the public and the proposed 5-member composition of the Sub Committee would ensure that the process was both responsive and practical.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) To approve the Core and Discretionary Project budgets for 2011-12.
 - (2) To include in the Scheme of Delegation to the Resources and Performance Committee the proposed creation of a Discretionary Budget Sub-Committee.

62. GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The Authority's Consideration

The meeting was reminded that at the request of Members, Standing Orders had been reviewed to ensure they reflected current practice and where appropriate to modernise old-fashioned or unnecessarily formal language. The revised Standing Orders were approved subject to amendment to the Order of Business to reflect that Chairman's Announcements were taken before approval and signing of the minutes. It was noted that Standing Orders may require further revision resulting from the coalition government's review of governance arrangements for National Park Authorities, the outcome of which was not expected until after the forthcoming local government elections in May.

As part of refocusing the Authority in response to the public spending review and reduction in National Park Grant settlement, and in accordance with the timetable supported by Members, it was noted that initial changes in the Authority's management and organisational structure had been implemented. In view of the changes made, the Chief Executive advised that some job descriptions may be subject to an independent process of review and evaluation.

- RESOLVED:** (1) Subject to revision to the Order of Business to reflect that Chairman's announcements are taken before approval and signing of the minutes, to adopt the revised Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation.
- (2) To approve the continuance of C W Burrows as the Authority's Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) in the new role of Head of Transition.

63. EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY ACHIEVEMENTS 2010-11

The Authority received a presentation from the Chief Executive which highlighted some of the Authority's achievements during 2010/11 (copy presentation attached).

The Authority's Consideration

The meeting welcomed the presentation which demonstrated that during a period of financial constraint and transition, the Authority had continued to achieve significant outcomes in support of its priority activities and in furtherance of National Park purposes. Members were pleased to note the following:

- The high level of use of the Pinkery Education Centre and engagement with young people and non-traditional audiences.
- The success of the Low Carbon Communities Challenge projects worth £400,000 funded by the Department of Energy & Climate Change. The hard work and ability of Tim Stokes, the Sustainability & Economy Manager, in preparing the Authority's successful application to this funding programme was acknowledged.

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- The completion of the new Livestock Market and delivery of affordable housing at Cutcombe; a development widely recognised as an exemplar of a Planning Authority and community working together.
- The creation of 3 apprenticeships and 3 'Moorkeepers' posts through the Heritage Lottery funded Moorland Landscape Partnership Scheme.

64. AUTHORITY PRIORITIES AND BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2011-12

The Authority received the report of the Chief Executive.

The Authority's Consideration

The draft Business Plan for 2011-12 set out work programmes for the year aligned to the Authority's identified priorities. It was agreed that the draft plan reflected the wide range of services provided by the Authority, while acknowledging the challenges of responding to the impact of public spending reductions. Members' consideration of the draft plan included the following:

- The style and language of the business plan should reflect the emphasis on services provision.
- Public spending reductions would result in significant challenges in the future funding and delivery of affordable housing. It was therefore felt important for the Authority to have a continuing, rolling target for achieving more affordable homes through partnership working with housing authorities and communities; and also to have an aspiration to seek to improve the process of affordable housing delivery. It was suggested that mechanisms be explored to bring derelict housing back into use and that the Authority take a catalytic role in identifying alternative ways of funding affordable housing and in encouraging local people to self-build affordable homes.
- The business plan should include the recent successful application to the Department of Communities and Local Government for Lynton & Lynmouth to become a neighbourhood planning vanguard, one of 17 communities to be led by their local planning authority to prepare draft plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders.
- Broadband delivery in the National Park was of key importance and an issue to which the Authority's statement of priorities should refer. The Chief Executive advised that Somerset and Devon County Councils were leading on the development of broadband delivery in the two counties; however it was anticipated there would be a role for the Authority in supporting remote farms and communities to connect to broadband infrastructure.
- The importance of encouraging appropriate businesses in the National Park and of commercial enterprises working together was acknowledged, however it was recognised that the Authority's role must be seen in the context of its delivery of National Park purposes. It was agreed that the key communities with whom the Authority would work to support the local community and economy should include employees, as well as businesses, employers and residents of the National Park.

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- RESOLVED:** (1) To approve the priorities and business plan for the Authority for 2011-12.
- (2) To authorise the Chief Executive to make further minor changes, publish the plan and implement the programmes set out in the plan.

65. REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012-17

The Authority received the report of the Chief Executive.

The Authority's Consideration

The meeting welcomed the proposed format and change of approach of the National Park Management Plan for 2012-17, in particular the emphasis on partnership working with communities and other agencies and the encouragement of wider ownership of the plan's priorities and actions.

It was agreed that the National Park Management Plan and the Local Development Framework must work together effectively and cohesively. The desirability of developing one plan incorporating both documents was recognised; however the potential to do so was currently prevented by the prescriptive nature of the statutory process which the local development framework was required to follow. It was confirmed that the public consultation for the draft Management Plan review and draft core strategy of the Local Development Framework would run concurrently.

- RESOLVED:** (1) To approve the process and timetable for the review of the Exmoor National Park Management Plan 2012-17 to be titled '*Partnership Plan for Exmoor National Park*'.
- (2) To delegate further decisions on the structure and content of the Plan to the National Park Management Plan Implementation Board.
- (3) To authorise the Chief Executive to enter into discussions with partners and other organisations in order to achieve commitment to the objectives and actions set out in the Plan.

66. MEMBERS' REPORTS

Mrs F Nicholson reported attendance at a recent meeting of the South West Lakes Trust Recreation and Conservation Forum.

67. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY: There was none.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm

(Chairman)