
MINUTES

Meeting: **National Park Authority**

Date: Friday 19 May 2023 at 10.00 am

Venue: Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell

Chair: Cllr A McCloy

Present: Mr J W Berresford, Cllr P Brady, Cllr M Chaplin, Cllr D Chapman, Cllr C Farrell, Cllr C Furness, Cllr C Greaves, Prof J Haddock-Fraser, Mr Z Hamid, Cllr A Hart, Cllr Mrs G Heath, Cllr I Huddleston, Cllr C McLaren, Cllr D Murphy, Cllr Mrs K Potter, Cllr V Priestley, Miss L Slack, Mr K Smith, Dr R Swetnam, Cllr P Tapping, Cllr J Wharmby, Ms Y Witter and Cllr B Woods

Apologies for absence: Cllr W Armitage, Cllr A Gregory, Ms A Harling and Cllr K Richardson.

35/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS PRESENT AND MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 14

Cllr Chapman declared an interest as Chair of the Moors for the Future Partnership.

Item 19

Cllr McCloy declared an interest on behalf of all Members as the item related to property owned by the Authority.

36/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 17TH MARCH 2023

The minutes of the last meeting of the Authority held on 17th March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

37/23 URGENT BUSINESS - APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER

The Chair confirmed that there was one item of urgent business, the appointment of an interim Monitoring Officer and that this would be dealt with later in the agenda.

38/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One member of the public was present to make representations to the Committee.

39/23 CHAIR'S BRIEFING

The Chair of the Authority welcomed Dr Ruth Swetnam, the newly appointed Secretary of State Member, to her first Authority Meeting. The Chair then provided a verbal update to Members which included:

- Confirmation that this committee would be his last Authority as Chair, except for the AGM.
- It was also the last Authority meeting for Mr Hamid, Cllr Tapping, Cllr Furness and Cllr Armitage (who had sent his apologies)
- Certificates of appreciation were awarded to Mr Hamid, Cllr Tapping and Cllr Furness and the Chair expressed thanks and appreciation for their contribution to the Authority.

40/23 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT (PM)

The Chief Executive report gave updates to Members on recent meetings with stakeholders, partners and other organisations. Additionally, the CEO advised that a great deal of his time had been taken up by the internal organisational change process.

41/23 EXTERNAL AUDIT 2021/22 AUDITORS ANNUAL REPORT (JW)

The report which asked Members to consider the External Auditors annual report was presented by the Head of Finance as Mark SurrIDGE of Mazars was unable to attend the meeting.

The recommendation set out in the report was moved, seconded, put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

To note the External Auditor's Annual Report at Appendix 1 of the report.

42/23 EXTERNAL AUDIT 2022/23 AUDIT STRATEGY (JW)

The report, which asked Members to consider the 2022/23 External Audit Strategy memorandum, was presented by the Head of Finance as Mark SurrIDGE of Mazars was unable to attend the meeting.

The recommendation set out in the report was moved and seconded, put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

To acknowledge the 2022/23 External Audit Strategy Memorandum.

43/23 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT BLOCK 2 2022/23 (JW)

The report which gave details of the Internal Auditors recommendations for the second block of the 2022/23 audit and the agreed actions for consideration, was presented by Ian Morton of Veritau..

Members requested that the following matters arising from the report, be considered for further attention in the next years audit:

- Review of Staff Appraisals.
- Monitoring and Enforcement in the Planning Service

Members noted the report's recommendation that appeal decisions should be reviewed by committee but felt that the current practice where this was done by Officers rather than Members, unless significant issues arose from a particular decision, should continue.

Members requested further clarification of the Substantial Assurance given to the Planning Service, and were advised that this was due to a reasonable plan being in place to address known issues in the Service. The Head of Planning advised that the subject of the audit had been systems and controls such as registration of applications, validation, and payments rather than the time taken to determine applications.

A motion to approve the recommendation was proposed, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED

To receive and agree the actions in the Internal Audit reports for the three areas covered under Block 2 for 2022/23 Human Resources, Contract Management and Planning (set out in appendices 1-3 of the report).

44/23 INTERNAL AUDIT 2022/23 ANNUAL REPORT (JW)

The report which asked Members to consider the Internal Audit 2022/23 Annual Report, was presented by Ian Morton of Veritau. It was noted that the overall opinion on the framework of governance, risk management and control operating in the Authority was of substantial assurance and there were no significant control weaknesses which needed to be included in the Annual Governance Statement.

Members were advised that an action plan had been put in place to address the reasonable, rather than substantial assurance level relating to Health and Safety, however this could be considered for further follow up in the next year's audit.

It was noted that there was an error in the report in paragraphs 1 and 12 regarding the date of the Annual Report and these should state 2022/23 not 2021/22.

A motion to approve the recommendation was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

To note and accept the 2022/23 Annual Report from the Internal Auditors as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

45/23 SLIPPAGE REQUESTS FROM 2022/23 INTO 2023/24 BUDGET (JW)

The report which sought approval from Members for the budget slippage requests to carry an unspent budget from 2022/23 into the 2023/24 budget was presented by the Head of Finance, who also advised that there was an error in the recommendation which should have stated £315k rather than £320k. It was noted that there was an error in paragraph 7 of the report, the date at the end of the third sentence should be 2021/22 not 2021/23.

The Head of Finance added that the aim was to reduce slippage to nil next year and ensure that future underspent budgets would be managed strategically going forward. Any budget carried forward would be on an exception basis e.g. for a specific project which had not been completed.

Some Members queried having an underspend at a time when the Authority was making cuts. The CEO advised that the any underspend is short term, whilst the proposed cuts would tackle longer term budget issues. He also advised that a new finance system was being procured that would be able to give managers timely financial information on a monthly basis which would help to better understand budget underspends.

A motion to approve the recommendation, with the amendment to the specific figure to £315k, was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

The approve the specific slippage requests of £315k (set out in Appendix 1 of the report) be carried forward into the 2023/24 budget.

46/23 2022/23 YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT, 2022/23 PERFORMANCE AND BUSINESS PLAN AND 2023/24 CORPORATE RISK (A91941/EF)

The report which provided Members with the 2022/23 Performance and Business Plan and 2023/24 Corporate Risk Register, was presented by the Head of Information and Performance Management. She also clarified in that Appendix 2b the targets for the “enabling” delivery aim were correct, however the targets for aims 1-4 needed to be removed as they were National Park Management Plan targets not Authority Plan targets.

The following additional information was provided by Officers in response to questions from Members:

- Local nature Recovery Strategies would be county based in future
- p.133 KPI13- Visitor centres had over achieved their target, and this was a good achievement by the staff involved, but the centres were still operating at a significant deficit and were not engaging with sufficient numbers of people.
- P.136 KPI16 – Officers would consider further how or whether the Parish Statements related to the objective. The statements would be reviewed when census data became available.
- Neighbourhood Plans were just one of the interventions that the Authority carries out to help communities. Other smaller interventions and projects were also supported.
- P.137 where it is stated that this work will not continue, this could be reworded to better communicate current priorities and the focus on the Local Plan Review
- On p.153 there were no actions that the Authority is undertaking on its own as these were in the National Park Management Plan
- P.171 the risk was around organisational change and how this may affect the delivery of the Authority Plan

Members made the following additional points:

- A KPI regarding visitor pressure on communities would be useful
- Targets should be realistic and not set outside the year
- The Climate Change Steering Group had been disbanded
- Further attention needed to be paid to Enforcement in the document, in addition to updating the Local Enforcement Plan, particularly given the potential

reputational damage to the authority of issues not being addressed. A further risk should be included to monitor this.

- P.184 the conflict between “Welcoming Place” and pressure on communities should be acknowledged as a risk.

Cllr Murphy left the meeting at 11.44

RESOLVED:

- 1. To review and agree any actions to address issues in the Q4 and year end performance reports in Appendices 1a and 1b of the report**
- 2. To approve the Performance and Business Plan content in Appendix 2a and 2b of the report, and completion of details to be delegated to the Chief Executive, to allow publication by the statutory deadline of 30 June.**
- 3. That the 2022/23 year end corporate risk register in Appendix 3 of the report is reviewed and the status of risks accepted.**
- 4. That the start of year 2023/24 corporate risk register in Appendix 4 is reviewed and the proposed risks agreed.**
- 5. That the status of complaints, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests in Appendix 5 is noted**

The meeting adjourned for a short break at 11.44 and reconvened at 12.00

47/23 UPPER DERWENT VALLEY RESERVOIR EXPANSION (BJT)

This item was brought forward on the agenda as the speaker had arrived.

The report which asked Members to consider the position of the Authority in respect to options proposed by Severn Trent Water to increase the supply of water in the Upper Derwent Valley, was presented by the Head of Planning.

The following gave a representation under the public participation at meetings scheme:

- Andrew Wheatley - Derwent and Hope Woodlands Parish Council.

The Chair stated that he had received several letters from the public in support of the Authority’s position on the matter and thanking the Head of Planning and the CEO for attending the Parish Council meeting.

A motion to approve the recommendation was moved and seconded.

Members raised the following points:

- Thought should be given to relevant themes which would engage the public, such as the historic role the site played due to the dam busters and the potential damage to wildlife such as hares.
- The Authority should speak against the proposal in the most robust terms possible as it flew in the face of both the purposes and the duty of the National Park.

- Water companies fixing leaking pipes and forming a national distribution network would be a better solution to the issue of insufficient water supply than new reservoirs.
- Resulting lorry movements would be unacceptable.
- Removal of organic matter from the existing reservoirs would increase their capacity
- Paragraph 17- disruption to local communities and to visitors by the works should be added as a concern, particularly as it was likely that public access would be denied for many years

The Head of Planning advised that pressure would be applied to establish if the framework had been properly set up in order to take National Park purposes into account. More detailed proposals would emerge and further engagement would take place at the "Gate 2" stage in July, at which point Members would be given the opportunity to ratify any decision. "Gate 3" would be the "preferred option" stage and the scheme aimed to be "shovel ready" by 2029.

Cllr B Woods left the meeting at 12:30.

A vote on the motion to approve the recommendation was taken and carried.

RESOLVED :

To support a holding objection to the Upper Derwent reservoir expansion plans from the National Park Authority.

Cllr Farrell left the meeting at 12.35

48/23 REVISION OF STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (CW)

The report which advised Members of, and sought approval for, public consultation on the updated Statement of Community Involvement, was presented by the Community Policy Planner.

A motion to approve the recommendation was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

1. **To approve the revised Statement of Community Involvement (set out in Appendix 1 of the report) for public consultation.**
2. **That any minor amendments necessary following the public consultation are delegated to the Head of Planning and in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee.**
3. **That final approval for the Statement of Community Involvement is delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning Committee.**

49/23 MOOR GREEN INVESTMENT - COMBS MOSS RESTORATION PROJECT (DC)

The report, which sought approval for the Moors for the Future Partnership to move into the delivery stage of the Combs Moss restoration Project, was presented by the Head of the Moors for the Future Partnership.

A motion to approve the recommendations was moved and seconded.

Officers confirmed that the project covered the whole of Combs Moss, including areas owned by United Utilities.

Members asked whether there was a process in place to establish which private companies the Authority is comfortable working with on green finance initiatives. Officers advised that the project had been considered by Due Diligence Panel, and this included consideration of any potential reputational issues. It had been decided that the benefit of the project would outweigh any potential public concerns.

The motion to approve the recommendation was put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve acceptance of up to £1m of private finance from Nestle and Severn Trent Water for the delivery of restoration and monitoring works on Combs Moss between 2023-28 with acceptance of agreements and funds for this delegated to the Head of Moors for Future Partnership in consultation with Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.**
- 2. That as registering the site with the Peatland code may produce further requests from the landowner to support the requirements of the code, that approval to enter into agreements and accept funds for this be delegated to the Head of Moors for Future Partnership in consultation with Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.**
- 3. That the Authority may, subject to compliance with its procurement standing orders, enter into contracts and agreements in order to spend funds and deliver the required outcomes of the agreements.**

A vote to continue the meeting past three hours was carried.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 13.00 and reconvened at 13.15 during which time Cllr Hart, Professor Haddock-Fraser, Dr Swetnam and Cllr Wharmby left the meeting.

PART B

50/23 EXEMPT INFORMATION S100(A) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

RESOLVED

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda Item 19 to avoid the disclosure of Exempt Information under S100 (A) (4) Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, paragraph 3 'information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

51/16 Warslow Moors Estate - Pump Farm, Warslow - Review of Future Management Options (CBM)

The meeting then returned to PART A

52/23 HYBRID WORKING POLICY (TR)

The report which asked Members to approve the policy on hybrid working and note the guidance on hybrid working document, was presented by the Head of Information and Performance Management as the Head of People Management was unable to attend.

Some Members felt that that the wording of the policy was too vague and that insufficient consideration had been given to the practicalities of hot desking such as having a satisfactory booking system and ensuring that desks were kept clean. Concern was also raised regarding the 6 month qualification period for new staff to move to hybrid working. It was also requested that the paragraphs of the policy be numbered and that GDPR should be covered.

The Chief Executive advised that the generous provision of desks meant that a booking system was not necessary, and that the policy and guidance had been agreed with Unison and Staff Committee. It was deliberately worded in order to be flexible and to assist with recruitment.

With regards to insurance, in response to a Member query Officers advised that staff should let their own insurers know that they were home working, but any equipment would be covered by the Authority's insurance.

A motion to approve the recommendations was moved.

A request was made for an additional recommendation to be added that the policy and guidance should be reviewed periodically at the Programmes and Resources Committee.

A motion to approve the recommendations with the additional recommendation that the policy and guidance should be reviewed periodically by the Programmes and Resources Committee was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve the Policy on hybrid working as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2. To note the Guidance on hybrid working as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.**
- 3. That the Policy and Guidance be reviewed periodically by the Programmes and Resources Committee.**

53/23 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES - NONE SUBMITTED

There were no outside body reports.

54/23 APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER

The report, which requested the appointment of an interim Monitoring Officer during the Authority's organisational changes, was introduced by the Chief Executive.

A motion to approve the recommendation was moved, seconded, voted on and carried.

RESOLVED

To appoint the Democratic Services Manager as Interim Monitoring Officer from 18 June 2023 until the appointment of a new Monitoring Officer following implementation of the organisational changes.

The meeting ended at 2.06 pm