

**AGENDA ITEM No. 5**

**PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING**

**6 FEBRUARY 2009**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**URGENT BUSINESS**

**PART A**

**1 REPRESENTATION ON EAST MIDLANDS LEADER'S BOARD (A971/JBD)**

**Proposal**

- 1 Members are advised of progress towards establishing a Leader's Board in the East Midlands and support is sought for the specific proposals for including this Authority in a Joint Board charged with preparing and delivering the Integrated Regional Strategy. I apologise that this report is coming as an urgent item to the Authority. This is because significant political negotiations have only very recently led to a proposal which the Authority must now formally consider and this was unforeseen when agreeing the Authority agenda and preparing other reports.

**2 RECOMMENDATION:**

**That**

1. **Proposals to include the Peak District National Park Authority as a member of the Joint Board (jointly with 5 members of the East Midlands Development Agency Board and 5 members of the East Midlands Leader's Board) charged with developing and delivering the East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy are supported as the minimum level of representation compatible with our statutory function and legislation.**
2. **Discussions continue with local authorities to find effective ways of the Peak District National Park Authority engaging in the wider work of the East Midlands Leader's Board.**

**Policy/Legal Background**

- 3 At the Authority meeting in May 2008, members were advised of the proposed new regional arrangements being prepared in line with the Government's Sub National Review. At the time, it was thought that a new regional body – the Leaders' Forum – would be created to oversee the work of the East Midlands Development Agency who would themselves be given the powers to produce an Integrated Regional Strategy, comprising land use planning and economic strategy matters. Members agreed to the following recommendation (Minute reference 35/08):

*Strong representations are made to Government Office East Midlands, East Midlands Development Agency, constituent authorities and Defra to ensure that the Peak District National Park Authority retains its essential position on the new regional and any sub-regional arrangements for developing and scrutinising the Integrated Regional Strategy.*

The proposed Integrated Strategy is a component of this Authority's Development Plan in the way that the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands is today. For land use planning, the Secretary of State has agreed that the National Park can be considered in one region, that is the East Midlands. This does not mean that our relations with other regions are not important but that the formal connection with the East Midlands strategy for land use planning must be strong and reflect our statutory position.

- 4 Following the May Authority resolution, representations have been made face to face and in writing to the Regional Minister for the East Midlands, the Government Office Director, Leader of the East Midlands Regional Assembly and also to the Chair of emda. In addition, representations have been made at a national level to Ministers at Defra and also Communities and Local Government. These representations have resulted in a broadly favourable set of outcomes. These are described first in terms of the national picture and secondly in the East Midlands where members views are sought on the proposed regional arrangements.

#### **Progress at national level**

- 5 Following consultation, the Government introduced the *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill* into Parliament as part of the current legislative programme. The Bill is currently in Committee stage of the House of Lords. Clause 66 of the Bill sets out the basis whereby '*participating authorities in each region must make a scheme for the establishment of a body for the region*'. The body, known now as the Leaders' Board will, however, share the responsibility for developing, consulting on and delivering the Integrated Regional Strategy with the Regional Development Agency. This function will be shared by the RDA and local government working together. This joint body will replace the Regional Assembly. '*Participating authorities*' for the purpose of the Bill are defined in clause 66 (3) as district and county councils (and hence unitary councils too), national park authorities and the Broads Authority (where relevant). Parliament has not yet considered this part of the Bill, although Ministers have made clear they expect no weakening of this position.

#### **Representation in the East Midlands**

- 6 In the East Midlands there was an initial plan for the Leaders Forum/Board to be composed solely of upper tier unitary and county councils (the '9 Cs'). This proposition was judged very unsatisfactory for this National Park Authority and also for district councils. Significant political debate led to no resolution of the matter until the Regional Minister wrote to the Chair of the Regional Assembly before Christmas seeking a resolution amongst local government. Significantly, the Chair of this Authority was copied in to the letter, although the purpose was to strike an agreement within local government. To aid the discussions, the Director of GOEM established a 'Sub National Review Implementation Group' and the Chief Executive of this Authority has been kept closely in touch with that group. The group and discussions under the leadership of the Chair of the Regional Assembly have led to a proposition for a regional architecture as follows:
  - A Leader's Board composed of all 9 county and unitary leaders and 5 leaders selected by each county from amongst district council leaders. It is expected that this will be established and will meet quarterly from March 2009.

- A Joint Board specifically charged with developing, monitoring and implementing the Integrated Regional Strategy. This will be composed of 5 members of the Leader's Board (2 county, 2 unitary and 1 district), 5 members of the emda Board and the Peak District National Park Authority. This Board will have a staff based on the current planning and economic strategy staff based in EMRA and emda.

- 7 The arrangement described above appears to be a very good outcome for the National Park Authority. Whilst we are not formal members of the Leader's Board, it is likely that the full Leader's Board will be interested in a very wide range of topics of a political nature that will only be partially relevant to this Authority. We can work through local authority leaders to influence these debates and as a statutory consultee to the work of the Leader's Board. Arguably, the Leader's Board will be superior to the Joint Board, but given that the legislation proposes to give the responsibility for the IRS *jointly* to the Leader's Board and emda, our position on their joint board is quite a strong one. Officers, in consultation with the Chair, the Deputy Chair (who is the Authority's representative on EMRA) and the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee believe this outcome to be supportable and in line with the recommendation made by members in May 2008. The position is in line with the spirit of the new Bill, our statutory powers and the distinctive role we play in the region. As a *participating authority* under the Bill, the Peak District National Park Authority must agree to the proposed make up of the regional body and so your support is sought for this.
- 8 For comparison, the Lake District National Park Authority has been invited onto the North West Leader's Board which is already established. Other NPAs in Yorkshire are likely to be invited to join a planning sub-committee of the Yorkshire and Humber Leader's Board. At the time of writing, it is not thought that other National Park Authorities have been invited to be part of their regional arrangements, although Defra and CLG Ministers seem to be working towards their involvement in some way. It is likely that once the Act achieves Royal assent that guidance will be prepared. This may be very late, in practice, to influence regional arrangements.
- 9 Officers and the Chair of the Authority continue to engage with the Sheffield City Region Forum which is working towards a clearer role in future sub-regional arrangements for both the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside Integrated Regional Strategies. Whilst there are no formal propositions, it is thought that there will be a 'joint chapter' in both the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside Integrated Regional Strategies. This is an opportunity for the Authority to work towards a degree of integrated strategic planning for the Peak District across at least two of our regions. The Sheffield City Region is also one of 5 to have engaged in discussion with Government on taking greater degrees of devolved powers from regional bodies. Members will be advised of the details of this at a future Authority. Officers and members will also continue to engage, although at a somewhat limited level with arrangements in the North West and West Midlands and, at the very least, we will press to be statutory consultees on the plans for all 3 other regions.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Resources**

- 1 It is expected that both officer and member time will be required to ensure an effective input by the Authority into helping prepare the Integrated Regional Strategy. However, as this will be similar to existing commitments for regional planning and as this relates to our statutory planning framework this is thought to be acceptable.

### **Risk Management**

- 2 Risks have been considered in preparing this report

### **Human Rights, Equalities, Health & Safety**

- 3 None apparent

### **Consultees**

- 4 Acting Head of Policy, the Chair of the Authority and the Deputy Chair who is our member on the East Midlands Regional Assembly

### **Enclosures**

- 5 None.

### **List of Background Papers** (not previously published)

- 6 None.

### **Report Author**

- 7 Jim Dixon, Chief Executive

### **Publication date**

- 8 29 January 2009