

**Minutes of Northumberland National Park Authority Review Panel Meeting  
Held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2004 at Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership  
Offices, Hexham**

**Present:** Mr E Idle; Mr J Vaughan; Cllr A Davidson; Cllr A Williamson; Cllr F M C Hewitson; Stuart Evans

**Apologies:** Cllr S E Bolam

**In Attendance:** Graham Taylor (RP11 & RP12); Steve Gray (RP13); Kim Hobson (RP14); Lucy Jowett (RP15)

**RP09-2004: Apologies/Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting (20.01.04) were accepted as a true record.

**RP10-2004: Action Points**

- Implementing Electronic Government statement has been submitted to Government. Awaiting confirmation of amount to be awarded. To be reported at the next Review Panel meeting (18.05.04)
- The Document Management System work is being actively progressed and an order has been placed for hardware. Roll out to Members is expected in June 2004.
- Park House situation has been passed on to Management Group; Review Panel responsibility discharged.
- Topic Papers are complete and will be signed off by Graham Taylor as an outcome of the National Park Management Plan.
- The relationship between the Review Panel and Management Group is now clear but any additional feedback would be appreciated. View of the Management Group to be sought.
- It was decided that Mr E Idle; Cllr S E Bolam and Mr J Vaughan be involved in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.

**Actions:**

- **Stuart Evans to update Review Panel on Implementing Electronic Government settlement at next meeting (18.05.04)**
- **Andrew Miller to produce a revised project plan on Cultural Heritage Initiatives for the next Review Panel meeting (18.05.04). (Continued action from previous Review Panel meetings)**
- **Stuart Evans to consider Corporate Risk Management (re: Project Management) as a future agenda item for Review Panel.**
- **Stuart Evans and Eddie Idle to produce a brief information paper on the Role of the Review Panel for the Full Authority.**

**Recommendations:**

- **The Review Panel recommended that the Management Group consider the issue of the staff effort involved in generating external funds via the benefits/costs.**

**RP11-2004: Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

Stuart Evans presented this paper.

Voluntary preparation for Comprehensive Performance Assessment has not been carried out by any other National Park. NNPA have decided to do a trial run. The process will result in an Improvement Plan. The Authority are advised to allocate £185,000 to implement this. A report will go to the Full Authority on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

Comments from the Review Panel included:

- The need to incorporate elements of Best Value into Comprehensive Performance Assessment?
- Need to balance NNPA's processes and products in the final report to show the extent of corporate leadership in NNPA.
- Use the CPA as a means of "Corporate Learning" and culture change.
- Recognise the potential impact of the Haskins Review on the issues within the CPA.
- There is an opportunity to capitalise on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process by achieving a good result and "kudos" with DEFRA.
- The danger that some areas of underperformance will reduce DEFRA's opinion of NNPA.

**Actions:**

- **Stuart Evans to provide Review Panel with the questions/issues which will be asked/assessed of the National Park, the self-assessment questions and a brief of scores and Improvement Plan. Progress to be reported at the next Review Panel.**

**RP12-2004: Annual Review of Development Control Best Value Implementation Plan**

Graham Taylor presented this paper.

Comments from the Review Panel included:

- The need to see Planning as a positive tool to achieve NNPA vision (Enabling vs. Regulatory roles)
- Opportunity to generate new ideas in collaboration with outside agencies.
- Enforcement issue – re-consider immediate action or wait Government review.
- Essential that draft/model106 agreements are produced
- Review of Development Control should take account of cost

- Consider a communication exercise to establish stakeholder views of the planning function?
- Sign-off on this BVP.

**Actions:**

- **Review Panel to look at progress of the production of 106 agreement at 13<sup>th</sup> July 2004 meeting.**
- **Graham Taylor to provide a revised improvement plan to include for e-enabling, new design guide and community engagement**

**RP13-2004: Review Response to Annual Management Letter**

Steve Gray presented this paper.

This is a positive report from a finance point of view. However, ICT staff are stretched.

The Internal Audit contract is out for tender; new arrangements are expected for September 2004.

Comments from the Review Panel included:

- Re-consider prioritising; either the work is necessary – or not! Perceptions are distorted by using 3 priority levels.
- Several issues depend on the ICT Team Leader raising the question of NNPA's ability to comply with the action plan? Need a grip on the capacity shortage.
- The report raises the issue of a culture of trust and delegation within NNPA.
- Overall a good report on which staff should be congratulated.

**Actions:**

- **Steve Gray to provide Review Panel with a further report outlining the issues of capacity and meeting the audit requirements (to July 2004 meeting).**
- **Management Group to look at the need for short-term resources to assist the new ICT Team Leader.**

**RP14-2004: Review of the Sustainable Tourism Project**

Kim Hobson presented this paper.

Corporate "ownership" of Sustainable Tourism by NNPA needs to be strengthened.

Comments from the Review Panel included:

- The format of the paper is good with long term and short-term objectives clearly identified. Measurement of progress is less clear.
- Progress is good on individual projects Word seems to be spreading e.g. have heard about the "Inn Way", seen leaflets on village walks and cycle ways.
- Measures of sustainability of the products and results are needed.

- Approach to public needs to be carefully considered..
- Skills/Cross-cutting of functions/activities need to be trained and learned in this area and applied to and with other Directorates.
- Corporate Ownership should be reconsidered and actions taken to improve understandings, skills and competencies.

**Recommendations:**

- **Review Panel to recommend that Management Group look into training and skills for the Authority in relation to Corporate ownership.**
- **Management Group to add a 30 minute slot to the beginning of a future Authority meeting on Sustainable Tourism**

**RP15-2004: Annual Review of the Communications Plan**

Lucy Jowett presented this paper.

*Cllr A Davidson left the meeting at 3:45pm*

Comments from the Review Panel included:

- Welcome the long-term/short-term objectives format of the paper.
- Engaging the public means that more effort is required at the beginning of projects but a better result is achieved at the end
- Identify clearly the objective to be achieved with the communication and use media appropriate to the target audience.
- Communicate with the public – consultation is often a one-way process
- Involving Members is crucial; informing them is not enough.
- Members Information Bulletin is excellent – can it be circulated to a wider audience?
- Communications is more than just Press Releases
- Use local expertise, knowledge and status to reach your audience.
- Learning how to use communication should be through “real” problem-solving. Learning-by-doing and from mistakes is the most effective method.

*Cllr FMC Hewiston left the meeting at 4:00pm*

**Recommendations:**

- **Management Group to look at joining-up forthcoming consultation activity to each member of the Senior Management Team**

**RP16-2004: Review Panel Timetable & Agenda Items**

Nothing to report.

**RP17-2004: Any Other Business & Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Review Panel will be held on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2004** at **1:30pm** in the **Teasdale Room** (NNPA offices, Hexham)

Foot Note: Decision made Post Meeting:

Please note that the date of the September 2004 Review Panel meeting has changed. It was scheduled to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2004, but will now be held on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2004** (1:30pm) to avoid a clash with the ANPA Conference.