

**MINUTES OF THE BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HELD
ON 10 OCTOBER 2006 AT THE CASTLE OF BRECON HOTEL, BRECON**

Present

Powys

Cllrs Mrs D James, J Griffiths, Mrs Kathryn Silk, Mrs M Morris, K Pathak, W Powell and J Steadman

Carmarthenshire

Cllrs E Williams, H Morgan

Monmouthshire

Cllr A Breeze

Merthyr Tydfil

Cllr A Baynham

Torfaen

Cllr M Reece

Members appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government

Mrs I Evison, Mr P Seaman, Mrs J James, Mrs M Taylor (Chairman) and Mr J Suter.

78/06 CORRESPONDENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr A Carrington, Mr M Thomas, Mr M Buckle and Mrs J Charlton.

79/06 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made as follows:

Mr P Seaman: Agenda item 7.0: Proposed National Grid Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline: Felindre to Tirley (Financial Interest in route with Holiday Cottage)

Cllr Mrs M Morris: Agenda item 7.0: Proposed National Grid Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline: Felindre to Tirley

Cllr Mrs D James: Agenda item 7.0: Proposed National Grid Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline: Felindre to Tirley

Cllr H Morgan: Agenda item 7.0: Proposed National Grid Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline: Felindre to Tirley (Grazier on land affected by proposed route)

Cllr W Powell: Agenda item 7.0: Proposed National Grid Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline: Felindre to Tirley (Minor shareholder in National Grid)

80/06 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no requests to speak at the meeting.

81/06 PRESENTATION OF AUDIT REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Geraint Norman from the Wales Audit Office, who presented the Audit of the Authority's Financial Statements. He reported that the accounts were of a high standard with no cause for concern and said that the Authority should be proud of this. He thanked the Finance team for their co-operation in compiling this audit.

Members thanked Mr Norman and congratulated the Finance Team on their achievements in receiving an unqualified report.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman and Section 151 Officer be authorised to sign the Letter of Representation which is required at the completion of the Audit of the Financial Statements.

82/06 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman apologised for the delay in receipt of agendas for the meeting, which was due to problems with the equipment for the new postal pricing system. She referred to the agendas for both the Authority meeting and the Future Directions Forum which would follow this meeting, which in part were driven by external factors such as the need to brief members before the Welsh Association of National Park Authorities Seminar.

The Chairman then made the following announcements:

- The Biodiversity Officer had asked the Chairman to thank members for their commitment and enthusiasm on the recent training day, which had been very useful both for members and officers.
- The Chairman congratulated the following members who had recently completed a one day IT course run by the Authority, and handed out certificates:

Cllr Dorothy James
Cllr Graham Thomas
Mrs Julie James
Cllr Alan Breeze
Cllr Kathryn Silk
Cllr William Powell
Cllr John Steadman

Cllr Margaret Morris
Mr Peter Seaman
Cllr Mervyn Reece
Cllr Evan Morgan
Cllr Joe Griffiths
Cllr Alan Baynham
Cllr Huw Thomas

The Chairman highlighted some of the meetings and events she had attended in the last three months, and thanked members who had represented her at some events she had not been able to attend.

83/06 MINUTES

A member referred to the minutes of the Western Area Advisory Forum and asked that his point about the lack of a Beacons Bus route from Llandeilo to the Amman Valley be included, as he had raised this in the meeting and felt it to be pertinent.

RESOLVED:

a) That the following minutes be approved, subject to the above amendment, and the Chairman authorised to sign them as a true record:

- **National Park Authority – 28 July 2006**
- **50th Anniversary Working Group – 31 July 2006**
- **50th Anniversary Working Group Project Plan- 31 July 2006**
- **50th Anniversary Working Group – 29 August 2006**
- **50th Anniversary Working Group Project Plan – 29 August 2006**
- **50th Anniversary Working Group – 26 September 2006**
- **50th Anniversary Working Group Budget – 26 September 2006**
- **National Park Management Plan Steering Group – 18 July 2006**
- **Eastern Area Advisory Forum – 26 September 2006**
- **Central Area Advisory Forum – 27 September 2006**
- **Western Area Advisory Forum – 29 September 2006**

A member asked that it be made clear in the Internal Review Committee minutes that the terms of reference circulated with the agenda had had two clauses omitted because of printing errors, and that members had referred to the correct version approved by the Authority.

b) That the following minutes be received, subject to the amendment above:

- **PAROW – 5 September 2006**
- **Internal Review Committee – 25 September 2006**
- **Development Control Committee - 4 July 2006**
- **Development Control Committee - 1 August 2006**

A member commented that attendance at the Area Advisory Forums had been poor recently, and asked that this be further debated. The Chairman reported that the Eastern Area Advisory Forum had just welcomed two new members, from Talgarth Town Council and Llangorse Community Council.

A member referred to various dates in relation to the 50th Anniversary celebrations next year and asked that these were highlighted for members' diaries.

In relation to Minute 76/06 of the Authority meeting held on 28 July 2006, item 2.0 Wales Spatial Plan meetings, a member pointed out the increasing importance of the Wales Spatial Plan, which was likely to have a significant influence on European funding. While the Authority had resolved not to be represented on the South West Regional Committee, he felt that this should be reviewed in light of emerging information.

RESOLVED: *That Cllr E Williams be appointed to represent the Authority on the Wales Spatial Plan South West Committee, with Cllr K Pathak to deputise.*

84/06 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

RESOLVED: *That pursuant to the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under Paragraphs 12 and 21 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Act.*

85/06 EXEMPT ITEMS

85.1 Sickness Report

Members noted that while the incidence of short term sickness had increased slightly, this was still below the national average, and that there were no cases of long term sickness at present.

RESOLVED: *That Members note the contents of the report.*

85.2 Health and Safety Report

Members considered a report of incidents that had happened since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: *That Members note the contents of the report.*

86.2 Relocation Expenses for Members of Staff

Members considered a recommendation to approve relocation packages for two officers who had recently been appointed by the Authority. These were exceptions to the Authority's policy on relocation, and members were briefed on the circumstances.

RESOLVED: *That relocation expenses be approved for the Rural Practice Surveyor and the Business Strategy Manager.*

86.4 Staffing Issues: Development Control Section

The Chairman advised that this report had been withdrawn from the agenda.

86.5 Proposed National Grid Liquefied Natural Gas Pipeline - Felindre to Tirley

Members who had declared an interest in this item withdrew from the meeting.

Members considered a detailed tabled report on the current situation regarding the proposed pipeline, and sought clarification from the Chief Executive and the Authority's Ecologist on a number of issues. Following a meeting with National Grid last week, the Chief Executive had now received a letter from the Project Manager, which he read out to members. He advised that members' views were sought on the issue of a Voluntary Easement, and the conditions that should be attached to this.

Members were still totally opposed in principle to the pipeline being routed through the Park but recognised the need to consider the options available to the Authority if the DTI approved the route, and how best to mitigate the effects of construction.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Authority remains opposed in principle to the proposed route of the pipeline through the National Park;**
- b) That the Chief Executive be authorised to negotiate further the voluntary easement subject to:**
 - DTI consent for the pipeline**
 - All work being carried out to an agreed best practice schedule**
 - Further negotiation on an enhancement package in line with a minimum figure advised by the Authority**

87/06 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chief Executive gave the following update to members:

- He had hosted a meeting of overseas Police Officers, which had provided a useful perspective on how Wales was viewed;
- The Authority had hosted a WAG meeting with the new Head of Planning, Rosemary Thomas, which had discussed amongst other issues, the improvements in the Authority's planning services;
- He had met with Glyn Davies, AM, to discuss a range of topics, including the possibility of the Assembly holding one of its Environment Committee meetings in Plas y Ffynnon.
- He had formally opened the Crickhowell Information and Resource Centre, and recommended that members visit this if they were in the area, as it was an excellent resource for the town and local organisations;

- A useful meeting with the Chief Executive of Powys had highlighted the need for an action plan arising out of the Memorandum of Understanding. This would be discussed further at the next liaison meeting on 8 December.
- The Management Teams of the Authority and of CCW had had a useful meeting recently, and the Chief Executive of CCW had indicated that he would like to repeat the exercise with the other two Welsh Parks in order to find better ways of working;
- He had attended a very interesting event on renewable energy at Penpont, where he was struck by the enthusiasm of the young people involved, and with the efforts of the owner to find sustainable ways of managing Penpont's energy needs.

A member felt that there was a perception from Powys that Park officers were not readily available to them. The Head of the Business Unit and the Head of Conservation and Community outlined the range of services and activities on which the two authorities were working closely.

87/06 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1.0 Performance 2006/07

The Head of Performance apologised to members that two annexes had been included on their agendas that were contrary to the Data Protection Act, and which members had been asked to destroy.

She referred to improvements in the procedures for dealing with complaints to the Authority but advised that while trends were being identified it was too early to assess any improvements. In answer to a question about verbal complaints, the Head of Performance advised that some complaints could be dealt with immediately either face to face or by telephone, but that otherwise complainants were invited to submit a written complaint. She confirmed that the Chairman of the Complaints and Customer Feedback Panel had been kept briefed about the changes in procedures, and that members only became directly involved in Stage 3 complaints. She confirmed that customer relations was a priority for the Authority. A member asked that examples of congratulatory letters be brought to members' attention.

It was agreed that a 12 monthly review of trends would be very helpful for members, and that an indication be given as to what stage each complaint was at.

RESOLVED: That Members note the report on general and ombudsman complaints.

2.0 Risk Assessment Strategy and Review of Corporate Objectives 2007/10

The Head of Performance took members through the methodology used to assess risk in the organisation and how this was used to contribute to the review of corporate objectives for the coming year. In response to a question from members, the Chief Executive advised that the Authority was aware of the potential risk posed by equal pay claims and confirmed that this was being addressed.

The issue of a fireproof safe was debated and the Head of the Business Unit confirmed that the Authority had a fireproof safe but that this was not airtight as recommended by the Authority's insurers.

RESOLVED: That Members discuss and adopt the Annual Risk Assessment carried out in 2006.

3.0 Business Improvement Plan (BIP) 2006/09 Part Two

Members considered the draft Business Improvement Plan for 2006/09. They stressed the importance of the language being understood by all rather than using jargon. One member referred to the risks identified through the Risk Management Strategy and the Head of Performance confirmed that these would be addressed through an action plan.

RESOLVED: That Members approve the BIP part two for 2006/09.

4.0 Revised Estimates

Members considered the revised revenue and capital estimates for 2006/07. The Finance Manager advised that there were no major concerns but that significant variances had been highlighted to members in the report. Reserves were also at an acceptable level.

RESOLVED: That Members approve the Revised Revenue and Capital Estimates 2006/07.

5.0 BBNP 50th Anniversary Celebrations

A detailed report was received on the events and key projects planned as part of the Authority's 50th anniversary. The Communications Officer advised that the member/officer project group were meeting on a monthly basis to take projects forward. In response to a question about funding, he confirmed that each project had a detailed costed project plan and that the Service Managers' Team were currently addressing savings in the budget to fund these. All members would be kept informed through a communications plan. He also confirmed that various organisations would be involved in events, including the Park Society.

RESOLVED: That Members note the information in the report and support:

- a) The aims, objectives and themes of the programme***
- b) The individual project elements described***

6.0 Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the National Park Management Plan

Members considered a recommendation in relation to the scoping report for the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the National Park Management Plan.

RESOLVED: That members authorise the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive to approve the National Park Management Plan SA/SEA Scoping Report for consultation after its agreement by the Steering Group

7.0 WLGA Annual Conference 2006

The Authority had been offered five 'free' places at the WLGA Annual Conference this year, although there would be accommodation and dinner costs, as well as travel costs.

RESOLVED: That the Authority authorises the Chairman, Cllr W Powell and one other members (to be decided) to attend the WLGA Conference.

8.0 Local Development Plan

Members considered changes to the Draft Delivery Agreement following the consultation process, including late comments received from CCW which had been sent out with the agenda. One member had some issues in relation to the Sandford Principle, which he had raised separately with the officer.

RESOLVED: That Members approve the Delivery Agreement for submission to the WAG.

9.0 HR Policies

Members considered three HR policies which would form part of the Authority's Signpost suite of policies. Those policies for Chief Officers had to be written specifically in relation to their terms and conditions, which were different from those staff on NJC terms and conditions.

RESOLVED: That Members adopt the following three policies:
1.1b Disciplinary Policy (Chief Officers)
1.5b Capability Policy (Chief Officers)
1.21 Employment of Ex-Offenders

10.0 Anti Money Laundering Policy

The lack of an Anti Money Laundering Policy had been identified by the Wales Audit Office, and members considered a draft policy for the Authority.

RESOLVED: That the Authority adopts the Anti-money Laundering Policy and Guidance Note.

11.0 Appeals Panel: Terms of Reference

Members considered an amendment to the terms of reference for the Appeals Panel to include chief officers employed under JNC terms and conditions as well as NJC conditions of service.

RESOLVED: That the Terms of Reference of the Authority and its Committees and Scheme of Delegation be amended so that the Terms of Reference of the Appeals Committee are as follows:

“To consider and determine appeals including job evaluation appeals under the appeals procedure for employees under NJC and Chief Officers employed under JNC Conditions of Service”

12.0 Additional Capital Allocation for Disabled Access

Members received a report of proposed work to be carried out from the additional capital funding received from the Welsh Assembly Government. They welcomed the projects to improve disabled access in sites across the Park and noted that a report would also be made to the Disabled Access Steering Group later this month.

A member highlighted an access issues on the Henry Vaughan walk in Brecon, and the Assistant Community Development Officer confirmed that he was in discussion about this.

RESOLVED: That Members are asked to approve the projects for capital funding from the additional capital allocation from the Welsh Assembly Government.

88/06 OTHER BUSINESS

88.1 Chain of Office

A member asked that an item be put on the next NPA agenda regarding the issue of the National Park Authority Chairman and Deputy Chairman wearing chains of office.

CHAIRMAN