

Engagement with Communities: Paper for the Area Advisory Forum – February 2008

Current Situation

We currently engage with communities in the following ways:

- Area Advisory Forums (comprising representatives from community councils, partner organisations and local/national interest groups)
- Consultation meetings (often area based) for eg. National Park Management Plan, Local Plan
- Promoting specific issues (eg. Support for local action on climate change, SDF and Big Green Challenge) to community councils, community groups and SDF contacts-via mailshot/email, meetings and contacts
- Agricultural stakeholder meetings with representatives of the farming community
- Tourism workshops/conference with tourism providers
- Informally in day to day work eg wardens, sustainable tourism etc developing projects across the Park
- Communities of interest around developing policy & plans in their specific interest area eg Disabled Access Steering Group around Disability Equality Scheme
- Communities of interest in specific projects eg youth & education services in delivering Youth Diversionary Project
- Attendance at community/ interest group meetings eg Community Council mtgs, Farming Union meetings
- Indirectly through engagement with Community Strategy processes- where communities have expressed their wants/ needs via a 3rd party (the Community strategy process & resulting strategies & in some cases action plans)

Feedback from Area Advisory Forums

At the October round of meetings some detailed feedback was received. To summarise:

- The Park was trying to be all things to all people – not always possible
- Timing and venues of meetings not always convenient
- Too many NPA representatives and not enough community or user group input – review composition
- Forums were a good source of information about what the Park was doing
- Community councils needed to be encouraged to join the forums
- Very few agenda items received from any organisations except the Park Society
- Formal structure of the meetings limited involvement – need to try other methods – eg Open Space
- Themed and facilitated workshops may be a better option
- Reduce forums to two to match warden/planning areas
- The Authority needed to listen more to its communities
- Attending meetings of organisations might be more effective – larger target audience
- Too much NPA policy on the agenda
- Limited local focus on the agendas, but updates from Area Managers particularly helpful and interesting

Update

The Corporate Management Team considered a report based on feedback from the Area Advisory Forums, with the following options:

- Reduce Area Advisory Forums to two based on warden and planning areas – East/West
- Move the forums around the Park – ie. Not area based – would encourage a Park wide approach
- Consider use of open space technology instead of formal agendas
- Consider whether we would want to host meetings where organisations gave presentations to each other – not a good use of NP resources? Tight management (preview presentations) to ensure “on subject” (NP theme) would help build wider “team NP”
- Disband AAFs and replace with series of themed workshops linked to our priorities for the next year – advertise in press and via website/email to encourage wide attendance from interested individuals, community councils or organisations (or all three). Back to back them a bit to enable “elected reps” (with wider interests) to attend several. Invest time in targeted invites
- Engage separately with community councils (we have done this before with limited effectiveness). Would address their general representative role. Link to annual barbecue to promote “team NP”
- Need to consider how we engage with user groups

The CMT felt that the following might a way forward, subject to consultation with the Area Advisory Forums.

- A suggestion that CMT and SMT (Service Managers Team) work with 2 or 3 Community Councils, becoming the representative/conduit for those areas and could offer to give presentations on what is going on in that area with regard to the Park. Note: This has not been discussed with the SMT yet, and would be subject to their agreement and capacity.
- An annual meeting of the Community Councils where open space will be used.
- Themed meetings could take over from the AAFs and move around the Park and the first themes could come from Part I of the NPMP
- Open space methodology to be trialled at the Eastern Area Advisory Forum on 18 February

Recommendation: Views are now sought from the Area Advisory Forums for inclusion in a report to the National Park Authority on 26 March 2008.