

ROACHES UPDATE JUNE 2011

Where are we now?

Tenders were submitted for May 20th. Best information to date is that tenders were received from the National Trust (NT), the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (StWT), and the Land Trust (LT) although the National Park Project manager hasn't yet responded to our request for details. The LT told us that they would like to buy the estate and appoint a managing agent. The NT and StWT would buy or lease as sole agents.

The BMC has submitted a written proposal to the National Park (NP) to buy the Don Whillans Memorial Hut (DWMH) also known as Rockhall Cottage. All three bidders have also offered to sell the BMC the DWMH if they buy the estate, subject to agreed terms. The Friends of the Peak (FoP) in a supporting letter to the NP have stated that the NP should sell the DWMH to the BMC within the bidding process.

The NT requested a letter of support from the BMC to be submitted with their bid and this was provided. The FoP also strongly supported the NT in their letter.

A letter has gone from the Chair of the BMC Peak Area to the Chair of the NP covering all the considerations and principles that the BMC considers important with regard to the asset disposal. The previously mentioned letter from the FoP of 26/5/11 largely reiterates these considerations and principles and is a very influential voice for the NP to take into account.

The process from now on.

The tenders have been opened and the NP officers (access; property; conservation; archaeology etc) will examine these tenders in detail and during the summer will visit bidders' existing sites to judge their abilities to manage estates of this kind and to follow up on tendering proposals with detailed questioning. In the autumn the officers will make their recommendations to the NP Members for their decision. In October the NP Members are due to make that decision. If a tender submitted is a good one and is for both the Roaches and North Lees then the decision may be delayed until the spring of 2012.

Overall.

Our case is now made. We will continue to monitor and to lobby whenever and by whatever means are appropriate. The NP can be in no doubt of what we wish to see take place as well as how BMC members feel about the area. We have strengthened our links with, and mutual support to, NT; StWT; the Ramblers; the Friends of the Peak; and local community groups and this in itself has been a very positive and useful spin-off of the exercise.

The NP would do well to listen to ourselves, the FoP, the Ramblers, and the community groups as the overwhelmingly involved users of the area. We shall see.

Finally a thankyou.

This exercise has involved seeking advice and information from individuals and organizations often at short notice; visiting and interviewing the various initial bidders sometimes more than once; attending community meetings locally in Leek and with the NP

in Bakewell and at the DWMH; letter-writing; countless e-mails; keeping community groups and the Ramblers informed and 'on side'; working with both the NT and SWT on their tender documents; frequent BMC internal discussions; and trying to keep members informed.

No one person could have done all this and therefore a special thanks will go to all those BMC members who have variously contributed to this process with their advice, information, expertise, and support, even though they may not always have been aware of it! In alphabetical order: Andi Turner; Adam Long; Bill Renshaw; Dave Turnbull; Gary Cooper; Henry Folkard; Michael Hunt; Martin Kocsis; Mark Sharratt; Martin Dearden; Peter Cowie; Rob Dyer; and of course Neil and Lynn. And if I've missed anyone in the process, sorry!

Dave Bishop, May 31st 2011

Postscript:

Safeguarding of public land:

The whole question of the safeguarding of public land, which has arisen out of this asset review, is a vital one for BMC members as well as all other citizens given that offering public assets for sale or lease seems to be current government policy. The BMC has issued a press release stating our policy and principles on 21st April and there is an article on the BMC website 'Peak Park seeks partner for Stanage' on the same theme. On the 60th anniversary of the Peak Park in April I got a letter into The Guardian congratulating the Park, drawing readers' attention to the on-going asset review and the sale/lease of public land, making parallels with the recent Forestry Commission fiasco, and asking readers to ensure that the NP Authority Members kept public land in the public domain.

I've certainly learned some useful guidelines during this Roaches exercise that would be helpful to anyone faced with the issue of public land being put up for sale or lease, and Henry, with his significant involvement in Eastern Moors, the Roaches, and North Lees, will have a major contribution to make also. We will ensure that our lessons are available to other areas of the BMC.