

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Public Minutes of Meeting held on 6 December 2024

Present:

Jerry Brook, Will Dracup (Deputy Chair), Catherine Shewan (Independent Person), Peter Harper, Gay Hill, Mike Jeffery, Sally Morgan, Caroline Mott, Mark Owen, Guy Pannell, Philip Sanders, Mary Seddon, Peter Smerdon, Dan Thomas, Mark Williams.

Apologies:

Pamela Woods (Chair), James McInnes, John Nutley, Mark Renders, Lois Samuel.

Officers in attendance:

Kevin Bishop (Chief Executive), Dean Kinsella (Director of Spatial Planning) Richard Drysdale (Director of Conservation and Communities), Neil White (Head of Organisational Development), Su Layfield (Business Support – Minutes).

3620 Declarations of Interest

Will Dracup declared an interest in Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes (DDL) and Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), the Shallowford Farm City Bid and the Hill Farm Project.

Peter Harper declared an interest in the Hill Farm Project and he is the Chair of the City Boundary Boost. He also sits on the assessment panel for FiPL.

Mark Owen declared an interest in Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL). He is also the Director of the Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster Community Interest Company.

3621 Minutes

The public minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2024, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Deputy Chair as a correct record.

3622 Chair's Report

The Deputy Chair reported having attended the following meetings:

- Meeting with Team Devon, the main topic discussed was the Devon devolution deal.
- National Parks England discussing finance and securing finance going forward.

3623 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

None.

3624 Public Participation

1. Councillor Catherine Fileman-Wright, Chair of Moretonhampstead Parish Council

Moretonhampstead Parish lies at the junction of the A382 and B3212 with many homes built along these busy roads. There have been many complaints about people driving too fast, dangerously and even mounting pavements. Moretonhampstead Parish Council has made many representations to Devon County Council for 20mph speed limits and other traffic calming measures but have been unsuccessful to date.

Many towns and parishes reported concerns about the speed of traffic in their communities. 12 DNPA communities have previously applied for 20MPH speed limits, and 7 are registered supporters of “20’s Plenty” campaign. Of the councils who responded to us, ten indicated support for action on excessive speed.

A few years ago, Dartmoor National Park took a lead in setting 40mph limits on the high moor to protect livestock and reduce emissions and we would therefore ask DNPA to:

- support Dartmoor communities’ efforts to introduce 20mph speed limits by asking Devon County Council to increase and ring fence their annual budget for these schemes so that Dartmoor communities stand a chance of coming forward sooner;
- ask Devon County Council to give extra weight to the special character of Dartmoor communities in their evaluation of 20mph schemes;
- support the proposed measures in the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan for 20mph speed limits in settlements, where locally supported.

In response, a Member commented, that, in his experience, the Council do not generally decrease the speed limit on national trunk roads (like the A382) to 20 miles an hour. Cllr Fileman-Wright replied that their request has not yet been answered by Devon County Council.

Another Member confirmed that DCC works on a matrix system and has implemented 20 miles per hour based on the score for the area on this matrix system. The Member asked Cllr Fileman-Wright whether she knew the score for Moretonhampstead on application and she replied she thought it was 10 or 11 but would need to check this to confirm.

2. Tim Ferry, Voluntary Warden for Dartmoor National Park Authority, Trustee and Volunteer of the charity Moor Trees.

National Park Partnership Plan

Mr Ferry started by explaining that as the next item on the agenda is regarding the Partnership Plan, he felt it timely to speak about the Partnership Plan, which he feels lacks any connections to the general public. He took part in the consultation leading to the plan’s creation as a representative of Moor Trees, however he feels that it was not promoted enough after its publication in 2021; the Plan has not subsequently been given out by the Outreach team or circulated to/by the Information Centres. Mr Ferry is a Voluntary Warden for Dartmoor National Park Authority and can vouch for the fact that a copy of the Partnership Plan would have helped him in his work. He says that the 195 targets and progress thereupon seem to have been forgotten. Even the Annual Review does not refer to specific targets or any progress. In contrast, Exmoor National Park Authority often talks about its nature recovery targets and achievements. Mr Ferry feels that this document, which some could argue is the single most important in recent years, has been kept a secret from the public.

There were no questions from Members.

3625 Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-2026 – Progress Update

Considered:

Report of the Partnership Plan & Climate Officer and the Director of Spatial Planning (NPA/24/041)

In response to Members' questions/comments, it was advised:

- It was acknowledged that a common thread running through all the comments and feedback is of a lack of external communication and it is recognised there is a lesson to be learned here.
- However, during 2018 and 2019 DNPA carried out a series of Dartmoor debates around the topics, a full public consultation online and draft vision consultation – all of which were robust.
- It was confirmed that actions are being measured and monitored against national projects and their targets (e.g. FiPL, Protected Landscapes Outcomes Framework and 30by30) as well as the actions in the Plan. Although the entire time-period 2018-2020 could not be noted as disrupted by the pandemic, this did significantly impact the launch of the plan and how we could engage with audiences.
- In response to whether the communication strategy refers to the Plan or the whole authority, it was confirmed that this refers to the Plan. We have a separate Communications strategy plan for the Authority.
- The communication strategy going forward needs to Clarify this.
- It was agreed that we need to move forward and increase communication of the data gathered within a robust process and developed over the next 5 years.
- Agreed to give Members regular updates on the Partnership Plan which will include learning from the previous processes and procedures and ensuring the Plan is prominent, clear and communicated throughout.
- In the future, it would be informative to include reports from all partners and the public if possible, with regular updates to ensure we make people aware of what we are doing.
- The State of the Park report is done every five years which is an important evidence base. DNPA is finalising the next update on the state of the park. This will provide an important evidence base for the review of the current Partnership Plan.
- The next steps are to establish a “Partnership Board” (name to be decided). This will establish the monitoring framework for the current plan while providing direction or the review process. We are looking to finalise this structure next year. Initial discussions have already taken place following a meeting in November 2024.
- It was stressed that the current plan has delivered a lot of very positive outcomes, many of these in partnership with other organisations.
- Members were reminded about the upcoming Planning and Sustainable Development Working panel and to attend. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) accepted the criticism and recognised the frustrations that had been aired.
- It was recognised that consistent data sets cut to the National Park boundary was not always available. It is hoped that with the launch of the Land Use Management Group and the requirement to deliver (Dartmoor Observatory) this will make data collection and evidence gathering more efficient, addressing data gaps.
- Undertaking an external audit of the State of the Park Report would be costly. As it is a Partnership Plan, there is already has an element of external consultancy.
- Regarding the lack of hard copy, it was published and there was a distribution list of all partners who formulated the plan. Documents of the smaller vision were sent to visitor centres and the staff were briefed at the time. However, it is clear we need to

do more. Now we have appointed a Partnership Plan and Climate Officer who is reviewing how information is most effectively shared.

The Deputy Chair advised that it was the input into the Partnership Plan sessions which were carried out with such enthusiasm and ambition which inspired him to become a part of the Authority. Partnership is good, but now clearly needs to be moved forward and is on the agenda next week at the Planning and Sustainable Working Panel meeting.

Members also asked that the Plan is broken down into different parts so it could be addressed more easily. Members also added that officers are doing a great job and they are not trying to be critical but trying to help.

Recommendation: That:

- i Members note and comment on progress of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-2026; and
- ii Members' views are sought on lessons learnt and next steps

Resolved: Members noted the content of the report and approved the recommendation.

Mark Owen left the meeting.

3626 Boundary Boost Consultation Work – Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF)

Considered:

The Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) on behalf of the Dartmoor Farming Officer (NPA/24/042)

A Member confirmed that they are working on the committee involved and they believe it is reasonable request as the project only has 18 months to run.

Another Member asked whether this project covers just Dartmoor or outside the boundary of the project. It was advised that this project relates to the National Park only and is testing the feasibility of the idea.

Recommendation: That Members approve the utilisation of the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund framework thresholds rather than those of the Authority

Resolved: Members noted the content of the report and approved the recommendation.

3627 Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Considered:

The report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/24/043).

Members agreed to complete appropriate e-learning to raise their awareness and understanding of their role and responsibilities to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Resolved: Members noted the content of the report.

Members agreed to complete appropriate e-learning by 31 March 2025.

Standing Orders to be revised to require Members to complete appropriate training to prevent harassment in the workplace prior to sitting on a public committee.

3628 Open Consultation: Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority Meetings

Considered:

The report of the Head of Organisational Development (Monitoring Officer) (NPA/24/044).

In response to Member comments/questions the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer:

- Advised that this is an open consultation on proposals at this stage and that the Authority's response does not bind it to any actions or decisions in the future;
- Noted the views expressed by Members regarding the advantages and disadvantages of remote attendance at public meetings;
- Acknowledged the points raised relating to accessibility, protected characteristics and climate change;
- Noted the concerns raised regarding proxy voting, in particular in relation to Development Management Committee and the risk of pre-determination.

Resolved: Members agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) in consultation in consultation with the Deputy Chair of the Authority, Chair of Development Management and Chair of Audit and Governance Committees, to finalise and submit the final response.

The Meeting had a break for lunch.

Jerry Brook, Dan Thomas and Guy Pannell left the meeting.

3629 Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme – A report on the Programme to date – July 2021-October 2024

Considered:

The report of the Strategic Planning and Projects Manager (NPA/24/045).

All agreed that feedback from applicants had been extremely positive and Members passed on their congratulations to the officers which was reinforced by Director of Conservation and Communities who thanked the team.

Another Member advised that the success of the project was in part due to the fact we had a real person to deal with and the amount of support given was hugely appreciated.

Members asked how DEFRA had received the success of this project. It was suggested that this success may result in continued funding and we have been lobbying for an extension to FiPL. Members agreed it was an interesting project to see from initial consultation through to implementation. There were initially differences of opinion about the value of a locally led scheme providing free advice to applicants, however this project has shown how valuable and appreciated this has been.

Thanks was given to all the officers working on the scheme.

Resolved: Members noted the content of the report

3630 Visitor Engagement – End of Season Report 2024

Considered:

The report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/24/046).

In response to Member comments/questions:

- Members asked about an online retail offer and were advised that the Retail Officer is currently tasked with looking into the viability of this. She will visit Exmoor next week to see how they have implemented and their learnings to date.
- Members also noted that additional Dartmoor branded items are also being looked into.

A Member then wanted to record their thanks to all the Visitor Centre staff. Their knowledge and professionalism was acknowledged and Members are very grateful for this. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) promised that these sentiments would be passed on to the staff.

Resolved: Members noted the content of the report.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed by Members to move to Part II – items to be taken in the absence of the press and public on the grounds that exempt information may be disclosed.

Public Summary of Items considered “in private” at the meeting of the Dartmoor National Park Authority on 6 December 2024.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 November 2024 were approved and signed.

There being no other business, the Part II meeting ended and moved back to Part I. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all staff and Members.

There being no other business the Part I meeting ended.