



Dartmoor Access Forum

Parke, Bovey Tracey, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 9JQ

Tel: (01626) 832093 Fax: (01626) 834684

E-mail: localaccessforum@dartmoor-npa.gov.uk Web site: www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk

To: All Members of the
Dartmoor Access Forum
(see below)

DARTMOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES of meeting held on Tuesday, 19 November 2024

James Wright
Recreation Strategy Development Officer
E-mail: recreation@dartmoor.gov.uk

Present: Mrs A Clish-Green, Ms K Donohue, Mrs A Head, Mrs J Lewis, Mr G Lindsay, Mr C Mason, Mrs S Morgan, Mr M Owen, Mrs S Parrott, Mr P Spear & Mrs P Warren
DNPA: Mr A Watson, Mr T Russell & Mr J Wright

606) Welcome and Apologies

The meeting was opened by the current Chair Michael Owen (MO) who welcomed members.

Apologies from Mrs Gillian Branfield, Mr Luke Fursdon, Mr Mark Owen and Dr Rachel Manning

607) Minutes of meeting held on 23 April 2024

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 April 2024 were accepted as a correct record by the Chair Michael Owen and seconded by Alison Clish-Green.

608) Update on Access and Recreation Projects

Access for All

Tim Russell provided an update on Access for All projects delivered as part of year 3 DEFRA funding. TR confirmed that DNPA have received £73k which is supporting delivering across 15 projects including access improvements at 8 sites including Wistman's Wood, Fernworthy Reservoir, Blackingstone Rock and Longtimber Woods. Additionally, the funding is being used to invest in digital resources through the walking app and purchasing of a tramper/off-road mobility scooter that the park will make available for visitors to the park in 2025.

TR highlighted the ambition for improving equity in our National Park through barrier removal and working closely with user groups.



TR and JW have submitted a bid to Teignbridge through their Rural Connectivity Fund and are awaiting a decision for access improvement projects in the Teign Valley including bridge upgrades and surfacing improvements.

Michael Owen asked why the park had to apply to the council and couldn't be funded directly. JW confirmed that this was related to the format of government funding and that DNPA have no say over how this operates.

Inga Page asked whether the park had received concerns from landowners and tenant farmers over stile removal. TR stated that though there has been some concern, most are supportive, and the team appreciate that it may not be practical to replace all stiles but the ambition to reduce unnecessary barriers remains a priority.

Sue Parrott asked how user groups and organisation can help the park with access improvements e.g. gates that would improve access for horse-riders. SP suggested that there may be means for user groups to raise funds to supply new gates and asked whether DNPA could support with installation. JW confirmed this would be welcome and that the park would work with users and organisations wherever possible.

Dartmoor National Park Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

James Wright provided an update on the development of Dartmoor's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. DNPA received £100k from Active Travel England to develop a network plan to improve walking and cycling links in the park. JW described the focus of the plan which was to highlight the need for improved rights of way, promoted routes, quiet lanes and basic infrastructure such as waymarking and secure cycle parking at key sites across Dartmoor. JW highlighted the consultation tool once again with members and confirmed the deadline of 24 November 2024 for submissions. A further consultation on the draft network plan will be carried out early in the new year.

Inga Page shared some general feedback including some quiet lane options that will be submitted following the meeting. IP proposed a general piece of work around mapping of businesses that support bike parking and charging.

Peter Spear raised some concerns regarding quiet lane designation and the viability without any formal enforcement. JW stressed that the park will not be considering a blanket quiet lane approach rather a targeted series of routes where quiet lane designation would support multi-user safety.

Alison Clish-Green highlighted the need for active travel to align with public transport links. A C-G shared details of Devon County Council Rural bus funding and suggested that DAF should provide a formal approach to Devon County Council highlighting the need for improved year-round services to Dartmoor. Specific feedback was given on the success of the 171 and 172 service which is currently seasonal but could be extended to provide a year-round service for residents and visitors.

Sally Morgan suggested the use of school buses to offer services to residents. It was noted that many bus companies travel back to their hub rather than to a destination, but DAF could question DCC on viability of using school buses following drop-offs.

609) DAF Member Submissions

Graham Lindsay submitted questions related to mapping including the varied sources of information and how this needs to be improved in order for us to encourage, educate and enforce appropriate use of Dartmoor. GL argued that there needs to be consistent and up-to-date information for people to access relating to their chosen activities, including route finding, navigation and safety.



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GL described the main sources of information for cyclists and made suggestions on how these could be improved. JW highlighted that many of the sources were external to DNPA and therefore outside of our control but recognised the need for more consistent and up-to-date information. JW to arrange a meeting with GL and other interested members to discuss future actions.

Sue Parrott raised the issue of reporting a path problem and how some users were experiencing difficulties when trying to report issues. SP also asked whether update/live information could be provided so that users can be updated on the progress of action taken and/or amend an issue if resolved by themselves. JW confirmed that the system is currently under review and that a new simpler reporting system will be introduced in 2025. JW highlighted the challenges with updating on issues but that this would be considered when implementing the new system.

Peter Spear raised a question about letterboxing and geocaching. What is DNPA's standpoint and how is it managed? JW confirmed that letterboxing events are picked up under the event notification process and conditions for support are shared with the Dartmoor Letterboxing 100 club who facilitate the walks on Dartmoor. The letterboxing club also have a code of conduct which members need to agree to before walks are put out.

JW confirmed that there was need for a clean-up of old/abandoned letterboxing resources at popular sites. JW to liaise with letterboxing club to support with this.

610) Update from Dartmoor Access Forum Chair

Michael Owen provided a summary of the summer Peatland Restoration site visit to Great Gnat's Head where members were able to discuss access implications of peatland works on Dartmoor. MO thanked DNPA officers Jonny and Martin for an informative day and found the visit insightful. No negative access implications were identified. JW suggested that assessment of impacts on access should continue while works are being carried out as the project is well funded and any necessary interventions should be factored into the project planning.

Penny Warren highlighted that the works were being completed at significant expense and DNPA does not have the funds to carry out interventions resulting from any impact of the works, this should be picked up by South West Peatland Partnership.

611) Next Meeting and AOB

Alison Clish-Green provided an update on FiPL. Alison celebrated the success of FiPL but noted that currently FiPL is not going to be extended beyond March 2024. A C-G shared details of a FiPL celebration event at Tor Royal farm and highlighted some of the main successes of the scheme. TR shared a document summarising some of the FiPL projects.

A C-G asked whether officers were able to share FiPL fortnight with DAF members. JW to ask Bea Dunscombe and Richard Drysdale whether possible.



SP asked whether there was any update on ELMS. JW confirmed that government change has delayed announcement on implementation.

Members thanked A C-G for her diligence in attending every panel meeting to ensure that access was considered wherever possible.

Next formal meeting – Date to be confirmed.

No other business noted.