

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Public Minutes of Meeting held on 10 January 2025

Present:

Will Dracup, Peter Harper, Gay Hill, Sally Morgan, Caroline Mott, John Nutley, Mark Owen, Guy Pannell, Mark Renders, Philip Sanders, Mary Seddon, Catherine Shewan (Independent Person), Peter Smerdon, Dan Thomas, Mark Williams, Pamela Woods

Apologies:

Jerry Brook, Mike Jeffrey James McInnes, Lois Samuel

Officers in attendance:

Kevin Bishop (Chief Executive (National Park Officer)), Dean Kinsella (Director of Spatial Planning), Richard Drysdale (Director of Conservation and Communities), Neil White (Head of Organisational Development), Jen Manning (Partnership Plan and Climate Officer), Liz Payne (Senior Planning Policy Officer), Tamsin Thomas (Our Upland Commons Dartmoor Officer), Penny Bailey (Minute Secretary)

3631 Declarations of Interest

Mr Dracup declared an interest in Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), and that under Our Upland Commons, Shallowford had received funds for the Farm to City project.

Mr Sanders advised that he was an appointee of Devon County Council, and his ward was Yelverton Rural which includes Princetown. He advised that this did not exclude him from debate or discussions in respect of Item 7 on the Agenda (NPA/25/001).

Mrs Mott advised that she was appointed to serve as a Member of DNPA by West Devon Borough Council which includes Princetown. She advised that this did not exclude her from debate or discussions in respect of Item 7 on the Agenda (NPA/25/001).

Mr Renders declared a personal interest in Item 7 on the Agenda (NPA/25/001), due to the following: he is councillor for WDBC, he is also the Deputy Leader of WDBC. He is the owner of the Post Office and General Store in Princetown, has attended meetings with Sir Geoffrey Cox and Tom Stratton. The meetings were not specifically about the Visitor Centre but the issue was raised and discussed. He attended a business meeting last week with all of the speakers at today's meeting. He was aware that Tom Usher, Chief Executive, Dartmoor Preservation Association (DPA), had emailed a letter to Dr Bishop, Chief Executive (National Park Officer), which had today been circulated, together with Dr Bishop's response, to all Members. He advised that he was pre-disposed, not pre-determined.

Mr Pannell declared a personal interest in Item 7 on the Agenda (NPA/25/001) as he is an ordinary member of the DPA.

Mr Owen declared a personal interest in Item 7 on the Agenda (NPA/25/001) due to his being a tenant of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Mr Williams declared a personal interest in Item 7 on the Agenda (NPA/25/001) due to his being the Chair of Dartmoor Forest Parish Council and a resident of Princetown. He has also attended the HIVE meetings as a Parish Councillor. He stated that he was pre-disposed, not pre-determined.

3632 Minutes

Mr Harper advised that with regard to Minute No. 3627 – Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace – the resolution should have read “Members agreed to complete appropriate e-learning by 31 January 2025”. Save for this amendment, the public minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2024, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3633 Chair’s Report

The Chair stated that it was good to be back after her leave of absence ; thanked Mr Dracup for covering for her and other Members for their good wishes.

The Deputy Chair reported that he had attended a National Parks England meeting; the meeting with the Minister responsible for National Parks was cancelled and has been re-arranged for 24 January 2025.

3634 Public Participation

The Chair observed a number of speakers, both in person and via Teams and advised them all of the process to be followed.

3635 Closure of the National Park Visitor Centre, Princetown

Considered:

The report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/25/001).

Speakers: Cllr Alison Geen, Vice-Chair Dartmoor Forest Parish Council
Mr Rory Atton
Mr Nick Bennett
Mrs Caroline Wain
Mrs Emma Hogbin

Councillor Geen joined the meeting via Teams and read her statement as follows:

“I hereby speak on behalf of Dartmoor Forest Parish Council, united in our deep concern regarding the proposed closure of the Dartmoor National Park Visitors Centre in Princetown. This decision threatens the very heart of our community and the businesses that sustain it.

The DNPA cites financial constraints due to a “full repairing” lease as the reason for this drastic measure. Whilst we understand the pressures of managing budgets, we

firmly believe that closing this vital resource is not the solution. The Centre is a cornerstone of Princetown's tourism and a gateway to the wonders of Dartmoor. Its closure would have a devastating ripple effect on local businesses, many of which rely on the visitor traffic it generates.

The Council believes strongly that in times of financial adversity, we must pull together, not apart. Every avenue must be explored to preserve this essential asset. To this end we ask that any decision is postponed at least until the DNPA has met with Mary Creagh MP (Minister with responsibility for National Parks), on 23rd January.

We have identified several viable funding options that we urge the DNPA to seriously consider:

- The Centre has a history of hosting well-attended exhibitions. Implementing a small admission fee for these events could generate significant revenue without deterring visitors.*
- A modest entrance fee to the Centre itself could provide a steady stream of income, contributing directly to its upkeep.*
- Establishing a "Friends of Dartmoor" supporters club with an annual membership fee would not only provide financial support but also foster a sense of community engagement.*
- We strongly encourage the DNPA to engage in further open dialogue with the Duchy of Cornwall regarding the existing lease. Exploring alternative lease arrangements or considering adaptable uses for different parts of the building could offer a more sustainable long-term solution.*
- Finally, and importantly, liaise with Council and the wider community, who are committed to supporting the Centre, in providing assistance with cost elements, including but not limited to volunteer staffing, caring for the Jack Wigmore garden, and maintaining the grass area.*

We understand that the current lease, whilst not expiring until 2026, presents challenges. However, we believe that with creative thinking and collaborative effort, we can find a way to navigate these challenges without sacrificing this crucial resource.

We are not asking for the impossible, but simply asking for a delay to allow all parties involved the opportunity to work together and find a solution that benefits everyone.

Closing the Centre is not just about closing a building; it's about closing a door on opportunity, on community, and on the future of Princetown. We urge the DNPA to choose collaboration over closure. Let's work together to ensure that the Centre, and the Moor it supports, continue to thrive for generations to come."

A Member commented that this particular issue had been in the public arena for some considerable time and asked what the Parish Council felt could be achieved

now that has not previously been considered. Cllr Geen stated that the Council would like the Authority to talk to the Minister responsible for National Parks, Mary Creagh.

Mr Rory Atton made his representations to Members as follows:

“I’m representing my businesses Dewerstone and Hunt the Moon, as well as Basecamp and the General Stores. We comprise of all the retail business on Princetown high street situated directly opposite the Visitor Centre. I am also a member of the Princetown business network.

The Visitor Centre plays a crucial role in bringing tourism to Princetown, tourism which our retail businesses welcome, and have already planned for, in advance of the 2025 Summer season.

As retailers, please consider our concerns:

- *We are already financially committed to the tourism levels we have planned for, the Visitor Centre closing will cause a significant drop in visitor numbers and inflict a financial burden on us as retailers.*
- *In order to futureproof our businesses, the retailers of Princetown will have to seriously consider our position as to whether it is viable to remain in Princetown based on reduced tourism as a direct result of the Visitor Centre closure.*
- *A significant delay to the closure of the Visitor Centre would provide time for us to work with our stakeholders to formulate a plan to increase tourism and secure our viability for businesses in Princetown.*

The decision made today on the closure of the Princetown Visitor Centre will have knock on effects to our businesses. There are financial implications that have not been considered, because there has been no consultation.

Closure in March 2025 would unquestionably inflict grave consequences for the businesses and community of Princetown.

By delaying the closure of the visitor centre until March 2026 it will enable both business and community to form a resilient plan of action for the future of the village.”

In response to the same question previously posed to the first speaker, Mr Atton advised that he would like to see the local businesses and people who are involved in tourism within the community included in any discussions, adding that, in his opinion, there were many ways in which the building could become more viable. He felt that, as a business, he had not been consulted on something that would really affect him.

Mr Nick Bennett stated:

“I’m a local artist with a studio in Princetown and currently Chair of the Princetown Arts Festival. My understanding is that the DNPA has a responsibility for social access and a duty of care for the Park and those living in its surroundings. There is a sizable community of artists, both established and amateur, in West Dartmoor who are drawn to the area for its well-known mentally reparative qualities and sheer beauty. This large Visitor Centre has always been strongly engaged with local artists, extolling their work and recognizing their influence in all forms of media. Resultant exhibitions have attracted large footfall to this extremely deprived village, resulting both in the purchase of displayed art but also in recognition of the rich artistic diversity to be found in West Dartmoor. Such footfall also clearly helps form strong social bonds between art, retail, hospitality and other enterprises. I do not think it is too much to say that it forms an essential nucleus in the village which Princetown will really struggle without. Princetown and surrounding areas, while providing a crucial gateway to the moors, is also a deeply deprived area and in dire need of the well-being support and assistance provided by this Centre. I believe that it is a travesty that there has been no consultation with the Princetown community or business hub and, instead, a stealth decision has been made which will knowingly devastate our proud village. I call on you to fulfil your duty to the village of Princetown and extend the tenure to its fullest duration so that the village the Duchy of Cornwall and the DNPA can all work together to establish the best way forward. It is perfectly clear to me and to anyone that comes to have a look, that The Duchy Hotel is ripe for monetisation with its rich historical legacies and ample room.”

In response to a Member question requesting some examples of how he felt monetisation could be achieved, Mr Bennett responded that, in his opinion, visitors from all over the world would pay a significant sum to stay in the room where the Hounds of the Baskervilles was actually written, adding that all manner of commercial ventures could be accommodated within the building, e.g., farmers’ markets. He suggested that a brainstorming session could be undertaken within one of the local artist’s studios.

Mrs Caroline Wain made her presentation as follows:

“Good afternoon, I am Caroline Wain, teacher, parent, resident and owner of Duchy House Guest House in Princetown.

My key concerns about the closure of the Visitors Centre:

- *the absence of prior consultation,*
- *closing it before the 2025 season,*
- *if cuts are required, why is shutting the largest Visitor Centre the only option on the table?*

While the DNPA claims to have been exploring options, there has been no engagement with the community. Closing without engaging with the key stakeholders undermines statutory duties to the local community.

Published data reveals significant growth in visitor numbers consistently, with a spend of £293 million. With this in mind it is impossible to see how a public facing centre, with space and means to have a retail presence has not been successful. The commercial viability opportunities are extensive. No other organisation has had such favourable lease terms and still managed to fail! As a business owner it is impossible for me to reconcile how incompetently this valuable Duchy Lease has been mis-managed.

With visitor numbers increasing, there needs to be positive public guidance. The Dartmoor National Park Visitor Centre is the largest of three and the only one equipped to handle large school groups, making it a crucial educational resource. Princetown is one of the eight local centres in the strategic plan and the only one with a Visitor Centre. Sending visitors to the much smaller provisions at Postbridge and Haytor contradicts this plan and has to be discouraged. Closing the flagship Centre sends a clear negative message to visitors. The vision for the park proposes that visitors leave no trace; understand and respect the environment, each other and the people living and working here. A Visitor Centre in a hub location is crucial to deliver this.

There is mention of commercially sensitive third party involvement in the closure briefing. The DNPA has an obligation to keep the Visitor Centre open until this and other solutions have been exhausted. Otherwise, it might never reopen - there just isn't the commercial acumen within the DNPA. It is recognised there is a knock-on impact for local businesses. Which partners have been worked with on the longer-term vision for Princetown? The Business Network of Princetown have not been included.

The Visitor Centre is a vital lifeline for Princetown, one of the most socially deprived areas on Dartmoor (according to the ONS). Its closure would severely impact footfall, jeopardising the viability of local businesses, some of which have already expressed intentions to leave. This loss of businesses and community space would further isolate Princetown, exacerbating its existing economic disadvantages and creating a sense of decline. This comes at a particularly precarious time, with uncertainty surrounding the prison and the threat to the important Prison Museum. The knock-on impact could be devastating.

The community strongly urges members to reconsider its statutory duty, continuing the lease until March 2026, engaging in open and constructive dialogue to find a sustainable solution that benefits both the Park and the local community, whether it be exploring partnerships, increasing volunteer involvement, or pursuing grant funding."

In response to a Member's question regarding her understanding of the lease, its conditions and restrictions, between DNPA and the Duchy of Cornwall, Mrs Wain stated that she was aware that the lease had been held for 30 years, with a rental cost of £100; it was fully repairing lease. She advised that she had implied that there was potential for a café / restaurant to be installed in order to improve the viability of the building.

Mrs Emma Hogbin advised the Members as follows:

“Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. I live and work in Princetown. I would like to speak to my experience as an immigrant to the UK, as a home-owner, and business-owner in Princetown.

I moved from Canada to the UK a little over ten years ago. In the first few days of being in the UK, I went to the Visitor Centre in the city I was living in. Maybe it was called a tourist information centre. I don't remember. But I do recall nearly bursting into tears when someone asked me if I was alright (“Alright?”). When you're new to a place, unexpected things can be complicated and overwhelming.

When my partner and I first moved to Dartmoor, I was straight into the visitor centre to learn as much as I could. It was so much more helpful than reading books. I learned about the incredible history, archaeology, geology, and wildlife of the park. I was also introduced to a few local businesses whose products were stocked in the shop. I've since taken several courses on outdoor proficiency, and I now volunteer with the park. The Visitor Centre has played a key part in me feeling welcome in Princetown, and more generally on the moor.

I now regularly walk on the moor and have spent more than one New Year's Day visiting Fur Tor. It's unusual to find people off-the-track, but some of my favourite experiences include helping visitors to make sense of the self-guided Hound of the Baskervilles walk which is available for £2 from the visitor centre. Folks will pause around Nun's Cross, to figure out what a leat is, and where it is. This loop is now one of my regular walks as it takes me past my own workshop at Tor Royal Farm. The Visitor Centre doesn't just get people to the park, it helps people get into the park. It gives people a reason, and enough guidance, to explore the park.

The NHS and Natural England have linked the natural environment to improved mental health. I agree. Princetown has welcomed me, nurtured me, and helped me through difficult times. I strongly believe that the Visitor Centre acts as a daily reminder for residents, and visitors alike, that we are all welcome on Dartmoor. We take moor care, and we take care of one another.

New ideas need old buildings. Old buildings have character. They are inviting. We want to know about their history, and the secrets they hold. The Visitor Centre at Princetown, especially so. It's not just a place to learn about history and culture, it's a place where history is made – from the writing of the Hound of the Baskervilles to the protests in support of wild camping. Good things happen at the Princetown Visitor Centre housed in the Old Duchy Hotel.

Without consulting its key constituency, the park has announced it will be closing the Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre has made people welcome, in turn helping local businesses, and residents. Now it's time for the park to allow Princetown the greatest possible opportunity to ensure we are able to continue welcoming people to the moor, indefinitely. I ask the members of the National Park to delay the closure of the visitor centre to give the community a chance to keep this vital service and iconic building in operation.

The Chair reminded Members that they had also been provided with copy of a letter from Dartmoor Preservation Association, together with the Chief Executive's (National Park Officer) response to it.

The Chair also reminded Members that at an Authority meeting held at the end of 2024, there was a Part II (without the presence of press and public) discussion regarding the Visitor Centre. It was confidential because of commercial sensitivity and that requirement still holds. Therefore, in questions, discussions and debate today, Members were required to remember that the commercial sensitivity included in the Part II is still relevant.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) responded to the issues raised by the speakers:

- The Authority received a one-off payment of £440,000 in March 2023; this figure was received by all National Park Authorities in England. It was not conditioned in that the Authority was not required to use it to keep the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown open; however, an assurance was given that some of the money would be used to keep the Visitor Centre open. That commitment has been honoured.
- The Authority pays £100 per annum to the Duchy of Cornwall in rent for the building. The net cost of operating the building is about £65,000 per annum. Staffing costs for operating the Visitor Centre are in addition to these costs.
- The Authority has been actively considering options for the future of the Visitor Centre over a number of years. Mention had been made of a potential cafe or restaurant – this was explored with our landlords, the Duchy of Cornwall when we did the last significant upgrade to the building. Our landlords were not supportive because they were concerned that a cafe or restaurant would take money away from existing businesses in Princetown. We have also looked at charging for entry to the Visitor Centre; charges for the museum or the display element of The Visitor Centre were introduced. However, it was found that people would come into the foyer and would not pay to go around the displays, so the charges were removed.
- Officers have also looked at other venues within Princetown which might offer lower running costs, but our landlord would not consider early surrender to facilitate a move to another location in Princetown. Since 2021/22 we have worked closely with the Duchy of Cornwall to look at a number of options aimed at securing and/or extending the operation of the Visitor Centre or providing a new use for that building which would support the local economy in terms of footfall into Princetown. We have been unable to work with the local community and businesses on those options because they have been commercially sensitive. One of those options remains live and is subject to ongoing discussions between the Duchy and a third party. The Authority is supporting that discussion – should it come to fruition it could potentially help sustain some form of reduced Visitor Centre offer on the ground floor

- In November 2024 Members approved a consultation with staff about closing the Visitor Centre with effect from the end of March 2025. A consultation paper was sent to all staff; there was a face-to-face meeting with all Information Advisors and then one-to-one meetings with all affected staff. There were also meetings with Unison, the recognised trade union.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) thanked the speakers for their time and ideas. He indicated that it was his belief that the Authority had explored all options, but that he would be more than willing to talk to and engage with businesses in the community if they felt that they could bring something new to the table.

Members thanked the speakers for their individual presentations and their time today.

In response to Member questions, the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) responded as follows:

- The Authority has two statutory purposes, the first purpose relates to conservation of natural beauty and the second purpose relates to promoting enjoyment and understanding of the National Park's special qualities. The Authority is also under a legal obligation, a duty, to have regard to the socio-economic well-being of local communities. In practice we try to deliver the two purposes and the duty together e.g., if conservation works are being undertaken, we try to do that in a way which benefits to the local economy and promote a circular economy. In pure legal terms, however, the purposes carry greater weight than the duty.
- The £65,000 running costs do reflect the maintenance work that has been carried out in recent years.
- The Authority does not have a specific consultation and engagement strategy.
- With regard to dilapidations (the sum of money the Authority would have to pay the landlord at the end of the Lease) – when the Authority first proposed closing the Visitor Centre because of financial strains in 2021/22 the Duchy of Cornwall commissioned a dilapidation survey. The Authority has the results of that survey and has provision for payment of the dilapidations.
- The Authority has an earmarked reserve for premises which enables funds to be put aside for building maintenance which has not been previously factored into the Revenue budget. With regard to car park income, charges were introduced several years ago and Princetown car park led the way on this. The income helps the Authority to maintain the car parks, and surrounding areas, in good condition. There is a potential risk that if the Visitor Centre closes then income from the car park could reduce.
- Visitor Centre numbers have never fully recovered from Covid; e.g., 2023/24 figures for Princetown were 48,449, in 2017/18 the number was 79,221. It has been calculated that the Authority has lost one in five visitors to the Centres since the pandemic.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mrs Mott. However, Mrs Mott proposed that recommendation (ii) be amended to read as follows: *'That the Centre remains open until the end of October 2025 based on 2024/25 opening hours.'* Option C (Section 3.5 of the report). This was seconded by Mr Dracup and carried. The formal recommendation (ii) was therefore amended to read:

'That Members determine to formally close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown at the end of October 2025, based on 2024/25 opening hours, and agree to use reserves to meet any additional cost.'

Resolved: Members agreed that recommendation (ii) be amended as detailed above.

Members commented as follows:

- Delaying closure would be worth the cost in terms of taking from reserves. It would provide an opportunity for the community to develop the ideas presented at the meeting and potentially offer a long-term solution that did not rely on Authority funding.
- Following on from the staff consultation, staff are now expecting for the Visitor Centre to close in March 2025. The Authority and Members must be conscious of their expectations and ensure that they are all made aware of any change in situation.
- It would help if the speakers who have presented to Authority, and their colleagues, were to write to local MPs and even the Minister responsible for National Parks highlighting the need to invest in National Parks and not cut their budgets.
- Some Members expressed anger and concern at the situation that the Authority finds itself in because of 15 years of austerity. A Member reminded everyone that the Authority was disinvesting in the building, not in Princetown the village, or its community.
- Assistance from small businesses etc which are more commercially aware would be a useful thing;
- Disappointment was expressed that the Parish Council had not previously approached the Authority with any proposals or ideas to keep the Visitor Centre open. Members felt that some of the criticisms expressed, levelled at the Authority, were out of mis-information e.g., restrictions placed on the Authority by its landlord, the Duchy of Cornwall, in terms of what could and could not be done in the building.
- A Member suggested that consideration be given to an increased reliance on volunteers. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) confirmed that any delay in the closure would provide the business/local community to look at the volunteer model. He cautioned that a volunteer model is not without costs; someone to manage the volunteers would be needed, plus the volunteers would have to commit to working shifts.
- The responsibility of the Members is to ensure the funding of all Authority operations, across the whole of the National Park.

Resolved: Members:

- (1) Noted the financial circumstances that have led to the proposal to close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown, feedback from staff and UNISON about the potential closure; and
- (2) determined to formally close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown at the end of October 2025, based on 2024/25 opening hours, and agreed to use reserves to meet any additional cost.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) reiterated his thanks to the speakers, adding that he and the Director of Conservation and Communities would attend the meeting with the businesses and local community of Princetown scheduled for 13 January 2025 and looked forward to hearing their suggestions and ideas.

The meeting paused for a short break.

Mark Renders and Philip Sanders left the meeting.

3636 Local Development Scheme (LDS)

The Director of Spatial Planning advised Members that this report (NPA/25/002) had been withdrawn to allow amendments related to a recent letter from the Chief Planning Officer. A report will be presented before Members at the next Authority meeting on 7 February 2025.

3637 Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy and Local Government Discretionary Compensation Policies

Considered:

The report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/25/003).

A Member raised a query regarding salary sacrifice. It was agreed that the Head of Organisational Development would address any concerns outside of the meeting.

Resolved: Members:

- (i) approved the updated Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employer Pensions Discretions Policy; and
- (ii) approved the updated Employer Discretionary Policies relating to the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Comp

3638 Draft State of the Park Report 2024

Considered:

The report of the Partnership Plan and Climate Officer and the Director of Spatial Planning (NPA/25/004).

An overview of the Draft State of the Park Report 2024, structured around the seven themes of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan, was presented to Members by the Partnership Plan and Climate Officer, The Director of Spatial Planning and the Director of Conservation and Communities.

In response to Member questions, officers responded as follows:

- Officers agreed to ensure that the page numbering was correct; reference to SSSIs would be uniform throughout the report; river names would be referred to consistently; page 77 – spellcheck, page 99 – terminology of the work ‘turnover’ to be better explained; the report to be checked to ensure it is accessible to people with colour-blindness; the settlement of South Brent to feature more in maps etc.
- Agreed that the report should be sent to the Minister responsible for National Parks, pdf version made available to Parish Councils etc.
- Data – the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group (DLUMG) and Dartmoor Observatory – the hope is to have a central repository where all Dartmoor data will be held.
- With regard to the data within the report in respect of rivers/water quality etc, Officers confirmed that the information had come direct from the Environment Agency.

The recommendations were duly proposed and seconded.

Debate followed and Members commented / made suggestions as follows:

- It would be useful to have some additional historical information in order that trends could be identified; colour-coding of this information would be useful to reveal positive or negative trends.
- Broadleaf Woodland – it would be useful for the data to reflect the targets within the Partnership Plan.
- There appears to be no sense of urgency within the report in respect of the decline in nature. Better, more detailed, explanations would solve this issue.
- Further explanation is needed regarding what is ‘urgent’ and what ‘action’ needs to be taken e.g., consider the detail within Exmoor’s report.

The Director of Spatial Planning advised Members that there was no prescriptive way to produce a State of the Park report. The report is very factually driven and officers had deliberately not given opinions. The mechanism is used to focus the work and address the issues that are raised by the public. He asked that special mention and thanks be given to David Boocock, Projects Officer, for his hard work is helping to pull the report together.

Members congratulated the officers responsible for the report, adding that it was interesting and easily digestible with small, snapshot amounts of text. They were impressed with the number of links within the report and the infographics used to make the data very easy to follow. Members suggested that some of the infographics could be used on the Authority’s website, on Instagram/Facebook etc to help get our message out to more people.

Resolved: Members noted and commented on the draft State of the Park Report 2024.

3639 Update to the National Planning Policy Framework

Considered:

The report of the Senior Planning Policy Officer and Director of Spatial Planning (NPA/25/005).

A Member commented the White Paper regarding Devolution would have a huge effect in that, for example, South Hams and West Devon Councils will not exist after 2028 so there will be a significant challenge going forward to the housing targets set. A Member added that increased population numbers would add significant pressure on the National Park service provision and referred to the new duty introduced in December 2023 which requires all relevant authorities to further National Park purposes in the exercise of their functions. Interim guidance is still awaited from Defra, as well as a statutory instrument.

The recommendation was duly proposed and seconded.

A Member commented that the current model had not worked for quite some time with regard to the number of houses needing to be built and affordability. A Member added that an opportunity had been missed to include within the NPPF a requirement for developers to build where and when needed. Local authorities are again being blamed for the lack of housing available when it is beyond their control.

Resolved: Members noted the content of the report.

Mr Thomas and Dr Bishop left the meeting.

3640 Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons Project – End of Programme Report

Considered:

The report of the Director of Conservation and Communities and the Our Upland Commons Dartmoor Officer (employed by Foundation for Common Land), (NPA/25/006).

Members commended the Our Upland Commons Dartmoor Officer for the role and work that she had undertaken over the past four years, adding that the facilitator role is one of significant importance. A Member added that the report highlighted the true cost of commoning.

Resolved: Members noted the progress and legacy of the Our Upland Commons Project.