



MINUTES

Meeting held Tuesday 2 November 2021



Meeting Room, Parke

Present: Mr M Walker, Mrs A Clish-Green, Mr J Daymond, Mr P French, Mr J Howell, Mr G Kelly, Mrs L Martin
Ms S Viccars, Mrs P Warren, Mrs J Lewis, Mr M Owen, Mr G Kelly

Officers: Mr Andrew Watson (Head of Recreation Access & Estates)
Mr T Russell (Recreation and Access Projects Officer)

Apologies: J Manning (Recreation Strategy Development Officer), Miss H Jenny, Mr J Hayes, Miss D Moyse, Mrs G Branfield, P Smeardon

554) Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12th November 2019

- The Minutes of the meeting, held on Tuesday 27th April 2021, were duly signed and agreed by the Chair as a correct record.
- Miss H Jenny has resigned from the Forum on health grounds. The contribution and commitment that Helen had made to the work of the Forum over recent years was recognised and the Chair proposed a letter of thanks is sent to Helen.

ACTION: Chair to send letter of thanks to Helen Jenny

555) Presentation: Social Media and Dartmoor Visitors

- Forum members Gavin Kelly and Julia Lewis gave a presentation on some of the issues around social media and the impact this can have on visitor management. Social media provides opportunities for getting messages across to a wider audience, but also can create challenges for visitor management. The presentation highlighted the huge scale of users following social media platforms that promoted and/or focussed on use of Dartmoor and the huge impact this can have.
- Julia Lewis – focussed on the extent that Facebook (over 51 million users) and Instagram (over 28 million users) have on influencing use and behaviour of people in the countryside. E.g. Dartmoor Wild Swimming Group nearly 16,000 members and Dartmoor Wild Camping Group almost 4,000 users. She explained about the role of “Influencers” who earn income by using (and promoting) outdoor products in their posts/blogs. And smartphone apps that share information about locations which are not always accurate – e.g, mountain biking routes or wild camping sites that are not on legal access routes.

A discussion followed and the key points were:

- Forum should not feel overwhelmed or defeated by scale of social media and look at ways in which misinformation can be addressed
- social media can be very useful, but misinformation is the main problem highlighted that Facebook groups (for example) requires good administrators to manage them
- having a good idea of what people are saying on social media platforms is useful background information
- Should DAF consider setting up its own Facebook page? There were concerns as to who would manage it and how much time this might take to administer
- opportunities for DNPA to extend its reach to a different set of users, as it has become a really important place for people.
- Andrew Watson explained that through the Authority's Communications Team, the Authority has a social media presence through several platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The Authority actively monitors social media output and publishes content that informs and engages people about the special qualities of the National Park
- It was noted that it was important to strike a balance between being too authoritarian (which can turn people off) and the Forum considered that social media messages from the Authority are important as some people have little experience of the countryside or the National Park

ACTION: Andrew Watson to invite Communications Team to a future meeting to discuss social media strategies and approach to informing the public and influencing behaviours around visitor management

556) Byelaw Review responses clarification:

The byelaw working group reported back on the work they had done to review the proposed changes to the byelaws. The Forum worked through the new set of byelaws in turn. The Forum broadly supported the new set of byelaws although there were some minor changes recommended for clarification. Specifically there were concerns with:

- Byelaw 5 and need to ensure there were no unintended consequences with the introduction of the term "occupy" in relation to vehicles parked on the moor overnight
- Byelaw 10 in relation to the number of dogs. The Forum considered 6 dogs was too many for one person to effectively control
- Other byelaws needed to be checked that there was no conflict or duplication with existing legislation
- The Forum also considered that the provision of alternative sites for certain activities may be desirable e.g. for the recreational flying of drones

The Forum welcomed and supported the review of the existing byelaws. The Forum's response was approved and the Chair will submit this to the Authority.

ACTION: The Chair to submit the Forum's formal response on proposed changes to National Park byelaws.

557) Green Transport Strategy:

John Howell reported back from the DAF working group and his attendance at the Authority's partnership group meeting. A briefing note had been circulated by the Authority with the agenda papers which outlined some of the challenges and

opportunities facing the National Park. The Authority has established a partnership group and is working towards developing a Green Transport Strategy during 2022. There are some exciting opportunities with the opening of the Exeter to Okehampton rail link in November and funding for a Bus Service Improvement Plan submitted by Devon County Council. Andrew Watson thanked him for his work representing Ramblers, DPA and DAF on the partnership group and asked that the Forum feed in ideas and aspirations via John Howell and the DAF working group.

558) Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL):

Andrew Watson briefly outlined the scope of the scheme. There are four national theme outcomes – Climate, Nature, People and Place along with local objectives or priorities contained within the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan. The “People” outcome is highly relevant to DAF as it helps to deliver opportunities for people to access, enjoy and explore the national park. Applications over £5k are determined by a Local Assessment Panel (LAP) and Mark Walker has a place on the LAP which has now met twice.

The DAF has established a FiPL working group and Andrew suggested that they could:

- Assist with identifying areas where access is deficient
- Identify where permissive links could fill gaps in the PROW network
- Identify improvements or enhancements to the PROW network

The Recreation and Access team could support some of this work

Philip French suggested that there would be opportunities for improved river/stream crossing places as well as the potential use of firebreaks which could double as access links.

559) Training Day and future training requirements

Not discussed.

560) Future agenda items and work programme

Not discussed.

561) Dates of next meetings

Tuesday 12th April 2022