



NPA/24/12

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

1 March 2024

FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25

Report of the Head of Business Support

Recommendation: **That subject to any amendments proposed at the meeting, Members:**

- (i) approve the recommendations made in section 3 of this report; and**
- (ii) approve the 2024/25 schedule of fees and charges as set out in Appendix 2**

1 Background

1.1 The Authority is responsible for a number of services for which fees are permitted to be charged in order to offset the costs involved. The Government requires that Local Authorities should raise revenue wherever possible to cover costs, which means that fees and charges (which include suggested donations) are reviewed and approved on an annual basis.

2 Current Situation

2.1 The Authority needs to consider the fees and charges for each financial year during the budget setting process. Whilst many are not a major source of income, they do contribute to meeting the costs of delivering some services. The charges applied may be the difference between providing a service and having to withdraw it all together.

2.2 The fees and charges for the current year were approved by the Authority in January 2023 (NPA/23/002).

3 Fees and charges for 2024/25

3.1 The proposed schedule of fees and charges for 2024/25 can be found on Appendix 2. Many of the fees and charges often remain unchanged for several years at a time. At the 2nd February 2024 Authority meeting, members agreed to the policy of annually raising car parking charges in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) reported in September from the previous year (NPA/24/06).

3.2 Car parking charges are currently the only fee income that does and can provide the Authority with significant additional income. Costs to maintain our car parks is

significant and continued high inflation has a bearing on these costs. It should be noted unlike the other fees and charges, which normally come into force from 1st April 2024, the car park charges will become effective after advertising (before April 2024).

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Most of the Authority's fees and charges (excluding planning fees) are not a major income source for the Authority and the income forecast for the end of the current financial year is likely to be circa £192,020, as per Appendix 1. Since the introduction of the Traffic Regulation Order and the ability for customers having several options on how to pay for car parking, the charges are providing a fairly substantial and stable income source. The income generation is and will continue to be used to maintain the infrastructure that provides accessibility for the public.
- 4.2 The schedule of fees and charges are incorporated into the 2024/25 Revenue Budget, which is also being presented for approval by the Authority.

5 Equality and Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The implications for access to services and the economy of the area are fully considered and addressed in all the Authority's policies, especially when considering charging for services. Consideration is given to proactively engaging those who may not otherwise access Dartmoor, being mindful of potential barriers and balancing the need to generate income and maintaining budgets that are flexible and responsive to the needs of service users.

ANGELA STIRLAND

Background Papers: NPA/24/06
NPA/23/002

Attachments: Appendix 1 - Income to date for 2023/24
Appendix 2 - Proposed fees and charges 2024/25

20240301 AS Fees and Charges 2023/24

Appendix 1 to Report NPA/24/12

| Fees and Charges | 2022/23 Outturn | 2023/24 Budget | 2023/24 Actual at Month 9 | 2023/24 Forecast Outturn | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | |
| Pre Application Advice | (3,875) | (6,000) | (2,729) | (3,639) | Pre-app service suspended in August |
| Filming | (4,250) | 0 | (4,753) | (4,753) | |
| Room Hire & refreshments (Parke) | (361) | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| DHFP Membership fees | (1,633) | 0 | (1,283) | (1,283) | |
| Photocopying | (8) | 0 | 0 | (70) | |
| Legal Costs recovered | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Education Guided Walks | (1,556) | (1,000) | (1,752) | (1,752) | |
| Education Events | (848) | 0 | (796) | (861) | |
| Education Walks | (3,975) | (3,000) | (3,910) | (3,910) | |
| Ranger Ralph | (782) | (750) | (672) | (750) | |
| Junior Ranger programme | 0 | (750) | 0 | 0 | |
| Donations | (18,040) | 0 | (10,781) | (14,375) | |
| Car Parking: | | | | | |
| Princetown | (19,741) | (45,000) | (37,663) | (42,855) | |
| Haytor Upper | (3,923) | (10,000) | (14,484) | (16,481) | |
| Haytor Lower | (13,421) | (20,000) | (35,324) | (40,193) | |
| Postbridge | (12,514) | (30,000) | (25,470) | (28,980) | |
| Meldon | (13,452) | (15,000) | (28,227) | (32,118) | |
| Total | (98,379) | (131,500) | (167,844) | (192,020) | |
| | | | | | |

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24**

Appendix 2 to Report NPA/24/12

| Description of Charges Levied (or Donations suggested) | Unit | 2023/24 Rates @ 20% | | | 2024/25 Rates 20% | | |
|---|-------------|--|----------------|------------------|--|----------------|------------------|
| | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) |
| Administration | | | | | | | |
| Photocopying - Black and White (charges for sizes over A3 as for plans below) | A4 per side | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 |
| | A3 per side | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 |
| Photocopying - Colour (charges for sizes over A3 as for plans below) | A4 per side | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 |
| | A3 per side | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 |
| Plan Copying – Colour (subject to copyright) | A4 per side | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 |
| | A3 per side | 0.83 | 0.17 | 1.00 | 0.83 | 0.17 | 1.00 |
| | A2 per side | 2.50 | 0.50 | 3.00 | 2.50 | 0.50 | 3.00 |
| | A1 per side | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 |
| | A0 per side | 5.83 | 1.17 | 7.00 | 5.83 | 1.17 | 7.00 |
| <i>NB: Copying charges that total less than £1 will be waived</i> | | | | | | | |
| Microfilm Copying | | As photocopying | | | As photocopying | | |
| Private Telephone Calls | | Actual time | | | Actual time | | |
| Development Management | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) |
| Planning Application Fees | | See "Government Scale Charges" | | | See "Government Scale Charges" | | |
| Pre Application Fees: | | | | | | | |
| Class A: Residential between 31-149 dwellings / Non-residential floor space 5,000-9,999 sq.m - 1 meeting | | 600.00 | 120.00 | 720.00 | 600.00 | 120.00 | 720.00 |
| Class A: Additional meeting fee | | 300.00 | 60.00 | 360.00 | 300.00 | 60.00 | 360.00 |
| Class B: Residential between 10-30 dwellings / Non-residential floor space 1,000-4,999 sq.m - 1 meeting | | 400.00 | 80.00 | 480.00 | 400.00 | 80.00 | 480.00 |
| Class B: Additional meeting fee | | 200.00 | 40.00 | 240.00 | 200.00 | 40.00 | 240.00 |
| Class C: Residential (including holiday lets) between 3-9 dwellings / Non-residential floor space 500-999 sq.m - 1 meeting | | 300.00 | 60.00 | 360.00 | 300.00 | 60.00 | 360.00 |
| Class C: Additional meeting fee | | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 |
| Class D: Residential 1-2 dwellings (including replacement dwellings) including change of use to, conversion & holiday lets / Non-residential floor space up to 499 sq.m - 1 meeting | | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 |
| Class D: Additional meeting fee | | 50.00 | 10.00 | 60.00 | 50.00 | 10.00 | 60.00 |
| Class E: Advertisements / telecommunications proposals/ Change of use where no operational development (except residential / holiday let) - 1 meeting | | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 |
| Class F: Listed Building where site visit involved | | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 |
| Class F: Additional meeting fee | | 75.00 | 15.00 | 90.00 | 75.00 | 15.00 | 90.00 |
| Class G: Other minor development including agricultural based development - 1 meeting | | 83.33 | 16.67 | 100.00 | 83.33 | 16.67 | 100.00 |
| Class G: Additional meeting fee | | 41.67 | 8.33 | 50.00 | 41.67 | 8.33 | 50.00 |
| Class H: Domestic Scale Renewable energy - solar, wind, hydro Free unless site visit required | | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 |
| Class H: Non Domestic Scale Renewable energy - solar, wind, hydro | | 166.67 | 33.33 | 200.00 | 166.67 | 33.33 | 200.00 |
| Class H: Additional meeting fee | | 50.00 | 10.00 | 60.00 | 50.00 | 10.00 | 60.00 |
| Copy of Section 52/106 Agreement | | Charge per page in scale of photocopying charges above subject to maximum charge of £15.00 (inc VAT) | | | Charge per page in scale of photocopying charges above subject to maximum charge of £15.00 (inc VAT) | | |
| Copy of Decision Notice | | | | | | | |
| Copy of Enforcement Notice | | | | | | | |
| Copy of Appeal Decisions | | | | | | | |
| Copy of Appeal Statement | | | | | | | |
| Copy of Tree Preservation Order | | | | | | | |
| Planning Search | | 10.00 | 2.00 | 12.00 | 10.00 | 2.00 | 12.00 |
| All postal requests carry a minimum £2 postage/administration charge. Actual postage will be charged if in excess of £2 | | 1.67 | 0.33 | 2.00 | 1.67 | 0.33 | 2.00 |
| Agenda – Copies of Minutes/Reports/One off requests | | Charge per page (inc VAT) | | | Charge per page (inc VAT) | | |
| Meeting Room Hire | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) |
| Parke | | 17 | | | | | |

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24**

| Description of Charges Levied (or Donations suggested) | Unit | 2023/24 Rates @ 20% | | | (VAT £ | 2024/25 Rates 20%) | | | (VAT @ £ |
|---|--|---|----------------|------------------|-----------|---|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| Meeting Room | Half Day (up to 4 hrs) | 80.00 | EXE | 80.00 | | 80.00 | EXE | 80.00 | |
| | All Day (over 4 hrs) | 160.00 | EXE | 160.00 | | 160.00 | EXE | 160.00 | |
| | Refreshments per delegate: | | | | | | | | |
| | 1st serving | 1.92 | 0.38 | 2.30 | | 1.92 | 0.38 | 2.30 | |
| | 2nd serving | 1.33 | 0.27 | 1.60 | | 1.33 | 0.27 | 1.60 | |
| Cancellation charges | Notice of cancellation of 48 hours or more | No Charge | | | | No Charge | | | |
| | Notice of cancellation 24 to 48 hours | 50% Charge | | | | 50% Charge | | | |
| | Notice of cancellation less than 24 hours | Full Charge | | | | Full Charge | | | |
| Car Parking at Princetown, Haytor Upper and Lower, Postbridge, Meldon, Lydford | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | |
| Cars - Per Day (24 hours) | | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 | | 4.42 | 0.88 | 5.30 | |
| Cars - Per half Day (up to 3 hours) | | 2.50 | 0.50 | 3.00 | | 2.67 | 0.53 | 3.20 | |
| Blue Badge Holders | | 2.50 | 0.50 | 3.00 | | 2.67 | 0.53 | 3.20 | |
| Coaches and minibuses - Per Day | | 8.33 | 1.67 | 10.00 | | 8.88 | 1.78 | 10.65 | |
| Guided Walks and Education Walks | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | |
| Walks, Talks and Activities | Guided Walks (Adult) | Various charges, which will be informed by the organiser prior to the event | | | | Various charges, which will be informed by the organiser prior to the event | | | |
| | Guided Walks (14 years & under) | | | | | | | | |
| | Children Activities - (accompanying adult free) | | | | | | | | |
| | Private talks - Higher Uppacott - per group (max 20) | | | | | | | | |
| Education Walks | Walks up to 3 hours (per guide = 25 children) | 60.00 | EXE | 60.00 | | 60.00 | EXE | 60.00 | |
| | Walks up to 6 hours (per guide = 25 children) | 75.00 | EXE | 75.00 | | 75.00 | EXE | 75.00 | |
| Ranger Ralph | Annual subscription (per child) | 12.00 | ZERO | 12.00 | | 12.00 | ZERO | 12.00 | |
| | Events | FREE OF CHARGE | | | | FREE OF CHARGE | | | |
| Junior Ranger Programme | Annual subscription (per child) | 25.00 | ZERO | 25.00 | | 25.00 | ZERO | 25.00 | |
| Youth Ranger Programme | Annual subscription | 50.00 | ZERO | 50.00 | | 50.00 | ZERO | 50.00 | |
| Higher Uppacott | Bespoke Events | Delegated to Director of Conservation and Communities | | | | Delegated to Director of Conservation and Communities | | | |
| Legal Services | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | |
| Public Path Orders: | | | | | | | | | |
| Public path orders: Advertisements x 2 Preparing order, all officer time, administration, postage, legal costs, site visits, notices, negotiations with users etc. | Per advert | See Below | | | | See Below | | | |
| | Unopposed orders | £1,000.00 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | | £1,000.00 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | |
| | Additional orders linked to above | £400.00 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | | £400.00 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | |
| | Opposed orders | £2,000 - £3,000 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | | £2,000 - £3,000 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | |
| | Temporary closures | £600.00 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | | £600.00 plus advertising costs (plus VAT) | | | |
| | Extending a Temporary closure & submission to Secretary of State | £60 per hour + Advertising costs + VAT (minimum charge £500) | | | | £60 per hour + Advertising costs + VAT (minimum charge £500) | | | |
| | Informal Consultations (includes consulting with interested parties, summarising responses and Authority Report) | 400 | 80 | 480 | | 400 | 80 | 480 | |
| | Legal charges | Per hour | 80-140 | OOS | 80-140 | | 80-140 | OOS | 80-140 |
| Copy / Inspection of Deeds or Documents (held in secure storage) | Per document | 37.50 | 7.50 | 45.00 | | 37.50 | 7.50 | 45.00 | |
| Section 106 agreements | Per hour | Not applicable - service provided by DCC | | | | Not applicable - service provided by DCC | | | |
| Certification of a document | Per document | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 | | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 | |
| Supply data to: | Non Public Body | 40.00 | 8.00 | 48.00 | | 40.00 | 8.00 | 48.00 | |
| Environmental Information Regulations | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | |

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24**

| Description of Charges Levied (or Donations suggested) | Unit | 2023/24 Rates @ 20% | | | (VAT £ | 2024/25 Rates 20%) | | | (VAT @ £ | |
|---|---|--|----------------|------------------|--|--------------------------------------|----------------|--|-------------|--|
| Disbursement Costs: | | | | | | | | | | |
| Photocopying - Black and White (charges for sizes over A3 as for plans below) | A4 per side | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 | | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 | | |
| | A3 per side | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 | | 0.33 | 0.07 | 0.40 | | |
| Photocopying - Colour (charges for sizes over A3 as for plans below) | A4 per side | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 | | 0.42 | 0.08 | 0.50 | | |
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| | A3 per side | 0.83 | 0.17 | 1.00 | | 0.83 | 0.17 | 1.00 | | |
| | A2 per side | 2.50 | 0.50 | 3.00 | | 2.50 | 0.50 | 3.00 | | |
| | A1 per side | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 | | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 | | |
| | A0 per side | 5.83 | 1.17 | 7.00 | | 5.83 | 1.17 | 7.00 | | |
| Microfilm Copying | | | | | | | | | | |
| Staff Time: For every members of staff or agency staff involved in considering or dealing with a request for information | | Search for Information. Identification & location of information. Retrieval of information. Copying of information. Collating & despatching of information. | | | As photocopying £25 per hour (pro rata) VAT will only be charged if the information could Be obtained elsewhere | | | As photocopying £25 per hour (pro rata) VAT will only be charged if the information could Be obtained elsewhere | | |
| Filming on DNP Land (owned or managed) per day | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | |
| Feature films | | From £2,500 plus VAT | | | | From £2,500 plus VAT | | | | |
| TV Feature / Mini series / Drama | | From £500 plus VAT | | | | From £500 plus VAT | | | | |
| TV Documentary / Children's | | From £250 plus VAT | | | | From £250 plus VAT | | | | |
| Advertising / Promotional | | £, 1.200 plus VAT | | | | £, 1.200 plus VAT | | | | |
| Commercial Photo Shoot | | From £1,000 plus VAT | | | | From £1,000 plus VAT | | | | |
| National Park staff time | | £60 per hour / £360 per day plus VAT | | | | £60 per hour / £360 per day plus VAT | | | | |
| Aerial Footage (including stock footage) | | Price on application | | | | Price on application | | | | |
| News, current affairs or educational / schools | | Free of charge | | | | Free of charge | | | | |
| Officer support for Filming and / or Event Management | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | |
| National Park staff time | | £60 per hour / £360 per day plus VAT | | | | £60 per hour / £360 per day plus VAT | | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | NET (£) | VAT (£) | GROSS (£) | | |
| Closure of car parks for filming, large scale or other events (minimum charge) | Low season (1 Oct - 31 March) | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 | | 150.00 | 30.00 | 180.00 | | |
| | High season (1 April - 30 Sept) | 300.00 | 60.00 | 360.00 | | 300.00 | 60.00 | 360.00 | | |
| Creation of maps for external bodies (GIS) | Fixed cost based on half day | 41.67 | 8.33 | 50.00 | | 41.67 | 8.33 | 50.00 | | |
| | Hourly rate above half day | 16.67 | 3.33 | 20.00 | | 16.67 | 3.33 | 20.00 | | |
| Gateway Repair | Per Gateway (per hour - minimum 2hrs) | 45.00 | 9.00 | 54.00 | | 45.00 | 9.00 | 54.00 | | |
| | Drilling/Gluing per fixing | 20.00 | 4.00 | 24.00 | | 20.00 | 4.00 | 24.00 | | |
| | Fittings | 6.00 | 1.20 | 7.20 | | 6.00 | 1.20 | 7.20 | | |
| Gateposts | Repair per post - or individually priced | 75.00 | 15.00 | 90.00 | | 75.00 | 15.00 | 90.00 | | |
| | Replacement - plus cost of commercially sourced post | 75.00 | 15.00 | 90.00 | | 75.00 | 15.00 | 90.00 | | |
| Dartmoor Hill Farm Project Membership Scheme | | 50.00 | 10.00 | 60.00 | | 50.00 | 10.00 | 60.00 | | |
| Conservation Works Team - staff time | | £60 per hour | | | | £60 per hour | | | | |



NPA/24/13

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 March 2024

Budget And Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27

Report of the Head of Business Support

Recommendations: **That Members:**

- i. **approve the 2024/25 budget and note the indicative budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 as shown in Appendices 1 – 3;**
- ii. **approve the use of Earmarked Reserves balances as set out in Appendix 5; and**
- iii. **approve the Capital Investment Strategy as set out in section 4 of the report.**
- iv. **Note that the Authority faces an uncertain financial future and that without further core funding for service delivery will need to undertake a business review to reduce costs in order to set a balanced budget in the medium term. Such a business review will have significant implications in terms of the Authority's ability to deliver National Park purposes.**

1 Background

1.1 The Authority is required by statute to set a balanced annual revenue budget. The basis for the revenue and capital expenditure is the pursuit of the 'National Park Purposes'. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended) sets out two statutory purposes for National Parks:

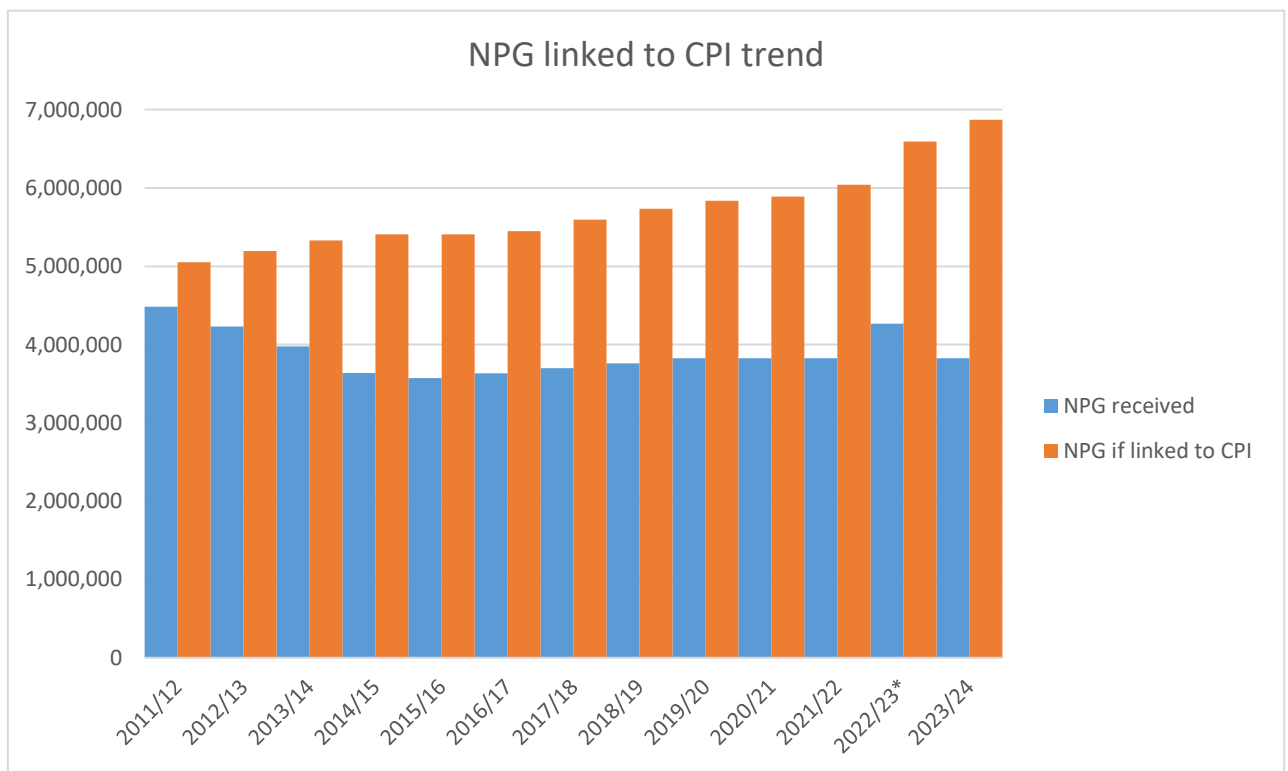
- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public.

The Authority also has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park. As noted in the draft Business Plan (NPA/24/15), the Authority seeks, wherever possible, to integrate delivery of the purposes and the duty.

1.2 The key source of funding for the Authority is National Park Grant (NPG) which is paid by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Currently NPG accounts for over 60% of total income. At the time of writing this report Defra has yet to confirm how much NPG the Authority will receive in 2024/25 and there is no indication of grant levels for the medium term. This delay and uncertainty has a profound impact on our ability to plan over both the short and medium term.

2 Financial Context

- 2.1 The Government's 2023 Autumn Statement announced departmental spending will increase by 2.6% per year in real terms, but with an aim to make savings against day-to-day central departmental budgets of 5% in 2024/25.
- 2.2 Defra's resource funding will drop by 4% for the next year, but their capital funding will increase by 4% next year.
- 2.3 Defra has indicated that we are likely to receive revenue grant funds at the same level as for 2023/24. This will mean in real-terms the value of our DEFRA grant is a cut again, when taking into consideration the rate of inflation and nationally set pay awards, which are all outside of our control. It is worth noting that National Park Grant has remained at £3.8m since 2019/20, but it should also be noted the Authority did receive a one off additional funding of £440,000 in March 2023.
- 2.4 A standstill grant means our current projection is that our existing deficit will grow if the grant is not adjusted for inflation and other pressures beyond our control. The Authority has had to live with continued austerity since 2010/11. If NPG had kept pace with inflation (CPI), it would now be worth in excess of £6.8m (RPI £7.8m), but we anticipate receiving £3.8m in 2024/25.



*Includes the additional one off £440,000 funding received.

Whilst the Authority has been successful in securing external funding for projects this money does not contribute to our core services and requires investment of staff time to bid for and manage. We are always reviewing our assets to see if we can generate further income, but the reality of the situation we face is that we own few assets that offer any form of income generation potential and most of our 'assets' (whilst described as such under accountancy conventions) are in reality liabilities.

Over the last twelve years the Authority has conducted a number of business reviews in order to reduce our expenditure and set a balanced budget. We invest approximately 96% of National Park Grant on staffing – specialist staff are our key means of meeting National Park purposes. The reality of the situation we face is that without a real terms increase in NPG we will have to undertake a further business review during 2024/25 if we are to set a balanced budget for 2025/26 and beyond that does not require use of reserves. A further business review will have to look at what we stop doing.

3 2024/25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Overview

3.1 The 2024/25 Budget and indicative financial plans for 2025-26 and 2026-27 can be found at Appendices 1 to 3. The Authority does not build each annual budget on an incremental basis, choosing instead to zero-base each year. Assumptions used are:

- Pay Award: the single largest area of expenditure is staff salaries. A 4% pay award has been assumed for 2024/25, 3% for 2025/26 and 2% for 2026/27. An extra 1% increase in pay, if awarded in year 1, would cost around £30k; a provision for this is included within earmarked reserves; Inflation and price increases are only included after discussion with suppliers / service providers;
- External grant income: only included if confirmed;
- Fees and charges income: target budgets are estimated using historical and trend data;
- NPG: for planning purposes the MTFP assumes that the funding settlement will be flat cash (i.e. the same as 2023/24) for 2024/25 and 2025/26. For 2026/27 we have assumed a 2% increase in our NPG, this assumes government increasing our core funding to reflect our assumption for the pay award in 2026/27.

3.2 As noted above, if increased core funding from Defra is not forthcoming in the near future, we will need to make some tough decisions to significantly adjust our work programmes in order to set an affordable and balanced budget in future years. The budget for 2024/25 is affordable, as the Authority determined to use the in-year underspend in 2022/23 (a result of the additional one-off grant from Defra received in March 2023) to balance the revenue budget in 2023/24 and 2024/25. We cannot keep calling on reserves as this is simply not sustainable. Also, we have assumed that NPG for 2024/25 will be the same as for 2023/24. If this is not the case a revised budget may have to be brought back to the Authority after the start of the financial year, so that Members can make decisions about how to rebalance the budget (and the MTFP).

| No increase in NPG | Budget Gap / (Surplus) £ |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2024-2025 (to be met from reserves) | 409,047 |
| 2025-2026 | 510,035 |
| 2026-2027 | 471,058 |
| Total | 1,390,140 |

4 Budget Detail

- 4.1 The following table provides a summary of some of the most significant projects and income targets that have been included in the MTFP; some of which may become at risk if increased core funding is not forthcoming.

| Projects and Programmes | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £ | £ | £ |
| Adopt a Monument Project | 10,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| External Funding (Historic England) | (10,000) | (10,000) | (5,000) |
| Monument Management Scheme Projects | 10,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| External funding (Historic England) | (10,000) | (10,000) | (5,000) |
| Biodiversity invasive projects | 10,000 | | |
| External Funding (South West Water) | (10,000) | 0 | 0 |
| Curlew recovery project | 3,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| Pine Martin Reintroduction | 5,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Management of own land | 3,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| Outreach & Education (incl. Ranger Ralph, Junior & Youth Rangers) | 11,465 | 12,500 | 12,500 |
| Vehicle purchases | 92,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Electric Vehicle lease – 2 pool cars | 9,500 | 9,500 | 0 |
| Property maintenance programme | 42,000 | 11,000 | 10,000 |
| Car park improvements and maintenance | 30,030 | 27,530 | 30,500 |
| Car parking income – demand led | (190,000) | (194,000) | (198,000) |
| Planning fee income – demand led | (191,000) | (191,000) | (191,000) |
| Visitor Centres retail stock procurement | 80,000 | 50,000 | 50,000 |
| Visitor Centres sales income | (147,000) | (100,000) | (100,000) |
| Donate for Dartmoor (target not budget) | (15,000) | (15,000) | (15,000) |

- 4.2 Members' attention is also specifically drawn to the following projects:

- (i) The Hill Farm Project is a partnership between the Authority, Duchy of Cornwall and the farming community. The Authority effectively acts as guarantor for the project; anticipates its contribution circa £66,000 for the coming year, with the Duchy of Cornwall contribute £15,000. We have also secured project funding from the Royal Countryside Fund. External funding ends in March 2025. We have made assumptions about which posts the Authority would underwrite going forward but a key priority is to secure external funding for the Hill farm Project.
- (ii) Our Common Cause is a national partnership project, being led by the Foundation for Common Land with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, with the National Trust acting as the accountable body and will be completed by November 2024.
- (iii) The Authority is a delivery partner in the Defra funded South West Peatlands Project being led by South West Water which commenced in 2018/19. Approximately £9.4million will have been spent on peatland restoration on Dartmoor by the time the current funding programme ends in March 2025. Securing continued funding for peatland restoration is a key objective for the next twelve months (see draft business plan).

- (iv) Dartmoor’s Dynamic Landscapes is an external funded project working in partnership with others to help deliver key priorities in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan: including nature recovery, environmental enhancement, engaging and welcoming a wider range of people and supporting sustainable use of the National Park, the local economy, jobs, and communities. In December 2022, the Authority was successful in securing a grant of £361,082 towards the development phase of the project from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Our application for a grant to fund the delivery phase will be submitted in summer 2024 and, if successful, we hope to commence a five year delivery programme in January 2025.
- (v) The Authority is also a delivery partner for the Dartmoor Natural Flood Management Project, which is being led by the Environment Agency (EA) for the delivery of nature-based solutions to deliver multiple benefits. A budget of £8 million has been secured by the EA to 2027, with in-kind and financial support (£86,891 for the length of the MTFP) contributions from the Authority. The Authority is hosting the employment of the Project Officers and is recharging all cost to the EA.
- (vi) Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL) – developed by Defra, commenced in July 2021 as a three year project, which has been extended for a further year. Dartmoor was received £1.9m for the three years and allotted a further £1.2m for 2024/25. FiPL provides funding for farmers and other land managers to make improvements to the natural environment, mitigate impacts of climate change, provide public access on their land and support nature-friendly, sustainable farming. This funding has been apportioned across protected landscape bodies to enable the farmers and land managers to bid for grants. Working through National Parks England we are making the case for FiPL to be extended until the end of the agricultural transition period (2027) or clarify how the lessons learnt through FiPL are being embedded in ELMS and that National Parks will be priority areas for ELMS within local flexibility.

4.3 In recent years the Authority has operated a Project Fund as part of its Revenue Budget. This Fund has enabled us to: buy-in additional support and capacity; to match-fund new projects; and to invest in new equipment during the financial year. This strategy has helped to provide flexibility and agility and it is therefore proposed that we continue with this approach for the life of the new MTFP. The amount allocated to the Project Fund for each year is summarised below:

| Project Fund | £ |
|---------------------|----------|
| 2024/25 | 75,000 |
| 2025/26 | 75,000 |
| 2026/27 | 75,000 |

4.4 The last triennial valuation of the Local Government Pension Fund took place in 2022 and the Authority’s funding level improved from 97.8% in 2019 to 101.6% on 31 March 2022. An employer contribution target rate was subsequently set by the Actuary to 19.7% of pensionable pay, rather than 19.5%. The Authority’s pension fund is fully funded, but we are on the cusp. However, this situation can alter due to external factors such as the state of the economy and members joining and/or leaving. Although the Actuary has stated we need to pay a suggested minimum of 19.7% the Authority made the prudent decision to set the contribution rate to 20%, which members agreed to at the last budget setting (NPA/23/010). The next valuation

will take place in 2025, with the new rates, once known, taking effect from 1st April 2026.

5 Capital Strategy and Prudential Indicators

- 5.1 As part of the annual budgeting process the Authority is required to produce an affordable Medium Term Capital Programme (MTCP) alongside its revenue budget, if relevant. There is also the requirement to produce a Capital Strategy in line with the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2021. The Prudential Code is a professional code of practice to support local authorities when taking capital investment (fixed asset) decisions. The objectives are to ensure, within a clear framework, that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice. A Treasury Management & Investment Strategy report is also being presented for approval today.
- 5.2 The obligation to have a Capital Strategy has arisen, as some authorities have become increasingly willing to invest significant amounts in commercial developments, in order to generate returns that will offset some of the financial impact of austerity.
- 5.3 This Authority rarely has a Capital Programme or the need for significant investment in physical assets in the same way as local authorities, who have responsibility for highways or housing. Capital spend for this Authority is commonly of a small scale nature such as related to vehicles or IT. For larger schemes such as new buildings or conversions, Members receive specific reports to support decision making; which provides background, the reasons why the scheme is being recommended and a cost benefit analysis; and will identify sources of finance. In advance of the report being presented to the Authority, Leadership Team will have scrutinised the proposed scheme.
- 5.4 The Authority historically has a low-risk attitude toward capital investment; having never borrowed internally or externally to fund capital schemes; entered into long-term liabilities such as Private Finance Initiatives; nor invested for commercial purposes. Capital investment decisions are made to support National Park Purposes only.
- 5.5 We seek external contributions towards supporting our capital spend wherever possible. If capital receipts (sale of assets) become available, these must be used to finance capital spend. In the absence of both these, revenue income (via NPG or fees and charges) or revenue reserves are used to fund capital expenditure.
- 5.6 Stewardship of our assets is led by Leadership Team and delivered by various officers within the Authority; the portfolio is small. Assets are kept under review to assess their ability to deliver or support National Park Purposes, to identify and manage future liabilities and identify opportunities for disposal. Built assets are subject to regular condition assessments and have a repair and redecoration programme that is built into the MTFP.
- 5.7 The Authority's capital programme for the MTFP period currently consists of:

| Capital Scheme/ Project | 2024/25 £ | 2025/26 £ | 2026/27 £ |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Replacement Vehicles for Rangers | 92,000 | 0 | 0 |

| Funded From | £ | £ | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|---|
| Capital Receipts and Vehicle Reserve | 92,000 | 0 | 0 |

5.8 If any other Capital Projects are proposed in-year, for example in respect of the Climate Change Action Plan, they will be subject to submission of a business case to have the allocation of required funding approved.

5.9 At the time of writing this report Defra have indicated that the £10 million of additional funding for protected landscapes in England announced in November 2023 is likely to be in the form of a capital grant of £500,000 for Dartmoor National Park Authority. We understand that any capital grant would have to be spent within the 2024/25 financial year. If this funding is confirmed, then officers will develop proposals for the spend and a revised Capital Programme with associated business case will be presented to a future Authority meeting for approval. with a business case for approval. Any changes required to the Prudential Indicators will also be brought to the Authority for approval.

6 Reserves

6.1 The Authority adopts a risk-based approach to determining the level and sue of reserves (NPA/AG/10/014). We formally review our reserves an annual basis as part of the MTFP process. The reserves are allocated according to three 'categories':

- General Reserve (unallocated) - a contingency balance for emergency situations and is the minimum level that we have determined will always be maintained.
- Contingency Reserves (allocated) - provisions set aside using a risk-based analysis to cushion the impact of uneven cash flows, and unexpected events where the timing of and / or amounts are uncertain (e.g. pay awards, pension contributions, loss of income).
- Earmarked Reserves (allocated) - consisting of ring-fenced grants and contributions received from third parties, sums set aside for capital schemes, commitments against future contracts and agreements and our external funding allocations where we are working in partnership with others.

6.2 The Risk Based analysis can be found at Appendix 4 and is at a summary level. Appendix 5 shows the likely General Fund Reserve Balances for the MTFP period at a detailed level. It can therefore be seen that the majority of our Reserve Balances are "allocated." The following table is a summary of how reserves are currently being allocated in each year of the MTFP the detail of which can see found at Appendix 5:

| Earmarked Reserves | 2023/24 £ | 2024/25 £ | 2025/26 £ | 2026/27 £ |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Opening Balance | 2,765,018 | 2,567,768 | 1,685,740 | 1,635,740 |
| Movements | (197,250) | (882,028) | (50,000) | (50,000) |
| Closing Balance | 2,567,768 | 1,685,740 | 1,635,740 | 1,585,740 |
| General Reserve | 500,000 | 500,000 | 500,000 | 500,000 |

6.3 If no increases in NPG are received for the next two years our Earmarked Reserve balances will be reduced by over 57% at the end of this MTFP period based on

current assumptions and scenario planning (the final two years of the MTFP indicative budget gap deficits have not been included).

- 6.4 Legislation does not prescribe how much the minimum level of reserves should be. The Section 151 Officer is tasked with recommending the minimum level of reserves required as part of the budget setting process having regard to elements of risk in the Authority’s finances. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the S151 officer to report on the adequacy of the Council’s financial resources on an annual basis.
- 6.5 Earmarked reserves are working balances, and many are ringfenced as they represent external match funding. These balances will naturally fluctuate between years. The current MTFP has been put together using cautious assumptions and our reserves risk assessed as normal. Years two and three are currently forecast to be in deficit, if there is no future increase in NPG, the position is the authority would need to undertake cost cutting, service reduction or restructuring.
- 6.6 The General (unallocated) Reserve balance was increased in 2019 to £500,000 in order to maintain this reserve at approximately 12% of the net budget. This amount does still maintain a reserve of 12% of the 2024/25 budget which is deemed sufficient.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1 It should be noted that the first year of the MTFP i.e. the 2024/25 budget is normally the most robust and accurate financial plan of the three year period. It is inevitable that future years’ financial plans can change for all sorts of reasons and influences, internal and external. However, as, at the time of writing, NPG has not been confirmed for 2024/25 (and beyond) there is a degree of uncertainty and there is a risk that the 2024/25 budget may have to be re-visited. The Authority continues to actively manage its financial and non-financial risks and therefore makes allowances for them by promoting a culture of flexibility and agility to militate against threats, to be proactive and to embrace opportunities as they arise.
- 7.2 The budget and MTFP contains a number of assumptions that may or may not prove to be accurate. In addition, events may occur that have the potential to affect the Authority’s underlying finances. We must therefore consider for ongoing risks and uncertainties such as:

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigating Factors |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---|
| Government Policy | High | Unknown | At the date of this report, there still remains a number of uncertainties associated with Government Policies and being an election year, these could change, which could alter the outcomes for the Authority. |
| NPG – no increase | High | High | Level of reserves held. NPG has not yet been notified at time of writing this report. Budgets may have to be revised. |
| Staff costs in excess of budget | Medium | High | Beyond 2024/25, annual inflation-related pay awards are assumed to continue at the rate of 3.0% in 2025/26 and 2% for 2026/27. This assumption is used for |

| | | | |
|--|--------|--------|---|
| | | | modelling purposes only. Higher rates of national pay award may be agreed (as the local government pay continues to lag behind inflation); this would also have a knock-on effect on employer pension contributions. Provision (short term) made in reserves. Some notice will be provided which will enable a timely response. |
| Economic situation could deteriorate. Run-away inflation affecting expenditure and income. | High | High | MTFP constructed on 3-year timescale with annual review. Budgetary control arrangements are in place to monitor income and expenditure. Reserves provision (short-term) made to manage immediate pressures. |
| Liabilities related to property estate | Medium | Medium | A contingency fund established in reserves. On-going maintenance programme and not all property costs need to be met immediately. |
| Failure to deliver Business Plan objectives | Low | High | Closely managed process, with regular in-year review. Where additional spending is required to achieve delivery, budget can be made available from the General Reserve or – if necessary - from redirecting resources from lower priority programmes. |
| External grant income reduced | High | Medium | We have an active programme of developing new project ideas, but external funding sources are extremely competitive; time and capacity to bid has to be carefully factored in |

8 Equality & Sustainability Impact

- 8.1 Consideration is given when deciding which areas of expenditure should be supported of the impact on under-represented groups, and the need to promote equal opportunities both as an employer and in respect of the services provided. Our Climate and Environmental Emergency declaration does feature within the MTFP; however, our ability to deliver significant projects could be hampered due to lack of resources (funding).

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 Clause 25 of part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Financial Officer (section 151 Officer) to report to Members, when calculating the net budget requirement, on the robustness of estimates made including the overall public sector financing climate. The financial context within which we have developed the 2024/25 budget and MTFP is very uncertain:

- We are still waiting for the Government to confirm NPG for 2024/25.
- In November 2023, the Government announced £10 million in additional funding for protected landscapes in England for 2024/25. This has still to be confirmed. We understand that it is likely to be capital funding to be spent within the financial year and not revenue funding which is what we most need.
- There is no indication of NPG levels for 2025/26 onwards and a general election in late 2024 will leave little time for a full spending review meaning we may receive a one year settlement for 2025/26.

This uncertainty makes it very difficult to plan ahead and impossible to prepare a detailed MTFP. Our external auditors, Grant Thornton, have suggested that we should prepare a MTFP covering five or more years rather than the current three. Leadership Team have considered this and do not believe that there is merit in spending staff time on a longer MTFP given the financial uncertainties we face.

The current MTFP demonstrates that without a real-terms increase in core funding we will need to undertake a business review to reduce our costs in order to set a balanced budget in the medium term. However, the financial uncertainty that exists also makes it difficult to define the parameters for such a business review: we could cut services in 2024/25 and then find we have an increased budget in 2025/26; or we could cut services in 2024/25 and then have to cut again in 2025/26 due to further reductions in core grant. Business and service reviews inevitably mean that the organisation 'faces inwards' rather than focuses on delivering National Park purposes.

Our clear need is for increased revenue funding which we can use to support service delivery. If the additional funding announced in November 2023 is restricted to capital spend it will not address the financial reality facing the Authority. We will still need to cut or remove services.

Members are recommended to approve the **2024/25 budget and note the indicative budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 as shown in Appendices 1 – 3; approve the use of Earmarked Reserves balances as set out in Appendix 5; and, approve the Capital Investment Strategy as set out in section 4 of the report.**

Members are also asked to note that the **Authority faces an uncertain financial future and that without further core funding for service delivery will need to undertake a business review to reduce costs in order to set a balanced budget in the medium term. Such a business review will have significant implications in terms of the Authority's ability to deliver National Park purposes.**

ANGELA STIRLAND

**Attachments: Appendices 1, 2 & 3 – 2024/25, 2025/26 & 2026/27 Revenue Budgets
Appendix 4 – Reserves risk-based analysis
Appendix 5 – Reserve balances**

20240301 AS 2024/25 Budget & MTFP

Appendix 1 to NPA/24/13

| BUDGET 2024/25 | Salaries | Travel | Transport | Premises | Projects: Supplies & Services | GROSS EXPENDITURE | Grants | Treasury | Fees & Charges | Sales | Rents & Other | INCOME | NET EXPENDITURE |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | | |
| BIO-DIVERSITY | 126,399 | 1,500 | | | 70,289 | 198,188 | (10,000) | | | (12,940) | | (22,940) | 175,248 |
| LAND MANAGEMENT | 36,570 | 675 | | | 14,809 | 52,054 | | | (176) | | | (176) | 51,878 |
| WOODLANDS | 24,242 | 100 | | | 6,500 | 30,842 | | | | | | 0 | 30,842 |
| DARTMOOR DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE BID | 54,518 | | | | | 54,518 | (34,322) | | | | | (34,322) | 20,196 |
| DARTMOOR HEADWATERS PROJECT | 244,054 | | | | 108 | 244,162 | (215,973) | | | | | (215,973) | 28,189 |
| PEATLANDS | 187,600 | | | | 144 | 187,744 | (187,744) | | | | | (187,744) | 0 |
| ENGAGEMENT RANGER | 34,170 | | | | | 34,170 | (10,000) | | | | | (10,000) | 24,170 |
| FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES | 189,672 | | | | 1,054,798 | 1,244,470 | (1,244,470) | | | | | (1,244,470) | 0 |
| HILL FARM PROJECT | 110,958 | | | | 108 | 111,066 | (44,775) | | | | | (44,775) | 66,291 |
| NATURAL ENVIRONMENT | 1,008,183 | 2,275 | 0 | 0 | 1,146,756 | 2,157,214 | (1,747,284) | 0 | (176) | (12,940) | 0 | (1,760,400) | 396,814 |
| ARCHAEOLOGY | 141,661 | 1,100 | | | 30,142 | 172,903 | (52,250) | | (2,000) | | | (54,250) | 118,653 |
| BUILT ENVIRONMENT | 49,741 | 300 | | | 36 | 50,077 | | | | | | 0 | 50,077 |
| UPPACOTT | | | | 12,532 | | 12,532 | | | (1,000) | | (4,000) | (5,000) | 7,532 |
| CULTURAL HERITAGE | 191,402 | 1,400 | 0 | 12,532 | 30,178 | 235,512 | (52,250) | 0 | (3,000) | 0 | (4,000) | (59,250) | 176,262 |
| VISITOR FACILITIES | 55,776 | 250 | | 14,732 | 113,129 | 183,887 | | | (222,000) | | | (222,000) | (38,113) |
| ACCESS & RECREATION | 104,847 | 700 | | | | 127,132 | | | | | | 0 | 127,132 |
| PROW | 122,414 | | | | 49,088 | 171,502 | (43,000) | | | | | (43,000) | 128,502 |
| SUSTAINABLE TOURISM & TRANSPORT | | | | | 2,500 | 2,500 | | | | | | 0 | 2,500 |
| RECREATION MANAGEMENT | 283,037 | 950 | 0 | 14,732 | 186,302 | 485,021 | (43,000) | 0 | (222,000) | 0 | 0 | (265,000) | 220,021 |
| VISITOR CENTRES | 219,269 | 1,150 | | 22,233 | 6,234 | 248,886 | | | | | | 0 | 248,886 |
| RETAIL | 23,605 | 200 | | | 89,655 | 113,460 | | | (147,000) | | | (147,000) | (33,540) |
| COMMUNICATIONS | 155,440 | 550 | | | 42,721 | 198,711 | | | (17,500) | | | (17,500) | 181,211 |
| EDUCATION | 137,021 | 1,100 | 1,747 | | 15,309 | 155,177 | | | (4,900) | | | (4,900) | 150,277 |
| PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING | 535,335 | 3,000 | 1,747 | 22,233 | 153,919 | 716,234 | 0 | 0 | (22,400) | (147,000) | 0 | (169,400) | 546,834 |
| RANGERS | 470,066 | | 31,550 | 2,900 | 23,676 | 528,192 | | | | | | 0 | 528,192 |
| CONSERVATION WORKS SERVICE | 126,472 | | 10,453 | 10,711 | 8,086 | 155,722 | | | | | | 0 | 155,722 |
| RANGERS, ESTATES & VOLUNTEERS | 596,538 | 0 | 42,003 | 13,611 | 31,762 | 683,914 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 683,914 |
| DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT | 704,528 | 3,075 | | | 45,621 | 753,224 | | | (207,000) | | | (207,000) | 546,224 |
| DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT | 704,528 | 3,075 | 0 | 0 | 45,621 | 753,224 | 0 | 0 | (207,000) | 0 | 0 | (207,000) | 546,224 |
| FORWARD PLANNING & COMMUNITY | 211,697 | 750 | | | 5,180 | 217,627 | | | | | | 0 | 217,627 |
| FORWARD PLANNING | 211,697 | 750 | 0 | 0 | 5,180 | 217,627 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 217,627 |
| CORPORATE CENTRE | 234,307 | 3,550 | | | 168,891 | 406,748 | | (100,000) | | | | (100,000) | 306,748 |
| CORPORATE & DEMOCRATIC CORE | 234,307 | 3,550 | 0 | 0 | 168,891 | 406,748 | 0 | (100,000) | 0 | 0 | 0 | (100,000) | 306,748 |
| INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY | 191,994 | 700 | | | 31,747 | 224,441 | | | (3,837) | | | (3,837) | 220,604 |
| CORPORATE OPERATING COSTS | | | 14,660 | | 122,248 | 136,908 | | | | | | 0 | 136,908 |
| ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE | 197,876 | | | | 13,066 | 210,942 | | | | | | 0 | 210,942 |
| LEGAL | | | | | 75,000 | 75,000 | | | | | | 0 | 75,000 |
| HUMAN RESOURCES | 176,148 | 200 | | | 47,099 | 223,447 | | | | | | 0 | 223,447 |
| OFFICE ACCOMMODATION (PARKE) | 17,755 | | | 138,042 | | 155,797 | | | | (1,000) | | (1,000) | 154,797 |
| OFFICE ACCOMMODATION (PRINCETOWN) | | | | 74,039 | | 74,039 | | | | (30,268) | | (30,268) | 43,771 |
| CORPORATE SERVICES | 583,773 | 900 | 14,660 | 212,081 | 289,160 | 1,100,574 | 0 | 0 | (3,837) | 0 | (31,268) | (35,105) | 1,065,469 |
| PROJECT FUND | | | | | 75,000 | 75,000 | | | | | | 0 | 75,000 |
| OTHER | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75,000 | 75,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75,000 |
| TOTAL | 4,348,800 | 15,900 | 58,410 | 275,189 | 2,132,768 | 6,831,067 | (1,842,534) | (100,000) | (458,413) | (159,940) | (35,268) | (2,596,155) | 4,234,912 |

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Summary: | |
| Gross Expenditure | 6,831,067 |
| Reserves | (409,047) |
| Income | (2,596,155) |
| Net Budget | 3,825,865 |
| | |
| National Park Grant | (3,825,865) |
| Deficit / (Surplus) | 0 |

Appendix 2 to NPA/24/13

| BUDGET 2025/26 | Salaries | Travel | Transport | Premises | Projects: Supplies & Services | GROSS EXPENDITURE | Grants | Treasury | Fees & Charges | Sales | Rents & Other | INCOME | NET EXPENDITURE |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| BIO-DIVERSITY | 131,608 | 1,500 | | | 64,698 | 197,806 | | | | (6,848) | | (6,848) | 190,958 |
| LAND MANAGEMENT | 48,219 | 675 | | | 7,309 | 56,203 | | | (176) | | | (176) | 56,027 |
| WOODLANDS | 50,014 | 100 | | | 8,500 | 58,614 | | | | | | 0 | 58,614 |
| DARTMOOR HEADWATERS PROJECT | 254,361 | | | | 108 | 254,469 | (225,415) | | | | | (225,415) | 29,054 |
| ENGAGEMENT RANGER | 48,671 | | | | | 48,671 | | | | | | 0 | 48,671 |
| HILL FARM PROJECT | 73,486 | | | | 108 | 73,594 | (51,379) | | | | | (51,379) | 22,215 |
| NATURAL ENVIRONMENT | 606,359 | 2,275 | 0 | 0 | 80,723 | 689,357 | (276,794) | 0 | (176) | (6,848) | 0 | (283,818) | 405,539 |
| ARCHAEOLOGY | 146,037 | 1,100 | | | 42,797 | 189,934 | (53,158) | | (2,000) | | | (55,158) | 134,776 |
| BUILT ENVIRONMENT | 51,270 | 300 | | | | 51,570 | | | | | | 0 | 51,570 |
| UPPACOTT | | | | 19,310 | | 19,310 | | | (1,000) | | | (1,000) | 18,310 |
| CULTURAL HERITAGE | 197,307 | 1,400 | 0 | 19,310 | 42,797 | 260,814 | (53,158) | 0 | (3,000) | 0 | 0 | (56,158) | 204,656 |
| VISITOR FACILITIES | 58,763 | 250 | | 15,074 | 112,821 | 186,908 | | | (226,100) | | | (226,100) | (39,192) |
| ACCESS & RECREATION | 108,060 | 700 | | | 23,637 | 132,397 | | | | | | 0 | 132,397 |
| PROW | 128,211 | | | | 49,270 | 177,481 | (43,000) | | | | | (43,000) | 134,481 |
| SUSTAINABLE TOURISM & TRANSPORT | | | | | 5,500 | 5,500 | | | | | | 0 | 5,500 |
| RECREATION MANAGEMENT | 295,034 | 950 | 0 | 15,074 | 191,228 | 502,286 | (43,000) | 0 | (226,100) | 0 | 0 | (269,100) | 233,186 |
| VISITOR CENTRES | 130,314 | 1,150 | | 18,950 | 4,613 | 155,027 | | | | | | 0 | 155,027 |
| RETAIL | 0 | | | | 59,961 | 59,961 | | | | (100,000) | | (100,000) | (40,039) |
| COMMUNICATIONS | 172,734 | 550 | | | 37,924 | 211,208 | | | (17,500) | | | (17,500) | 193,708 |
| EDUCATION | 147,181 | 1,100 | 1,747 | | 16,144 | 166,172 | | | (4,900) | | | (4,900) | 161,272 |
| PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING | 450,229 | 2,800 | 1,747 | 18,950 | 118,642 | 592,368 | 0 | 0 | (22,400) | (100,000) | 0 | (122,400) | 469,968 |
| RANGERS | 492,662 | | 31,250 | 2,913 | 22,896 | 549,721 | | | | | | 0 | 549,721 |
| CONSERVATION WORKS SERVICE | 130,462 | | 10,453 | 12,781 | 6,550 | 160,246 | | | | | | 0 | 160,246 |
| RANGERS, ESTATES & VOLUNTEERS | 623,124 | 0 | 41,703 | 15,694 | 29,446 | 709,967 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 709,967 |
| DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT | 739,022 | 3,075 | | | 41,940 | 784,037 | 0 | | (207,000) | | | (207,000) | 577,037 |
| DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT | 739,022 | 3,075 | 0 | 0 | 41,940 | 784,037 | 0 | 0 | (207,000) | 0 | 0 | (207,000) | 577,037 |
| FORWARD PLANNING & COMMUNITY | 255,999 | 750 | | | 5,180 | 261,929 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 261,929 |
| FORWARD PLANNING | 255,999 | 750 | 0 | 0 | 5,180 | 261,929 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 261,929 |
| CORPORATE CENTRE | 241,410 | 3,550 | | | 172,862 | 417,822 | | (80,000) | | | | (80,000) | 337,822 |
| CORPORATE & DEMOCRATIC CORE | 241,410 | 3,550 | 0 | 0 | 172,862 | 417,822 | 0 | (80,000) | 0 | 0 | 0 | (80,000) | 337,822 |
| INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY | 199,836 | 750 | | | 32,405 | 232,991 | | | (3,837) | | | (3,837) | 229,154 |
| CORPORATE OPERATING COSTS | | | 14,760 | | 123,403 | 138,163 | | | | | | 0 | 138,163 |
| ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE | 204,039 | | | | 14,368 | 218,407 | | | | | | 0 | 218,407 |
| LEGAL | | | | | 75,000 | 75,000 | | | | | | 0 | 75,000 |
| HUMAN RESOURCES | 182,179 | 200 | | | 46,199 | 228,578 | | | | | | 0 | 228,578 |
| OFFICE ACCOMMODATION (PARKE) | 18,306 | | | 131,912 | | 150,218 | | | | | (1,000) | (1,000) | 149,218 |
| OFFICE ACCOMMODATION (PRINCETOWN) | | | | 41,768 | | 41,768 | | | | | (19,492) | (19,492) | 22,276 |
| CORPORATE SERVICES | 604,360 | 950 | 14,760 | 173,680 | 291,375 | 1,085,125 | 0 | 0 | (3,837) | 0 | (20,492) | (24,329) | 1,060,796 |
| PROJECT FUND | | | | | 75,000 | 75,000 | | | | | | 0 | 75,000 |
| OTHER | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75,000 | 75,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75,000 |
| TOTAL | 4,012,844 | 15,750 | 58,210 | 242,708 | 1,049,193 | 5,378,705 | (372,952) | (80,000) | (462,513) | (106,848) | (20,492) | (1,042,805) | 4,335,900 |

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Summary: | |
| Gross Expenditure | 5,378,705 |
| Reserves | 0 |
| Income | (1,042,805) |
| Net Budget | 4,335,900 |
| | |
| National Park Grant | (3,825,865) |
| Deficit / (Surplus) | 510,035 |

Appendix 3 to NPA/24/13

| BUDGET 2026/27 | Salaries | Travel | Transport | Premises | Projects: Supplies & Services | GROSS EXPENDITURE | Grants | Treasury | Fees & Charges | Sales | Rents & Other | INCOME | NET EXPENDITURE |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| BIO-DIVERSITY | 135,607 | 1,500 | | | 35,946 | 173,053 | | | | (5,265) | | (5,265) | 167,788 |
| LAND MANAGEMENT | 49,805 | 675 | | | 7,309 | 57,789 | | | (176) | | | (176) | 57,613 |
| WOODLANDS | 51,064 | 100 | | | 10,200 | 61,364 | | | | | | 0 | 61,364 |
| DARTMOOR HEADWATERS PROJECT | 259,597 | | | | 108 | 259,705 | (230,058) | | | | | (230,058) | 29,647 |
| ENGAGEMENT RANGER | 51,001 | | | | | 51,001 | | | | | | 0 | 51,001 |
| HILL FARM PROJECT | 67,569 | | | | 108 | 67,677 | (44,420) | | | | | (44,420) | 23,257 |
| NATURAL ENVIRONMENT | 614,643 | 2,275 | 0 | 0 | 53,671 | 670,589 | (274,478) | 0 | (176) | (5,265) | 0 | (279,919) | 390,670 |
| ARCHAEOLOGY | 149,041 | 1,100 | | | 42,817 | 192,958 | (43,795) | | (2,000) | | | (45,795) | 147,163 |
| BUILT ENVIRONMENT | 52,320 | 300 | | | 36 | 52,656 | | | | | | 0 | 52,656 |
| UPPACOTT | | | | 14,485 | | 14,485 | | | (1,000) | | | (1,000) | 13,485 |
| CULTURAL HERITAGE | 201,361 | 1,400 | 0 | 14,485 | 42,853 | 260,099 | (43,795) | 0 | (3,000) | 0 | 0 | (46,795) | 213,304 |
| VISITOR FACILITIES | 61,298 | 250 | | 15,434 | 118,199 | 195,181 | | | (230,200) | | | (230,200) | (35,019) |
| ACCESS & RECREATION | 110,267 | 700 | | | 23,637 | 134,604 | | | | | | 0 | 134,604 |
| PROW | 131,200 | | | | 49,270 | 180,470 | (43,000) | | | | | (43,000) | 137,470 |
| SUSTAINABLE TOURISM & TRANSPORT | | | | | 5,500 | 5,500 | | | | | | 0 | 5,500 |
| RECREATION MANAGEMENT | 302,765 | 950 | 0 | 15,434 | 196,606 | 515,755 | (43,000) | 0 | (230,200) | 0 | 0 | (273,200) | 242,555 |
| VISITOR CENTRES | 133,090 | 1,150 | | 19,701 | 4,694 | 158,635 | | | | | | 0 | 158,635 |
| RETAIL | 0 | | | | 56,473 | 56,473 | | | (100,000) | | | (100,000) | (43,527) |
| COMMUNICATIONS | 176,947 | 550 | | | 38,621 | 216,118 | | | (17,500) | | | (17,500) | 198,618 |
| EDUCATION | 154,011 | 1,100 | 1,747 | | 15,644 | 172,502 | | | (4,900) | | | (4,900) | 167,602 |
| PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING | 464,048 | 2,800 | 1,747 | 19,701 | 115,432 | 603,728 | 0 | 0 | (22,400) | (100,000) | 0 | (122,400) | 481,328 |
| RANGERS | 504,205 | | 31,250 | 2,926 | 23,061 | 561,442 | | | | | | 0 | 561,442 |
| CONSERVATION WORKS SERVICE | 133,242 | | 10,453 | 13,285 | 6,586 | 163,566 | | | | | | 0 | 163,566 |
| RANGERS, ESTATES & VOLUNTEERS | 637,447 | 0 | 41,703 | 16,211 | 29,647 | 725,008 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 725,008 |
| DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT | 762,155 | 3,075 | | | 38,568 | 803,798 | 0 | | (207,000) | | | (207,000) | 596,798 |
| DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT | 762,155 | 3,075 | 0 | 0 | 38,568 | 803,798 | 0 | 0 | (207,000) | 0 | 0 | (207,000) | 596,798 |
| FORWARD PLANNING & COMMUNITY | 264,078 | 750 | | | 5,180 | 270,008 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 270,008 |
| FORWARD PLANNING | 264,078 | 750 | 0 | 0 | 5,180 | 270,008 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 270,008 |
| CORPORATE CENTRE | 247,655 | 3,550 | | | 115,291 | 366,496 | | (60,000) | | | | (60,000) | 306,496 |
| CORPORATE & DEMOCRATIC CORE | 247,655 | 3,550 | 0 | 0 | 115,291 | 366,496 | 0 | (60,000) | 0 | 0 | 0 | (60,000) | 306,496 |
| INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY | 205,164 | 750 | | | 35,187 | 241,101 | | | (3,837) | | | (3,837) | 237,264 |
| CORPORATE OPERATING COSTS | | | 14,980 | | 126,224 | 141,204 | | | | | | 0 | 141,204 |
| ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE | 208,269 | | | | 15,701 | 223,970 | | | | | | 0 | 223,970 |
| LEGAL | | | | | 75,000 | 75,000 | | | | | | 0 | 75,000 |
| HUMAN RESOURCES | 187,179 | 200 | | | 50,122 | 237,501 | | | | | | 0 | 237,501 |
| OFFICE ACCOMMODATION (PARKE) | 18,685 | | | 139,649 | | 158,334 | | | | | (1,000) | (1,000) | 157,334 |
| OFFICE ACCOMMODATION (PRINCETOWN) | | | | 0 | | 0 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| CORPORATE SERVICES | 619,297 | 950 | 14,980 | 139,649 | 302,234 | 1,077,110 | 0 | 0 | (3,837) | 0 | (1,000) | (4,837) | 1,072,273 |
| PROJECT FUND | | | | | 75,000 | 75,000 | | | | | | 0 | 75,000 |
| OTHER | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75,000 | 75,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 75,000 |
| TOTAL | 4,113,449 | 15,750 | 58,430 | 205,480 | 974,482 | 5,367,591 | (361,273) | (60,000) | (466,613) | (105,265) | (1,000) | (994,151) | 4,373,440 |

| Summary: | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Gross Expenditure | 5,367,591 |
| Reserves | 0 |
| Income | (994,151) |
| Net Budget | 4,373,440 |
| National Park Grant | (3,902,382) |
| Deficit / (Surplus) | 471,058 |

| 2023/24 RESERVES: RISK BASED ANALYSIS | Risk Level | Rate | 2024/25 Opening Balance £'000 |
|--|------------|--------|----------------------------------|
| Grants & Contributions with Restrictions carried forward: | N/A | Actual | (396) |
| Budget Management Fund: | | | |
| Employees - Maternity / Paternity Cover / Pay Awards | Medium | Est. | (52) |
| Costs & Awards: Appeals / Public Enquiries / Litigation | High | Est. | (320) |
| Invest to Save Fund | N/A | Actual | (34) |
| Loss of Income, Inflation or Price Increases | Medium | Est. | (35) |
| Climate Change - Action Plan projects | N/A | Actual | (50) |
| 2020/21 Outturn - to manage future budget deficits | N/A | Est. | (745) |
| Capital | | | |
| Property: Repairs & Maintenance (sinking fund) | Medium | Est. | (200) |
| Vehicles: Provision for future replacement of vehicles (sinking fund) | High | Actual | (70) |
| Capital Receipts Unapplied | N/A | Actual | 0 |
| Known Commitments/Contracts | | | |
| National Park Management Plan | Low | Est. | (26) |
| Conservation Volunteers - DNPA Commitment | Low | Est. | (5) |
| Carbon Toolkit | Low | Est. | (4) |
| Match Funding Reserve | | | |
| Cash Flow management for externally funded projects | Medium | Actual | (236) |
| Dartmoor Foundation | Low | Est. | (150) |
| South West Peatland Partnership | Low | Est. | (125) |
| Unallocated fund balance | N/A | Actual | (120) |
| General Reserve - Minimum amount to cover unanticipated costs / emergencies | N/A | Actual | (500) |
| Total Reserve Balance | | | (3,068) |

Appendix 5 NPA/24/13

GENERAL FUND RESERVE BALANCES

| GENERAL FUND RESERVE BALANCES | 2023/24 Opening Balance | 2023/24 Transfers Out | 2023/24 Transfers within | 2023/24 Transfers In | 2023/24 Closing Balance | 2024/25 Forecast Movements | 2025/26 Forecast Movements | 2026/27 Forecast Movements | 2026/27 Forecast Closing Balance | Notes |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | |
| Ringfenced External Grants & Contributions with Restrictions | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hill Farm Project (Princes Countryside Fund) | (81,825) | 28,673 | | | (53,152) | 53,152 | | | (0) | Cash balances are carried forward at each year end as allocated to expenditure |
| Communities Fund Grant (from District Councils) | (95,567) | | | | (95,567) | 95,567 | | | 0 | Cash balances are carried forward at each year end as allocated to expenditure |
| Beacon Park affordable housing | (102,200) | | | | (102,200) | 102,200 | | | 0 | to be used for affordable housing within the next 5 years |
| DCLG - Neighbourhood Planning Grant | (10,000) | | | | (10,000) | 10,000 | | | 0 | Community planning referendums |
| DCLG - Unringfenced Grants | (84,940) | | | | (84,940) | 84,940 | | | 0 | |
| Donate for Dartmoor Balances (public donations) | (44,407) | 13,250 | | (14,375) | (45,532) | 45,532 | | | 0 | Cash balances are carried forward at each year end as allocated to expenditure |
| Cave Shrimp S106 | (5,000) | 5,000 | | | 0 | | | | 0 | |
| Defence infrastructure - River Tavey bridge feasibility | (5,000) | | | | (5,000) | 5,000 | | | 0 | |
| Budget Management Fund - Provisions (risk based) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employees | (52,000) | | | | (52,000) | | | | (52,000) | See risk assessment for breakdown |
| Costs and Awards: Appeals/Public Enquiries/Litigation | (250,000) | | | (70,000) | (320,000) | | | | (320,000) | See risk assessment for breakdown |
| Loss of Income and Inflation | (34,500) | | | | (34,500) | | | | (34,500) | See risk assessment for breakdown |
| Invest to Save and / or Generate Projects | (33,733) | | | | (33,733) | | | | (33,733) | |
| Climate Change /Emergency Declaration | (50,000) | | | | (50,000) | | | | (50,000) | NPA/19/020 - Carbon Footprint Analysis |
| Annual Revenue Outturn | (731,981) | | 22,958 | (35,633) | (744,656) | 409,047 | | | (335,609) | |
| Capital Expenditure Fund | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vehicles - Sinking Fund - Replacement | (127,321) | 57,423 | | | (69,898) | 1,000 | | | (68,898) | Ranger vehicles |
| Property - Sinking Fund - Repairs & Maintenance | (200,000) | | | | (200,000) | | | | (200,000) | |
| Purchase of New Server | 25,055 | | (25,055) | | 0 | | | | 0 | |
| Known Commitments | | | | | | | | | | |
| National Park Management Plan | (25,590) | | | | (25,590) | 25,590 | | | 0 | C/Fwd to be used as required |
| Conservation Volunteers - DNPA Commitment | (5,000) | | | | (5,000) | | | | (5,000) | C/fwd from 2019/20 to be used as match funding |
| Carbon Toolkit | (20,000) | 15,500 | | | (4,500) | | | | (4,500) | |
| Commitments to carry forward | (56,643) | 56,643 | | | 0 | | | | 0 | |
| Capital Receipts Unapplied | (20,769) | 20,769 | | | 0 | | | | 0 | Ranger vehicles |
| Match Funding Reserve | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cash Flow management of external funding bids | (236,500) | | | | (236,500) | | | | (236,500) | To cover cash flow delay when claiming in arrears |
| Public Arts Project 2020 | (120,000) | | 120,000 | | 0 | | | | 0 | |
| South West Peatland Partnership | (125,000) | | | | (125,000) | | | | (125,000) | NPA/21/020 |
| Dartmoor Trust digitising DNPA photographic archive | 0 | 20,000 | (20,000) | | 0 | | | | 0 | |
| Dartmoor Foundation | 0 | | (150,000) | | (150,000) | 50,000 | 50,000 | 50,000 | 0 | |
| Dynamic Landscape | 0 | 100,000 | (100,000) | | 0 | | | | 0 | |
| Unallocated fund balance | (272,097) | | 152,097 | | (120,000) | | | | (120,000) | |
| Total Earmarked Reserves | (2,765,018) | 317,258 | 0 | (120,008) | (2,567,768) | 882,028 | 50,000 | 50,000 | (1,585,740) | |
| General Reserve (unallocated emergency reserve) | (500,000) | | | | (500,000) | | | | (500,000) | |
| Total General Fund Balance | (3,265,018) | 317,258 | 0 | (120,008) | (3,067,768) | 882,028 | 50,000 | 50,000 | (2,085,740) | |



NPA/24/14

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 March 2024

Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25

Report of the Head of Business Support

Recommendation: That the Authority approves and adopts the 2024/25 Treasury Management & Investment Strategy (Appendix 1)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In December 2021, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) published a revised Code of Practice for Treasury Management and a revised Prudential Code. As a result, a revised Treasury Management Policy Statement together with a revised statement of 'Treasury Management Practices' (TMPs) was agreed by the Authority in March 2022. No changes are proposed to these policies for 2024/25.
- 1.2 The policy requires the Authority to consider a treasury strategy report, setting out the strategy and plans to be followed in the coming year, as part of the budget process. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 is set out at Appendix 1.

2 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy – Key Points

- 2.1 The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy sets out the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, capital expenditure funding, prudential indicators, the current treasury position, debt, and investments; prospects for interest rates; the borrowing strategy; and the investment strategy.
- 2.2 The key issues for 2024/25 are set out in the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Overview section. These include:
 - a) Consideration of the need for prudent management of the Authority's cash resources in order to support the capital strategy and meet the Authority's strategic priorities.
 - b) The potential for lower investment income resulting from the decreased level of interest rates forecast for the final half of the year.
- 2.3 In general, the strategy remains broadly similar to that for 2023/24, with no changes, for example, to the MRP policy, or approved counterparty criteria.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 The Authority's arrangements for treasury management continue to be maintained at a high standard. The Head of Business Support continues to consult with Devon County Council's Assistant County Treasury (Investments and Treasury Management) to investigate opportunities to maximise the Authority's investment income and will bring a report to the Authority for approval if changes to our practices are proposed.

ANGELA STIRLAND

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Treasury Management and Investment Strategy

20240301 AS Treasury Management

TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2024/25

1. Introduction

The Authority has adopted the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services. A revised Code of Practice was published by CIPFA in December 2021 and requires the Authority to approve a Treasury Management Policy Statement together with a statement of its 'Treasury Management Practices' (TMPs). No changes are proposed to these policies for 2024/25.

The policy requires the Authority to consider a treasury strategy report, setting out the strategy and plans to be followed in the coming year, as part of the budget process.

The Treasury Management Strategy sets out the Authority's policies in relation to:

- the management of the Authority's cashflows, its banking transactions;
- borrowing and investment strategies;
- monitoring of the level of debt and funding of the capital programme.

The Treasury Management Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Capital Strategy.

The Authority is required to monitor its overall level of debt in line with the national code of practice drawn up by CIPFA. Part of this code requires consideration of a set of "prudential indicators" in order to form a judgement about the affordable, prudent and sustainable level of debt.

The prudential indicators, treasury management strategy and the annual investment strategy have been reviewed in line with the Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27, and the Capital Strategy.

This Treasury Management Strategy document sets out:

- Minimum revenue provision;
- Capital expenditure funding;
- Prudential indicators on the impact of capital financing and monitoring of the level and make-up of debt;
- The current treasury position, debt and investments;
- Prospects for interest rates;
- The borrowing strategy; and
- The investment strategy.

2. Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Overview

The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy sets out the MRP policy, capital expenditure funding, prudential indicators, the current treasury position, debt and investments; prospects for interest rates; the borrowing strategy; and the investment strategy.

3. International Financial Reporting Standard 16 – Leases.

From 1st April 2024, accounting code IFRS16 Leases, which implementation has been deferred by CIPFA for a number of years, will now need to be adopted. This means that the Authority will have external borrowing in relation to leasing contracts that it currently holds or enters into (for property, plant and equipment).

All current “operating leases” unless of low value or of less than 12 months duration, will become “finance leases”. This has the “accounting” effect of bringing lease liabilities onto the balance sheet, which counts as “debt” as far as the Prudential Code is concerned. However, as this “debt” relates to transactions that the Authority has already approved, this will be purely an administrative task to increase Prudential Code Indicator limits equal to the newly recognised “debt”. Members agreed to increase the Prudential Code Indicator limits (NPA/22/013) at the 4th March 2022 Authority meeting, therefore this administrative task has already been undertaken.

4. External Borrowing

The Authority has always followed a policy of containing the capital programme and not taking out external borrowing. New capital expenditures are limited to those that are financed from sources other than external borrowing. To meet the need for capital expenditure, the highest priority schemes across the Authority are funded from capital receipts and internal borrowing over the capital programme timescale. As the Authority is debt free it has no plans to borrow.

5. Target Rates for Investment

For the 2024/25 financial year it has been assumed that the average interest rate earned on lending to banks and building societies will be 5.0% p.a. The target rate takes into account the likelihood that the Bank of England will start to reduce the base rate from the current level of 5.25% during the second half of the 2024.

6. Minimum Revenue Provision

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) is a charge to the Authority’s revenue accounts to make provision for the repayment of external debt and internal borrowing. The Authority has a statutory obligation to charge the revenue account an annual amount of MRP. Although the Authority has no external debt or borrowing.

7. Capital Expenditure

The Authority rarely has a capital programme; capital spend is commonly of a small-scale nature such as related to the acquisition of vehicles or IT. At the time of writing the report, DEFRA has indicated that each national park will be allocated £500,000 capital funding, but this has yet to be confirmed. Once we have confirmation a separate report will be bought to the Authority.

| Project | 2024/25 £ | 2025/26 £ | 2026/27 £ |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Replacement Vehicles (Rangers) | 92,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 92,000 | 0 | 0 |

| Funded From | £ | £ | |
|------------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Capital Receipts | 92,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 92,000 | 0 | 0 |

8. Prudential Indicators

Capital Financing Requirement - this represents the Authority's underlying debt position, showing how the previous and future spend for capital purposes has been or will be financed by borrowing or entering into other long-term liabilities.

Authorised Limit for total external debt - this represents the level at which the Authority is able to borrow and enter into long term liabilities. Additional borrowing beyond this limit is prohibited without Authority approval. The Authorised limit is currently set to £500,000.

Operational Boundary - this is based on the anticipated level of external debt needed during the year. Variations in cash flow may lead to occasional, short term breaches of the operational boundary that are acceptable. Sustained breaches would be an indication that there may be a danger of exceeding authorised limits. The Operational Boundary is currently set at £500,000.

Underlying Borrowing Requirement to Gross Debt - the Authority needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the Capital Financing Requirement.

Liability Benchmark – This takes the capital financing requirement, and the forecast level of reserves and balances, and assumes that cash and investment balances should be kept to a minimum level at each year end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk. As the Authority currently has no capital finance requirements this is not required.

Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream - this shows the relationship between Capital Financing Costs and the Net Revenue Stream.

9. Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

These relate to the fixed and variable rates of interest on loans and borrowings. As the Authority does not have any external borrowing, these indicators do not apply.

10. Monitoring the Indicators

It is important to monitor performance against forward looking indicators and the requirement that borrowing should only be for capital purposes. If we had borrowing, it would be monitored daily against the operational boundary and authorised limit. If these limits were to be breached, a report would be brought to the Authority outlining what action would be necessary to prevent borrowing exceeding the limit and the impact on the revenue budget. The indicators for capital expenditure, capital financing requirement, capital costs and the treasury management indicators are monitored monthly if they apply. Any significant variations would be reported to the Authority.

11. Analysis of Long Term Debt

The Authority has no long term debt.

12. Schedule of Investments

At the time of writing this report all the Authority's working capital was being held in its bank accounts and in a Barclays Treasury Deposit Account. The Authority's fixed rate investments as at 31st January are:

| Bank | Maturing in | Current 31.01.24 | Interest Rate range % |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Barclays – term deposits | < 365 days | £4,000,000 | 2.30 – 3.57 |

The annual investment returns history and current position is set out below.

| 2016/17 Actual | 2017/18 Actual | 2018/19 Actual | 2019/20 Actual | 2020/21 Actual | 2021/22 Actual | 2022/23 Actual | 2023/24 Forecast |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| £17,950 | £10,616 | £23,505 | £23,726 | £5,488 | £386 | £24,157 | £100,442 |

The Authority's cash balance available for investment varies during the year, with the balance building up on a quarterly basis when we receive National Park Grant; it then tapers down at the end of each quarter and towards the end of the financial year. It is anticipated that long term cash balances available for investment on 31 March 2024 will be circa £3 million.

The recent investment performance of the Authority's cash has improved as a result of rising interest rates, as the Bank of England has sought to contain inflation. The Bank of England has raised base rates from 0.25% at the beginning of 2022 to 5.25% in August 2023, the highest level for 15 years. This has had an impact on the rates available for investment, which have gradually increased over the period since December 2021.

The average rate achieved on investments has therefore improved during the year as Term deposits carried forward from earlier periods have matured and been reinvested at higher rates, where cashflow has allowed.

13. Prospects for Interest Rates

Forecasting future interest rate movements even one year ahead is always difficult, exacerbated by the current economic environment and recent volatility in rates. The factors affecting interest rate movements are clearly outside the Authority's control. Whilst short term rates are influenced by the Bank of England's Base Rate, long-term rates are determined by other factors, e.g. the market in Gilts.

Having taken interest rates to their highest level in 15 years in August 2023, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept Bank Rate unchanged for a fourth consecutive time at its January meeting. With the market anticipating cuts in rates during 2024, MPC decided that it was too early to conclude that services inflation or pay growth were firmly on a downward path.

Nevertheless, current market expectations, following this meeting and the previously released weaker than anticipated employment and growth figures, are for an initial cut in interest rates in Summer 2024, followed by further cuts in rates during the Autumn.

The following table includes Link’s and Capital economics’ forecast movements in the base rate.

| Base Rate forecasts | Dec (act) 2023 | March 2024 | June 2024 | Sep 2024 | Dec 2024 | March 2025 | June 2025 | Sep 2025 |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Link Asset Service | 5.25% | 5.25% | 5.25% | 5.00% | 4.50% | 4.00% | 3.50% | 3.25% |
| Capital Economics | 5.25% | 5.25% | 5.25% | 5.25% | 4.75% | 4.25% | 3.75% | 3.25% |

When budgeting for interest receipts a prudent approach has been adopted to ensure that, as far as is possible, the budget will be achieved.

14. Borrowing and Debt Management Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27

As the Authority is debt free and has no current plans to borrow, there is nothing to report under this heading.

15. Investment Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27

The Authority continues to adopt a very prudent approach to its investments. The investments will be “Specified Investments” as defined by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The lending policy is kept under constant review with reference to strict criteria for inclusion in the counterparty list. The Treasury Management Strategy will continue to be set to ensure a prudent and secure approach.

The Authority is required under the guidance in the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice to approve an Annual Investment Strategy. The overall aims of the Authority’s strategy continue to be to:

- Limit the risk to the loss of capital (security);
- Ensure that funds are always available to meet cash flow requirements (liquidity);
- Maximise investment returns (yield), consistent with the first two aims; and
- Review new investment instruments as they come to the Local Authority market, and to assess whether they could be a useful part of our investment process.

The overriding objective will be to invest prudently, with priority being given to security and liquidity before yield.

Under the Markets in Financial Instruments (MiFID II) directive, local authorities are now classed as retail clients by the Financial Conducts Authority (FCA). This has implications for the range of investments that are available to local authorities. While bank and building society deposits are unaffected by the regulations, some banks have determined that they will only take term deposits from professional clients and a range of alternative forms of investments are only available to professional clients. However, if the local authority meets the criteria set by the FCA, then it can apply to be “opted up”. The Authority does not meet the criteria to do so.

Specified Investments

Specified Investments will be those that meet the criteria in the MHCLG Guidance i.e. the investment:

- Is sterling denominated;
- Has a maximum maturity of 1 year;
- Meets the “high credit quality” as determined by the Authority or is made with the UK government or is made with a local authority in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland or a parish or community council;
- The making of which is not defined as capital expenditure under section 25(1)(d) in SI 2003 No 3146 (i.e. the investment is not loan capital or share capital in a body corporate).

Specified investments will include bank and building society deposits. Security is achieved by the creation of an ‘Approved list of Counterparties’. These are the banks, building societies, money market funds and other public bodies with whom we are prepared to deposit funds. In preparing the list, criteria will be used not only to determine who is on the list, but also to set limits as to how much money can be placed with them, and how long that money can be placed for.

Banks are expected to have a high credit rating. The Authority uses the ratings issued by all three of the major credit rating agencies, Fitch, Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s, made available to the Authority via Devon County Council’s Assistant County Treasurer (Investments and Treasury Management), who monitors them daily and advises the Authority accordingly.

The lowest rating published by any of the agencies is used to decide whether an institution is eligible for inclusion. Where the counterparty is only rated by two of the major ratings agencies, the lowest rating published by either of the two is used. This rating also determines the maximum amount which can be loaned to an individual counterparty. Overseas banks that meet the criteria are included from countries with an ‘AAA’ Sovereign rating. The time length of all deposits with financial institutions will be managed prudently, taking account of the latest advice from Devon County Council’s Assistant County Treasurer (Investments and Treasury Management). The Authority’s investments will continue to be in bank deposits.

The ‘Approved List of Counterparties’ specifies individual institutions and is formally reviewed at least monthly. Notification of credit rating downgrades (or other market intelligence) is acted upon immediately, resulting in any further lending being suspended.

Counterparty Approved List criteria

| Counterparty Type | | Fitch | Moody’s | Standard & Poor’s |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| UK Banks | Not below | A- & F1 | A3 & P-1 | A- & A-1 |
| UK Building Societies | Not below | A- & F1 | A3 & P-1 | A- & A-1 |
| Overseas Banks | Sovereign rating of | AAA | Aaa | AAA |
| | And not below | A- & F1 | A3 & P-1 | A- & A-1 |
| Other Local Authorities | | N/A | N/A | N/A |

Where the short term rating of a counterparty is one notch below the stated criteria, but the counterparty meets the long-term rating criteria, they may still be used, subject to the advice provided by Devon County Council, who will take into account a range of other metrics in arriving at their advice. The credit ratings shown in the table for banks and building societies allow for greater sensitivity in recognising counterparty risk. Liquidity in investments is the second key factor in determining our strategy. Funds may be earmarked for specific purposes or may be general balances and this will be a consideration in determining the period over which the investment will be made. All known short-term commitments are covered before lending for over 1 month. Where cash is expected to be available long-term (up to a year) the Authority will maximise the length of time for the deposit to obtain the best interest rate possible.

Non-Specified Investments

Non-specified investments are those that do not meet the criteria detailed above, but are intended to be a longer-term investment, generating a higher yield, but with a slightly higher degree of risk e.g. investment in commercial property. The Authority has no non-specified investments.

Interest Rate Targets

For the 2024/25 financial year it has been assumed that the average interest rate earned on short-term lending (to the bank) will be 5.0% p.a. The target rate takes into account the current level of the Bank of England base rate, but also reflects the expectation that rates are likely to reduce in the second half of 2024.

The targets we have set for 2024/25 are considered to be achievable.

The expectation is interest rates are likely to decrease further during 2025, once inflation is under control. The medium term financial plan forecasts have been based on the average rates for lending to banks being 4.0% in 2025/26 and 3.0% thereafter. However, these will be reviewed in the light of updated interest rate forecasts and changes to the rates on offer from the Authority's counterparties over the MTFP period.

Investments that are not part of Treasury Management

The revised Code requires the Authority to report on investments in financial assets and property that are not part of treasury management activity, but where those investments are made primarily to achieve a financial return. The Authority does not currently have a policy of making commercial investments outside of its treasury management activity, for both financial and legal reasons. Any capital investment made or held is for the purposes of delivering operational services and must be in accordance with National Park Purposes.

Performance

The primary aim of the Treasury Management Strategy is to maximise interest receipts over the long term, whilst achieving annual budgets, without taking any undue risk.



NPA/24/15

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 March 2024

Draft Business Plan 2024 - 25

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **review the draft Business Plan for 2024/25 and draft list of revised performance indicators; and offer any comments;**
- ii. **delegate authority to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair, to agree the final version of the business plan and set of performance indicators and targets for 2024/25 .**

1 Background

- 1.1 The Business Plan is a strategic document and as such does not seek to describe everything that we do, rather it seeks to:
 - Explain the purpose of the Authority.
 - Detail the link with the Dartmoor Partnership Plan (also referred to as the National Park Management Plan);
 - Set out the Authority's strategic priorities and the key actions to achieve these;
 - Explain the Authority's performance management framework
 - Outline the funding available to deliver the Business Plan.
- 1.2 The Business Plan also provides a link between the Dartmoor Partnership Plan, individual work programmes and staff appraisals.
- 1.3 The draft Business Plan focuses on 2024/25 but many of the actions are multi-year and link to the Medium Term Financial Plan as well as the detailed revenue budget for 2024/25) (see NPA/24/13).
- 1.4 The draft business plan reflects national policy and priorities as detailed through documents such as the Government's [Environmental Improvement Plan](#); the new [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework](#); the [Government's response to the Landscapes Review](#); the [Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#); and the Government's [30 by 30 target for nature recovery](#). Whilst the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Defra is the 'sponsoring government department' for National Parks our work extends beyond

Defra to other Departments including: Health; Transport; Education; Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; Net Zero and Energy Security; and Culture, Media and Sport.

2 Priorities for 2024/25

2.1 The draft Business Plan for 2024/25 (see appendix 1) is structured around the five priorities identified through the review of the National Park Management Plan and the development of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. In no particular order they are:

- Better for Nature
- Better for Cultural Heritage
- Better for Farming and Forestry
- Better for People
- Better for Communities and Business

2.2 Members have previously endorsed these priorities as the basis for developing the Authority's Business Plan. They also agreed a sixth priority – **'Be an excellent organisation'** – which reflects our desire to be an effective organisation providing an excellent level of service.

2.3 The key actions in the draft Business Plan reflect priorities identified by members at the annual workshop held in September 2023, including:

- **Visitor management** – there is a commitment to develop and implement visitor management plans; undertake access infrastructure improvements to ensure 'access for all'; and to consider how we take forward the aims of the byelaw review (subject to the timing and outcome from the Supreme Court appeal in the matter of Darwalls vs the Dartmoor National Park Authority).
- **Farming** – there is a clear focus on working in partnership to take forward the recommendations of the [Fursdon Review into protected site management](#) on Dartmoor and to build on the success of the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project which celebrates 20 years of achievements in 2024 (see NPA/24/18).
- **Additional resources to deliver the Dartmoor Partnership Plan** – key actions include the development and submission of a Heritage Project for Lottery Funding and launching the Dartmoor Foundation.
- **Climate and nature recovery** – our work on peatland restoration, natural flood management and landscape scale conservation are all focused on delivering nature recovery, climate action and other public benefits in an integrated way which supports viable farm businesses.
- **Supporting economic development and productivity** - The Authority's work is focused on managing and enhancing a key economic asset – Dartmoor National Park – and supporting key sectors such as farming. Our Digital National Park proposal is aimed at securing gigabit broadband for Dartmoor and improved wireless connectivity that reflects the special qualities of the National Park.

3. Performance Management Framework

3.1 The draft Business Plan (see appendix 1) outlines the Authority's performance management framework which includes:

- Reporting of progress against the key actions set out in the Business Plan.
- A set of performance indicators (PIs) which relate to data sets that we use to gauge the 'quality of the service' we provide and/or potential impact. They comprise some that are set nationally by Government (e.g. speed of planning decision); some that have been agreed collectively by the English National Park Authorities so that we can benchmark performance; and some are agreed locally (i.e. by Dartmoor National Park Authority). The list of PIs is being revised for 2024/25. A list of draft indicators and associated targets is presented at Appendix 2.
- Budget monitoring is completed on a quarterly basis.

3.2 The above are reviewed quarterly by Leadership Team and reported to Audit and Governance Committee.

3.3 One of the key actions in the draft Business Plan is to publish a revised State of the Park Report in 2024/25 which will provide an evidence base for developing the next version of the Partnership Plan. We are also committed to reviewing the governance arrangements for the Partnership Plan in 2024/25 and this will include a 'performance framework' to monitor delivery of the actions in the Partnership Plan and progress towards the overarching ambitions and vision.

3.4 A key issue in 'measuring performance' is the availability of data and/or the cost of data collection. We have sought to address this, in part, through our work with Exeter University on the use of remote sensing to determine habitat coverage in the National Park and a separate study looking at visitor numbers, pressures and the potential implications of household growth and housing development around the National Park. A key action for 2024/25 is to work with partners on the concept of a 'Dartmoor Observatory' that could bring together all known data sets for Dartmoor and identify future data and monitoring needs. This relates to a specific recommendation in the [Fursdon Review into the management of protected sites](#) on Dartmoor.

4 Equality and Impact Assessment

4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) the Authority must prepare and publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve in pursuance of the general duty under the Act. Our work programmes are designed to ensure equality of access and awareness and understanding of diversity.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The draft Business Plan has been developed in parallel with the 2024/25 Revenue Budget. As noted in (NPA/24/13) we still await confirmation of National Park Grant for 2024/25 from Defra.

- 5.2 Notwithstanding the one-off additional grant received in March 2023 which Members have agreed would be used to balance our budget in 2023/24 and 2024/25, the Authority's core grant has reduced by over 40 per cent in real terms since 2010/11. Our assumption for the draft Business Plan, revenue and Medium Term Financial Plan is that we will receive £3,825,865 in National Park Grant from Defra. If the amount we receive is less than anticipated we may need to review the Business Plan.
- 5.3 Future funding is uncertain and unless we secure additional revenue funding in 2024/25 or for 2025/26 we will have to complete a business review in the 2024/25 financial year to reduce our costs. This will mean closing facilities and reducing or removing services.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The draft Business Plan is ambitious, with a blend of key actions that will deliver: management and enhancement of the environment; opportunities for people to engage in looking after the National Park; and promote the enjoyment and understanding of Dartmoor's special qualities. These actions will help support the Dartmoor economy and the communities that live within the National Park. The key ingredients for most of the actions are staff time and partnership working.
- 6.2 Whilst many of the actions are funded there are a number that relate to work programmes designed to develop future funding bids and/or secure other forms of funding (voluntary donations, commercial sponsorship etc.).
- 6.3 Progress on the Business Plan is reported to each meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 6.4 The most significant risks to non-delivery of the key actions in the draft business plan are lack of core grant and staff resource.

KEVIN BISHOP

Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Draft Business Plan 2024/25

Appendix 2 – Draft list of Performance Indicators 2024/25

**Dartmoor National Park Authority
Business Plan 2024 - 25**

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Dartmoor National Park Authority

The Dartmoor National Park Authority was established under the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 as an independent body within the framework of local government.

Our role is clearly defined by Parliament through two statutory purposes to:

- conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park;
- promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

These purposes are of equal weight unless there is an irreconcilable conflict between the two, in which case, priority is given to the first purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.

In pursuing the two statutory purposes, we are also required to:

- seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.

The National Park Authority is governed by 19 Members appointed via different routes:

- by the Secretary of State to reflect the national interest
- by constituent authorities (Devon County Council, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council).
- via parish council elections and subsequent appointment by the Secretary of State.

We are a small organisation and the majority of our work is undertaken in partnership with others in order to achieve the best outcomes for Dartmoor National Park, the people who live and work here and those who visit this special place. Our partners range from public authorities to private individuals, from commercial businesses to community groups.

To learn more about our work visit: www.dartmoor.gov.uk

Dartmoor Partnership Plan

The Dartmoor Partnership Plan (formerly known as the National Park Management Plan) is the most important document for the National Park. It sets out a vision for the National Park and specific objectives for the next five to ten years. The Partnership Plan is produced in partnership with the Authority playing a key role in facilitating the partnership and leading the process. The vision for Dartmoor (see below) is ambitious: it combines national and local priorities.

This Business Plan identifies key actions that we will lead on in support of the Partnership Plan (see next section).

Vision for Dartmoor National Park 2045

Dartmoor National Park is an extraordinary landscape: shaped by nature and humans over time; steeped in history but always changing; one of Britain's finest. It has the power to inspire and enrich lives.

Our Vision is to make Dartmoor better for future generations: climate resilient, nature rich, beautiful, connected to the past and looking to the future; a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, work or visit. A place that is loved, cherished and cared for.

It will be:

- **Alive with nature:** Networks of healthy habitats that are home to many different plants, insects and animals create a more resilient natural environment connected within and across the boundary of the National Park. Some areas feel wilder as nature is enhanced and allowed to take its course.
- **Celebrated and enhanced:** Dartmoor's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage is better understood, valued and looked after.
- **A warm welcome for all:** Enriching people's lives, reaching out to people from all backgrounds, connecting them with this special place. Transformative experiences will inspire people to care for the National Park.
- **A great place to live and work:** People of all ages can enjoy living and working in low carbon, flourishing communities that are connected physically and digitally. Farming and forestry businesses play a key role in delivering a high-quality environment and local products alongside a range of other public benefits.
- **Carbon negative:** Dartmoor's peatlands, soils and woodlands will store significantly more carbon. Responding to climate change will be embedded in our way of life, making the best use of natural resources and reducing carbon emissions.

Everyone will come together to deliver this Vision for Dartmoor; make choices that balance the needs of people and place; embrace positive change; and inspire the next generation to help shape its future.

This plan sets out how we will work together over the next five years towards the vision. This National Park Management Plan for Dartmoor will be reviewed and updated every five years.

To learn more about the Dartmoor Partnership Plan visit: [Partnership Plan](#)

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This Business Plan

Our Business Plan is structured around 6 priorities:

- P1 Better for Nature
- P2 Better for Cultural Heritage
- P3 Better for Farming and Forestry
- P4 Better for People
- P5 Better for Communities and Business
- P6 Be an excellent organisation

Priorities 1 to 5 relate directly to the Dartmoor Partnership Plan (see above). Priority 6 reflects our desire to be an effective organisation providing an excellent level of service.

The table below highlights key actions that we will focus on in 2024/25 to deliver the key priorities identified above. It should be noted that whilst we up-date our Business Plan on an annual basis most of our work programmes span more than one financial year. Our overall goal is integrated delivery: to ensure action on one priority considers and delivers, wherever possible, across all themes and helps Dartmoor become carbon neutral.

The key actions do not encompass all of the work that we undertake, nor do they relate to all of our services; rather, they reflect, as the name suggests the key actions which will help deliver our priorities and contribute to delivery of the vision and ambition in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan.

As well as the key actions identified in

The Business Plan sets out:

- Key actions to deliver our priorities
- Performance targets for our key services
- The funding available to deliver our services and key actions
- The key strategic risks that may impact on delivery of the business plan

Key Actions to Deliver Business Plan Priorities

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|---|--|--|--------------------|
| 1 | JA | Peatland restoration - work with the South West Peatland Partnership to deliver an agreed programme of peatland restoration | Restoration and enhancement of 1,000 ha of peatland on Dartmoor by 2026 to deliver multiple benefits including increased local capacity to undertake the restoration work and thus support a 'circular economy'. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured funding for an ongoing programme of peatland restoration for 2025/26 and beyond. Completed restoration of 400 ha of blanket bog. | P1, P2, P3 |
| 2 | JA | Natural Flood Management – working with the Environment Agency and others to deliver natural flood management schemes | Use of natural flood management measures within key catchments that reduce the risk of flooding, improve hydrological systems and deliver other public benefits in a way that supports local communities and the 'circular economy'. | By March 2025 we will: <p><u>Targets to be added when Environment Agency have approved business case (Feb 2024)</u></p> | P1, P2, P3 |
| 3 | CG | Deliver landscape scale nature enhancement | Nature enhancement at a landscape scale is underpinned by dynamic natural processes and we have viable farming and forestry businesses that have delivery of public benefits at their heart. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commenced delivery of the Walkham Landscape Recovery project and ensured an active programme of farmer, landowner and community engagement. Worked with partners to ensure an integrated approach to the three Landscape Recovery projects on | P1, P2, P3, P4 |

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| | | | | Dartmoor, learning is shared and they are being developed as examples of 'best practice' in landscape-scale nature recovery. | |
| 4 | CG | Support key species | An abundance and diversity of species on Dartmoor, which are widespread and thriving. This will include work on species reintroduction. | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued support for the Curlew Recovery Project; worked with partners on key lessons and a citizens science programme for reporting curlew sightings. Worked with Devon Wildlife Trust on the reintroduction of Pine Martens at agreed sites on Dartmoor and ensured a robust evidence and monitoring framework is in place. Identified and supported the delivery of projects that help safeguard key species on Dartmoor as well as projects that support species reintroduction. | P1, P4 |
| 5 | CG | Better for Cultural Heritage | Dartmoor's cultural heritage is protected, well managed and in good condition. The significance of the historic environment will be understood by both those living and working on Dartmoor and by visitors. | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaken one major archaeological excavation. Identified and sought to secure funding to improve historic environment features and target at risk monuments. Run a 'History Day' to engage with local history societies and other stakeholders. Ensured we have a team of trained, local volunteers to undertake a | P2, P4 |

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|---|---|--|--------------------|
| | | | | <p>programme of condition assessment for heritage assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed projects that increase understanding of cultural Dartmoor. | |
| 6 | KB | Work with partners to implement the recommendations from the Fursdon Review | Viable farming and forestry systems that sustain and enhance a high-quality environment, store and sequester carbon, produce healthy food, high quality fibre and other products, and deliver a wide range of public goods. | <p>By March 2025 we will work with partners to seek funding and authorisation for a programme of activity that takes forward key recommendations from the Fursdon Review, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dartmoor Observatory – a central library of data and evidence relating to the condition of Dartmoor that is accessible by all. A new approach to measuring nature and 'favourable condition'. Development of thinking around a Dartmoor wide grazing and agri-environment scheme that supports the Partnership Plan vision. Work with Defra on exploring the potential role and remit for a 'Land Use Management Group'. Scope a land use strategy linked to the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. | P1, P2, P3, P4 |
| 7 | JS | Deliver Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) | FiPL will help support a farmed landscape that contributes to the Dartmoor Partnership Plan Vision across all of its themes. | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully committed the grant of £1m for 2024-25. Ensure spend delivers across all four themes (carbon, nature, people place). | P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 |

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|--------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed an impact report identifying what FiPL has achieved on Dartmoor and any lessons to learn. Ensured that the learning from FiPL is embedded in the new environmental land management schemes and protected landscapes are a key priority in the schemes. | |
| 8 | DA | Hill Farm Project | Support for farm businesses across the National Park to help them deliver a range of public goods as part of a sustainable business and promote effective collaboration. Focus on supporting: agricultural transition, understanding of the new Environmental Land Management system and a circular economy. | <p>By March 2025 we will have :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured funding for 2025 and beyond. Provided ongoing high quality, information for all Members of the Hill Farm Project. Run at least six events to support farmers through agricultural transition. Celebrated 20 years of achievements by the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project. Provided a focus on soil management. | P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 |
| 9 | RD | Our Upland Commons | Deliver agreed outcomes for National Lottery Heritage Funded programme, including: shared local visions for commons, showcasing new approaches to management of common land to deliver a range of public benefits and improved public understanding of commoning. Contribute to | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explored extension of the project beyond the contractual end date of November 2024. Developed the role and requirement for a Commons Convenor role, where that would sit and how it might be funded. Completed a legacy report, disseminated key findings and celebrated the achievements to date. | P1, P2, P3, P4 |

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|---|--|---|--------------------|
| | | | thinking about the new Environmental Land Management system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment of a 'Dartmoor Observatory' (see above). | |
| 10 | RD | Develop and implement a Visitor Management Plan for 2024 season | Visitors understand and respect the environment, each other and the people living and working on Dartmoor. | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed in partnership and implemented, as appropriate, a visitor management plan for 2024 and for 2025. Sought funding to continue the work of the 'Dartmoor Marshalls' to ensure that visitors are welcome, safe and 'leave no trace'. Subject to the timing of the decision of the Supreme Court case in the matter of Darwalls vs DNPA; finalised a work plan and timeline to complete the byelaw review alongside considering alternative options to deliver the outcomes sought. Reviewed our media channels, their role and impact. Ensured key messages are promoted through Visitor Centres, the Outreach Vehicle and events. Continued to support the Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative as a basis for partnership working to address priority issues such as anti-social behaviour, livestock worrying and heritage crime. | P4, P5, P1 |
| 11 | SL & AW | Access for All | High quality infrastructure that supports access by | By March 2025 we will have: | P4, P5 |

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| | | | people from all backgrounds and ages. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the creation of National Parks by improving the condition and infrastructure on a minimum of 10 miles of the Two Moors Way. • Completed 12 projects as part of the Defra funded 'Access for All' programme. • Ensured consistent use of volunteers to support the Ranger Service in delivering PROW improvements across the whole network. • Delivered new cycling initiatives through Active Travel England funding. | |
| 12 | CE | Dartmoor for All | People of all ages, backgrounds and abilities are able to access Dartmoor and feel welcome. Every visitor has positive and immersive experiences resulting in a long-lasting connection and care for the place and its communities. | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported 40 educational visits. • Hosted, in partnership, five overnight stays for groups on Dartmoor through Nights Under the Stars. • Deliver three, free to engage, public events that celebrate wildlife, heritage and access. • Secured ongoing funding for the Community Engagement Ranger to deliver a proactive engagement programme that includes Junior and Youth Rangers and Girls Do Dartmoor. • Review Ranger Ralph Club with a focus on how we can use this model to engage harder to reach communities. | P4 |

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|-----------------------|---|--|--------------------|
| 13 | DB | Better Communities | Dartmoor's communities are thriving and engaged in caring for the National Park. | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed at least two 'Town Trails' that support the local economy, engage local communities and help people explore our 'Terrific Towns and Vital Villages'. • Identified need for community facilities through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and helped local communities secure funding for these facilities. • Identified and collated climate action plans for Dartmoor's communities that ensures a coordinated community-led approach to climate action supporting the economy, nature and climate. • Developed a vision for Princetown working with partners and the local community and businesses. | P2, P4, P5 |
| 14 | KB | Digital National Park | Working in partnership to support communities in enabling high quality digital connectivity through the development of ultra-fast broadband and mobile provision in ways compatible with the National Park's landscape and cultural heritage. | <p>By March 2025 we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with partners to seek funding for the 'Digital National Park' proposal with the aim of commencing work on a gigabit network across Dartmoor by December 2024. • Explored the potential of AI (Artificial Intelligence) to help deliver National Park purposes and identified actions for implementation as appropriate. | P5 |

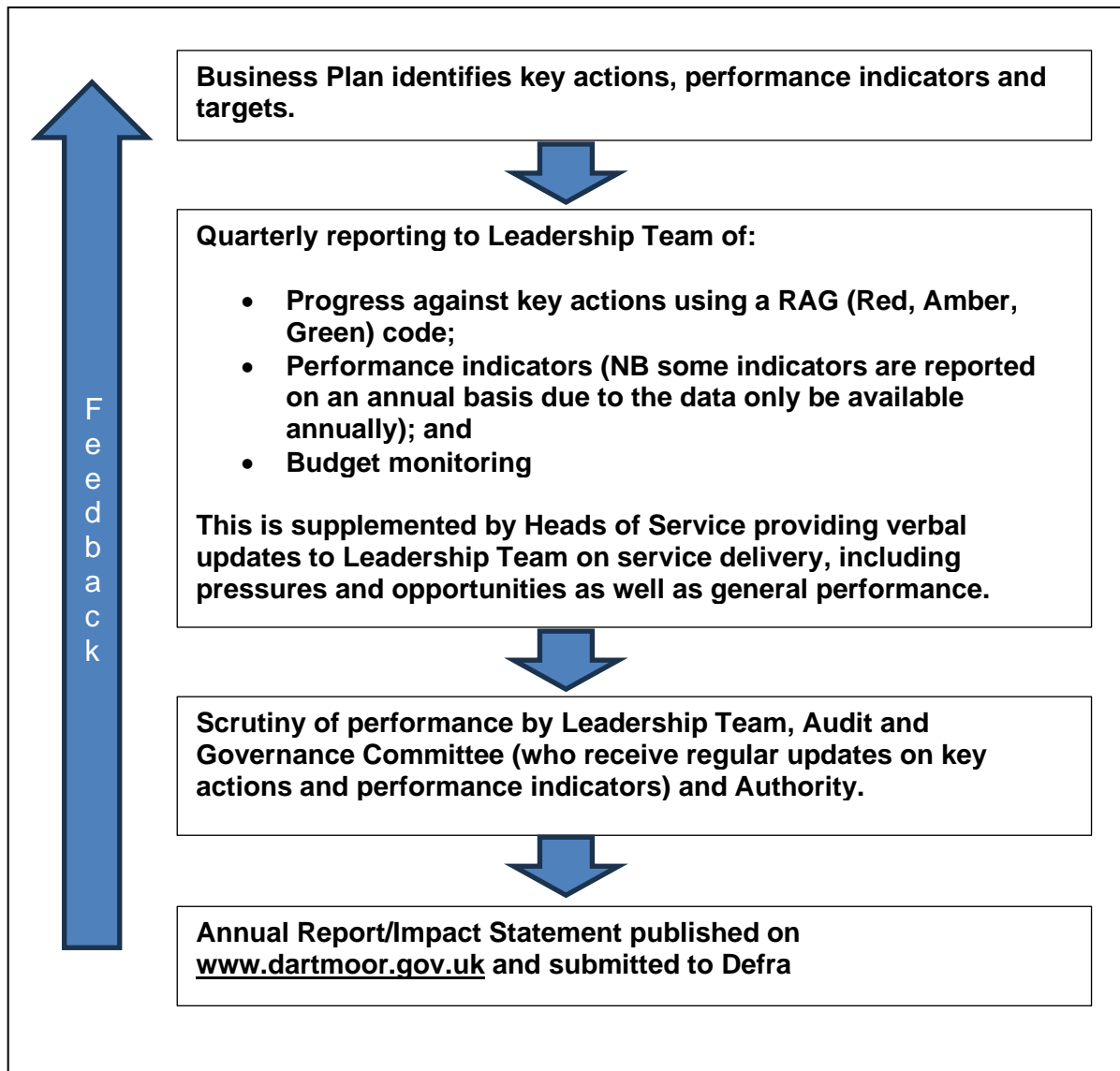
| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|---|--|---|------------------------|
| 15 | DK | Race to Zero Review and deliver DNPA's Climate Action Plan. | An action plan that supports our ambition for the National Park to be carbon negative by 2024. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commenced work on an Action Plan for the National Park. Agreed, a revised Climate Action Plan for the Authority. | P6 |
| 16 | NW | Volunteering | A spectrum of volunteering opportunities so that anyone in communities within or outside the National Park has the opportunity to engage in caring for and managing Dartmoor. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a new team of regular volunteers who will help undertake practical access and conservation work across the National Park. Developed a volunteer 'hub' at Parke and to ensure volunteers are equipped, trained and supported. | P6 |
| 17 | KB | Dartmoor Foundation | Establish a new 'Dartmoor Foundation' as a vehicle to support National Park purposes, deliver the agreed vision for Dartmoor National Park and key actions in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. | By December 2024 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched the Dartmoor Foundation, agreed a business plan for the Foundation and developed a portfolio of potential projects for the Foundation to help deliver. | P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 |
| 18 | JS | Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes | An integrated programme of funded partnership activity projects that help deliver the vision in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted the 'Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes' bid to the National Lottery Fund for Heritage (August 2024). Start the delivery phase in January 2025 (subject to the bid above being successful) running until 2030. | P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 |

| No | Lead Officer | Key Action | Output and/or Outcome sought | Targets | Link to Priorities |
|----|--------------|--|---|---|------------------------|
| 19 | RD | Integrated Management Plans for land owned by the Authority | Management of land owned by the National Park Authority is helping to demonstrate practical delivery of the vision in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed integrated management plans for the areas of common land owned by the Authority and identified funding streams that could help us deliver agreed actions on each common. | P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 |
| 20 | DK | Publish a revised State of the Park Report and review the governance arrangements for the Partnership Plan | A comprehensive report on the State of the Park that provides an evidence base for future policies and projects. A clear governance structure for the Partnership Plan. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published a revised State of the Park report. Identified research and data gaps and linked these to work on the proposed Dartmoor Observatory (see above). Agreed with partners a revised governance structure for the Partnership Plan that reflects the recommendations from the Fursdon Review (see action 6 above), the new Outcomes and Targets Framework for Protected Landscapes and forthcoming guidance on Management Plans. | P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 |
| 21 | AS | Implement a new financial system | A robust IT system that supports more efficient and effective processes for financial transactions and monitoring. | By March 2025 we will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced a new IT system for financial management and have identified how we will use this to deliver potential efficiency savings. | P6 |

Measuring Progress

We continually seek ways to improve the quality and value for money of the services we provide.

The Authority's performance framework is summarised below:



Progress against key actions is monitored on a quarterly basis and reported to the Authority's Audit and Governance Committee.

At the end of each financial year, the Authority completes an annual performance review which contains information about the progress made in delivering the Business Plan, together with achievements against a comprehensive set of performance indicators. A copy of our latest Annual review can be accessed [here](#).

In addition the Authority reports separately on the Dartmoor Partnership Plan and produces a State of the Park report every five years.

Funding

To be drafted once we receive confirmation of National park Grant and approval of the revenue budget for 2024/25

DRAFT

Appendix 2: Draft Authority Performance Indicators for 2024/25

The table below sets out a revised set of performance indicators for 2024/25. It is a working draft.

| Indicator | Target for 2024/25 | Frequency of reporting |
|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| Percentage of Public Rights of Way network that is easy to use | 90% | A |
| Total number of outstanding issues on the Public Rights of Way network and number of outstanding issues resolved by the Authority | | Q |
| Byelaw offences | | |
| Employee sickness absence | | Q |
| Employee turnover - the percentage of employees who leave the employment of the Authority, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis (annually). | | Q |
| Employee Appraisals – the percentage of employees that have participated in an annual appraisal meeting and process completed in accordance with staff appraisal scheme. | | A |
| Total No. of volunteer days organised or supported by the NPA | | Q |
| Value of volunteer days organised or supported by the NPA | | A |
| No. of volunteer days attended by 'under-represented' groups | | A |
| Spend per visitor in our visitor centres | £2.00 per visitor | Q |
| Percentage of income derived from sources other than National Park Grant | | A |
| Percentage change in CO2e from DNPA operations | | A |
| Percentage of membership attending Authority meetings | 85% | Q |
| Number of visitors to the three visitor centres operated by the Authority | 170,000 per annum | Q |
| Percentage of planning applicants satisfied with quality of the service received | | Q |
| Percentage of appeals allowed against DNPA decision to refuse consent (low figure is positive) | | |
| Percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks *If over 13 weeks Nos of PPAs or Exts | 50% | Q |
| Percentage if minor applications determined within 8 weeks | 65% | Q |
| Percentage of other applications determined within 8 weeks | 85% | Q |
| Percentage of all planning applications which have been approved | No target | Q |
| Percentage of pre-applications for minor and householder applications which have been dealt with within 28 days | 80% | Q |
| Percentage of pre-applications for major applications which have been dealt with within 42 days | 70% | Q |

| | | |
|---|---------|---|
| Number of engagement events delivered on Dartmoor and number of attendees | | Q |
| Number of engagement events attended/delivered beyond the National Park and number of attendees | | Q |
| Number of followers on social media | 110,000 | Q |
| Number of subscribers to e-communications | 5,000 | Q |
| Percentage of e-communications opened by subscribers | 48% | Q |
| Number of unique visitors to Authority website and page views | 500,000 | Q |
| Number of parish meetings attended at least once in the year | | A |
| Number of parish meetings attended by Rangers and other officers | | Q |
| Number of parish meetings attended by Members | | Q |
| Number of affordable housing units approved | | Q |
| Proportion of FiPL budget committed and spent | 100% | Q |

Key: A = annual reports; Q = quarterly and annual reports



Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 March 2024

Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **authorise the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to write a letter outlining the Authority's support for the draft Devolution Agreement; and**
- ii. **agree to the potential appointment of the Chair of the Authority to the proposed Team Devon Joint Committee (subject to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) being satisfied that there is no adverse risk or cost to the Authority through such membership).**

1. Background

1.1 The Government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants to will have a devolution deal with powers at, or approaching, the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement. The 2022 [Levelling Up White Paper](#) makes it clear that devolution is to be the engine room for improved productivity and reduced regional disparities. The White Paper also set out a devolution framework comprising three levels:

Level 1 – local authorities working together across a functional economic area or whole county area e.g. through a joint committee.

Level 2 – devolution to single local government institutions without a directly elected mayor, such as a combined authority or combined county authority, covering a functional economic area or whole county area.

Level 3 – offers the most comprehensive devolution 'package' but requires a mayoral combined authority or a mayoral combined county authority covering a functional economic area or whole county area.

1.2 Level 3 represents the Government's preferred model of devolution, but they have been clear that this will not suit all areas at present, and that the framework will instead allow areas to deepen devolution at their own pace.

- 1.3 There has been a long, and at times, protracted process of seeking a devolution deal for the South West. The concept of a devolution deal was one of the key reasons for establishing the Heart of the South West Joint Committee in 2017 (NPA//19/033 and NPA/23/025). The Joint Committee covered Devon and Somerset. In 2018 an informal Team Devon partnership was established comprising the County Council, the district and borough councils in Devon, Devon Association of Local Councils and Dartmoor and Exmoor National Park Authorities. The Chair of the National Park Authority has represented the National Park on the Team Devon Leaders meetings. There was discussion of a devolution deal for Devon, Torbay and Plymouth, what has now been agreed (subject to certain criteria) is a deal that covers Devon and Torbay.

2. Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal

- 2.1 The [Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal](#) is subject to a public consultation process which ends on 24 March 2024. The Devolution Agreement is contingent on the constituent authorities proceeding through the steps necessary to meet the governance criteria for a Level 2 devolution deal. The Devolution Agreement includes:

- Establishment of a Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA).
- New powers to shape local skills provisions.
- £16m of new capital funding in this Spending Review period to support the delivery of local housing priorities, Net Zero ambitions and support green skills. The £16m is subject to agreement of the relevant business cases.
- Greater collaboration between Devon and Torbay CCA and Homes England to reduce the barriers to affordable housing, regeneration and housing growth – with a particular focus on rural and coastal communities.
- New powers to improve and better integrate local transport, including the ability to introduce bus franchising, subject to approval from the Secretary of State for Transport, and control of appropriate local transport functions (including an area wide local transport plan).
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) planning and delivery at a strategic level from 2025/26 (subject to funding and other considerations at the next Spending Review).
- Integration of functions of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership into the Devon and Torbay CCA (including provision of a strong and independent local business voice).
- Commitment to developing an arrangement that ensures close cooperation with the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- A clear role for Devon and Torbay in local resilience and civil contingency planning, preparation and delivery.

Governance

- 2.2 The Devolution Agreement requires the establishment of a Devon and Torbay CCA. The CCA will be led by a group of local leaders who will act as its Executive, with one of this leadership group acting as the Chair of the Devon and Torbay CCA's Board. The CCA will provide the accountability required by the Government. The CCA will comprise the following:

- Six constituent members appointed by the two constituent councils (Devon and Torbay)
- Four non-constituent members, of which two will be members nominated by the District councils within the Devon area to act as District representatives
- Two associated members as decided by the CCA. One of these members will represent the voice of business and another the skills/education sector.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner will be invited to attend and participate in CCA meetings as an associate or non-constituent member.

2.3 The constituent members will determine matters such as election of chair, agreement of the annual budget, major investment decisions, transport functions, policy frameworks, scrutiny arrangements and membership and governance. Thus the constituent members effectively ‘control’ the CCA and take all of the key decisions.

2.4 There is recognition that the CCA institutional model as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration only provides opportunities for upper tier authorities to be formal constituent members. For this reason, the proposal is to establish a Team Devon Joint Committee (under sections 101 to 103 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended). Membership of this proposed Joint Committee would include:

- Devon County Council
- The City, District and Borough Councils in the Devon Area
- The National Park Authorities
- Devon Association of Local Councils

2.5 At the time of writing this report the precise governance arrangements for the Joint Committee were subject to development.

3. Implications of the Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal for Dartmoor National Park and the National Park Authority

3.1 The draft Devolution Agreement does not impact on the functions and role of the National Park Authority. No local authority functions are being removed from any local authority in the area other than transport functions.

3.2 Devolution deals are likely to be the key route to accessing future funding for transport, regeneration, economic development and housing. Whilst the forthcoming General Election creates uncertainty it is unlikely that an incoming government would abandon the principles of devolution.

3.3 The draft agreement does offer some potential funding and policy opportunities that are relevant to both the National Park and the Authority. These include:

- Housing – there is a focus on rural and coastal affordable housing delivery, especially across small sites. Some of the £16m capital commitment will be made available to support the development of a “small sites Green Homes investment programme”.
- The transport functions may provide an opportunity to ensure greater public transport access to the National Park and for the local communities to use public transport to access services.

- Net Zero – some of the £16m capital fund will be used to support green skills; there are opportunities through the CCA to influence local energy plans and heat networks and a commitment from the Government to explore the potential benefits of and design options for a place-based approach to delivering retrofit measures as part of the Government’s Net Zero Strategy. The Devolution Agreement could also provide a mechanism to access the UK Infrastructure Bank and thus secure investment to tackle the climate change actions identified in the Devon Carbon Plan.
- Nature recovery – there is reference in the draft agreement to potential innovative climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives linked to nature recovery and a test-bed for the new carbon code for soils.
- Environmental Land Management – there is a commitment in the draft agreement that the Government will ensure the new environmental land management schemes are implemented in line with local needs and priorities and reference to specialist business support.
- Culture and Tourism – the Government will hold exploratory talks with local stakeholders regarding how to develop the region’s visitor economy.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There is no discernible direct financial implication for the National Park Authority from the draft Devolution Agreement.
- 4.2 The Devon and Torbay CCA could provide access to future funding but there is very little detail in the draft Devolution Agreement and some of the funding that may in the future go to the CCA is already going to districts and boroughs (i.e. a re-allocation rather than potential new money).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

- 5.1 In summary, the Devolution Agreement and the proposed Devon and Torbay CCA could be an important source of funding and a focus for partnership working. It is important that the Authority supports this even if the precise details and implications for the National Park are unclear at this stage.
- 5.2 The Authority would not be represented on the proposed CCA but is being offered a position on the Team Devon Joint Committee. Membership of the Team Devon Joint Committee provides an opportunity to influence but it is not possible, at this stage, to determine how significant that influence would be.
- 5.3 The key risk and constraint is likely to be the lack of senior staff capacity to engage with this initiative. Also, it could add an additional layer to an already complex world of funding and reporting.
- 5.4 It is recommended that the Authority writes in support of the Devolution Agreement and agrees to the potential appointment of the Chair of the Authority to the proposed Team Devon Joint Committee (subject to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) being satisfied that there is no adverse risk or cost to the Authority through such membership).

KEVIN BISHOP



NPA/24/17

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

1 March 2024

Transfer of S106 monies - Transfer £175,000 of S106 monies to West Devon Borough Council for the development of the site known as Hessary View, Princetown and delivery of local needs affordable housing.

Report by the Director of Spatial Planning

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **Agree the principle of transferring up to £175,000 to West Devon Borough Council to enable the delivery of local needs affordable housing at a site known as Hessary View, Princetown. The £175,000 is part of a sum of money paid by a developer in lieu of on-site affordable housing under planning approval 0524/14. The money is restricted to use for local needs affordable housing.**
- ii. **Delegate to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, the final decision as to whether to proceed with this transfer.**

1 Background

- 1.1 On the 4 March 2015 planning permission (0524/14) was granted for the erection of 15 specialist dwellings for the elderly (nine houses and six flats) together with garages, gardens and a communal area for residents, on land at Bretteville Close, Chagford. As part of the permission the applicants entered into a section 106 agreement to provide £350,000 towards affordable housing, this was later subject to a deed of variation application which altered the agreement from:

‘To apply the Commuted Sum to the Community Purposes in accordance with the Authority’s adopted Local Plan and to no other purpose.

Without prejudice to the generality of the above, the authority may make payments from the Commuting Sum to Devon County Council as Highway Authority; West Devon Borough Council and/or Chagford Town Council as appropriate to secure delivery of the Community Purposes.’

to:

'To pay the commuted Sum to the Authority in lieu of making provision within the Development for affordable housing, recreational open space for community use and a public car park as set out in policy CHG2 of the Authority's adopted Local Plan.....

The Authority covenants to apply the Commuted Sum to the delivery of affordable housing to meet identified local housing needs within the civil parish of Chagford, PROVIDED that if any part of the Commuted Sum remains unspent or uncommitted on the date that is three years from the date of the Planning Permission, that part may be applied to the delivery of affordable housing on any land within Dartmoor National Park which also falls within the administrative district of West Devon Borough Council AND FURTHER PROVIDED that if any part of the Commuted Sum remains unspent or uncommitted on the date that is eight years from the date of the Planning Permission, that part may be applied to the delivery of affordable housing on any land within Dartmoor National Park.

- 1.2 The agreement states that if any part of the commuted sum remains unspent by the Authority within 10 years from the date of actual payment this money would be liable to be repaid to the owner together with interest.
- 1.3 The original agreement sought for half of the financial contribution (£175,000) to be paid 20 days after construction works commenced on site, this was paid to the Authority on the 12 August 2015 with the remaining £175,000 being paid on the 25 September 2019. The first contribution is due to be spent by the 12 August 2025.
- 1.4 As per the Section 106 Agreement, the Authority's priority was to spend the £175,000 supporting delivery of local needs affordable housing in the Chagford area. Officers have investigated a number of options including: supporting development at Lamb Park, potential acquisition of land and allocating money to the Chagford Community Trust. Officers are of the view that there are no viable options to spend the £175,000 in Chagford by 12 August 2025 that offer value for money/significant social benefit for the investment. This has prompted us to look at other options to ensure that the money is used for the intended purpose of supporting local needs affordable housing and not returned, unused, to the developers.
- 1.5 Discussions have taken place with West Devon Borough Council regarding a project to develop a parcel of land in Princetown. The land in question includes two adjacent parcels of land. Dartmoor National Park Authority own the largest parcel of land and West Devon Borough Council own the adjoining land. Early assessments of the site have looked to provide 100% affordable

housing at a yield of around 10 homes, however, this is subject to final designs.

- 1.6 The normal policy requirement would be for 5 homes to be provided as affordable housing on a scheme of 10. There will be 5 units of additional affordable housing being provided, there is therefore some flexibility in the tenure of these homes to better meet the needs identified.
- 1.7 Officers have offered some initial pre-application design advice identifying the surrounding design and layout characteristics. The historic semi-detached housing typology of Moorland View and Hessary View provides a strong form to inform the proposal's housing units. Closely reflecting the rhythm, pattern and density of these semi-detached units will assist integration with this street and Princetown.
- 1.8 Strategic Policy 3.2 part 2 requires that 'all new housing should meet and not significantly exceed nationally described space standards'. Our [Housing SPD](#) clarifies 'not significantly exceed' means a gross internal area less than 10% over nationally described space standards. It is expected that rented and intermediate affordable housing should be delivered well within these thresholds.
- 1.9 There is also an opportunity to enhance the northern boundary of the site with a Devon hedgebank or stone wall to match local examples, which could be incorporated into scheme.
- 1.10 In principle there would be no fundamental issues with regards site access, given presence of turning area. However, consultation with the Highway Authority, Devon County Council, would need to be sought to inform proposals as they emerge, particularly with regards parking details.
- 1.11 National legislation (whether major development or not) and Strategic Local Plan Policy 2.3 requires 10% biodiversity net gain, and it is expected that this should be provided on-site in the first instance.
- 1.12 External lighting and glazing must be compatible with Strategic Policy 2.6 Protecting tranquillity and dark night skies and specific attention must be paid to lighting impacts on protected bat species.
- 1.13 A technical lighting statement will be required to justify why lighting is necessary and demonstrate every effort has been made to mitigate its adverse impacts. As a minimum, these proposals will be required to meet the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) standards for National Parks: Zone E1 ([Guidance Notes for the reduction of obtrusive light \(Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2011\)](#)).

- 1.14 In order to release the funds to West Devon Borough Council it is necessary for both authorities to enter into an agreement that secures the transfer of funds from Dartmoor National Park Authority. National Park Authority officer time will be deducted from the total amount. West Devon will then lead on instructions to the various reports and assessments and designs needed to progress towards the submission of a planning application. West Devon have agreed to lead on this matter given Dartmoor National Parks function as the Planning Authority.

2 Equality and Impact Assessment

- 2.1 The proposal is to use the £175,000 to bring forward a site that will provide 100% local needs affordable housing with the potential for a mix of tenures.
- 2.2 Strategic Policy 3.2 part 3 of the Local Plan requires that ‘all new build dwellings should be constructed in accordance with Building Regulations Requirement M4(2) for accessible and adaptable dwellings, or successive regulations, unless evidence demonstrates: a) it is not desirable or possible for planning or environmental reasons; or b) it is not viable.’ Our expectation is that this standard is achievable for all dwellings and will be a condition of consent. Any identified need for wheelchair accessible housing within the housing needs assessment should be considered for delivery.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Authority is holding the cash balance of £175,000, which is ring-fenced and can only be used as per the Section 106 Agreement (see above). If the £175,000 is not spent by 12 August 2025 then it has to be returned to the developer plus interest.
- 3.2 Officer time to support the development and the legal costs associated with the development agreement are eligible expenditure under the terms of the Section 106 Agreement.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members agree the principle of transferring up to £175,000 to West Devon Borough Council to support the development of local needs affordable housing at Hessary View Princetown. This would be funded via the commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision associated with the development at Bretteville Close, Chagford. It is further recommended that the final decision on the transfer is delegated to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) in consultation with the Chair of the Authority.
- 4.2 Subject to Authority agreement it is understood that a paper will be presented to West Devon Borough Council in April to confirm agreement for the transfer of monies.

- 4.3 If the above recommendations are agreed and the transfer made, it would leave £175,000 in reserve. Our first priority for the use of this money would be to support local needs affordable housing in the Chagford area and we would continue to work with partners such as the Parish Council and the Community Land Trust to identify and bring forward suitable schemes. If no such schemes are identified then we would apply the 'cascade' mechanism as we have done for the first £175,000.

DEAN KINSELLA



NPA/24/18

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 March 2024

Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **endorse the findings from the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor.**
- ii. **Support the priority areas for action identified in section 3; and**
- iii. **note that the leadership and facilitation role envisaged for the Authority by the independent panel will require additional resources.**

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government appointed David Fursdon to chair an [independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor \(the Fursdon Review\)](#). The review was undertaken by a panel of experts with terms of reference set by the Government (NPA/23/021).
- 1.2 Authority report NPA/23/012 provides the background to the issues that led to the 'Fursdon Review'. It is important to note that the Authority has no formal role in agri-environment agreement negotiation, monitoring and/or delivery. However, agri-environment agreements are a key tool for delivering National Park purposes and duty and the vision in the [Dartmoor Partnership Plan](#) (the National Park Management Plan).
- 1.3 When the issue of agri-environment rollovers first arose, the Authority hosted a series of meetings involving key stakeholders to develop a better understanding of the issues by all stakeholders and to identify a way forward. The stakeholders engaged in these meetings included: Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Dartmoor Common Owners' Association, Duchy of Cornwall, Rural Payments Agency, Natural England, Historic England, Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, National Farmers' Union, Tenant Farmers' Association and Farm Community Network. There was agreement from all present on the need for an independent review. Feedback from these meetings was provided to the four MPs who have constituencies that include the National Park and helped inform the Westminster Hall debate held on 18 April 2023.

These meetings also helped identify issues for the review to consider and develop the 1 plus 4 model for agri-environment rollovers on Dartmoor commons.

- 1.4 The Authority submitted written evidence (see appendix 1); facilitated initial site visits to two commons for panel members to meet commoners and landowners; and also attended an evidence session with members of the Fursdon panel.
- 1.5 Our written evidence (see appendix 1) stressed the importance of the review taking a holistic approach to its terms of reference and not a narrow focus on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Dartmoor was designated as a National Park in 1951. As such it is an internationally recognised and important protected area within which are nested a range of protected sites (SSSIs, National Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, etc.). Agri-environment schemes and individual agreements are a key tool for the management of protected sites but also an essential tool for the delivery of National Park purposes.
- 1.6 Our submission to the review sought to outline a route map for moving forward based on a framework of viable farm businesses delivering a range of public benefits. We identified ten principles:
 - An integrated approach that focuses on all public benefits.
 - A shared vision based on outcomes – clarity on what is sought and where.
 - An agreed and shared approach to monitoring.
 - Engagement and partnership to deliver agreed outcomes.
 - Trusted facilitation and advice.
 - Combining national and local priorities with local delivery.
 - Moving beyond SSSIs and the notion of ‘Favourable Condition’.
 - Rewarding delivery and encouraging innovation.
 - The tools to do the job.
 - Celebrate success.
- 1.7 These principles are outlined in our written evidence to the independent review (see Appendix 1).
- 1.8 The final [report](#) from the review was published in December 2023.

2. Key Findings and Recommendations from the ‘Fursdon Review’

- 2.1 David Fursdon and the wider panel are to be congratulated on the way in which they conducted the review – they reached out to all stakeholders, engaged with them and provided opportunities for stakeholders to submit evidence through roundtable discussions, site visits, formal evidence sessions and written submissions.
- 2.2 The review sought to balance the objective of bringing protected sites (SSSIs and the Dartmoor Special Areas of Conservation) into favourable environmental condition with a range of other priorities such as:
 - Agricultural production
 - Public access
 - Carbon capture

- Fire risk
- Water supply
- Military use (including firing ranges)
- Cultural and natural heritage

2.3 The panel made 42 recommendations under the following headings:

- Vision and governance
- Protected site management
- Land-use ecology and biodiversity
- Communications
- Grazing and vegetation management
- Roll-over of Higher-level Stewardship agreements
- Dartmoor statutory bodies

2.4 The panel were positive about the role the National Park Authority has played:

“In terms of the statutory bodies themselves, we commend much of the work that has gone on under the leadership of the DNPA. Projects like the Moorland Vision and Dartmoor Farming Futures have laid the foundations for what needs to happen next on Dartmoor. If Dartmoor’s stakeholders and commoning community could come together to revive and deliver those initiatives, the effect would be transformative. It could also provide invaluable learning for other English upland areas. We are clear that DNPA has a crucial leadership and facilitation role to play”. Para 15.2.

2.5 The panel also identified that:

“Dartmoor cannot either stand still or retreat into its past. More than anything, it needs a Dartmoor -wide, landscape level, vision, supported by a clear delivery strategy. This will give its stakeholders a rallying point and a clear sense of direction”. Para 18.1.

We believe that the DNPA Partnership Plan provides such a vision and should be fully supported by Dartmoor’s commoners and stakeholders”. Para 18.2.

2.6 The Panel are clear that, in their opinion, a positive outcome would not be achieved by *“walking away and leaving Dartmoor to its own devices”* (para. 11.5) and recognise *“Dartmoor is not in a good state”* (para. 12.1). Their analysis shows that there is no single action or silver bullet that would solve the issues. They are calling for change by all stakeholders, particularly, from Natural England and the commoners.

2.7 Key recommendations from the panel include:

Creation of a Land-Use Management Group, focusing particularly on protected sites (SSSIs and SAC) and surrounding land. It is suggested that this is independently chaired and should sit outside the governance structure of the National Park. It would provide neutral space and membership would include key stakeholder organisations as well as government agencies such as Natural England. It would develop a plan to improve SSSI condition, work closely with the

emerging Landscape Recovery Groups and be tasked with developing a multi-functional land use framework for Dartmoor and creating a land-use plan, building upon the foundation of the Moorland Vision.

SSSIs need to be reviewed, to ensure they are compatible with a vision to be delivered at landscape/ecosystem level. Protected site legislation should be simplified and current uncertainty over the legal position of commoners being treated as ‘owners and occupiers’ needs to be resolved. They are also calling for more research and monitoring; a safe space to innovate; and a more transparent approach to measuring ‘Favourable Condition’.

Future of agri-environment schemes on Dartmoor. The panel propose a single agri-environment scheme covering the whole moor to lead and encourage strategic improvement. It is suggested that Dartmoor Farming Futures provides a good example of what can be achieved through partnership and empowerment. They also recommend, amongst other things, a Dartmoor-wide grazing scheme, support for three species grazing, incentives for more grazing to tackle *Molinia*, positive action on straying livestock and a debate on the future of swaling.

Evidence and monitoring. The report is clear about a *“lack of clear, hard empirical data in many areas”* (para. 4.2). The lack of information on SSSI condition when the sites were notified and lack of subsequent monitoring is highlighted. A central library of protected site monitoring data is called for and it is suggested that this could potentially be held by the National Park.

- 2.8 Other recommendations include reforms to the Dartmoor Commoners’ Council and a change of approach by Natural England.

3. What Next?

- 3.1 The Government will consider the report from the independent panel and we anticipate a formal response later this year.
- 3.2 In the meantime, the Authority convened a meeting of the agri-environment stakeholder group (see para. 1.3 above) on 30 January 2024 which David Fursdon attended to discuss the recommendations from the review. There was general support from that meeting for the recommendations. We have circulated a short note to members of the agri-environment stakeholder group suggesting five priority areas for action that we would like to see reflected in the Government’s response to the independent review. The five areas and associated ‘asks’ are summarised below:

‘Hearts and Minds’

- 3.3 The Fursdon panel identified a real danger of a stand-off developing between Natural England and the commoners. To avoid this, and build on the work of the review panel, we need a programme of work that is aimed at re-building trust; valuing the knowledge and expertise of commoners; and, ensuring the knowledge and expertise of commoners and other stakeholders is used to help facilitate delivery of public benefits as well as the production of food and fibre.

- 3.4 We are asking for resources to undertake this programme via independent facilitation. We are also suggesting that a focus for the work should be how to engage the 'next generation' and not just focus on the views of the 'established voices'. The aim would be to support a group of younger commoners with the skills and expertise to become more active 'leaders' – potential succession planning for the Commoners Council might be one outcome.
- 3.5 Whilst the Fursdon Panel were clear about the need for change they also highlighted some examples of good practice. We need to celebrate what is being achieved, to construct a positive narrative that recognises that there are good examples of 'farming for nature' that can be built upon.
- 3.6 Part of this work might be to agree a set of principles about how we work together and how different stakeholders are engaged. The aim would be to secure clarity on what we are seeking to achieve and 'buy-in' to a model of farming that is financially viable and delivering multiple public benefits – the social contract and farmer commitment referred to by the Fursdon panel.

Evidence – a Dartmoor Observatory

- 3.7 There is a clear emphasis in the report from the Fursdon panel on the need for evidence to support management decisions. We are suggesting the establishment of a 'Dartmoor Observatory'. This would require resourcing. It should not be a 'passive library' that stakeholders 'deposit' evidence in. Consideration should be given to what evidence is required, how it is gathered, who is involved and how it might be used. These could be roles for the Land Use Management Group (see below). It is important that Dartmoor stakeholders shape the research opportunities and play a more active role in managing data. A concordant is needed that ensures academic or outside bodies share results with the observatory, landowners and commoners and the wider farming community where relevant. The Observatory needs an active programme of dissemination – to share the results, build understanding and knowledge.
- 3.8 We believe that with the appropriate resources the National Park Authority is the obvious lead organisation to 'host' the proposed Observatory. It would link to the National Park Management Plan and State of the Park.

SSSI Review

- 3.9 As noted above, there are a number of recommendations in the Fursdon Review that point to the need to review SSSIs and this is explicit in recommendation 7.
- 3.10 The aim of such a review should not be to weaken nature protection but to look, in the first instance, at how we 'measure nature recovery'. At present SSSI condition is used as the measure of nature recovery yet there is acceptance by many that 'Favourable Condition' is not a representative measure of environmental condition (especially for large moorland SSSIs).
- 3.11 The report from the independent panel provides an opportunity to develop a new approach to measuring nature recovery and a model of 'favourable condition' that is about delivery of a suite of public benefits (not just nature). This new approach needs to be easily understood, potentially based on a basket of indicators, scientifically robust but also one that can help engage farmers and other

stakeholders. It might take a systems approach (i.e. soils, habitats and species). We are asking Government for the mandate and resources to undertake this work. The aim would be to establish an agreed measure that is about a resilient and productive environment. Resilient to the extremes of climate change, plant and animal disease; and productive in terms of nature and other public benefits but also recognises the importance of viable farm businesses.

Grazing and Agri-Environment

- 3.12 The independent panel suggested that a Dartmoor wide grazing scheme should be investigated and that a Dartmoor wide agri-environment scheme was needed to encourage strategic improvement and link commoners together. They also suggested a range of other recommendations that need to be considered together with the headline recommendations summarised above (including, more cattle at certain times of the year to manage *Molinia*, three species grazing, active shepherding, etc.).
- 3.13 More work needs to be done on these proposals to determine what is possible, what changes and incentives might be required to support delivery of nature and other public benefits through a grazed landscape.
- 3.14 Our ask is that we are given the mandate and resources to consider the potential benefits and pitfalls of a Dartmoor-wide grazing scheme and to develop a Dartmoor wide agri-environment Scheme (we see the two as linked) for consideration by Defra – a scoping phase and business case for potential change. The ‘Dartmoor Agri-environment Scheme’ would need to link with the ELMS (Environmental Land Management Schemes) structure. This might take the form of a ‘single fund’ that is able to offer funding for initiatives and actions that support the farming community to deliver the Partnership Plan vision where such funding is not available via other Government funds, or it might be a special projects fund to offer grants/funding for projects that are not eligible under existing schemes.
- 3.15 This could be a good example of the Government demonstrating how the new legal duty to further National Park purposes should be considered in policy development.
- 3.16 This work would need to consider the output from the two Environmental Land Management Test and Trials on Dartmoor and the three Landscape Recovery projects. It could (as suggested by Fursdon) seek to build on the principles that underpinned Dartmoor Farming Futures.

Governance

- 3.17 The panel make a number of recommendations around governance. There are key questions that need to be considered such as the role of a potential Land Use Management Group. Potential roles might include:
- Fostering a collaborative or partnership approach
 - Mediation
 - Identifying and addressing evidence needs, agreeing a monitoring and evaluation framework, overseeing a ‘Dartmoor Observatory’ (see above)
 - De-risk agreements through advice and support
 - Promoting innovation
 - Ensuring a partnership approach and clearer communication

- 3.18 A first step might be to establish a Steering Group as a 'Shadow Land Use Management Group' to oversee the work identified in the points above and to scope a land use framework (as suggested by the panel).
- 3.19 The group would need to involve all key stakeholders and ensure that there is balanced representation. The Authority could potentially (subject to resources) provide the secretariat for the Land Use Management Group. This has the advantage of ensuring the group is 'hosted' by a body corporate that is able to enter into local agreements for advice, mediation, research etc.

Time

- 3.20 There is no immediate solution to the issues addressed by the independent panel. It is important that there is time to re-build trust, engage with stakeholders and implement the recommendations from the panel. At the same time all stakeholders need to be able to demonstrate a willingness to change and move forward.
- 3.21 We are asking for recognition that this transition will take time and this may require a further extension to existing agreements (i.e. beyond 2024) subject to further details about the new ELM schemes.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 We have supported the Fursdon Review through officer time – we re-prioritised work programmes which meant that some key actions in the agreed Business Plan for 2023/24 were not progressed or progress was slower than anticipated.
- 4.2 We are keen to see the Fursdon recommendations implemented in full and not 'cherry picked' and to provide the leadership and facilitation role that the panel highlighted for us. However, we do not have the resources (financial or staff capacity) to provide leadership through facilitation or to host/support initiatives such as the Land Use Management Group and the suggested 'Dartmoor Observatory'. We hope the Government response will recognise this.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The report and recommendations from the independent review into protected site management on Dartmoor provides the foundations and 'ingredients' to build a better future.
- 5.2 It is recommended that Members endorse the findings from the independent panel; support the priority areas for action identified in section 3 and note that the leadership role envisaged for the Authority will require additional resources.

KEVIN BISHOP

Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor



Evidence Submission by
Dartmoor National Park Authority

October 2023



Executive Summary

It is important that the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor takes a holistic approach to its terms of reference and not a narrow focus on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Dartmoor was designated as a National Park in 1951 and, as such, is an internationally recognised and important protected area within which are nested a range of protected sites. Agri-environment schemes and individual agreements are a key tool for the management of protected sites but also an essential tool for the delivery of National Park purposes.

In our submission we have highlighted key learning points from previous initiatives (on Dartmoor and beyond) that help provide a framework for delivery of public benefits alongside viable farm businesses. To achieve this objective, we have identified ten principles:

- An integrated approach that focuses on all public benefits.
- A shared vision based on outcomes – clarity on what is sought and where.
- An agreed and shared approach to monitoring.
- Engagement and partnership to deliver agreed outcomes.
- Trusted facilitation and advice.
- Combining national and local priorities with local delivery.
- Moving beyond SSSIs and the notion of ‘Favourable Condition’.
- Rewarding delivery and encouraging innovation.
- The tools to do the job.
- Celebrate success.

1. An integrated approach that focuses on all public benefits

There is an urgent need to do more for nature but agri-environment schemes, and individual agreements, need to be about delivery of a suite of public benefits and not narrowly focused on one benefit or objective.

For too long agri-environment schemes (and thus agreements) have been developed, and delivered, in a silo that separates this policy area from wider issues pertaining to farm productivity, sustainability and the rural economy. An integrated approach is required that makes the connections between agri-environment and the farm business and with the wider rural economy. Such an approach offers the potential for efficiencies, greater effectiveness and an opportunity to develop the circular economy (i.e., to use the public money spent on agri-environment agreements as a ‘multiplier’ for the local economy). We support the Government’s stated principle of public money for public benefits but this needs to be seen alongside the viability of farm businesses.

Whilst recognising that food production is not a public benefit to be paid for via agri-environment agreements it should be considered alongside other public benefits. We also need to consider animal health and welfare alongside delivery of public benefits.

2. A shared vision based on outcomes – clarity on what is sought and where

There is value in a shared vision of what is being sought and where – one that is ambitious. A vision that identifies the outcomes sought. When the vision is formed by all who will be guided by it, it's shared; people are engaged and bought in – their actions are part of achieving the vision. The Dartmoor Moorland Vision provides a case study in the value of a shared vision but also demonstrates areas that need to be addressed, notably how the vision is promoted, kept alive, monitored and used to inform decision-making.

The National Park Management Plan (the Dartmoor Partnership Plan) should provide the shared vision. There is the potential to develop this spatially so it becomes a blueprint for delivery. It can then provide a framework for advice and more detailed work at a landscape-scale.

3. An agreed and shared approach to monitoring

Regular, agreed monitoring is essential in order to help build trust, de-risk agreements (for all sides) and provide evidence of delivery (or non-delivery). Engaging farmers in this monitoring can help build trust, understanding and a sense of pride (see below). Too often we focus on the problems/what is wrong and do not celebrate success.

As well as recommending a new approach to monitoring of nature (see below) it is essential that monitoring is across all of the public benefits and also consider the economics of farming.

Data (from monitoring, academic studies etc.) should be held centrally and be accessible to all. We suggest that the National Park Authority should act as the 'library' – a 'Dartmoor Observatory' that can help ensure evidence-based advice and actions.

4. Engagement and partnership to deliver agreed outcomes

There is considerable evidence that farmer engagement in design, delivery and monitoring of agri-environment agreements delivers better outcomes than a prescriptive approach that effectively 'dictates' management actions. Buy-in is a prerequisite for success and can help drive ambitious delivery. Many farmers, land managers and other stakeholders want to be engaged in the whole process, from design through to delivery and monitoring, to foster shared ownership of the system rather than being faced with a finalised product that ignores their respective knowledge, experience and skills.

On Dartmoor, the Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF) pilot sought to develop an approach based on engagement and delivery of agreed outcomes. This initiative offers important lessons to learn: the philosophy underpinning the initiative is highly relevant.

5. Trusted facilitation and advice

The importance of access to trusted facilitation and advice cannot be over-stated. If we want high quality outcomes, we need to provide high quality, consistent advice and see this as an investment in delivery of outcomes and not a cost or overhead to be continually reduced. Advice should be provided locally where possible and face to face. There is an opportunity to develop an integrated local team that offers advice from all of the relevant agencies via one point of delivery.

Advisors need to be knowledgeable in local farming systems. We suggest a training course that is developed and delivered in partnership with the farming and wider land management community. Such a model – the [Hill Farm Training Scheme](#) - was developed with the Foundation for Common Land.

6. Combining national and local priorities with local delivery

Even within a small and relatively uniform area, an approach that prescribes, in advance, a standard set of management prescriptions, to deliver a desired outcome, will not necessarily succeed because local conditions will vary. Conditions on Dartmoor vary from those on Exmoor and more northerly uplands.

Local flexibility can deliver national and local priorities. It also provides for: innovation, engagement in designing the management to deliver agreed outcomes; monitoring can be based on local circumstances and there is scope to have a partnership approach to governance at a local level.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme provides a good example of how to combine national and local priorities whilst also allowing local flexibility within a National Framework.

7. Moving beyond SSSIs and the notion of ‘Favourable Condition’

We need to develop a landscape scale approach to nature conservation one that is about the management of a resilient, productive environment one that enables nature to adapt to climate change.

We need a new approach to monitoring of ‘condition’ that:

- Looks at a wider basket of indicators (e.g., soil condition, diversity and numbers of invertebrates, condition of habitats and number and abundance of species etc.);
- Considers the role of external factors such as climate change, atmospheric pollution, plant disease (e.g., heather beetle);
- Is linked to expected sensitivity to change and the expected speed of change as a result of potential management adjustments and the legacy of past management;
- Is robust but also easy to understand and provides for engagement by farmers and others (see point above).

8. Rewarding delivery and encouraging innovation

Our current system of agri-environment payments is a combination of fixed annual and capital payments. A payment by results or a performance related payment approach offers a number of potential benefits, including:

- Encourages and potentially rewards innovation, whilst the current system mitigates against innovation;
- Incentivises improvement or enhancement of the environment rather than just paying for management;

- Supports a more 'entrepreneurial approach' – farmers are used to the idea that stock in good condition get best price and will seek to improve the condition of their stock.

9. The tools to do the job

It is important that agri-environment agreements facilitate appropriate grazing by cows, sheep and ponies - mixed grazing imitates natural processes. Swaling is also an important tool for delivery of public benefits. There is a need for further research into the climate change implications of swaling (the net effect in terms of greenhouse gas emissions) but removing this tool would significantly increase the risk of wildfires and would put delivery of other public benefits at jeopardy.

10. Celebrate success

The current system seems to be leading to a 'spiral of dismay and despair'. We rarely celebrate success. Fear of failure, disallowance and financial penalties results in very little innovation. We need to be better at celebrating success, demonstrating that farming can be good for the environment and supporting innovation.

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1 Introduction

Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) welcomes the independent evidence review of protected site management on Dartmoor being chaired by David Fursdon (hereafter referred to as the Fursdon Review).

The terms of reference for the review focus on ‘protected sites.’ It is important to recognise that Dartmoor National Park is a protected area within which are a series of protected sites, for example: Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSIs], Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) but also sites protected for their cultural and/or archaeological value such as Scheduled Monuments. It is essential that the review takes a holistic view that considers National Park purposes and the fact that UK National Parks are Category V protected areas:

“Areas of land ...where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.”

The Fursdon Review has been commissioned against a backdrop of:

- A need to do more for nature but also to recognise that Dartmoor is a living, working landscape that provides other public benefits that should be recognised through agri-environment schemes and individual agreements.
- A lack of engagement and effective communication between Natural England and the farming/commoning community.
- The money from agri-environment agreements becoming an ever more important part of the farm business as Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is phased out and uncertainty remains about future funding under the new Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs).
- A lack of robust evidence or monitoring data to support management decisions.
- A belief amongst many in the farming community that further reductions in stock numbers will not improve the state of nature on Dartmoor and, more specifically, the condition of SSSIs.
- A concern, from some, that SSSIs are not a good measure of ‘nature’ and mean we look back to a condition that was meant to exist rather than look forward to a vision of a resilient, productive environment delivering a range of public benefits and supporting viable businesses.
- A weak structure for governance of the commons.

The Authority’s submission seeks to provide information and detail about:

- the designation of Dartmoor as a National Park, the role of the National Park Authority and the National Park Management Plan (Dartmoor Partnership Plan) and what this should mean for the management of the National Park
- the current state of farming within the National Park and the importance of farming as a tool for delivering National Park purposes;

- the role of SSSIs, how we should enhance nature and measure ‘nature recovery’;
- lessons to learn from previous and current initiatives (e.g., Dartmoor Farming Futures, Moorland Vision and the Environmental Land Management Test and Trial); and
- our suggestions for a way forward that seeks to address the issues highlighted above.

2 Dartmoor National Park and the role of the National Park Authority

2.1 Purposes of Dartmoor National Park

Dartmoor was designated as a National Park in 1951. National Parks were established as part of the post-World War II process of 'Building a Better Britain' and aimed to bring long-term protection to areas recognised for their 'natural beauty' and highly valued for physical and spiritual refreshment¹.

Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995 confirms the two core purposes of National Parks (as set out in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949) as follows:

- (a) of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the areas specified... and;
- (b) of promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public."

The purposes are equal in weight unless there is an irreconcilable conflict between the two, in which case the first purpose should take precedence. This is known as the Sandford Principle.

2.1.1 Duty of Regard

Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 establishes a legal duty on relevant authorities to 'have regard to' the purposes of National Parks when carrying out their work. Specifically, the legislation states that "in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in these areas, relevant authorities shall have regard to their purposes" (i.e., National Park purposes).

Natural England is included within the definition of 'relevant authority' as are government departments, statutory undertakers etc. The Dartmoor Commoners' Council would also be a 'relevant authority'.

The duty applies to any decisions or activities an authority may take affecting land in the National Park, not just those related to narrowly defined environmental or 'countryside' issues. It may be the case that the activities of certain authorities operating outside the boundaries of the designation may have an impact. In such cases, the duty would also apply. The duty does not override obligations or considerations Relevant Authorities must consider in carrying out any function.

¹ Natural beauty is a broad concept and not defined in legislation. It has been codified through case law and it is generally accepted that it is concerned with landscape and the interaction of physical, natural and cultural/social components of the environment (Selman, P and Swanwick, C (2010).

Relevant authorities are expected to be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled these duties. Where their decisions may affect National Parks, AONBs, or the Broads, they should be able to clearly show how they have considered the purposes of these areas in their decision-making. Consulting a Management Plan and following the guidance within it can be a valuable way to demonstrate regard under the duty.

A Government sponsored amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is likely to strengthen the duty to have regard by requiring that relevant authorities must seek to further National Park purposes.

2.2 Dartmoor National Park Authority

The Environment Act 1995 (Sections 63-64) provided for the establishment, by order of the Secretary of State, of new National Park Authorities. The subsequent National Park Authorities (England) Order (1996/1243) established Dartmoor National Park Authority as a free-standing body corporate and executive within the local government framework.

The purposes of Dartmoor National Park Authority mirror the purposes of the National Park (see above). In pursuing these purposes, the Authority must also seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park². In discharging the socio-economic duty, the Authority must co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of the National Park.³

The National Park Authority has no formal role within existing agri-environment schemes but would expect the relevant authorities (e.g., Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency) to have regard to National Park purposes and consult with the Authority. It is worth noting that the Authority does have a joint post with Historic England. This provides for the employment of a professional archaeologist who provides advice on agri-environment agreements and applications. The post-holder has, over a number of years, developed a close working relationship with the farming community. We believe this is a good model for joint working of benefit to the farming community and the two employing organisations.

The National Park Authority administers the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme on Dartmoor (see case study below). This is not an agri-environment scheme but does offer important learning, including:

- It recognises the value of locally-based and accessed advice and facilitation – this is provided for within the budget for the programme with the National Park Authority acting as the hub for this advice through dedicated posts.

² As required under Section 11 of the Environment Act 1995 (as amended by Section 62 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006)

³ It is worth noting that under the Section 37 of the Countryside Act 1968 it is a duty of every Minister, and of Natural England and local authorities, to have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas.

- It combines national and local priorities. The programme is structured around four themes (see case study) which reflect national priorities but applications also need to demonstrate how their application contributes to delivery of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan (National Park Management Plan).
- It is integrated in that projects can combine environment and farm business needs/objectives. Environment is defined in a holistic manner to include nature, climate, heritage, access, landscape and water management.
- There is local decision-making.

Case Study: Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

The FiPL programme is a part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan. It is not an agri-environment scheme. Each protected landscape receives a financial allocation from Defra. The allocation provides money for grants and agreements that can combine revenue and capital. The allocation also includes ring-fenced money to support administration and resource local advice and facilitation.

FiPL is structured around four themes or outcomes:

Climate – projects that result in carbon being stored, sequestered or both, reduced flood risk, better understanding of the implications of climate change, a more resilient landscape etc.

Nature – projects that deliver an increase in wildlife-rich habitat, greater connectivity between habitats, better management, increased biodiversity etc.

People – projects that provide more opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape, more diverse audiences, greater public engagement in landscape management etc.

Place – projects that enhance or reinforce the quality and character of the landscape, historic structures and features are conserved, enhanced and/or interpreted more effectively and an increase in the resilience of nature-friendly farm businesses which contribute more to a thriving local economy. The local economy contribution must be delivered along with other outcomes.

Applicants can access free advice via a dedicated FiPL project officer employed by the National Park Authority⁴. This project officer is able to access additional advice from specialist officers within the Authority and beyond.

FiPL operates within a National Framework set by Defra. This framework includes set grant rates for certain activities to ensure consistency with agri-environment schemes but does not limit activities to a set list. Thus, FiPL is better able to support innovation and creativity.

Grant applications (above a minimum threshold) are determined by a Local Assessment Panel which has membership from a cross-section of key stakeholders and agencies. The Dartmoor panel includes: farmers recruited via open advert, representatives from the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, Dartmoor Commoners' Council, environmental non-government organisations (one person representing a range of groups), landowners, the local access forum, the National Park Authority, Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency.

⁴ The budget for FiPL has been increased for 2023/24 across all protected landscapes and this has enabled the Authority to recruit an additional project officer to provide advice to applicants.

There have been two annual reviews of FiPL in [2022](#) and in [2023](#). Interim results from an ongoing independent evaluation are due to be published in the middle of October 2023.

2.3 National Park Management Plan

The Environment Act 1996 (section 66) requires National Park Authorities to prepare and publish a National Park Management Plan (NPMP) for their area and to review it at least every five years. The NPMP should:

“provide statements of the relevant Authority’s policy for managing and carrying out its functions in relation to the Park and should reflect Park purposes, the duties of the Authorities and the need to engage other local authorities, statutory agencies and a wide range of partners, stakeholders and the community in the preparation and implementation of the Park Management Plan”.⁵

More specifically the NPMP provides an opportunity to identify the special qualities of the National Park; set a long-term shared vision and ambition for the whole of the area and more specific actions to help achieve that vision. The plan is for the place and not just the National Park Authority. The current National Park Management is called the [Dartmoor Partnership Plan](#) to reflect the fact that it is a partnership document.

NPMPs provide a mechanism to combine national priorities (such as the [Environmental Improvement Plan, 30 x 30 and Net Zero](#)) and local priorities and needs. Whilst focused on the core purposes of designation they take a wider perspective – seeking to ensure that environmental outcomes (including access and enjoyment) are linked to the socio-economic well-being of local communities.

There is no specific funding to support delivery of the NPMP and if you look at the statutory powers of the National Park Authority these are limited to:

- Land use planning
- Access authority for open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 1985
- Powers under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 pertaining to access and visitor management on registered commons

Delivery of the NPMP requires effective partnership working and the ability to influence and secure external funding – soft power rather than statutory powers.

A Government sponsored amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will provide the Secretary of State with the power to require NPMPs to contribute to the meeting of any target set under Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Environment Act 2021 and how such plans must contribute to the meeting of such targets. The amendment to

⁵ [Defra \(2010\) English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010, Defra, London.](#)

the duty to have regard to one that requires relevant authorities to further National Park purposes should help strengthen NPMPs (see section 2.1.1).

2.4 Summary

The purposes of National Parks (and National Park Authorities) plus the duty to foster the socio-economic well-being of local communities that rests with National Park Authorities requires an integrated approach to delivery: one that seeks to deliver multiple public benefits and in a way that contributes to the local economy and well-being of local communities.

National Park Authorities do not have a statutory or formal role in the delivery of agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, yet such schemes are key to delivering National Park purposes. This paradox has been commented on by successive Government commissioned independent reviews of National Parks. The most recent such review led by Julian Glover (2019) called for protected landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to have a central place in the environmental land management schemes, for their Management Plans to set a framework for all ELMS payments within their landscapes and over time for some landscapes to take a leading role in creating bespoke schemes. We believe that the current situation on Dartmoor provides the opportunity for the Government to pilot the proposals outlined in the Landscapes Review and to build on what is being achieved through FiPL.

3 Dartmoor Partnership Plan (the National Park Management Plan)

As noted in chapter 2, the [Dartmoor Partnership Plan](#) is a statutory document that sets a long-term vision for the National Park. It identifies Dartmoor's special qualities; outlines the key drivers and challenges facing the National Park, including conflicting objectives and competing priorities, and sets out how these should be addressed. The Partnership Plan guides the resource allocation and priorities of the National Park Authority. It should also influence the actions and resource allocations of partner organisations who are key to its delivery (see section 2.1.1 above).

3.1 Dartmoor's Special Qualities

The special qualities of the National Park (see Figure 3.1) identify what is distinctive about Dartmoor and help to identify what is most important to be conserved, enhanced and enjoyed. They were identified through a process that included discussion with stakeholder groups (e.g., statutory agencies; non-governmental organisations, farming groups etc.), a series of 'Dartmoor Debates' and a public opinion survey. The special qualities are not a reason for 'preservation in aspic' but should help inform the public benefits that agri-environment schemes and individual agreements seek to deliver.

Figure 3.1: Dartmoor's Special Qualities

A distinctive landscape and valuable biodiversity, including:
open, windswept **upland moors** with far reaching views and a sense of remoteness and wildness, distinctive granite tors surrounded by loose rock or 'clitter', and large expanses of grass and heather moorland, blanket bogs, and valley mires providing habitats for distinctive wildlife such as skylark and cuckoo, and rarities including Vigur's eyebright and southern damselfly;
sheltered valleys with upland oak woodland, rhôs pasture and fast-flowing boulder-strewn rivers, home to characteristic wildlife including the pied flycatcher and salmon, and rare species such as the marsh fritillary butterfly;
enclosed farmland with small irregular pasture fields bounded by dry stone walls and hedgebanks providing a mosaic of different wildlife habitats, including hay meadows and species rich dry grasslands with wildlife such as the beautiful greater butterfly orchid;
a **varied geology**, including the granite bedrock providing the dominant building material throughout history, and a wide range of valued minerals including tin, copper, lead, silver and arsenic;
timelessness: a place spared many of the intrusions of modern life, with dark night-time skies;
tranquillity: where it is possible to find absolute peace, offering spiritual refreshment and opportunities for quiet reflection, escape and creativity;
unrivalled opportunities to roam at will over the extensive open moorland, and an exceptional **rights of way network** for walking, riding and cycling;
traditional farming practices, using the moorland commons for extensive grazing of hardy cattle, sheep and ponies including locally distinctive breeds;

clean water: the catchment area for most of the rivers of Devon; historic leats still supply water to surrounding settlements. The peatlands and open water of the reservoirs provide an important water store helping to regulate the flow of water off the moor;

one of the most **important archaeological landscapes** in western Europe revealing a chronology of human activity stretching back over 8,000 years, from ancient field systems to the legacy of tin mining;

a wealth of **historic buildings, structures and townscapes**, including a strong medieval settlement pattern of **scattered farmsteads, hamlets, villages and towns**, set within enclosed farmland surrounding the open moor and linked by an intimate pattern of sunken lanes;

resourceful rural communities with distinctive culture and traditions, characteristic ways of life, local crafts, fairs, food and drink;

an **inspirational landscape** of legends and myths that has inspired art and literature through the centuries and continues to inspire;

opportunities for **discovery, challenge and adventure** for all.

3.2 A Vision for Dartmoor in 2045

The Partnership Plan sets out a vision for Dartmoor in 2045 (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: A Vision for Dartmoor in 2045

Dartmoor National Park is an extraordinary landscape: shaped by nature and humans over time; steeped in history but always changing; one of Britain's finest. It has the power to inspire and enrich lives.

Our Vision is to make Dartmoor better for future generations: climate resilient, nature rich, beautiful, connected to the past and looking to the future; a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, work or visit. A place that is loved, cherished and cared for.

It will be:

- **Alive with nature:** Networks of healthy habitats that are home to many different plants, insects and animals create a more resilient natural environment connected within and across the boundary of the National Park. Some areas feel wilder as nature is enhanced and allowed to take its course.
- **Celebrated and enhanced:** Dartmoor's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage is better understood, valued and looked after.
- **A warm welcome for all:** Enriching people's lives, reaching out to people from all backgrounds, connecting them with this special place. Transformative experiences will inspire people to care for the National Park.
- **A great place to live and work:** People of all ages can enjoy living and working in low carbon, flourishing communities that are connected physically and digitally. Farming and forestry businesses play a key role in delivering a high-quality environment and local products alongside a range of other public benefits.

- **Carbon negative:** Dartmoor’s peatlands, soils and woodlands will store significantly more carbon. Responding to climate change will be embedded in our way of life, making the best use of natural resources and reducing carbon emissions.

Everyone will come together to deliver this Vision for Dartmoor; make choices that balance the needs of people and place; embrace positive change; and inspire the next generation to help shape its future. This plan sets out how we will work together over the next five years towards the vision. This National Park Partnership Plan for Dartmoor will be reviewed and updated every five years.

The Partnership Plan contains a target that, by 2026, SSSIs will have achieved favourable or recovering status if still feasible. However, the Plan is also clear about a new approach to nature enhancement at a landscape scale by, for example:

- ensuring that soils are well managed, achieve good condition and are functioning to improve biodiversity, productivity, maximise carbon storage and reduce flood risk;
- habitat improvement and connectivity through partnership working with a focus on supporting farmers and landowners to work together (e.g., the Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster and the Walkham Landscape Recovery proposal);
- looking at priority species (including species re-introduction) (e.g., Curlew Headstart Project);
- maintaining the moorland network of upland habitats, whilst encouraging natural woodland regeneration and expansion (as supported by the Moorland Vision); and
- undertaking a programme of blanket bog restoration and natural flood management to improve hydrological systems.

Farming and forestry enterprises are key to delivery of the ‘Alive with Nature’ vision in the Partnership Plan and the wider vision. The Partnership Plan is seeking farming (and forestry) systems that sustain a high-quality natural environment, store and sequester carbon, produce healthy food, high quality fibre and other products, are economically viable and deliver a wide range of public goods. Agri-environment schemes and agreements are a key tool to achieve this.

3.3 Summary

We would like to see the Dartmoor Partnership Plan provide the framework for agri-environment on Dartmoor. FiPL provides a blueprint for this. The Partnership Plan should be developed so it has a stronger spatial dimension – a blueprint for landscape scale action identifying a vision and priorities for action at a sub-National Park level. This is an action in the current Partnership Plan but has been delayed through resource constraints.

To implement the Vision in the Partnership Plan requires agri-environment schemes that deliver a range of public benefits and pay for management and enhancement. An approach that is about 'stacking' public benefits and seeking maximum delivery of such benefits in a particular spatial area rather than focusing narrowly on one priority.

Taking the special qualities of the National Park and the vision in the Partnership Plan as a starting point then the public benefits that need to be delivered through agri-environment schemes include:

Nature – agreements should not be focused on SSSIs alone, they need to be a tool to deliver a landscape scale approach (see subsequent chapters).

Landscape - projects that enhance or reinforce the quality and character of the landscape.

Access – agreements should not pay for access rights where there is existing statutory provision but should provide for new permissive access (area and linear) where there is identified need and opportunity. They should also make provision for visitor management, this might include education and engagement, management to address visitor related erosion, interpretation etc.

Cultural heritage – management of archaeological features, management and enhancement of historical features and interpretation of these. Retention of cultural traditions where these contribute to delivery of other public benefits.

Water management – reduced flood risk and better water quality.

Carbon management - projects that result in carbon being stored, sequestered or both, reduced flood risk, better understanding of the implications of climate change, a more resilient landscape etc.

Wildfire prevention and management – prevention through pro-active management of vegetation and management through management plans for each common, provision of appropriate equipment, payment for training etc.

4 Farming: Setting the scene and identifying the issues

4.1 Farming and Commoning on Dartmoor

Dartmoor is celebrated for its landscapes, wildlife and public access all inextricably linked to farming. Dartmoor is predominately a farmed landscape, one of open moorland surrounded by the enclosed fields of hill farms. About 86% of the area of the National Park is farmed.

Whilst farms on Dartmoor are collectively known as hill farms this hides a significant variation in farming practice. A recent study identified 19 different types of farming enterprises within 8 different farming models (Duverne & Pages 2023 *in prep*). This variety in farming systems has implications for how each farm contributes to grazing the moorland; some farms no longer include moorland grazing as part of their system whilst for others it remains essential both as a part of their livestock system and for the income it provides.

The moorland and adjoining enclosed land have long been valued for their grazing (Fox, 2012). Today the moorland is still managed by extensive grazing of cattle, sheep and ponies. How moorland grazing is integrated (or not) into the wider farm system varies significantly from holding to holding. Examples include:

- Providing a free summer grazing resource, freeing up the inbye land for the growing of winter fodder, or
- Providing a cheap grazing resource for the use of less demanding animals, e.g., dry cows, young stock, or
- A source of progeny, some of which is sold fat, some of which is sold store for fattening elsewhere (on-farm or by other farms), and some of which is used as breeding stock for the inbye system (perhaps as cross-breeds). This is especially the case for sheep systems.

The majority of the 46,000 ha. of moorland is registered common land (35,882 ha.). The common land is divided into 92 separately registered common units of variable size and most without any physical boundaries between them. The South West Uplands Federation estimate that circa 61% of Dartmoor's hill farms exercise their common rights. These hill farms are barely profitable, and their economic viability is inextricably bound up with the availability of public funding, (CRR 2002, LUC 2007, Turner 2008 and more recently Duverne & Pages 2023 *in prep*).

On Dartmoor around 50% of farm business income comes from support payments and agri-environment payments, (CRR 2002, LUC 2007). The line between support payments provide by the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and agri-environment payments often becomes blurred and agri-environment payments are all too often only seen as an integral part of a farm's income and not the intended contract to deliver environmental management. The availability of BPS and agri-environment on commons may tempt some commoners to sign to an agreement without having any interest in the intended objectives of the agreement. Such farmers may place limited stock numbers to satisfy the criteria to receive payment. It was necessary to introduce minimum stocking rates within some agri-environment agreements to

ensure grazing continued. Few agreements provide stock at the maximum stocking rate.

The income from AES remains essential for some farms. As the BPS ends farmers will increasingly turn to agri-environment as source of income, to support their business.

Cattle, sheep and sometimes ponies on the commons have traditionally been leared or hefted to a specific area; the animals become trained to stay within their lear. The density of grazing stock prevented straying. However, reductions in stock numbers have caused some, if not most, lears to break down and straying animals are now more widespread. The shepherding costs in addition to the lack of a shepherding culture can result in less effort to return stock to their correct lear. This situation is exasperated by some lears becoming less palatable (to the stock) than others.

4.2 Agri-environment Schemes – Management of the SSSIs

There is a long history of agri-environment schemes on Dartmoor. The National Park Authority offered management agreements prior to the Dartmoor Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) (which was launched in 1994). Many areas, including commons, have been under agreement for over 30 years.

All agri-environment schemes claim to be multi-objective schemes (Natural England, 2009) designed to:

- protect and enhance habitats and species, landscape character and quality, the historic environment, soils and natural resources;
- support the adaptation of the natural environment to climate change;
- contribute to mitigating climate change, reducing flood risk and conserving genetic resources; and
- provide opportunities for people to visit and learn about the countryside.

The Dartmoor ESA scheme aimed to maintain and often to enhance the conservation, landscape and historical value of the key environmental features of an area, and, where possible, improve public access to these areas. Its primary objective was to secure lower stocking levels, see figure below. After 10 years there were some 12,500 agreements covering over 70% of the available area and the majority of the common land. The high take up was partly as a result of the financial imperative and partly the relevance of what was a national scheme tailored to local conditions and priorities.

Figure 4.1: Estimated livestock numbers pre-ESA and post-ESA on the commons

| | 1985 | 2019 |
|--------|--------|--------|
| Cattle | 10,401 | 5,100 |
| Sheep | 51,188 | 26,000 |
| Ponies | 2,263 | 1,200 |

In 2005 Environmental Stewardship (ES) was launched and after that date, when ESA agreements came to an end, many commons entered the Higher Level tier

(HLS) and the Upland Entry Level tier (UELS) of ES. The ambitions of the ESA and ES schemes were different; one to stop damaging practice, the other to encourage environmental management. ES required more commitment than the ESA and was predicated on delivering a number of objectives. The need to amass points to qualify and to secure a funding level close to that provided previously by an ESA agreement resulted in more and more options being selected, leading to further complexity. The level of advice provided during the ESA (by the Rural Development Service) was not as forthcoming during the ES application process.

The relationship between agri-environment schemes and SSSI management is complex and relevant. Agri-environment agreements remain the principle means of managing SSSIs (nationally 93% of eligible SSSIs are supported by an agri-environment agreement). However, agri-environment schemes were not designed just to provide management to SSSIs and should seek to address an array of public benefits.

The success of the various agri-environment schemes to secure improvement to the SSSIs is unclear. A review of ESAs in 2003 found that “Heather on Dartmoor is still deteriorating in condition and extent, and it has yet to be seen whether the stocking levels prescribed under the ESA scheme will result in the lessening or reversing of this decline” (AE Review 2003). Five years later another assessment was equally pessimistic, stating “Overall, however, evidence for the benefits of AES management is mixed, with little or no improvement in the extent or condition of heather found in a number of evaluations” (Boatman et al, 2008). In 2013 Natural England’s Evidence Review (NEER 006) concluded that reduced grazing pressure from sheep can lead to improved condition of heather moorland but that other factors were in play and that more evidence is required.

On Dartmoor most agri-environment agreements address some of the other public benefits or eco-system services in addition to biodiversity; archaeology and access are usually addressed to some extent.

Current land management regimes are not working particularly well for the archaeology of Dartmoor. The archaeology team at the National Park have been engaged since 2016 in a program of condition assessment of the region’s archaeology which involves visiting archaeological features and identifying active threats to their condition. Every specific area is different but, taking Dartmoor as a whole, at the time of writing, a total of 425 Scheduled features (not monuments) have been assessed. Of these 97 are assessed as being in poor or worse condition. For 93 (i.e. 96%) of these features (96%) vegetation encroachment, in the form of bracken, gorse or young trees is the active damage agent. It is highly likely that a similar picture pertains to the remainder of the Park’s archaeology that is, as yet, unassessed. Obviously, factors such as climate change are influencing this picture, but grazing regimes are also significant and more needs to be done to integrate the historic environment when setting grazing levels.

All the public goods and ecosystem services are threatened by extensive wildfires. During the past 10 years the number of wildfires has declined as a result of better farming practice, public awareness of the risk, farmer intervention and precautionary land management. Most common’s agri-environment agreements have a plan that

identifies sites to be managed by controlled burns (swaling). Whilst the intention is to manage the vegetation, swaling also reduces the vegetation load and thus helps reduce the risk of a hot wildfire. Farmers can receive training to work alongside the fire service. Payment for the training and for firefighting is provided by the relevant agri-environment agreement. Reducing the risk of wildfires and efficiently fighting fires has been one of the most successful aspects of agreements (Natural England pers comment). However, a number of factors (e.g., rising temperatures and prolonged dry periods, increased 'fireload' through longer growing seasons and less grazing, increased visitor numbers etc.) are leading to a potential increased risk of wildfires in future years. Prevention of wildfires, and fighting them when they do occur, needs to be considered as a public benefit to be paid for via agri-environment agreements and as a risk to the condition of SSSIs.

4.3 Agri-environment agreements on common land

It is no surprise that the issue that triggered this review arose from agri-environment agreements on common land.

During the design of all agri-environment schemes how it will address common land is all too often forgotten until the scheme's design has taken shape. The design is then tweaked to accommodate commons; a process that often fails to accommodate the unique issues related to commons.

Agreements on commons are particularly complicated. The application process for a commons ES agreement is complex; The Common Land and Shared Grazing supplement provided to be used in conjunction with the ES Handbook is 29 pages long. The capacity to write the application may not be held within the common's association so a third party is often employed to construct the application. This process creates the situation where not all those signed to the agreement understand what is required and why.

In addition to design failures, initiatives such as Dartmoor Farming Futures, demonstrate failings in the administration and delivery of agri-environment schemes and agreements on some commons. This is further complicated by the fact that no two commons are alike and the contributing farmers may operate different farming systems. Fitting a standardised national scheme to very different commons linked to a collection of different farming systems is a challenge.

The following observations are relevant to most commons.

4.3.1 Point of contact

There are many factors that are unique to agreements on common land. One of the most obvious is that delivery of the agreement is the responsibility of many people. An agreement on a farm is usually delivered by one person (or business), and that person/business usually applied for the agreement, possibly drew up the application and is clear on what they have taken on. The process for a common's agreement is far less direct. Whilst the RPA and Natural England insist on dealing with one

nominated person sometimes that person is not the one who drew up the application and certainly may not be responsible for delivering a part of the agreement. Their role is to act as a contact point, a role that requires good communication skills if the messages between the agency responsible for the scheme and the farmers signed to the agreement are to be efficiently and effectively delivered. None of the agri-environment schemes to date have explained fully what this essential role entails and no advice or training offered to ensure that the contact point understands their responsibility.

Many points of contact deliver their responsibilities well, but some do not. Support needs to be provided to those requiring it.

4.3.2 Contact with Natural England

Often Natural England has to adopt a pragmatic approach with issues arising on a common. The point of contact is usually the chair or secretary from the relevant common's association. It is rarely with all those delivering the agreement. In turn the chair or secretary has to convey messages from Natural England to the graziers. Occasionally another grazier is asked to pass a message on. This chain of communication can weaken the message and certainly removes any sense of urgency. Evidence collected during Dartmoor Farming Futures (see chapter 6) suggested that some graziers were still unclear on what they were attempting to achieve even after participating in agreements for over 20 years and that face to face contact with the relevant project officer was valued by all those engaged in the trial.

Even with direct contact the messages need to be clear, unambiguous and accurate. There needs to be regular and timely meetings with all the active graziers to discuss progress or lack of progress. It should be a condition of the agreement.

4.3.3 Environmental stewardship and collective responsibility

ES is predicated on a points system and different payment rates for different farming practices (cattle grazing is paid more than sheep grazing). To secure a sufficient (maximum) level of funding (and the appropriate number of points) options are included that may not be relevant to some of the graziers i.e., they don't have the means of delivery. Usually, a pragmatic approach and the allocation of monies within the agreement rewards those with the ability to deliver the various options. But at the same time this sends a message that not all participants in an agreement are equal; the levels of responsibility can vary. This damages collective responsibility and could lead to some graziers failing to deliver their part of the agreement believing that others should do more or believing that others are doing more so they don't need to. Collective responsibility works on some commons but not on others. Why this should be needs investigating and is part of the work on governance within the Dartmoor Test and Trial (see chapter 6).

4.3.4 The financial imperative

The income from an agri-environment agreement is an important driver and efforts are made to sustain a relatively high level of financial support. The obligations and corresponding funding are sometimes rolled over from one agreement to the next. This may be reasonable if the environmental outcomes and challenges remain constant, however it also sends a message that the agreements are not time related and may just be a funding source. This leads to a weakening of the need to deliver the more difficult aspects of an agreement. For a number of years there have been mixed messages about the role of agri-environment payments with some seeing such payments as a means to support farm businesses (especially following the removal of the Hill Farm Allowance (HFA)). It is important that payments are clearly linked to delivery of specified public benefits.

4.3.5 Critical role of advice

In 2006 the creation of Natural England resulted in changes to the level of advice and who would deliver it. The experienced advisors from the Rural Development Service were subsumed into NE and often had their roles changed. Those NE staff remaining on Dartmoor and those new to the area now had to wear three 'hats': advisors, administrators and enforcers. The relationships between the farmers (commoners) and agency staff began to be less positive, although there were exceptions.

Between 2010 and 2018 Natural England's budget was cut by 55% with a loss of 23% of its staff (Onyango, 2019). On Dartmoor the loss of experienced advisors was notable. Those Natural England staff transferred from English Nature often had little experience of agriculture and farming. The lack of such experience and general reduction in staff capacity was particularly relevant to complex agri-environment agreements on commons that required communication with multiple graziers within each agreement. The farmers often complained that the blunt tool of generic options within an agreement were unlikely to provide the fine tuning required for securing improvement to the condition of SSSI. Their criticism and concern over the unsuitability of some agreements to deliver environmental improvement was the catalyst for Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF) (see case study 3).

The resources necessary to address this challenge are limited. Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England stated in November 2020, *"Natural England's current funding is below the level required to deliver all of our statutory duties to a good standard. Cuts have inevitably meant that we have had to adopt a 'lighter touch' on monitoring and managing the outcomes of agreements. We have had to cease our investment in building resilience and capacity within the farmer community"* (Juniper 2020). The lack of resource also demonstrates itself in the poor communication between agreement holders and Natural England staff. Some communications have caused considerable anxiety and have led to a deterioration in trust and disaffected agreement holders.

4.3.6 Linking the common to the home farm

The relationship between the home farm and common grazing is not addressed in current agri-environment schemes (or agreements). The common's agreement and, if there is one, the home farm agreement are treated as separate entities. This risks farming practice on the common adversely impacting on the enclosed land, and vice versa. An example is reducing stock in winter on the common requires more feed to be provided to the wintering stock in fields or sheds. The demand for additional feed has led to intensification of grass production. This remains a challenging issue that has yet to be addressed although under the ESA scheme efforts by advisers to reduce the potential adverse effects of one agreement on another were undertaken.

4.4 Other factors impacting on hill farming

Several events between 2001 and 2020 threatened hill farming on Dartmoor. The impact of Foot and Mouth disease (FMD) on Dartmoor was dramatic and devastating for some farming families. In response to a perceived threat of the loss of farmers from the Moor the DNPA commissioned studies to identify what was needed to persuade the farmers to remain. Few farmers left but the report (CRR, 2002) provided the impetus to launch Moor Futures and the resulting initiatives (see case studies 1 -3).

Discussions with farmers affected by FMD after 2002 identified that the main reason they decided to stay were that hill farming was the only job for which they were qualified (experience and skills) and that they did not wish to break the family connection with the farm and moor. This cultural connection is very important and is a source of pride but can contrast with the transient nature of staff working for the key statutory agencies. This does not help the development of a trusted relationship especially if the 'organisational knowledge' departs with a key staff member.

In 2005 the decoupling of subsidy payments commenced; the incentives for high stock levels were removed, the HFA was replaced by the Single Payment Scheme (SPS). The impact of the SPS in the hills was particularly dramatic resulting in significant income reductions, (Bonn 2008). In 2008 it was estimated that in the Severely Disadvantaged Area (SDA) the value of the SPS payment would fall by 27% by 2012, and for "extreme" hill farms (as found on Dartmoor) the loss could be as high as 40%, (Turner, 2008). The reduction of the support payment created the situation where farmers were encouraged to enter an AES agreement with the intention to offset losses from the SPS and not for the intended reason of seeking changes to their farming practice to secure environmental improvement. It may well also have had the unintended consequence of incentivising the keeping of higher livestock numbers to maximize the income from farming. A situation that may today be more likely as the income from support payments (BPS) falls. The overriding driver for farmers is to stay in business.

4.5 Summary

Farming on Dartmoor (and elsewhere) is undergoing a period of dramatic change. There is considerable financial uncertainty. Annual reductions in BPS are not being replaced by other public income from new ELM schemes nor from private sources of 'green finance'. Agri-environment agreement payments are becoming more important to many farm businesses. Potential reductions in stock numbers mean a need to re-model or radically change farm businesses. This has a particularly significant impact on tenant farmers who face having to reduce their capital asset. At the same time there is a belief from many in the farming community that the stock reductions that may be required will not actually lead to an improvement in nature or condition of SSSIs. They feel disempowered and disengaged – done to rather than masters of their own destiny.

As noted in chapter 3, the Dartmoor Partnership Plan is clear about the need for financially viable farm businesses focused on sustaining a high-quality environment, producing high quality food and fibre and delivering a range of public benefits.

There is a need for change and a new approach from all involved. The change is not just about numbers of stock but more fundamental. We have sought, in chapter 7, to identify the building blocks for this better approach.

5 SSSI and Nature Enhancement

5.1 Background

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 provides for the designation or notification of SSSI. They were to be a tool for both geological and biological conservation. The biological SSSI 'system' was intended to protect a representative sample of species and habitats across the country: "a national network of areas representing in total those parts of Great Britain in which the features of nature, and especially those of greatest value to wildlife conservation are most highly concentrated or of highest quality" (Galbraith and Stroud, 2022).

The system was never intended to be a comprehensive or holistic nature conservation mechanism but has evolved to become the foundation for nature conservation in England with Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas overlaid on top of this foundation.

Reports such as 'Making Space for Nature' (Lawton, 2010) have identified the need to adopt a new approach to wildlife or biodiversity conservation. A move that might be characterised as moving away from trying to hang on to what we have to one of large-scale habitat restoration and recreation. This is the approach that underpins the vision and actions in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. The need for a more integrated, landscape scale is illustrated by the Southern Damselfly case study.

Case study – Southern Damselfly

This nationally scarce invertebrate is restricted to just three sites on Dartmoor, one of which is within a moorland common SSSI. The species is an Annex II primary feature of the Dartmoor SAC. Current status on the SSSI site is **declining** (DNPA unpublished monitoring 2023). The main reason for this is under-grazing in the spring-line mire system and runnels which provide the breeding habitat. The mire is on the edge of the common and with reduction in stocking over recent agreements the cattle and ponies rarely graze. The damselfly is tolerant of and may even benefit from locally high levels of grazing and trampling which, if replicated at a common scale would be considered unacceptable. Innovation to support the right stock in the right numbers at the right time could secure the future of this and other specialist invertebrates, but currently the population is maintained by targeted micro-management of the habitat by the Authority through annual cutting, which may not be sustainable.

5.2 Moorland SSSIs on Dartmoor

The majority of Dartmoor's moorland is notified as SSSI. There are three SSSIs: North Dartmoor, South Dartmoor and East Dartmoor, first notified in 1952 and then re-notified without significant changes in 1981. These large upland SSSIs recognised the importance of Dartmoor's blanket bogs and heathland, based on a national listing of 'near natural' or semi natural' special sites first developed in 1947 (see JNCC 2013). However, a rationale for site selection was only developed in the 1970's (Ratcliffe, 1977). This approach focussed especially on assessment of naturalness, diversity, typicalness and size, within an 'area of search' based on vice

counties. The approach was (and remains) underpinned by a guiding principle (the 'exemplary site principle') where the SSSI series should represent the best examples. It was not until 1989 that JNCC first published detailed guidance for designation of upland SSSIs.

We have no documentation of the decision-making process for designation of Dartmoor's moorland. It is reasonable to assume that not all of these large SSSI's could have possibly been 'pristine' blanket bog or heathland (however that might be defined). Unfortunately, away from a few core areas cited in literature, we have no idea what proportion was considered in good condition at the time of designation.

The first systematic vegetation survey covering the whole moor was in 1972 (Ward et al, 1972). By comparison with earlier accounts, the authors concluded that *Molinia* dominance was adversely affecting blanket bogs and wet heath, bracken was invading heathland and heathland was affected by high levels of grazing. At that time a major factor was unregulated swaling over large areas of both heathland and blanket bog, and there was an awareness that this was a major factor in some of the declining quality of the most valued habitats.

Rather than attempt to unpick the history of SSSI designation, we could consider the existing moorland SSSI on Dartmoor against the latest guidelines for SSSI designation (JNCC 1989, 2013). This could provide much-needed transparency and consistency. It is not to suggest that areas should be de-designated - it is accepted that the blanket bog and western dwarf shrub heath habitats remain international conservation priorities and the SSSIs remain at the core of nature recovery. The following considerations are particularly relevant:

- Size – SSSI must be large enough to encompass the special interest and ensure long-term viability, with space to allow for natural dynamics to take place. Better understanding here will allow concession that it can't all be in the ideal condition all of the time, but also reveal where external factors may mean that achieving some habitats or conditions may no longer be viable.
- Ratcliffe Criteria – latest guidance removes the distinction between the primary and secondary criteria, (JNCC 2013) and rightly places greater emphasis on considering ecological coherence and potential value. This allows us to look forward rather than fixating on the original reasons for designation.
- Gaps – It is not clear now why some areas of Dartmoor moorland and common land were not designated. Many of these areas include habitats of comparable quality and extent to the SSSIs.

Given the way Dartmoor moorland is extensively managed as commons, it was a far-sighted decision to designate the majority of the main moorland blocks, rather than just pick out the 'best bits' of blanket bog, heath and valley mire. However, in doing so it has made it more challenging for the statutory body and other advisors / land managers to assess condition and agree common-scale objectives.

5.3 The assessment of SSSI condition

The objective assessment of SSSI condition, referred to as Common Standards Monitoring (CSM), was only introduced in 1998 (JNCC 2004). At the site level, the intention was to indicate the degree to which current conservation measures are achieving the objective of the designation. At a national level it indicates effectiveness of conservation action and investment, meeting national and international reporting commitments. The intention was that for most habitats this would be on a rolling 6-year cycle. It was quickly apparent that guidance was needed on how to apply CSM, and this was developed for most habitats by 2005. The current guidance for upland habitats was published in 2009 (JNCC 2009). CSM is based on a binary favourable / unfavourable classification, with optional trend qualifiers (e.g., unfavourable recovering, unfavourable declining).

The underpinning science behind this methodology is sound, but it has not realised its potential in application (at least not on Dartmoor) due to a number of factors, including:

- Lack of resource to maintain the 6 year rolling programme
- Seemingly arbitrary use of the trend qualifiers such that a move to ‘recovering’ has in the past been made on implementation of a new agri-environment agreement, not necessarily on any change on the ground.
- Difficulties assessing large and variable units (the largest Dartmoor SSSI unit on the Forest is 2,500 ha)
- Nationally set definitions of ‘favourable’ which may not be locally applicable.

Whilst it is right that the objectives are set high for a SSSI feature, it is questionable whether some of these are achievable when considering external factors and other objectives. The binary nature (combined with lack of regular assessment) means that they are not discerning of relative change whilst moving towards favourable condition. FCS alone is not the best tool to monitor change as a result of management at a site (common) scale. SSSI favourable condition (as currently defined) is not necessarily the best indication of nature recovery at a landscape scale on Dartmoor.

The National Park Authority is hopeful that the change in approach to CSM from a unit (area) to feature-based approach is a positive step and may address some of the current shortcomings. It is unclear when and how this transition will be made on Dartmoor. We also draw attention to the most recent JNCC statement on common standards monitoring for protected sites (JNCC, 2022) and the following points therein:

“Common Standards Monitoring has traditionally focussed on features within protected areas. It could, however, be applied beyond protected areas and used to assess feature condition both within and outside protected areas. This would support the better understanding of condition at site, landscape, country and UK scales.”
[JNCC 2022, section 2.1]

“Interest features are dynamic and change over time and site management needs to reflect this dynamism. For this reason, objectives can be reviewed if evidence

suggests that dynamic natural processes have changed and now restrict their achievement.” [JNCC 2022, section 4.5]

The current condition for SSSIs on Dartmoor Commons is outlined in figure 5.1. There has been no updated condition assessment for the biological SSSI units on common land reported in 2023 or 2022. Only one unit, was downgraded to unfavourable declining in 2021 and a number of North Dartmoor and South Dartmoor units were re-assessed in 2019 as unfavourable no change.

Figure 5.1: Current SSSI Unit Condition of Dartmoor Commons

| Status | Area (ha) | Number of Units | % of Area |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Favourable | 1,178 | 25 | 5 |
| Unfavourable recovering | 10,153 | 27 | 47 |
| Unfavourable no change | 8,770 | 11 | 40 |
| Unfavourable declining | 1,799 | 4 | 8 |
| Total | 21,899 | 67 | 100 |

Note:

The above figures relate to the 61% of Dartmoor commons notified as SSSIs for their moorland and mire habitats

Figures based on Natural England SSSI Unit data June 2023, excluding geological and woodland units

Assessment dates range from 2007 to 2021. During those 14 years the approach has changed especially within the ‘unfavourable’ categories where assumptions were made about ‘recovering / no change / declining’ because there was no baseline pre-2007.

5.4 Summary

Natural England recognise the need to reform SSSIs (Galbraith and Stroud, 2022). The think piece on the effectiveness of protected areas written by Galbraith and Stroud (2022) suggests that a strategy to deliver a functional network of protected sites in England would be to “improve the quality of National Parks and increase the size of existing SSSIs”. The National Park Authority currently has no specific powers or tools (beyond provision of advice, FiPL and planning powers) to influence the management of SSSIs.

We support the need to move beyond SSSIs - to adopt a wider landscape scale approach. Key to any changes will be more participatory engagement with those who undertake the management (commoners, farmers and landowners). We also think that work needs to be done on how we measure ‘nature’ and ‘nature recovery’. This needs to reflect ecosystem dynamics and be ‘bottom-up’ i.e., look at soil condition, habitats and species and consider all of the factors that can impact on ‘condition’. It should not look at ‘nature’ in isolation: we need nature to be a business asset for farmers and landowners and for a partnership approach that better utilises their knowledge and skills but with an effective regulatory framework (recognising that cross compliance is going) that prevents further loss.

6 Learning from Experience

This chapter outlines lessons to learn from the following Dartmoor-based projects or initiatives:

- Dartmoor Moorland Vision
- Premier Archaeological Landscapes
- Dartmoor Farming Futures
- Dartmoor Environmental Land Management Test and Trial
- Landscape scale approach

6.1 The Dartmoor Moorland Vision

Immediately after Foot and Mouth Disease the National Park Authority commissioned work to identify the issues impacting on farmers within the National Park. The Authority's response to the report was to launch 'Moor Futures'. The issues identified included the concern expressed by some farmers that they received conflicting messages from the statutory agencies about the outcomes sought. In particular the farmers identified the lack of a collective longer term vision for Dartmoor's moorland and the potential for conflict between the land management sought by ecologists to that sought by archaeologists.

The Moorland Vision (see figure 6.1) was an initiative to address these two concerns.

A facilitator was appointed by the DNPA in 2003. All of the statutory agencies and other key stakeholders were invited to participate⁶. The approach was to secure agreement from the agencies' ecologists on what they wanted Dartmoor's moorland to look like in 2030. There was considerable consensus, and a draft map of the main vegetation types was produced. The next step was to seek agreement from the agencies' archaeologists and from staff tasked with protecting the historic environment. Dartmoor's historic environment is impressive with over 20,000 entries on the Historic Environment Record including 1,078 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM). To enable land management to be mapped the concept of Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PAL) (see below) was used to identify extensive areas where the archaeology was of exceptional value (often of international importance). Eventually 14 such areas were mapped. These areas were then added to the draft vegetation map. Where the PAL overlapped land notified as SSSI (and SAC in some instances) English Nature and JNCC reviewed whether the preferred management

⁶ Contributing Agencies included English Nature, Rural Development Agency, English Heritage, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency, MOD – Defence Estate, Dartmoor Commoners' Council with additional information provided by Exeter University (carbon and botanical) and RSPB and supported by the Duchy of Cornwall.

For further information see:

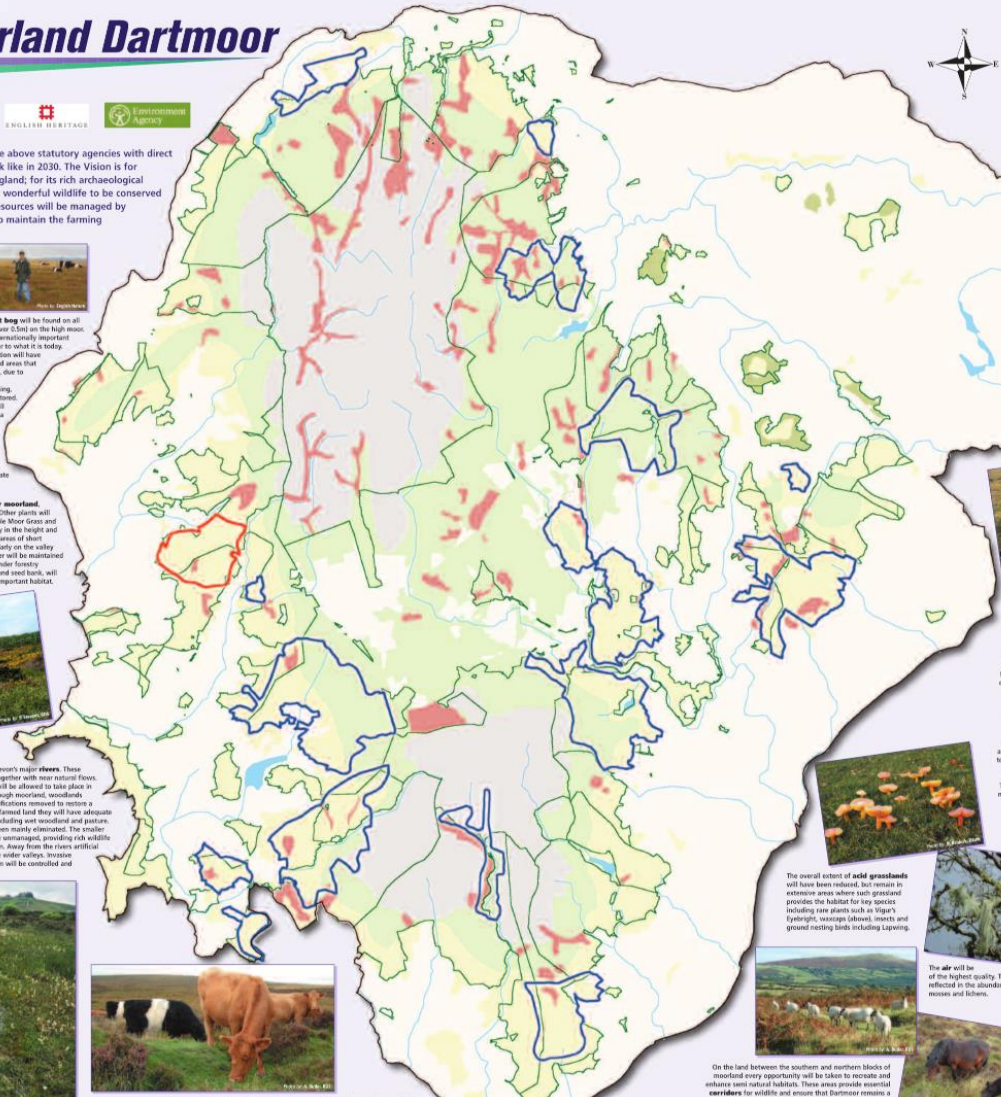
<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/living-and-working/farming/moorland-vision>

Figure 6.1: A vision for moorland Dartmoor

A Vision for moorland Dartmoor



This is an environmental vision for Dartmoor's moorland. It is what the above statutory agencies with direct responsibilities for Dartmoor's environment want to see Dartmoor look like in 2030. The vision is for Dartmoor's moorland to remain the largest open space in southern England; for its rich archaeological remains to be protected and made available to be appreciated, and its wonderful wildlife to be conserved and enhanced. The landscape and associated ecological and cultural resources will be managed by farming systems that not only provide environmental benefits but also maintain the farming communities so essential for Dartmoor's future.



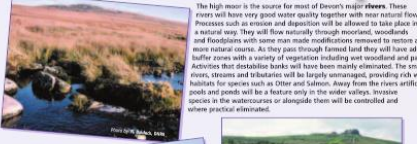
Good quality **blanket bog** will be found on all areas of deep peat (over 5.0m) on the high moor. The extent of this internationally important habitat will be similar to what it is today. Areas in good condition will have been maintained and areas that had been degraded, due to over grazing and inappropriate burning, will have been restored. The vegetation will be dominated by a mix of *Carex* Grasses, Cross-leaved Heath, Ling and various bog mosses. Other characteristic plants including Purple Moor Grass, Bog Asphodel and Round Leaved Sundew will be abundant. There will be a high water table with bog pools with breeding Golden Plover and Dunlin. Some areas of blanket bog may have eroded into wet heathland as a consequence of changes in climate. However, the blanket bog will remain as a major resource for retaining water on the moor and will buffer the impacts of climate change on streams, water supplies and associated habitats.



There will be extensive areas of **heather moorland** dominated by heather, particularly Ling. Other plants will include Bilberry, Cross-leaved Heath, Purple Moor Grass and some Western Gorse. There will be variety in the height and density of the vegetation including some areas of short grassland and tall moor heather particularly on the valley slopes and gullies. Existing areas of heather will be maintained and other areas, including land formerly under forestry plantations, which had the potential soils and seed bank, will have been restored to this internationally important habitat.



On the lower slopes the dominant habitat will be **Western heath**. It will be a mosaic of heath, grass, grassland and patches of scrub on the fringes of the moor. The vegetation will vary between wet and dry heath with characteristic plants including Western Gorse, Bell Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Brittle Bent Grass and Ling. There will be considerable variation in the height of the vegetation including areas of close-matted grassland/leaves. Western heath will have expanded onto areas of poor grassland where the seed bank existed. Western heath and heather moorland are largely confined to Western Torridge and the extensive areas on Dartmoor are of international importance.



The high moor is the source for most of Devon's major **rivers**. These rivers will have very good water quality together with near natural flows. Processes such as erosion and deposition will be allowed to take place in a natural way. They will flow naturally through moorland, woodlands and floodplains with some man-made modifications removed to restore a more natural course. As they pass through farmed land they will have adequate buffer zones with a variety of vegetation including wet woodland and peat. Activities that destabilize banks will have been mostly eliminated. The smaller rivers, streams and tributaries will be largely unmanaged, providing rich wildlife habitats for species such as Otter and Salmon, away from the rivers artificial pools and ponds will be a feature only in the wider valleys. Invasive species in the watercourses or alongside them will be controlled and where practical eliminated.

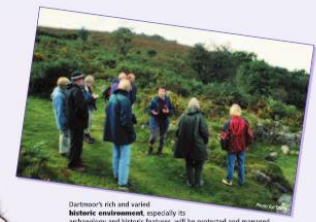


The **valley mires** will continue to be an internationally important habitat on Dartmoor, existing on areas of waterlogged deep peat in valley bottoms. The characteristic plants will be Cotton Grass, Cross-leaved Heath, Bog Asphodel, Bog Bean, sundew and sedges. The mires will provide nesting habitat for wading birds such as Jaeger and Curlew. This habitat will support a number of rare insects including Bog Hopperfly and Knapweed Stiletto. The majority of the mires (approximately 70%) will be kept open by grazing and management; others will have begun to receive both wet woodland and scrub (10%). Both and other nature trees will have spread onto moorland areas adjacent to some of the established mires.



Active management will be essential to achieve this vision for the moorland. Grazing, supplemented in some areas by burning and/or cutting, will continue over most of the moor, however different areas will require different levels of grazing. Farming systems will provide this essential management as well as providing a sustainable future for those engaged in hill farming. In some areas natural processes will have the greatest impact on the landscape and very extensive grazing, without burning, will create valuable habitats and landscapes.

VISION MAP PRODUCED BY MOOR FUTURES IN 2005



Dartmoor's rich and varied **historic environment**, especially its archaeology and historic features, will be protected and managed to ensure vegetation does not damage this internationally renowned resource and, where appropriate, does not hide the outstanding remains. The most significant archaeological landscapes (PALs) are identified on the vision map. Other important **archaeological sites** (including those qualifying for national designation) will be managed on a site by site basis to ensure their preservation and to ensure they remain accessible.



Important **geological and geomorphological features** will remain visible and in good condition and may require management similar to the PALs.

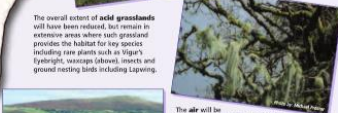


The Premier Archaeological Landscapes
The historic environment on Dartmoor is of great importance and value. Much of it is recognized as having international significance and there are archaeological landscapes which rank amongst the finest in Europe. Fourteen such areas, described as Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs) have been identified. These will need to be protected and kept available to be appreciated in their entirety and will require appropriate extensive land management. Generally, within the PALs the management requirements of the historically important features will, where necessary, take precedence over that required for their ecology.



Some areas of **bracken** will remain, especially where they host important species such as military butterflies. Other areas of bracken, particularly where it obscures the well being of archaeological sites and other environmental interests, will have been removed and some areas will have become woodland. This will be more noticeable on isolated outlying areas especially where proximity to oak woodland has allowed an increase in woodland cover through natural regeneration. There will be areas of scrub and naturally regenerated woodland in some centres and valleys.

Woodland will have expanded in some moorland valleys through natural regeneration and as a result of lower grazing pressure. There will be more trees around the fringes of the moor with Birch, Rowan and other native species common on some valley sides. Small woods, isolated in the past, may have become part of larger woodland blocks as a result of natural regeneration.



The overall extent of **acid grasslands** will have been reduced, but remain in extensive areas where such grassland provides the habitat for key species including rare plants such as *Villosa*, *Eyebright*, *Waxcap* (mosses), insects and ground nesting birds including *Lapwing*.



The **air** will be of the highest quality. This will be reflected in the abundance and diversity of mosses and lichens.



On the land between the southern and northern blocks of moorland every opportunity will be taken to recreate and enhance semi natural habitats. These areas provide essential **corridors** for wildlife and ensure that Dartmoor remains a single entity and is not further fragmented. The very important links between the moorland and adjacent farmland will be maintained and strengthened by appropriate management, including habitat restoration, where necessary. This will apply particularly to the valleys. Here mires and moorland can link to Rhos pasture, scrub and woodland.

Dartmoor in 2030

A Vision of what the statutory agencies would like the moorland parts of Dartmoor to look like

| | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|---|
| | Blanket bog | | Mires of high ecological quality. Note: not all mires are shown |
| | Heather moorland | | Naturally Regenerated Woodland |
| | Western heath | | Premier Archaeological Landscape (PAL) |
| | Geographical Landscape | | Boundary of Commons |

Scale 1:76,000

Note: This map is intended to guide land-use management decisions. It is not a guarantee of what will happen. The boundary between the moorland and farmland is a general guide only. The boundary between the moorland and farmland is a general guide only. The boundary between the moorland and farmland is a general guide only. The boundary between the moorland and farmland is a general guide only.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of the Majesty's Stationery Office in Great Britain. © 2005. Dartmoor National Park Authority Licence No. 1000492-2005. Published by Dartmoor National Park Authority

for the archaeology was compatible with that sought for the ecological value of the site. Eventually agreement was reached (it was less of an issue than anticipated). The draft vegetation map within the PALs was then 'ground truthed' with groups of farmers to ensure that what was pictured was accurate and deliverable. The Moorland Vision was then endorsed by all the contributing agencies and published in 2005.

6.1.1 What did we learn?

1. The perception that different agencies wanted different land management was largely unfounded. However, the language used by agencies often varied and this led to a lack of clarity to what was sought.
2. Some agencies were unable to provide clarity on what they sought long-term. This is a barrier to farmers who need to know the longer-term ambition in order to plan ahead.
3. The role of a facilitator and access to advice were essential. Capacity and lack of inter-agency working required independent facilitation that was acceptable to all contributing partners.
4. Whilst all the agencies signed-off the Moorland Vision, the almost immediate re-shuffle of agencies (creation of Natural England in particular) resulted in a lack of ownership and partial implementation due to staff changes.
5. The lack of promotion of the Moorland Vision to the common associations often resulted in the Moorland Vision not being used to inform new agri-environment agreements, which were the intended delivery mechanism.

6.2 The Premier Archaeological Landscapes

Dartmoor's historic environment is of national and international importance. Dartmoor holds one of the richest concentrations of prehistoric sites in western Europe. Almost 6% of the nation's Scheduled Monuments are found on the moorland, most on common land.

Given this evidence, it should be obvious that the archaeological record constitutes an important aspect of the wider environment within the Dartmoor National Park. As such it is a significant public benefit and must be considered alongside others when land management plans are drawn up or projects with non-archaeological objectives undertaken. Often, this simply requires a holistic approach to conservation and management which fully integrates the historic environment into decision-making. However, there are occasions when there is a tension between the management required for Scheduled areas and other forms of designation such as SSSIs designated for ecological reasons. This is most likely when Scheduled sites cover significant areas as they sometimes do on Dartmoor.

This latter issue is partially addressed within the National Park through the designation of PALs. PALs are a local designation, with no statutory standing. Fourteen PALs were identified through the Moorland Vision process (see above). They are characterised by the extent, quality and importance of the archaeological remains. The PALs vary in size from c10 ha to one of over several hundred hectares in area.

The idea for PALs was conceived and developed by the Cornwall County Archaeological Unit. The concept was used during the creation of the Dartmoor Moorland Vision (see above) and in similar initiatives on Bodmin Moor and Exmoor. Unlike the array of designations designed to describe ecological features the historic environment, in 2003, did not have a landscape scale designation. PALs were an attempt to address this.

A set of criteria was used to draw a boundary around an area. Within that boundary the archaeology was of national or international importance and a collection of features (or sites) were linked within a landscape. The intention was for these individual sites to be interlinked and made visible within their landscape setting. The main objective is to ensure that in these areas, when land management is under consideration, retain their historical significance and are correctly managed. All the PALs require a managed (grazed) setting to provide protection from inappropriate vegetation and provide accessibility.

Within the Moorland Vision it was agreed that all the individual Scheduled Ancient Monuments would continue to receive appropriate management.

Following collective agreement on the boundary of each PAL and the adoption of the PALs into the Moorland Vision a programme of visiting each PAL to discuss its value and management with the relevant commoners started.

6.2.1 What did we learn?

1. The land management required for most archaeological sites is compatible with that sought for important ecological sites.
2. The presence of archaeological sites is of enormous interest to landowners, farmers and commoners, but they need to be told of the sites' importance and what is their correct management.
3. Whilst initially endorsed by all the relevant agencies over time changes to staff and less resources led to the programme of meetings to explain the PAL to the local commoners being abandoned.
4. The PALs are still evident in agri-environment agreements and most receive appropriate management.

6.3 Dartmoor Farming Futures- *an outcome focused approach to agri-environment.*

Dartmoor Farming Futures (DFF) was an innovative project aimed at developing a new approach to the management of the public and environmental benefits associated with Dartmoor's moorland.

The origins of DFF can be traced back to the Moorland Vision (see above). Farmers providing the management of the common land on Dartmoor welcomed the Moorland Vision because it confirmed that all the statutory agencies with an interest in the commons agreed on a collective vision – a grazed landscape that delivered multiple public benefits.

Following publication of the Moorland Vision two groups were established; one a group of commoners and agency staff tasked to explore the barriers to delivering the Moorland Vision and the second a project board comprised of key stakeholders including landowners. It soon became evident that some farmers believed that the prescriptions in their agri-environment (AE) agreement would not deliver the land management required to secure the Moorland Vision and delivery of public benefits. The commoners were particularly concerned over AE delivery following the transition from ESA to Environmental Stewardship.

This apparent disconnect led the Dartmoor Commoners' Council and the National Park Authority, in 2009, to approach Defra and NE for the opportunity to improve delivery, stating "The time is right for a new initiative that addresses one of the main concerns of hill farmers and upland communities: to be able restore the full use of their experience and skills to the long-term management of the moorland". In response the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs invited the Commoners' Council and DNPA, in partnership with others, to submit a proposal for a pilot project.

This invitation was accepted and a formal proposal submitted to Defra by DNPA and the Dartmoor Commoners' Council with active support from the Duchy of Cornwall, Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) and South West Water (SWW). The proposal was to develop a new approach to agri-environment that:

- i. Offered farmers and landowners more responsibility for the design and delivery of agri-environment agreements.
- ii. Focused on the complete range of public benefits that are associated with upland farming and identifies priorities for particular spatial areas.⁷
- iii. Facilitates a collaborative approach to agreeing the outcomes sought, delivering the management required and assisting with the monitoring of the process and outcomes.
- iv. Identifies the true costs of management to inform future debates about public support.

⁷ Food production was included alongside public benefits such as nature, heritage, landscape, access, water management and carbon sequestration

- v. Assesses all funding streams: including the future role of private investment, the implications of CAP reform and identifies funding models for consideration by Government.

Active support from the then Duke of Cornwall helped secure Natural England support for a pilot which commenced in 2010. Unfortunately, the remit for the pilot did not include points iv and v above and there was limited capacity to take forward the spatial priorities work under point ii above.⁸ Although nothing stopped DFF from adopting a different payment regime the underpinning provided by the HLS agreement required the HLS agreement to be in place. The HLS application was only possible if all those signed to the previous ESA agreement received similar monies. This meant that the allocation of money to individual farmers was made before DFF went live and any opportunity to incentivise changes was lost. There were two stages to the development of DFF, both overseen by a steering group, comprised of the Rural Development Service and English Nature (later Natural England), DNPA, Defence Estate, Dartmoor Common Owners Association, English Heritage and Dartmoor Commoners' Council.

The first stage (the design phase) ran from August 2010 to March 2011. Two groups of commoners - with independent facilitation – designed a model that addressed all the relevant public benefits. After selecting the ecosystem services or public goods to be addressed an outcome was drafted for each one. These outcomes were discussed with and when accepted were 'signed off' or agreed by the relevant statutory agencies (Natural England, Historic England, Environment Agency and DNPA). The outcomes were designed to reflect the suite of public benefits relevant to each area (both groups selected 10 outcomes) and then formed the backbone of the agreement. The farmers would then be given the 'freedom' (opportunity) to develop the management they believed would deliver the outcomes, free of imposed prescriptions. The farmers then provided a monitoring schedule and an annual reporting programme to ensure all efforts were moving in the correct direction.

The second stage, which started in August 2011, was again a farmer led initiative with landowner support involved trialling the new design on two areas of common land: the Forest of Dartmoor and Haytor and Bagtor Commons. The two areas contain different public benefits with The Forest having extensive areas of SSSI (covers 86% of the common's area). The Haytor and Bagtor commons whilst not having land notified as SSSI are heavily impacted by public access and have a rich archaeological resource. Both trials were underpinned by an AE agreement (HLS). The opportunity to deviate from the AE agreements' prescriptions were enabled by a formal agreement and derogations. Both trials were for ten years.

A monitoring programme was set in place to ensure the farmers' actions and decisions could be reviewed annually to prevent any wrong land management practices continuing for more than one season. These annual reviews also encouraged direct discussion with the relevant agencies, especially Natural England.

⁸ The existing HLS agreements remained in place whilst DFF was operating. The allocation of monies under the HLS agreement was made prior to DFF 'going live'. There was no remit from Natural England or Defra to look at payment rates or methods.

There are independent evaluations of DFF in 2012, 2013 and 2017 (CCRI 2012; Cumulus Consultants, 2013 and Manning, 2017).

Further information is available see (Waldon 2021) and:
www.dartmoor.gov.uk/living-and-working/farming/farming-futures

6.3.1 What did we learn?

- 1. The principles that underpinned DFF remain as valid now as they were then.** Those principles were:
 - Farmers want to contribute their skills and experience to the design, delivery and monitoring of AE agreements,
 - Engagement with all the key stakeholders including the commons' owners,
 - a focus on all relevant public benefits not just one or two,
 - to be outcomes based,
 - to include regular monitoring and annual feedback,
 - and benefit from an ongoing partnership approach.
- 2. DFF, and other farmer-led initiatives, engender significant ownership and the potential for improved delivery.** Agreement holders better understand what is required.
- 3. Trusted facilitation and advice are essential to delivery of good outcomes.** During the development of DFF there was an investment in independent facilitation and access to advice. Once the two trials were operational the facilitation resource reduced and staff turnover within Natural England meant there was no consistency in approach and advice during the second stage. Staff turnover did not help develop trust or continuity. The pilot was intended to be farmer-led but it still needs to be a partnership with the relevant agencies actively involved in provision of ongoing advice and monitoring.
- 4. Regular monitoring is essential it can help build trust, de-risk and generate ownership and pride.** One of the key successes of DFF was the engagement of farmers in monitoring. Initially SSSI condition was poorly understood by those responsible for delivering its management on the Forest. Natural England facilitated training for over 60 commoners in species recognition. SSSI assessment units were based on management units devised by the farmers in their ESA agreement. A photo template illustrating good and bad condition was developed so farmers could undertake regular monitoring when checking stock. This initial work was not followed-up in a systematic way in terms of quality assuring the farmer surveys and explaining the changes required/sought.
- 5. The farmers were very cautious. There was a reluctance to propose or action any radical alternative management.** A key reason was the belief that their funding might be reduced or clawed back if the management they

proposed failed to deliver the outcomes sought. 'Fear of failure' reduced the willingness to be innovative. This was probably exacerbated by the lack of consistent, pro-active trusted advice. Also, farmers who were willing to be more innovative faced peer pressure not to put agreements at risk. Another contributing factor was a clear steer from Natural England that they would not permit any experimentation with management on land notified as a SSSI.

6. **Fluctuations in engagement by agency staff and turn-over of staff (notably within Natural England as the lead agency) mitigated against the development of a relationship of trust.** At times it appeared to those engaged senior managers in Natural England were disengaged or lacked support/interest in DFF and local staff were deprived of the time to proactively contribute. NE's commitment and support appeared to wane over time possibly as a result of the reduction in resources they experienced.
7. **Realistic milestones and understanding/agreement of outcomes required.** Agreements should be clear in relation to what good looks like and provide indications of the times required to achieve or improve the outcomes expected. Overall, direction of travel should be consistent even if incremental. There should be some accountability for the delivery of schemes on both sides.

6.4 Dartmoor Environmental Land Management Test and Trial (T&T)

The T&T process was established by Defra to help inform and shape the development of ELMS. DNPA (in partnership with the Commoners' Council, Common Owners Association, Duchy of Cornwall and Natural England) successfully applied to run a T&T in 2019, working closely with the farming community to shape the objectives. The project was overseen by a Project Board made up of representatives from the Dartmoor National Park Authority, Dartmoor Common Owners' Association, Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, Dartmoor Commoners' Council, The Duchy of Cornwall and Natural England with an independent chair.

The four objectives of the project were to:

- Develop a blueprint for land management plans with a specific focus on commons
- Develop and trial a 'payment by results' approach that could operate on commons as well as 'home' farms
- Explore how private finance and other forms of environmental net gain could be incorporated into ELMS at a local level
- Explore the role that National Park Authorities can play in shaping, facilitating and delivering ELMS

The project ran from January 2020 to November 2021 and was based on the concept of co-design with the farming community.

A second T&T was commissioned in November 2022 at the request of Defra who were keen to further explore some of the themes that emerged from the initial project. The second T & T is being delivered in partnership with the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) and focused on how to test the practical development of payment by results (PBR) on common land and better understand the barriers and opportunities to improve delivery including the necessary governance. Specifically, the project aims to:

- Develop and test the financial reward structure based on natural capital delivery to ensure it incentivises delivery, rewards collective and individual effort and accurately recompenses the effort and costs involved.
- Review existing governance structures and propose models that would ensure efficient delivery and administration of a PBR reward process that would be acceptable to the participants.

This project will conclude in March 2024.

6.4.1 What did we learn?

1. Both projects were co-designed with significant development and input from the farming community who understand the land and challenges associated with delivery.
2. Farmers were less satisfied with agri-environment agreements on commons than home farms partially due to what was considered inappropriate prescriptions. Outcome-based approaches were considered preferable as they provided agency in achieving results.
3. There was a positive response to PBR as a mechanism for delivering agri-environment agreements and agreed outcomes.
4. Facilitation and advice are considered critical for achieve positive results, particularly around achieving collaboration on complex sites such as commons.
5. A place-based approach, where local factors and an understanding the local landscape, should be integral to objective and priority setting.
6. Farmers and landowners want to be involved in co-design of schemes (and agreements). This creates more buy-in, ownership and understanding leading to improved outcomes.
7. Commoners and owners alike favour a future approach with stronger advice, feedback and support as well as more clearly delineated funding for specific targeted management action.
8. There are widespread calls for the approach to be led by a body which is independent of Natural England and has a resource adequate to ensure sustained advice and ongoing dialogue with commoners.

9. There is some support for a bespoke central team with the capacity to engage across the commons and overseen by some form of Dartmoor-wide partnership.

6.5 Landscape-scale action

Lawton (2010) argued the case that connectivity and scale were vital to restore nature and recognised that climate change would only accelerate this need. SSSIs are delivered at a unit or more recently a feature-based scale while agri-environment has and continues to be negotiated at tenure or administrative boundary scale. The objectives, outputs and outcomes are all based on what lies within that boundary, generally with little consideration for how the environmental objectives of one holding connect or complement those above, below or beyond.

Each agreement is isolated and insular, often resulting in a myriad of fragmented pockets of habitat and species that remain vulnerable, the antithesis of 'bigger, better and joined up'. This approach also does little to address large scale ecosystem failures such as hydrology or invasive species which must be resolved at a systems wide scale.

In order to achieve thriving, resilient and dynamic wildlife rich environments, nature restoration must be planned and delivered at landscape scales. Furthermore, the definition of these landscapes should be ecological rather than by tenure, so that the natural systems by which they were formed and functioned can be reinstated or emulated by restoring natural dynamic processes. It is important to distinguish between the ecological blueprint set out in landscape scale planning and the pragmatic delivery of objectives and management on the ground. Management will still be achieved based on tenure but everyone within the landscape will be contributing to an overarching blueprint.

Collaboration is fundamental to achieving landscape scale restoration and should be considered a fundable outcome under ELMS. Incentivising collaboration for a sector that has become increasingly isolated could help facilitate the cultural shift required to plan and deliver at a multi-holding scale.

Future ELMS agreements could interlink, enhancing the benefits within each holding but also joining with neighbouring farms and commons as part of the wider landscape vision. Collectively agreeing priorities strategically across a landscape also reduces the pressure within each holding to achieve multiple outcomes everywhere because traditionally each has been viewed in isolation. Landscape scale restoration provides space to achieve multiple public goods and reducing risk around achieving competing priorities.

The Postbridge Cluster (now established as [Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster CIC](#)) was the first attempt at facilitating collaboration through a landscape scale catchment-based approach. This began through work supported by the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project and funded via the Natural England Facilitation Fund. It looked at the requirements of fritillary butterflies as a way to think about landscape scale

conservation. Over a period of three years a group of 12 farm businesses within the East Dart and Webburn catchments have cultivated trust and collaborated to create a landscape vision that was inconceivable whilst working individually. They have now formed a CIC, work collectively to reduce business risk and are seeking funding to achieve their environmental ambitions (they have submitted a Landscape Recovery bid).

The National Park Authority are now exploring this approach (in partnership with farmers, commoners and landowners) on other Dartmoor catchments that have been identified for their ecological quality and potential. These include the Erme, Yealm and Walkham catchments.

6.5.1 What did we learn?

1. Landscape scale conservation is critical step-change required to address the ecological and climate crisis.
2. Scale and focus are important. Landscapes should be meaningful to those who live in them and objectives must be achievable and relatable. Setting ecological objectives at a Devon or Dartmoor scale are largely meaningless, crude and ecologically incoherent.
3. Priority habitats are key to achieving connectivity rather than a focus on designated sites.
4. This approach takes time to build relationships, trust and buy-in. Dedicated consistent advice that provides expertise and coordination is essential for success.
5. Setting strategic objectives collaboratively at scale provides more space for addressing competing priorities and can fundamentally alter how landowners perceive their landscape and ability to influence change.
6. Dedicated long term investment is crucial. Resources must be focused and committed to long term change rather than short term projects dispersed and unconnected across multiple landscapes.

7 Conclusion: Building Blocks for a Better Future

The terms of reference for the Fursdon Review are focused on protected sites. It is important that the review recognises that the National Park is a protected area within which are nested a range of protected sites. Agri-environment schemes and individual agreements are a key tool for the management of protected sites but also an essential tool for the delivery of National Park purposes. The second paragraph of the terms of reference for the Review indicates the focus on SSSIs needs to be alongside the *“long-term and sustainable delivery of other priorities such as agricultural production, public access and cultural and natural heritage”*. Whilst recognising the need to do more for nature, our submission reflects this wider perspective.

We argue that the Fursdon Review provides an opportunity to learn lessons that will help provide a framework for delivery of public benefits alongside viable farm businesses on Dartmoor and beyond. To achieve this objective, we have identified ten building blocks for a better future:

- An integrated approach that focuses on all public benefits.
- A shared vision based on outcomes – clarity on what is sought and where.
- An agreed and shared approach to monitoring.
- Engagement and partnership to deliver agreed outcomes.
- Trusted facilitation and advice.
- Combining national and local priorities with local delivery.
- Moving beyond SSSIs and the notion of ‘Favourable Condition’.
- Rewarding delivery and encouraging innovation.
- The tools to do the job.
- Celebrate success.

1. An integrated approach that focuses on all public benefits

Agri-environment schemes, and individual agreements, need to be about delivery of a suite of public benefits and not narrowly focused on one benefit or objective. In terms of Dartmoor National Park those public benefits include:

- Nature
- Landscape
- Access
- Cultural heritage
- Water management
- Carbon management
- Wildfire prevention and management

There will be a need for priorities but in many instances, you can effectively layer public benefits (i.e., deliver multiple benefits from a parcel of land). This approach offers, we believe, best value for public money and supports delivery of National Park purposes. The current debate about agri-environment agreements and SSSI

condition is an example of focusing on one public benefit without considering others such as cultural heritage, public access etc.

There must be consensus between government agencies, key stakeholders and those that deliver the land management on what is being sought and where (see point about shared vision – 3.12 below).

For too long agri-environment schemes (and thus agreements) have been developed, and delivered, in a silo that separates this policy area from wider issues pertaining to farm productivity, sustainability and the rural economy. An integrated approach is required that makes the connections between agri-environment and the farm business and with the wider rural economy. Such an approach offers the potential for efficiencies, greater effectiveness and an opportunity to develop the circular economy (i.e., to use the public money spent on agri-environment agreements as a ‘multiplier’ for the local economy).

For agreements on common land there is a need to make the connection to the home farms.

Whilst recognising that food production is not a public benefit to be paid for via agri-environment agreements it should be considered alongside other public benefits.

2. A shared vision based on outcomes – clarity on what is sought and where

There is value in a shared vision of what is being sought and where – one that is ambitious. A vision that identifies the outcomes sought. When the vision is formed by all who will be guided by it, it’s shared; people are engaged and bought in – their actions are part of achieving the vision. The Dartmoor Moorland Vision provides a case study in the value of a shared vision but also demonstrates areas that need to be addressed notably how the vision is promoted, kept alive, monitored and used to inform decision-making.

The National Park Management Plan (the Dartmoor Partnership Plan) should provide the shared vision. There is the potential to develop this spatially so it becomes a blueprint for delivery. It can then provide a framework for advice and more detailed work at a landscape-scale.

3. An agreed and shared approach to monitoring

Regular, agreed monitoring is essential in order to help build trust, de-risk agreements (for all sides) and provide evidence of delivery (or non-delivery). Engaging farmers in this monitoring can help build trust, understanding and a sense of pride (see below).

As well as recommending a new approach to monitoring of nature (see below) it is essential that monitoring is across all public benefits and considers other factors (e.g., the economics of farming and the health and welfare of livestock).

Data (from monitoring, academic studies etc.) should be held centrally and be accessible to all. We suggest that the National Park Authority should act as the 'library' as this then links to the requirement to prepare a 'State of the Park' report – a 'Dartmoor Observatory' that can help ensure evidence-based advice and actions.

4. Engagement and Partnership to deliver agreed Outcomes

There is considerable evidence that farmer engagement in design, delivery and monitoring of agri-environment agreements delivers better outcomes than a prescriptive approach that effectively 'dictates' management actions. Buy-in is a prerequisite for success and can help drive ambitious delivery (Lastra-Bravo et al., 2015; McCracken et al., 2015). Many farmers, land managers and other stakeholders want to be engaged in the whole process, from design through to delivery and monitoring, to foster shared ownership of the system rather than being faced with a finalised product that ignores their respective knowledge, experience and skills.

On Dartmoor, the Dartmoor Farming Futures pilot sought to develop an approach based on engagement and delivery of agreed outcomes. The case study on DFF (see chapter 6) identifies what we have learnt from this initiative.

Too often current agri-environment agreements are prescriptive – they specify the management required. In terms of agri-environment agreements on common land this is demonstrated by stocking densities and calendars. We need to move to a system that enables farmers/commoners to co-design the management required to deliver agreed outcomes. The experience of Farming Futures demonstrates the need for access to trusted advice and facilitation – farmers and agencies working in partnership.

5. Trusted facilitation and advice

The importance of access to trusted facilitation and advice cannot be over-stated. If we want high quality outcomes, we need to provide high quality, consistent advice and see this as an investment in delivery of outcomes and not a cost or overhead to be continually reduced. Advice should be provided locally where possible and face to face. There is an opportunity to develop an integrated local team that offers advice from all of the relevant agencies via one point of delivery. We believe that the National Park Authority is well placed to host and deliver such advice. It could build on existing initiatives such as the [Dartmoor Hill Farm Project](#), the [Headwaters Project](#) and the joint post between the National Park Authority and Historic England.

This initial 'one stop and shop' advice would not negate the need for access to more specialist advice. The model could easily develop a 'mixed economy' approach that combines a combination of public, NGO and private actors. More specialist advice could be signposted.

Advisors need to be knowledgeable in local farming systems. We suggest a training course that is developed and delivered in partnership with the farming and wider land

management community. Such a model – the [Hill Farm Training Scheme](#) - was developed with the Foundation for Common Land.

We also need to foster and encourage learning within the farming community and jointly with the agencies. The National Park Authority used to organise regular 'Moorland Management Forums'. These were largely site-based – hosted by a specific common with the focus on the management issues faced by that common with an invitation to all commons associations and all of the relevant agencies. The Moorland Management Forum provided an informal opportunity to raise issues, for discussion and learning. Reductions in funding and staff meant that there was no capacity to support this initiative.

6. Combining national and local priorities with local delivery

Even within a small and relatively uniform area, an approach that prescribes, in advance, a standard set of management prescriptions, to deliver a desired outcome, will not necessarily succeed because local conditions will vary. Conditions on Dartmoor vary from those on Exmoor and more northerly uplands. Conditions also vary across Dartmoor – from farm to farm, common to common. Research for the Dartmoor ELM Test and Trial phase 2 identified circa 19 different farming types within the National Park.

Local flexibility can deliver national and local priorities. It also provides for: innovation, engagement in designing the management to deliver agreed outcomes; monitoring can be based on local circumstances and there is scope to have a partnership approach to governance at a local level. Environmental quality standards are better interpreted at the local level: a payment by results approach on Dartmoor may be very different to payment by results in the Lake District.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme provides a good example of how to combine national and local priorities whilst also allowing local flexibility within a National Framework.

7. Moving beyond SSSIs and the notion of 'Favourable Condition'

SSSIs have provided the basis for our system of nature conservation in England since the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and arguably since the National parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 provided for their notification). Favourable condition is now being used as a measure for nature recovery. SSSIs were never intended for this purpose and there is a need to research and develop a new approach which is cognisant of climate change and more representative of nature as a dynamic system rather than a particular state

We need a new approach to monitoring of 'condition', one that:

- Looks at a wider basket of indicators (e.g., soil condition, diversity and numbers of invertebrates, condition of habitats and number and abundance of species);

Considers the role of external factors such as climate change, atmospheric pollution, plant disease (e.g. heather beetle);

- Is linked to expected sensitivity to change and the expected speed of change as a result of potential management adjustments and the legacy of past management;
- Is robust but also easy to understand and provides for engagement by farmers and others (see point above).

As noted above, monitoring needs to be across all outcomes or public benefits not just focused on one.

The Dartmoor Partnership Plan seeks to develop an approach to nature that goes beyond SSSIs and looks at nature enhancement at a landscape scale underpinned by dynamic natural processes. The plan is also clear about the need to accept change as nature responds to climate change and recovery of natural processes.

There is a need to review all of Dartmoor's landscapes to consider future viability, opportunity and ecological coherence. This exercise should transcend current SSSI boundaries and reflect a landscape scale approach (as reflected in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan). Results would inform a review of existing SSSI features, how they are monitored and how actions would be undertaken within and across commons. By looking forward rather than back to the original notification/designation, it would make decision making more transparent, objective and explicable to all. It also provides an opportunity to engage all stakeholders. Agri-environment schemes need to reflect this landscape scale approach with each agreement contributing to a greater connected whole rather than just considering objectives within single administrative boundaries. This is also true and beneficial for commons agreements where stocking should be considered across multiple commons where boundaries are permeable.

8. Rewarding delivery and encouraging innovation

Our current system of agri-environment payments is a combination of fixed annual and capital payments. A payment by results or a performance related payment approach offers a number of potential benefits, including:

- Encourages and potentially rewards innovation, whilst the current system mitigates against innovation;
- Incentivises improvement or enhancement of the environment rather than just paying for management;
- Supports a more 'entrepreneurial approach' – farmers are used to the idea that stock on good condition get best price and will seek to improve the condition of their stock.

The Dartmoor Environmental Land Management Test and Trial is exploring the development of a payment by results system for common land. There are potential disadvantages, but these could be mitigated by a system that combined a floor (a minimum payment) and a ceiling (a maximum payment). The level of the floor (and potentially the ceiling) would be subject to periodic review.

9. The Tools to do the Job

It is important that agri-environment agreements facilitate appropriate grazing by cows, sheep and ponies - mixed grazing imitates natural processes. Swaling is also an important tool for delivery of public benefits. There is a need for further research into the climate change implications of swaling (the net effect in terms of greenhouse gas emissions) but removing this tool would significantly increase the risk of wildfires and would put delivery of other public benefits at jeopardy.

10. Celebrate Success

The current system seems to be leading to a 'spiral of dismay and despair'. We rarely celebrate success. Fear of failure, disallowance and financial penalties results in very little innovation. We need to be better at celebrating success, demonstrating that farming can be good for the environment and supporting innovation. This is not an argument to cover up failure - if agreements are not working then this needs to be identified and action taken – but often the picture is more complicated; good delivery of some outcomes or public benefits can be overshadowed by the SSSI condition issue.

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Links to additional information:

www.hnmlink.eu/download/UK_BaselineAssessment.pdf