



NPA/20/017

Dartmoor National Park Authority

12 June 2020

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY'S RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) **note the content of this report and make suggestions as to further actions required.**

1. Introduction

1.1 On 23rd March 2020 the Prime Minister made it clear we are facing a national emergency as we tackle the coronavirus outbreak. We have responded accordingly and this report provides Members with an overview of:

- how we have adapted as an organisation to maintain service provision and discharge our statutory purposes and duty;
- the impact on our business plan and finances; and
- the initiatives we have taken, and are planning, to support our communities and businesses and manage visitors; and

1.2 This is inevitably an 'unfolding story' and the following report provides the 'first chapter'. Adaptability, flexibility and a desire to do our best for Dartmoor (the place and its communities) whilst protecting our staff, volunteers and Members have been our guiding principles.

2. How we have responded as an organisation

2.1 Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 23 March 2020 we shifted the whole organisation's way of operating to remote working. We had asked staff (not used to home working) to trial this in the week prior to lockdown. Our IT systems enable us to operate a switchboard service from home and all staff can (subject to broadband and/or mobile connectivity) access our servers and IT software remotely and also make and receive phone calls as if they were in the office. Site visits were (until 26 May 2020) only allowed if a member of Leadership Team provided express approval and subject to a risk assessment. Our public meetings are now taking place via video conferencing and webcasting. We have been able to maintain

service provision but restrictions on movement and site visits generally has impacted on our ability to process planning applications and do practical work 'on the ground'.

- 2.2 As from the 26 May 2020 we have allowed staff to conduct site visits but only in adherence to a published risk assessment and practical guidance on how to stay safe/minimise risk. Our Offices remain closed to the public but we are allowing limited access on certain days to Parke so that staff can collect equipment, print papers and carry out other activities essential to their jobs but not actually work from the office. Such trips have to be approved by the relevant line manager so we can control numbers and maintain social distancing. We have completed and published the necessary risk assessments and erected the required signage. Required PPE has been procured and is being issued to staff. In the first few weeks of lockdown we offered all existing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), not required by our staff, to the NHS.
- 2.3 Staff have been informed that our offices will remain closed until at least the end of June. Social distancing requirements and the layout of our offices pose particular challenges but there is an action plan in place, and required risk assessments, to guide a gradual re-opening of the offices when appropriate.
- 2.4 COVID-19 is having an impact on our revenue budget for 2020/21 but we are seeking to manage this through limited use of the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and in-year savings. Unlike some other National Park Authorities, who are able to generate significant sums of income from assets that they own, we have few assets from which to trade and thus have more limited exposure to loss of commercial income. We have furloughed nine Information Advisers and our Outreach Assistant as from 8 April (currently until 30 June) and ten Casual Information Advisers from 18 May 2020 (currently until 30 June). The income received via the CJRS is circa £5k per month for the nine Information Advisers and Outreach Assistant. We have not yet claimed for the Casual Information Advisers. We are losing income through sales in visitor centres, lack of car park charges and the waiving of vending licence charges (until 13 May 2020). These losses then need to be balanced against savings from project spend, stock acquisition, travel etc. We will provide a more detailed analysis of the financial impacts through our regular budget monitoring reports that are scrutinised by Audit and Governance Committee.
- 2.5 The pandemic is also having an impact on our 2020/21 Business Plan and key actions contained therein. It is too early to provide a composite picture but progress on key actions such as the review of the Management Plan has been delayed - at the request of partners we extended the consultation period. We have had to re-engineer how we approach other projects. For example, we are now using video conferencing to engage with farmers on the Environmental Land Management Test and Trial. We will review the Business Plan at the end of Quarter 1 and report implications in more detail to Members thereafter.
- 2.6 Whilst some work programmes will be delayed it should be noted that we have also developed a set of new work programmes in response to coronavirus, including:
- Learning in Lockdown – a set of resources for those who are learning/teaching at home
 - A Community Support Grant (see below) to provide fast financial support for community initiatives linked to the pandemic

- Work on a recovery plan (see below).

2.7 In addition, there has been a lot of work associated with the re-design of service provision (e.g. the move to virtual meetings and development of an associated protocol; re-thinking how we conduct site visits and the risk assessments and guidance associated with these and the eventual return to office work) and significant communication activity (see below). No part of the organisation has been left untouched by the implications of the pandemic.

3. Work to support Dartmoor communities, businesses and visitors

Dartmoor Coronavirus Community Support Grant (CCSG)

- 3.1 We launched the CCSG on 30 March 2020, just seven days after the Prime Minister announced the lockdown. Our intention was to provide fast, 'upfront' financial support to help Dartmoor communities.
- 3.2 Whilst Dartmoor-based community and voluntary organisations have a great deal of experience in assisting their local communities, the pandemic has created a range of unique problems to overcome. These include keeping households with limited or no internet access up to date with the latest coronavirus guidance, helping those who are isolating to access food and medical supplies as well as the provision of additional PPE and cleaning materials to enable volunteers and organisations to operate safely. Several new community initiatives, focused on supporting those on Dartmoor who are most vulnerable, have mobilised. All these groups have a need for immediate, up-front funding to enable them to make a difference to Dartmoor's local communities during these unprecedented times.
- 3.3 The CCSG provides up-front grants of up to £500 to Dartmoor-based voluntary and community groups. The funding supports projects that focus on community resilience and actions addressing the social and economic impacts of the pandemic. Examples of eligible projects/activities or items include:
- Support for vulnerable persons e.g. delivery of food and medicines and 'social' support for people living alone e.g. costs of phone call
 - Project development costs e.g. printing of leaflets or developing online information
 - Transport related initiatives focused on safe community responses to the pandemic
 - Equipment necessary to support community based responses to the pandemic e.g. necessary PPE
- 3.4 We designed the scheme to be quick and easy. In the first instance, potential applicants contact the Community Engagement Officer for an informal discussion. If the project idea supports the purpose of the CCSG Fund, the applicant is invited to complete a short application form. Applications are assessed on submission and successful applications receive funding in advance of the project, item or activity being delivered. Payment is by means of BACS transfer to a bank or building society account.
- 3.5 Constituted and not-for-private-profit voluntary, community and social enterprise sector groups and organisations, town and parish councils, charities or businesses,

or a combination of such groups working together can apply for funding. Non-constituted groups without their own, separate bank account, small local businesses and individuals can apply but they need to do so with the support of an accountable constituted organisation acting on their behalf either as guarantor or as the holder of the funding.

3.6 CCSG recipients will be asked to provide the following information on their project within 3 months of the project being completed, and then again later if requested:

- Details of how many people benefited from the project
- Number of volunteer hours supported by the project, item or activity
- Copies of invoices and receipts relating to the National Park Authority grant
- Details of match funding received

3.7 We allocated £25,000 to the CCSG Fund currently. As of the end of May 2020, £12,315 has been awarded and paid to 27 applicants. The Community Engagement Officer has been proactive in seeking spatial equity of the distribution of funds across Dartmoor (see appendix 1) with several organisations and community groups having been identified and invited to apply for funding in areas with a lower level of engagement. Appendix 1 also provides short details of the projects supported to-date.

3.8 Feedback from applicants has been overwhelmingly positive (see Table 1).

Table 1: CCSG Fund – applicant feedback

Oh amazing that was quick! I will let the team know. Thank you it will be a massive help! (Proper Job CIO)

We are delighted that you have chosen to support Team Horrabridge – we all send our grateful thanks and can assure you that this money will directly benefit the most vulnerable in our community. (Team Horrabridge)

Thanks so much for such a prompt reply and such good news. (The Seed, Buckfastleigh)

Thank you so much for your help and support. It is very much appreciated. (Bickington PC)

Thank you so much for this! This is such great news for our village. It has also made my day! (Dunsford PC)

Thank you Emma that's amazing news. And will be a tremendous help. That is the fastest grant application and turnaround EVER! That has really put a smile on my face!! Thank you so much! I'm gobsmacked!! (NED Care)

Absolutely great! Thank you. (Holne Community Shop)

Thank you SO VERY much! Well done for turning this around so quickly - impressive. (Acorn Community Care)

Many thanks for your kind consideration of this grant which now can make a real difference. (Sticklepath PC)

- 3.9 We surveyed early recipients of the CCSG to seek their views on future needs and opportunities. Feedback included: a desire to formalise spontaneous community volunteering initiatives; ongoing support for volunteering especially for younger volunteers; need for ongoing funding; providing opportunities to share lessons learned; and a desire for an ongoing dialogue/relationship with the Authority. We will seek to address this feedback and provide the ongoing relationship and support that some are seeking. Community engagement and volunteering have been a really positive amongst the many challenges of the pandemic. We hope we can use this experience to help develop a renewed relationship with our local communities and work jointly towards a new normal that is better for people and our environment.

Recovery Planning

- 3.10 Shortly after the lockdown restrictions were introduced in March 2020 we established a cross-department Recovery Planning Group led by James Sharpe (Strategic Planning and Projects Manager). This Group is undertaking work around the following themes:

1. Ensuring that DNPA visitor operations and assets are ready to adapt as the situation changes
2. Understanding the impact of the pandemic on Dartmoor's communities, businesses and visitors
3. Supporting the recovery of Dartmoor's economic and social wellbeing
4. Adapting to changing needs and availability of resources (with a focus on external grant funding).
5. Helping people engage with nature and improved wellbeing.
6. Seizing opportunities to help deliver the vision in the draft National Park Management
7. Ensuring National Parks are recognised for their contribution to the nation's recovery, health and wellbeing.

- 3.11 The group is also feeding into, and exchanging learning and ideas, with other English National Park Authorities which is the main vehicle for achieving theme 7.

Theme 1: Ensuring that DNPA visitor operations and assets are ready as the situation changes

- 3.12 Our advice to Defra in advance of the Prime Minister's announcement on 10 May 2020 was for a phased re-opening of the countryside and gradual relaxing of the stay local message. This position was common with all other English National Park Authorities and other providers/managers of countryside recreation facilities (e.g. National Trust, Forestry England, Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust). The advice was not accepted. We understand that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was the lead department on opening up 'access to greenspace'. On 10 May 2020 the Prime Minister set out how the Government planned to ease lockdown restrictions, including allowing unlimited outdoor exercise and driving to do this. This announcement gave us less than three days to prepare when we (and partners) had been advising on the need for 3 weeks plus some restrictions on travel. It should also be noted that Government guidance on risk assessments etc. was not available as from the announcement on 10 May 2020 – we had to wait for this.

- 3.13 We opened all of our car parks with effect from 13 May 2020 and we hope to open most of our toilets with effect from 8 June 2020. Our Visitor Centres will remain closed until at least the beginning of July 2020.

Theme 2: Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Dartmoor's communities, businesses and visitors

- 3.14 As well as working with our constituent authorities, the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HoSWLEP), other National Park Authorities and local partners we have completed a business survey, held a virtual workshop with stakeholders and have just launched a visitor survey.
- 3.15 We have completed an online survey of Dartmoor businesses. Over 230 businesses responded. Of the businesses surveyed only 30% were trading 'normally', 30% were trading in a limited sense and 40% closed (see appendix 2 for a summary of key results). We are using the results to shape our 'Recovery Plan' and to feed into wider work being led by Devon County Council and the HoSWLEP. Feedback included the need to promote Dartmoor as a destination and to promote local spending. Promotion is difficult at present given restrictions on travel (i.e. no overnights stays) and requirements for social distancing; it is something that we can consider as part of longer term recovery. We have, however, sought to action the priority around local spend and have developed, over the last few weeks, an online directory of Dartmoor producers.
- 3.16 The directory is focused on food and drink producers and retailers but has the potential to be expanded. The directory includes produce straight from the farm gate through to village shops and specialist retailers that source Dartmoor products. Given the current restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the directory is focused on businesses who have dedicated retail premises or are able to deliver direct to your home (we are keen not to promote unnecessary travel). The directory is available on our website in the form of an interactive map:
- <https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/living-and-working/farming/local-food-and-drink-map>
- 3.17 The information is provided without prejudice and with acknowledgement that there will be gaps as this is an evolving project. Producers or retailers who would like to be added to the evolving website are asked to contact the Hill Farm Project office via: hfp@dartmoor.gov.uk.
- 3.18 There may be scope to develop the directory further as part of a 'Shop Little, Shop Local, Shop Dartmoor' message.
- 3.19 On 6th May 2020 we held a workshop, via video conferencing, with representatives from Dartmoor's businesses, communities and farming to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and how we might manage the return of visitors. A priority for this meeting was to ensure DNPA's messaging to returning visitors was developed with input from community representatives. The meeting also provided valuable insight into the situation and needs experienced by communities. Feedback included (as well as concern over COVID-19 and impact of visitor numbers); concern over digital connectivity, increase in local volunteering and how we sustain this spirit of society or community, appreciation of local supply chains and increase in local spend. A critical concern was the need for clear and consistent messages and communication. The

views expressed by stakeholders were fed into Defra as part of the work on how to 're-open' the countryside. As noted above, our advice on a phased re-opening was not adopted by Government. The workshop has influenced our recovery plan and communications. We intend to reconvene this group in coming weeks

- 3.20 A short survey to capture where visitors are coming from, their frequency of visit, what benefits they gain from visiting Dartmoor National Park and to what extent they differentiate Dartmoor from other green space was launched at the end of May 2020 (<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YPJR6RC>). Results are not yet available but should provide evidence on the personal benefit gained by visitors from a visit to the National Park.

Themes 3, 4 and 5: Supporting the recovery of Dartmoor's economic and social wellbeing. Adapting to changing needs and availability of resources. Helping people engage with nature and improved wellbeing.

- 3.21 The CCSG (see above) is a key component of how we are seeking to support Dartmoor communities at present.
- 3.22 Drawing on the Vision for Dartmoor, contained in the draft National Park Management Plan, and in response to what we have heard from Dartmoor's businesses we have started to develop a number of projects to support recovery on Dartmoor. These include but are not limited to:

Welcome to Dartmoor routes - a suite of self-guided routes to give visitors confidence to explore new routes. The routes link with and promote local businesses along the way, providing benefit from additional local spend. This work was commenced pre COVID-19, with support from the HofSWLEP. We will 'launch' the routes when it is appropriate to re-start promotional activities for the benefit of local businesses.

Miles without Stiles - less physically able people may have felt the impact of COVID-19 restrictions more than most. We have developed guides to four accessible self-led routes to help a wider range of people enjoy Dartmoor. These guides will be launched shortly.

Supporting Dartmoor tourism – we are working with Visit Dartmoor to identify areas where the Authority is best able to support tourism businesses. Tourism businesses on Dartmoor are keen to be back in business, they and their customers are also concerned about doing so safely. The Authority may be able to play a supporting role, working with Visit Dartmoor to identify and help acquire additional support needed by tourism businesses when re-opening under restrictions (especially gaining Visit Britain's COVID-19 quality mark which is currently in development). We are also sharing details of our Education and Outreach activity with local businesses and coordinating promotion to make sure this is delivered when most beneficial to local economic needs.

Planning Guidance on Business Adaptation - responding to feedback from the Business Survey, we are producing short planning guidance notes to advise, in the first instance, cafes, pubs, restaurants and retail, on using outdoor space, selling from frontages, takeaway, signage, canopies, and use of public space and highways. This will be available early June.

Broadband uptake promotion - digital connectivity has been vital in recent months and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Dartmoor's fast broadband availability has not been taken up as widely as it could. We are working with Airband and Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) to increase awareness of availability and improve uptake.

Supporting pedestrian capacity in town centres - with Devon County Council and communities we are exploring the opportunity to use highway space flexibly to increase pavement capacity, facilitate queuing, frontage sales and social distancing.

Digital Events/Visits – we are working on a 'Digital Heritage Festival' to run through July, featuring a range of online digital content, including live online events and with links to heritage attractions that are open. This programme will also provide up to date information about the new Visitor Centre at Postbridge. There are also plans for a 'Digital Wildlife Festival' running through mid-summer. We hope that these events will help with understanding, appreciation and promotion of Dartmoor.

Theme 6: Seizing opportunities to move closer to the Dartmoor Vision

- 3.23 During lock-down the benefits of less motorised traffic were enjoyed across the UK. With returning visitors we have been quickly reminded of the negative impact of numbers of cars on Dartmoor. We are working on a number of areas to support the further development of sustainable travel, including:

A38 corridor - a scoping plan on cycling & walking provision along the A38 corridor. In July we will further develop options with partners and explore funding opportunities to support proposed work.

Key links to enhance the existing network – during the 'Granite and Gears' programme to develop new and enhanced cycle routes into and around the National Park we identified a number of routes that could be further developed. We are now exploring whether there might be funding for these as part of the Government's commitment to promote more walking and cycling and wider green recovery.

COVID-19 Communications

- 3.24 Clear communication, both internally and externally, has been essential during this crisis and continues to be very important. Our approach to communication has been twofold:

Informing – clear, accurate, timely communication is critical, *informing* people of what we are doing as an organisation and what they can and can't do in the National Park, echoing the Government messages.

Connecting - we also recognised the importance of communication to connect people with Dartmoor when they were unable to travel to enjoy the National Park. Helping people's mental wellbeing by connecting them with the landscape, nature and the environment became a key part of the proactive communication work we undertook, primarily through social media, particularly during the 'stay at home' phase.

- 3.25 We have used a mixture of press releases, social media content, briefing notes for key partners (e.g. parish/town councils, Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Dartmoor Common Owners' Association) to convey our messages. Up until the end of May 2020 we had issued 11 press releases resulting in 76 online or inprint media articles and staff had given nine TV or radio interviews. We have linked to national campaigns to inform (i.e. messages coming out of Government) and themed days to connect (e.g. #WildlifeWednesday and #ThrowbackThursday). We have also trialled, on Instagram, a Friday evening quiz covering topics from spring plants to archaeology, to name that tor. We received a lot of positive comments, interactions and requests for more in future.
- 3.26 Details of how we have sought to communicate are provided in Appendix 3. We have broken the crisis into three phases according to the message from Government and explained how we responded to each phase and are continuing to respond.
- 3.27 Dealing with crisis communications from a standing start is always going to be challenging especially when you are asking/telling people to do things that are totally contrary (i.e. stay at home and do not visit) to our mission and one of our statutory purposes. We have sought to keep our communication respectful and trusting of our audiences but taking a tough line when needed. We adopted different approaches, such as open letters to combat message fatigue. This resulted in positive feedback from people including comments such as: "well done Dartmoor I appreciate the updates, advice and it's been clear what we can and can't do". Where we did receive negative comments and feedback this was primarily directed at the message which we found to be one of two things: they did not like being told what to do by the Government (and then us) or they felt we were over stepping the mark (this was particularly true during the 'stay at home but drive to exercise' phase. Even so the messages were fully understood, even if ignored or challenged.
- 3.28 For a small organisation we reached a wide audience regionally and attracted some supportive media coverage. Our online audience grew (e.g. the total Facebook audience reached 766,777 – more than double our most successful quarter last year). Through our communications we sought to appeal to the majority. Comments on social media posts were mainly supportive of what we were asking.

4. Sustainability and Equality Impact

- 4.1 We have sought to embed the principles of sustainability and equality in our response to the pandemic. We have actively sought and supported applications to the CCSG from all sectors of the Dartmoor community. Our recovery planning work has sustainability at its core with the aim of 'building back better for nature and people'.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The pandemic is having a financial impact on the work of the Authority. We have always been prudent in our budget setting in terms of forecasts of external income generation and this prudence is helping us to manage the current situation. Access to the Government's CJRS is providing some assistance and Defra have written to all National Park Authorities in England offering to effectively underwrite revenue budgets for 2020/21 in order to avoid redundancies subject to requirements on in-year savings etc. At this current time, we believe that we can manage our way

through this crisis without the need for additional support during 2020/21. This is obviously dependent on how the pandemic develops. Our key concern is the longer term implications for our core funding. Given that we have had real terms cuts to our core funding in 8 of the last 10 years austerity never really ended for the Authority.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Coronavirus pandemic has provided significant challenges for the way the Authority operates and for Dartmoor communities. We were, and are, determined to do our best to ensure we maintain service provision and help 'look after' Dartmoor: its people, heritage, wildlife and landscapes.
- 6.2 As noted in the introduction to this report, this is the 'first chapter of an unfolding story'. Whilst we continue to respond to the challenges we are keen to learn from this experience and identify and make the most of the opportunities that will arise.
- 6.3 To-date we can identify some key lessons:
- Dedication, flexibility and adaptability of staff and Members – in particular, staff have risen to the challenge of working from home and have sought to re-engineer how they work. This has been, and continues to be, a team effort.
 - Importance of local partnerships – we are grateful for the support we have received (and hopefully been able to provide) to local partners like Devon and Cornwall Police, constituent local authorities etc. Working with the Local Resilience Forum we have been able to reach a wider audience through the 'Think Twice' campaign. The Police have provided active support for our Rangers with joint patrols (socially distanced) when resources permit. We offered support to local authorities for their role with local hubs and also offered what PPE we had to the NHS.
 - Importance of clear communication – both internally and externally.
- 6.3 There are some opportunities through this pandemic that we need to build upon:
- Sustaining the community spirit and volunteer activity that we have witnessed in our towns, villages and communities.
 - A new future for our rural economy and businesses. The COVID-19 outbreak is having a profound effect on rural economies. Some of this could be positive – the move towards local shopping and collaborative working. Other elements could be challenging – the rise of the cashless society, online shopping etc will potentially threaten local services. We may see increased demand for rural housing as people seek to move out of cities, potentially inflating house prices and increasing the affordability gap. The move away from public transport could threaten remaining bus services. The hospitality and leisure sector faces real challenges especially if there is no 2020 summer season. There are opportunities to develop a new more resilient, productive and equitable economy.
 - New audiences – we sense that since the easing of lockdown we have seen more first time visitors to Dartmoor - people seeking a 'safe place' to relax and exercise. This provides an opportunity to ensure that these people develop a 'love and respect' of the National Park and its communities; and to help them lead healthier and happier lives (key elements of the Landscapes Review [NPA/20/015]).

- The importance of nature to people – the lockdown phase demonstrated that ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’. There is an opportunity to engage with new audiences and not to go back to normal but to nature.
- Building even stronger relationship with our business community to support recovery and to look to the future ensuring Dartmoor is a destination of choice for those who love the outdoors, nature and cultural heritage.
- Digital delivery – we have been able to engage a wider audience through our digital platforms and these might provide a mechanism to reach beyond our boundaries, promote understanding and engagement.
- Active Travel - through lockdown people have become less reliant on their cars for everyday activities, we have seen an increase in the number of people walking and cycling. How do we maintain and encourage this into the future as we try to recover from this pandemic whilst also supporting actions to address the ecological and climate emergency.
- A new national role – National Parks have had a high profile through this pandemic. There is an opportunity for us collectively to lead a Green Recovery tackling COVID-19 and existing climate, ecological and health emergencies. A simple return to ‘normal’ is not sufficient – we would simply ‘stagger’ from one emergency to another.
- Learning from lockdown – we have started work exploring opportunities highlighted by working differently and primarily at home. Home working provides challenges especially for those who have been balancing work with home teaching, child care and/or looking after others but it has demonstrated opportunities to change processes and reduce our need for travel and for office space. The way organisations function post COVID-19 is likely to look quite different to what was ‘normal’ before the pandemic.

6.4 Since the 13 May 2020 we have seen unprecedented levels of visitors to the National Park. It has seemed as if every day has been a ‘summer bank holiday on steroids’. The majority of the visitors have come, enjoyed themselves and respected Dartmoor. However, there is a minority that have not. How we seek to tackle the anti-social behaviour of this minority is one of key challenges going forward. The verbal abuse of our staff is unacceptable as is the damage to sensitive habitats and the impact on local communities.

KEVIN BISHOP

(with input from James Sharpe, Emma Stockley and Samantha Hill)

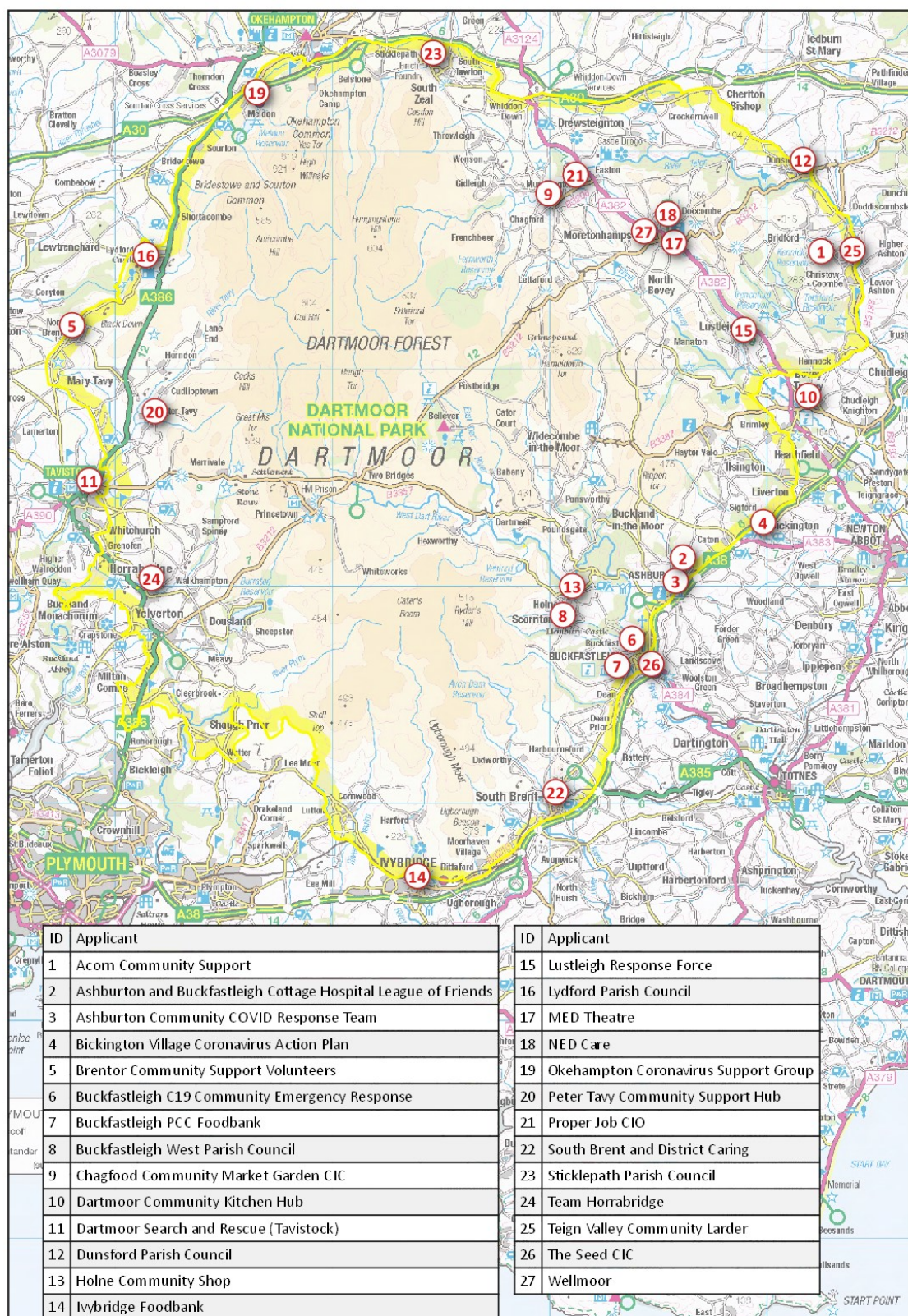
Attachments:

Appendix 1: Details of the grants awarded under the Dartmoor Coronavirus Community Support Grant (as of 31 May 2020)

Appendix 2: Summary of Business Survey Results

Appendix 3: Analysis of COVID-19 Communications

Appendix 1: Details of the grants awarded under the Dartmoor Coronavirus Community Support Grant (as of 31 May 2020)



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Table of grants awarded up to 31 May 2020

Applicant	Sponsor	Project name	Brief description	Amount granted
Acorn Community Support	N/A	N/A	Local GP surgery has asked for ACS to deliver all prescriptions to 1059 patients over the age of 70 and those who are classed as vulnerable. Funding is to support volunteer mileage.	£500.00
Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Cottage Hospital League of Friends	N/A	N/A	Funding towards a taxi, running costs and insurance, to be used to transport vulnerable people to hospital and shopping.	£500.00
Ashburton Town Team	Ashburton Town Council	Ashburton Community Covid Response Team	Communication, phone calls, volunteer recruitment, practical and emotional support for isolated.	£500.00
Bickington Village Coronavirus Action Plan	Bickington Parish Council	N/A	Supporting vulnerable residents of Bickington. Funding needed to reimburse volunteer expenses (mileage etc).	£500.00
Brentor Community Support Volunteers	Brentor PCC	N/A	Computer equipment to make 'how to' videos, video chats and pastoral messages for vulnerable and isolating people.	£500.00
Buckfastleigh PCC Foodbank	N/A	N/A	Emergency boxes of food delivered to over 80 households, the collection and delivery of prescriptions. Part of £1.5k project.	£500.00
Buckfastleigh Town Council	N/A	Buckfastleigh C19 Community Emergency Response	Delivering food and prescriptions to those who are self-isolating. Purchase of equipment including dedicated mobile phones, printed t shirts and PPE equipment for volunteers. Part of a £2k project.	£500.00

Applicant	Sponsor	Project name	Brief description	Amount granted
Buckfastleigh West Parish Council	N/A	N/A	Volunteer costs and expenses, car parking, emergency telephone costs, printing, stationary, PPE	£500.00
Chagfood Community Market Garden CIC	N/A	N/A	5 x packing tables to ensure volunteers can social distance at work, fuel for volunteers to deliver boxes to isolated and 10 subsidised veg boxes/week for 10 weeks for low-income families.	£500.00
Dartmoor Community Kitchen Hub	N/A	N/A	Protective clothing for volunteers and staff and additional sanitising kits for delivery drivers as they are required to enter client's houses.	£465.00
Dartmoor Search & Rescue (Tavistock)	N/A	N/A	Additional PPE to enable them to operate on the moor during the coronavirus.	£400.00
Dunsford Parish Council	N/A	N/A	A small temporary food bank – using a voucher system, held at the village stores.	£400.00
Holne Community Shop	N/A	C19 Lockdown & Exit Strategy	Food deliveries to vulnerable customers in the local area, additional cleaning costs.	£500.00
Ivybridge Foodbank	N/A	N/A	On-going costs associated with providing food parcels to vulnerable people.	£500.00
Lustleigh Response Force	Lustleigh Parish Magazine	N/A	Additional Parish Magazines in May and June to inform residents, distributed to all households freely and beyond current subscribers.	£300.00

Applicant	Sponsor	Project name	Brief description	Amount granted
Lydford Parish Council	N/A	N/A	Co-ordination of the parish response - two PAYG mobile phones, volunteers' petrol expenses, producing and distributing up to date information leaflets and PPE for volunteers collecting and delivering supplies.	£500.00
MED Theatre	N/A	N/A	An online arts platform to deliver work and hosting online sessions for young people, during the COVID-19 emergency. More info in 2 minute online film.	£500.00
NED Care (North East Dartmoor Care)	N/A	N/A	Enhanced PPE, non-contact thermometers, provision of enhanced level of care for older people with symptoms to enable them to stay at home.	£500.00
Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council	N/A	Okehampton Coronavirus Support Group	Supporting vulnerable residents within Okehampton and surrounding hamlets and villages, within the National Park. Including freshly cooked meals and communication and phone support.	£100.00
Peter Tavy Community Support Hub	Peter Tavy Methodist Church	N/A	Weekly information bulletins for homes w/o internet access, regular quiz and audio entertainments for isolated, Easter Egg competition	£150.00
Proper Job CIO	N/A	N/A	Additional PPE and fuel costs to enable volunteers to make food deliveries to local, vulnerable people. Online ordering system to deal with large volume of enquiries.	£500.00

Applicant	Sponsor	Project name	Brief description	Amount granted
South Brent and District Caring	N/A	N/A	Volunteer action to support mental and physical health of isolated, pastoral care, practical support. Part of a £27k project.	£500.00
Sticklepath Parish Council	N/A	N/A	Weekly village bulletin, meals, telephone support for isolated, delivery of supplies.	£500.00
Team Horrbridge	West Devon Community and Voluntary Services	N/A	Supporting vulnerable residents and setting up a village foodbank and hardship fund.	£500.00
Teign Valley Community Larder	Teign Valley & Haldon Hill Mission Community	Teign Valley Community Larder	A community food donation and collection point for essential food (and other basic items) for those who are struggling during the coronavirus crisis	£500.00
The Seed CIC, Buckfastleigh Community Wholefood Store	N/A	N/A	Additional phone line to take orders, PPE for 20+ volunteers to deliver food, website to communicate with customers and volunteer mileage.	£500.00
Wellmoor (community health and wellbeing in North East Dartmoor)	N/A	N/A	The provision of a telephone Coronavirus Care Line – available free of charge to everyone living in the parishes of Moretonhampstead, North Bovey, Manaton and Lustleigh. Part of a £2.5k project.	£500.00

Five case studies

1. Teign Valley Community Larder

Since it was established in early May, food has been collected from the community larder on a daily basis. In addition to £500 from the CCSG Fund, the project received £100 from Christow Community Land Trust, £80 of food from Christow Stores and £70 in food donations from local people. Collection boxes for food are located in several nearby shops and businesses and the team are working on identifying further locations as demand grows.

2. Buckfastleigh PCC foodbank

The foodbank was set up in 2013 and operates from St Luke's Church in Buckfastleigh. Since the coronavirus outbreak, 300 calls to the local helpline have been received and around 200 new volunteers have been recruited and trained. As of April 30 2020, 162 medication prescriptions, 65 food parcels to feed 177 people and 18 sets of hearing aid batteries have been delivered to vulnerable households. Money from the CCSG Fund was used to place two orders from RD Johns wholesalers in Newton Abbot for food supplies.

3. NED Care - North East Dartmoor Care

NED Care, a community-owned provider of regulated care at home, was awarded £500 to help insulate their critical service against the effects of Covid-19, in particular the increased requirement for essential PPE. The Chair, said, "It was great to have such rapid and early support from DNPA. PPE is now costing around £600 a month more than before the outbreak, so this fast-track grant has meant that we can bring in initial stock without worry. We now have enough to see us through the month ahead."

4. Ashburton Community Covid Response Team

As of April 30 2020, this collaborative effort led by the Ashburton Town Team has used £500 of CCSG funding to support the delivery 18 food parcels, 266 medical supplies and shopping for 316 households, collected from local stores. The helpline has received 766 calls, 6 texts and 71 'Check and Chats' have been conducted by 29 volunteers. 281 volunteers have registered to help with the efforts.

5. Sticklepath Parish Council

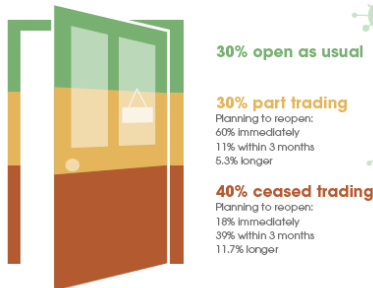
£500 of CCSG funding has supported a community hardship fund. This was initially intended to include the provision of hot meals, but as social distancing guidance changed and the pub and café closed, vouchers to purchase groceries from the local shop were provided instead. Volunteers produce a weekly Sticklepath Bulletin, with copies delivered to those shielding or without internet access. Volunteers have also delivered shopping, medicines and offer a 'phone friend' service. Of the support available, a self-isolating older lady said, "Thank you so much for this service, I don't know how I'd manage without someone getting my shopping". The Chair of Sticklepath Parish Council says that the CCSG Fund has, "Enhanced the ability of this small but close community to help each other during this troubling time."

Appendix 2: Summary of Business Survey Results

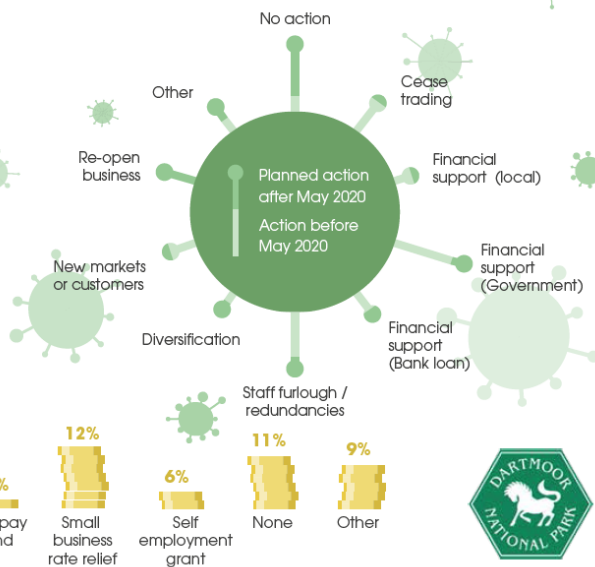
Dartmoor Coronavirus business survey

In May 2020 Dartmoor National Park Authority conducted a business survey during the Coronavirus lockdown to inform a recovery plan for Dartmoor. Over 200 local businesses responded. For more information visit: dartmoor.gov.uk/living-and-working/business

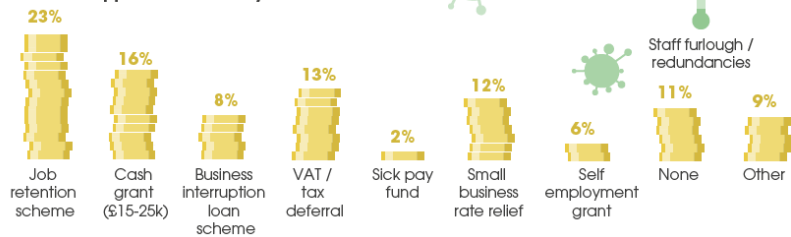
Current trading status and businesses plans to reopen



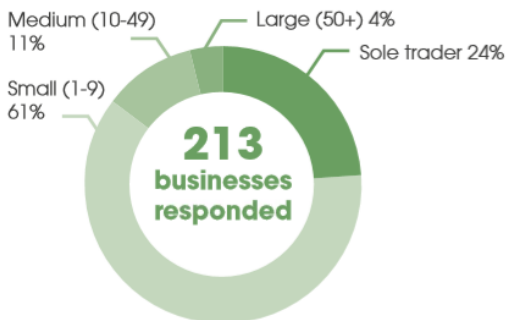
Actions taken and planned by businesses



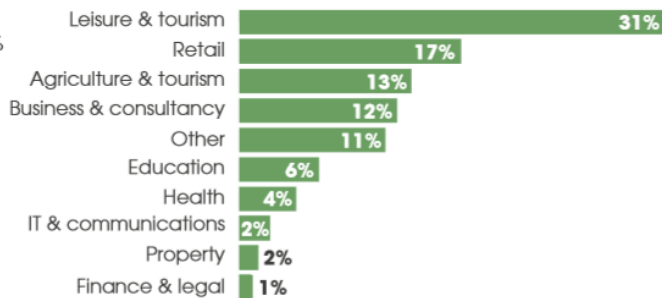
Financial support accessed by businesses



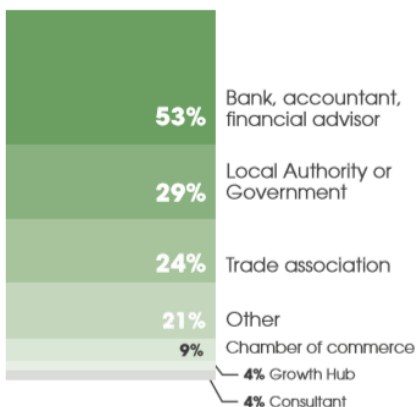
Respondent size



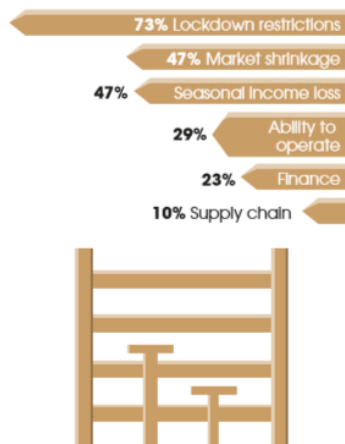
Respondent type



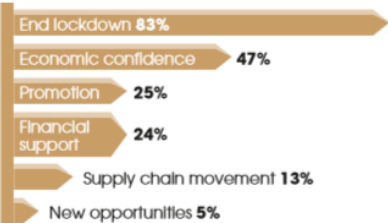
Where businesses have sought advice from



Key barriers businesses believe will prevent their recovery



Key actions businesses believe will enable their recovery



Appendix 3: Analysis of COVID-19 Communications

As outlined in the report, our approach to communications has been twofold; **informing** and **connecting**.

Our approach and experience of communicating through this crisis can roughly be broken down into three phases that we had to respond to:

1. Stay at home, do not drive to exercise, exercise from home
2. Stay at home, it's sort of OK to drive to exercise if the exercise takes longer than the drive
3. You can take unlimited exercise and drive as far as you like to do it, as long as you go home at the end

As well as working with local media and through our own social media accounts, the Head of Communications is representing the English National Parks on the Defra Covid Communications Cell. This group has been meeting weekly to discuss national strategy and messaging. It has been helpful to share some of the live issues National Parks have been facing on the ground to feed into communications planning.

1. Stay at home

Informing:

Once the lockdown was announced a single page was created on the website with a very clear and obvious link from the homepage. This would be the single point of information relating to both DNPA as an organisation and Dartmoor as a place and how restrictions applied. This page was dynamic with dated updates to ensure the information was accurate in line with Government guidance and DNPAs operational approach.

This was supported by media releases and regular updated messaging in social media, primarily focusing on the Government stay at home message, highlighting that facilities were closed and reminding people to exercise from their homes. This message was clear and simple to understand and reached a wide audience.

Connecting:

After the primary push of the Government message and our own with regard to operational matters, we focussed on social media to re-connect people with the moor virtually.

Sharing content about Dartmoor's special qualities and nature connections. Piggy-backing off national and international days, such as Earth Day, and regular days like #WildlifeWednesday and #ThrowbackThursday. We found these types of posts were very popular and helped to boost the morale of online audiences. Particularly those that were missing their visits to Dartmoor.

We also noticed many people were becoming more appreciative of the nature on their doorstep during lockdown, so we encouraged people to explore this more, which also helped to feed in the message of staying at home/local.

On Instagram we trialed a Friday evening quiz, covering topics from spring plants and archaeology, to name that tor! We received a lot of positive comments, interactions and requests for more in future.

2. Stay at home, it's sort of OK to drive to exercise if the exercise takes longer than the drive

Informing:

This message was widely shared in the media following the National Police Chiefs Council [NPCC] issuing guidance to officers on their public website that stated you could drive to exercise if the exercise was longer than the drive.

This NPCC guidance then made what had been a straight forward and simple message to communicate, difficult and nuanced. We adjusted our tone in our communications and appealed directly from the Chief Executive, asking people to be 'home hero's' appealing to the national spirit that had been shown in response to the crisis. This was echoed on our social media channels and was generally well received, we were thanked for our clarity of communications.

However, we did start to see comments, direct messages and feedback that quoted the guidance and the media coverage that was difficult to counteract. This combined with message fatigue with regard to the Government messages and people getting frustrated with the lockdown amplified this. We tried different communications approaches thanking people for doing the right thing and gaining support from Devon and Cornwall Police to remind people that there could be consequences to their actions.

Connecting:

We continued with our proactive approach to connecting people with Dartmoor. We launched our 'learning in lockdown' page on the website, supporting home schooling and providing activities for younger children to do. We ran 'isolation creation' activities via our social media channels again aimed at our younger audiences.

We held a virtual celebration of what would have been the 60th Ten Tors asking people to share their experiences and images. This was very well received, again helping people to connect with Dartmoor virtually. We also had a virtual live screening of our Hound Tor medieval village film.

3. You can take unlimited exercise and drive as far as you like to do it, as long as you go home at the end

Informing:

Unfortunately we did not have much time to get our messages and approach ready for the lifting of exercise restrictions. We needed to convey a series of messages around behaviours that we wanted people to adopt when they visited, but we did not want to issue them like a list of instructions, as we had seen how 'rules fatigue' had crept in.

We opted for an open letter from the Chief Executive, welcoming people back, thanking people for staying away and asking them to do a few simple things to help care for the National Park. This was combined with an updated webpage and social media. A live BBC Spotlight interview was secured on the day the restrictions were eased to help reiterate our messaging.

To help ease pressure on the honeypot sites, over the first weekend and the bank holiday, we set up a 'real time' reporting process with Devon Live and BBC Radio Devon. Rangers could email and let them know what car parks and areas were busy and they could report via their travel reports. This was backed up again via our social media channels. This

worked well over the first weekend with Spotlight again interviewing and highlighting some of the pressures on our honeypot sites.

Connecting:

We continue to share content that reflects our work and the special qualities of the National Park, inspiring people to Love Moor Life and care for Dartmoor. This will come increasingly more important as more people come back to Dartmoor to exercise.

What worked well and lessons learned

Dealing with crisis communications from a standing start is always challenging. We know the best way to manage this is through accurate, timely information from trusted sources, we also know the best way to convey this is simply and honestly through clear, concise messaging.

We kept our tone grown up and trusting of our audiences, taking a tough line when needed but always reflecting our brand values and respecting our audience. We adopted different approaches, such as open letters to combat message fatigue. This resulted in positive feedback from people including comments such as, 'well done Dartmoor I appreciate the updates, advice and it's been clear what we can and can't do'.

Working proactively with the media helped us reach more people, promote understanding and correct misinformation with clear, factual information and share effective, informative content. This was also a very effective tool for us when using social media.

Where we have received negative comments and feedback, primarily this was directed at the message, which we found to be one of two things; they didn't like being told what to do by the Government, or they felt we were over stepping the mark especially during the 'stay at home but drive to exercise' phase. Even so the messages were fully understood, even if they were ignored or challenged.

This is a key point to reflect on. We know that people understood what they could and couldn't do and we know through our data that we reached a very wide audience and we grew our reach on social media. However this does not necessarily mean that everyone will do as we ask or that all behaviors will change.

Through our communications we appealed to the majority rather than minority. Our key supporters and people who love the National Park, would help build support for what we were asking in a much more engaging way. We saw this play out in the comments on our social media posts many of which were supportive of what we were asking.

In conclusion, for a small organisation we reached a very wide audience regionally attracting some excellent media coverage, for example, we have averaged over one interview/feature per week on regional TV or radio since the start of the lockdown. We grew our online audience which reflects the national trend in social media use during the lockdown. Our messages were clear and timely and widely understood, even if a minority chose to ignore them.

We recognise that there is more to do as the situation evolves.