

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 4 May 2018

Present: K Ball, A Cooper, P Harper, S Hill, P W Hitchins, M Jeffery,
J McInnes, D Moyse, N Oakley, C Pannell, M Retallick,
P Sanders, M Simpson, D Webber, P Woods

Apologies: J Christophers, G Gribble, W Cann, S Barker

3346 Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 6 April 2018

Save for an amendment, as detailed below, proposed by Ms Woods, seconded by Mr Ball and agreed by Members, the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2018 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

The resolution of Minute number 3342 – Proposed National Parks Charity – to read as follows:

'Members mandated the Chief Executive ... dependent on the Authority's significant governance concerns being addressed through the draft articles of association and other forthcoming operational information.'

3347 Declarations of Interest

Mr Simpson declared a personal interest in Item 8 – Dartmeet Car Park, due to his father being the owner of the car park. He advised that he would leave the meeting at the end of Item 7.

3348 Chairman's Report

Nothing to report.

3349 Items requiring urgent attention

None.

3350 Public Participation

None

3351 Proposed New Visitor Centre at Postbridge

Members received the report of the Head of Communications and Fundraising (NPA/18/017).

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The Authority has three visitor centres; the only one which is owned outright by the Authority is at Haytor. The Visitor Centre at Postbridge is owned by the Authority but sited on land which is leased from the Duchy of Cornwall.

The Landscape Partnership Scheme – Moor than meets the eye (MTMTE), included a project for an enhanced visitor centre at Postbridge with a budget allocation of £184,920 (£100,000 from Authority reserves and £84,920 match funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)). However, it became clear that this would not be sufficient funding to create a meaningful increase in floorspace.

In 2017 an expression of interest was submitted to the Rural Development Programme England (RDPE) for part-funding of a new centre. This was successful and should funding be forthcoming from the RDPE, it would be conditional on the new centre being built and fully operational by the end of 2020, following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The funding from the MTMTE is also conditional and requires the interpretive element of the project to be completed by mid-2019 – this, which includes the 're-construction' of a bronze age roundhouse outside the centre, has been separated out from the building project in order to ensure that it can be delivered within the timeframe.

The Duchy of Cornwall has indicated a willingness to offer a new lease to the Authority and recommended an architect for the project; preliminary discussions have taken place and NPS have produced a draft project timeline and risk register.

Should the Rural Growth Programme bid be successful the Authority would need to find an estimated minimum of £132,000 from reserves, to cover project management, architect and technical fees, plus a contingency fund. The project would not be without risk; exit points have been built into the project plan should the need arise.

The formation of a small project team is proposed to monitor and manage progress.

In response to Member queries the Visitor Centres Manager advised that there was no intention to increase the size of the existing car park. Liaison with the Forestry Commission has proved extremely positive; in addition, it is proposed to introduce formal space marking in the car park to encourage visitors to park properly.

Negotiations are ongoing with NPS and the architect regarding the potential for a visitor information offer during construction. The cost of the build has been based on information provided by three architects though it is recognised that construction costs have increased since the application was submitted.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised Members that the Duchy had indicated an offer of a new lease. Members need to be clear regarding

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potential risks. The proposed design needs approval by the Duchy of Cornwall; planning permission is required; the centre has to be built by the end of 2020 as this is the final deadline for funds to be drawn down.

Members commented that the timeline is very ambitious. They observed that the weather will play a huge part in the smooth running of the project. Everyone involved must have a very positive attitude in order to drive the project forward. It was suggested that discussions could be undertaken with local landowners regarding the possible storage of materials, rather than potentially using a large part of the car park for storage. An assessment for asbestos was also suggested in order for this risk to be covered.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) agreed the draft Project Plan for the new Visitor Centre at Postbridge;
- (ii) agreed the design principles and considerations outlined in 4.2 of the report;
- (iii) authorised officers to proceed with the Postbridge Visitor Centre project up to, and including, a potential tender phase; final approval to proceed following tenders to be sought from the Authority;
- (iv) agreed the provisional budget details as set out in section 6 of the report;
- (v) appointed Mr Harper, Mr Cooper and Mrs Oakley to the Project Team which will report to Leadership Team and the Authority;
- (vi) agreed that the unfunded costs identified in the report should be taken from reserves up to a maximum of £140,000 with the Section 151 Officer authorised to re-profile the reserves accordingly; this to be monitored by Audit and Governance Committee

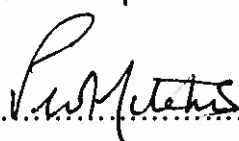
3352 Dartmeet Car Park

Members received the report of the Director of Conservation and Communities (NPA/18/018).

A management agreement between the owner of Dartmeet car park and the Authority is due to expire on 30 May 2018. The landowner does not wish to enter into a new agreement; rather, he intends to manage the site himself, resurface the carpark and install pay and display machines. It is understood that there would be a £2 a day flat rate charge for vehicles.

Having asked the Authority for a contribution to the resurfacing work, officers have recommended that the Authority offers a £10,000 one-off grant to the landowner to assist with the costs of the works. The Authority would have no future responsibility for grass cutting and litter collection; its sole remaining interest would be in the public conveniences on the site. The grant would be conditional on the car park remaining open to the public for a guaranteed number of years.

Members asked what control or influence the Authority would have over the charges. In response the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) explained

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that the Authority would have no influence over charges; they were solely a matter for the landowner to determine.

MR Retallick proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Harper.

RESOLVED: Members authorised the Authority to offer a grant of £10,000 to the owner of Dartmeet Car Park, the grant to be used as a contribution towards the cost of re-surfacing the car park in line with an agreed specification.

3353 Your Dartmoor – National Park Management Plan 2014 – 2019 Progress Report for 2017 and Proposed Review Process

Members received the report of the Project Development Manager, the Conservation and Outreach Officer and the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/18/019).

The National Park Management Plan is a statutory document which the Authority is required to review every five years. It is the strategic plan for the National Park, not just the Authority. It is shaped around three themes – Sustain, Prosper and Enjoy, and six priorities. A steering group meeting, involving all stakeholders, is held annually. Any issues raised, and revised action plans are then presented to the Delivery Board for comment and approval.

Key issues identified by the 2017 Steering Group included the future of farming post-Brexit and concerns over Dartmoor potentially becoming a retirement home with its ageing population.

Of the 149 actions, 26 have been completed, 109 are in progress and on time; nine are falling behind and only five are unlikely to be achieved. Good progress has been made.

The current plan runs until 2019; the review has already commenced. It is proposed to run a series of workshops on key topics in order to stimulate debate on developing a shared vision for Dartmoor.

Members raised issues about the current uncertainty regarding agri-environment agreements and the delay in receiving payment. They also highlighted the potential impact of proposed changes to planning policy on country wildlife sites.

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the progress with delivering the National Park Management Plan 2014-2019; the proposed process, indicative timeframe and opportunities for Members to engage in the Management Plan review.

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3354 Tree Preservation Orders and Section 211 Notifications (Works to Trees in Conservation Areas Determined Under Delegated Powers)

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/18/020).

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the content of the report.

It was proposed by Mr Ball and seconded by Mr Cooper that, in accordance with s.100A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, report NPA/18/021 should be taken in the absence of the Press and Public, on the ground that exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 Paragraphs 1 & 2 to Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act (as amended) will be discussed, namely:-


1. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority)

RESOLVED: Members resolved to move into Part II private session.

3355 Property Options

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/18/021).

RESOLVED: Members authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman, to conclude the property issues detailed in the report.

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