

# DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 5 January 2024

Present: A Cooper, W Dracup, G Gribble, P Harper, G Hill, M Jeffery, J McInnes, S Morgan, C Mott, M Owen, G Pannell, L Samuel, P Sanders, P Smerdon, M Williams, P Woods

Apologies: J Nutley, M Renders,

Officers: R Drysdale, Director of Conservation and Communities (Acting On behalf of Chief Executive (National Park Officer)  
A Stirland, Head of Business Support  
J Sharpe, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager  
S Lee, Head Ranger  
C Easton, Head of Communications & Engagement  
A Watson, Head of Recreation, Access and Estates

Independent Person in Attendance: C Farrell

## **3528 Declarations of Interest**

Mr Dracup and Mr Owen declared an interest in FiPL, both having received FiPL grants. Mr Dracup declared his employer and Mr Owen declared himself as a member of the Central Dartmoor Farmer Cluster  
Mr Harper also declared an interest in FiPL, as he is on the FiPL Assessment Board.

## **3529 Minutes of the previous meetings**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 1 December 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Gribble

## **3530 Chair's Report**

The Chair reported attending the following:

- Joint Team Devon meeting of Chief Executives and Chairs; the devolved model of funding (covering Devon County and Torbay) was discussed at length, the form, timings, and protocols to be agreed. DNPA are not a direct signatory but will be consulted.
- DNPA Staff Conference on 13 December 2023, at Buckfast Abbey. It was a super occasion, thank you to all staff – the conference was entertaining and very informative/useful.

The Chair invited other Members of the Authority to report any news.

- None reported.

**3531 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

None.

**3532 Public Participation**

None.

**3533 Auditor's Interim Annual Report 2022/23  
Value for Money Arrangements**

Justine Thorpe, of Grant Thornton, was due to present but Members were advised at the Meeting that she and/or another representative from Grant Thornton were not able to join us today. The Chair recommended that the item be postponed until the next Authority Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2024.

Members asked that a letter be sent to Grant Thornton to express their frustration and severe disappointment at the whole situation and to ask them to comment and answer the questions regarding our Accounts (2022-23) which is what we are paying them for. We should insist, not request, that they appear at the next Authority Meeting. The Head of Business Support advised that she has emailed Grant Thornton to express the Authority's concerns.

Members requested that future copies of Annual Reports are sent in text form that are easier to read (not scanned), with no redactions.

**3534 Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes (DDL)**

Members received the report of the Strategic Planning and Projects Manager, who presented progress on the Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscape (DDL) bid to date. The project is due to be submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund by August 2024, the final application will be brought to Members before submission.

The project is led by DNPA, with a landscape scale focus on three of Dartmoor's river catchments.

In response to queries raised by Members, the Strategic Planning and Projects Manager advised the following:

- With regards to river health, although not formal partners, the Ministry of Defence and the Duchy of Cornwall were consulted prior to Stage 1 of the application. Riparian owners and other main stakeholders will be identified and consulted with. The project plan includes citizen science work on water quality. Work will also be linked to that already underway on river health with the Headwaters project teams (Peatlands and natural Flood Management). It was noted that the Environment Agency have information already available.
- Princetown has been included as a Gateway town as it is a gateway to exploring the high moor.
- Consultations are ongoing with local families and schools. A consultant is being procured to manage on the Audience Development Plan.

Communications will continue with face-to-face interviews, social media and online surveys will commence shortly.

- The bid will deliver on key elements of the National Park Partnership Plan and provide significant resource for DNPA directly, hosting 4.6 FTE staff for 5 years (valued at £1.2 million), with officers being integrated within existing different teams.
- Areas included and focussed on were taken from the proposed pilot nature recovery areas from the National Park Partnership Plan, based on their locations near to towns. The area is different to that which benefited from a previous landscape Lottery fund, Moor than Meets the Eye.
- Confirmation that £100K (total) is included from DNPA Reserves.
- Agreed that communication is key; that all partners will meet regularly (once or twice annually with communication back to Members covering the broader issues) with DNPA providing strong strategic leadership across all the various projects and communication with key stakeholders in order to share information.
- The bid will be submitted by the deadline in August 2024, and the outcome should be known by early December 2024. If successful, the project will start early January 2025.
- A press release is currently being drafted

It was proposed that Members noted the update and confirmed their in-principal support for the DDL programme and bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Mr Cooper proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Smerdon.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the update provided and confirmed their in-principal support for the DDL programme and bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

In addition, the Members passed on their congratulations to the team, wished them luck and will look forward to the press release being issued.

### **3535 Body Worn Cameras and Video Ranger Team Review**

Members received the report of the Head Ranger.

At the Authority meeting held on 4 February 2022, Members unanimously agreed to introduce Body Worn Cameras (BWC) to the Ranger team on a trial basis for 24 months with a review at 18 months.

It was concluded by the Ranger team that BWC are very useful and have been used in one situation, which provided evidence against allegations levelled at a Ranger.

It was proposed that Members noted the report.

In response to queries raised by Members, the Head Ranger advised:

- Rangers all patrol different areas; currently there are only 4 areas where the BWCs must be worn, and this has led to a disparity in amount of time worn by each ranger

- Unfortunately, despite activation, there was no meaningful evidence from the camera on a trial bike incident that could be used for legal proceedings.
- BWCs are always taken with Rangers, fully charged and ready to be activated, however they are only physically worn in certain areas. It is up to the Ranger as to when the cameras are activated and at their discretion when to wear BWCs. They are not worn all the time, so the soft touch/public image of a ranger is not altered
- Overall, the team feel safer having them available and support their continued use, they have not met any notable objections from the public or had any noticeable negative impact on conversations.
- The presence of a BWC during the confrontation at Buckland Bridge shows how they can protect the team from false allegations.

It was proposed that Members noted the report and approved the continued utilisation of Body Worn Cameras and video.

Mr Gribble proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Cooper.

It was confirmed that this was the end of the trial, and that utilisation will now continue until further notice

**RESOLVED:** Members approved the continued utilisation of Body Worn Cameras and Video.

All were in favour.

### 3536 Race to Zero

Members received the report, prepared by Alex Gandy (former Acting Head of Forward Planning and Economy). The Director of Conservation and Communities presented the report.

In 2019 DNPA joined the UK Government and public authorities across the UK and abroad in declaring a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency. In 2022, Small World Consulting published a trajectory for National Parks to reach net zero by 2037 which led to shared targets.

As part of a package of work developed on the run up to COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, the UK Parks Chairs and Chief Executive group pledged to collectively apply to join the UN's Climate Initiative 'Race to Zero'.

In response to queries raised by Members, the Director of Conservation and Communities ran through the main benefits of joining Race to Zero and advised the following:

- UNFCCC sets out what 50% is and what targets are. As well as protocols and engagement techniques to include landscapes, individuals, businesses, transport, purchasing an energy use as well as landscape usage.

- DNPA role will be a leadership role, setting the landscape for 2037 and 2050. We are pledging to show leadership in getting to the target which is reliant on others to join and follow.
- Race to Zero will be integral to all DNPA's work, plans and projects; a new role will be advertised for the position of Partnership Plan and Climate Change Officer who will be responsible to ensure this work is integral and that all work will dovetail.

It was proposed that Members

- (i) Noted the report and agree to pledge, with other UK National Parks, to take action toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global GHG reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

Mr Cooper proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Gribble.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the report and agree to pledge, with other UK National Parks, to act toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global GHG reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

Members in favour were 15 with one abstention.

### **3537 End of Season Report 2023**

Members received the report of the Director of Conservation and Communities.

Summer 2023 was the second summer without any lockdown restrictions which was dry and hot to start with until mid-June, thereafter the summer and autumn were characterised by continual periods of rain, which impacted on visitor numbers and behaviour. This represents an opportunity to report to members our role in visitor engagement and how this has adapted since the last report in December 2021.

The Head of Communications and Engagement (in post since end May 2023) ran through the report, focusing on Communications which concentrated on messages on dogs and litter. They also updated members on the Backpack camping case and Visitor Centres, which saw a 33% increase in footfall over the summer due to the poor weather as well as due to events and coach visits. DNPAs Outreach and Engagement work was back to pre-pandemic levels with school visits, Ranger Ralph, pop up visits to urban areas and the Farm 2 City event in London which was well received. Financial support from BMW and the Dartmoor Preservation Association has also enabled the Authority to recruit two Community Engagement Rangers and subsequently our engagement with harder to reach audiences.

The Head of Recreation, Access and Estates ran through the report, focusing on Access for All funding which came from DEFRA (£63K received in funding in Year 1 and £75K forecast for Year 3 – 2024/25) which helped deliver a number of projects to improve access, working alongside the Dartmoor Access Forum and the Dartmoor Wheelchair and Access group (WAGs)

The Head Ranger ran through the report, updating on behaviour management with the support of Engagement Volunteers who located themselves at honey pot sites

on Dartmoor over the weekend. The continued use of yellow signage was also highlighted with a review of size, colour and seasonal variances.

Dartmoor Marshals (29 July – 9 September during the daytime) also supported the work and messages of the Authority and reinforced key messages, patrolling up to 21:30 every evening.

Summer 2023 also saw the rollout of the Ranger App, which allows for data to be collected more readily and easily. .

In response to queries raised by Members, the Director of Conservation and Communities:

- thanked the teams, volunteers, and partners.
- thanked the Members for the ongoing support of the work of the Marshals and asked the Members to highlight the work to any connections at the Police, local communities, and parishes in order to confirm ongoing funding. This positive communication is really valued.
- The visitor survey results are being finalised and will be shared shortly.  
Reiterated thanks to our partners who have supported schemes financially.

Members noted their thanks to all the teams who have presented for their proactive and positive role in visitor management.

It was proposed that Members noted the contents of the report.

Mr Dracup proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Harper.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the contents of the report

Members in favour were 15, one abstention