



Dartmoor National Park Authority Chief Executive appointment 2025



WELCOME

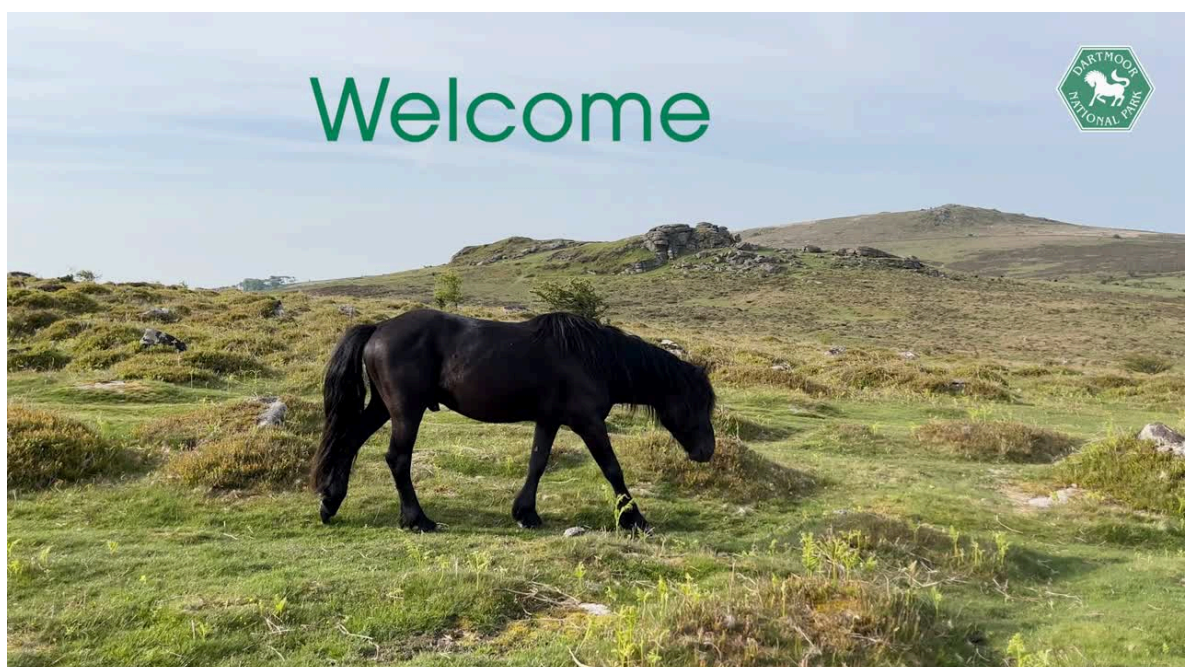
Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive at Dartmoor National Park Authority.

Dartmoor is a landscape of exceptional beauty, cultural richness, and ecological significance. It is a place where nature, heritage, and community meet—and where the challenges and opportunities facing protected landscapes in England are felt acutely. As Chair of the Authority, I am pleased to invite applications for this pivotal leadership role at a time of both great change and great possibility.

We are seeking a Chief Executive who can help Dartmoor realise its full potential in delivering the statutory purposes of National Parks: conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and promoting opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment. These purposes are underpinned by our duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities. Our vision, as set out in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan, is for a greener, wilder, and more accessible Dartmoor—one that is resilient to climate change, rich in biodiversity, and inclusive in its benefits.

The challenges are real: nature loss, climate pressures, an uncertain future for the farming community, financial and policy transitions, increasing visitor numbers, and development pressures beyond our boundaries. But so too are the opportunities. Dartmoor is uniquely placed to lead the way in landscape-scale recovery, sustainable land management, and community-led innovation.



Click here for video: <https://vimeo.com/1120756688/132735ea1a>



We have a proud record of partnership working and an ambitious programme that includes:

- **Farmer-led initiatives** such as the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project and delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscape programme.
- Involvement in three **Landscape Recovery Areas** that reconnect fragmented habitats and support sustainable farming.
- **Partnerships** that deliver peatland restoration, natural flood management, and species resilience—including the return of pine martens and curlews.
- A **Local Plan** that balances development for local needs with the protection of Dartmoor's special qualities.
- **Innovative funding streams** such as Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes and Dartmoor Futures, which help us diversify income and invest in long-term stewardship.
- A commitment to **access and engagement**, clarifying legal rights to open-air recreation and dismantling barriers to inclusion, so that everyone can connect with Dartmoor and understand why it matters.
- A programme of work to **support local communities** through, for example, our vision of a Digital National Park and development of a food strategy.

The new Chief Executive will represent the Authority on the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group. This is an independent group reporting directly to Defra Ministers that is charged with an ambitious remit that includes scoping a Dartmoor wide agri-environment scheme and development of a land use framework.

We are looking for an inspirational and strategic leader - someone with the vision, credibility, and energy to guide the Authority through a period of transformation. You will bring senior leadership experience, political acumen, and a passion for Dartmoor's landscapes and communities. You will be a champion for partnership, a steward of public value, and an ambassador for Dartmoor locally and nationally.

This is a rare opportunity to shape the future of one of England's most iconic landscapes. If you share our ambition and values, we would be delighted to hear from you and I encourage you to speak to our recruitment partners, GatenbySanderson, for a confidential discussion.

Warm regards,

Will

Chair, Dartmoor National Park Authority



Further reading:

[Dartmoor National Park Authority: About us](#)

[How we work: Annual Review 2024/2025](#)

[Dartmoor National Park's Partnership Plan](#)

[The Dartmoor Local Plan 2018 - 2036](#)



ABOUT DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

Dartmoor is....

A land of windswept upland moors with views stretching to the sea; towering granite tors and stunning rainforests; a place of wild rivers and blanket bogs, hay meadows and field systems; an inspirational place of myths, legends and art. It is internationally renowned for its varied archaeology and geology, home to rare species and locally distinct animals. Dartmoor is timeless and tranquil; a place to discover, explore and cherish.

Dartmoor is...

Protected for its nature, beauty, history and enjoyment. Designated as a National Park in 1951 – among the first to be granted the status – Dartmoor covers 954 square kilometres in the heart of Devon. It is the largest and highest upland area in southern England and one of the longest-standing military training locations in the UK.

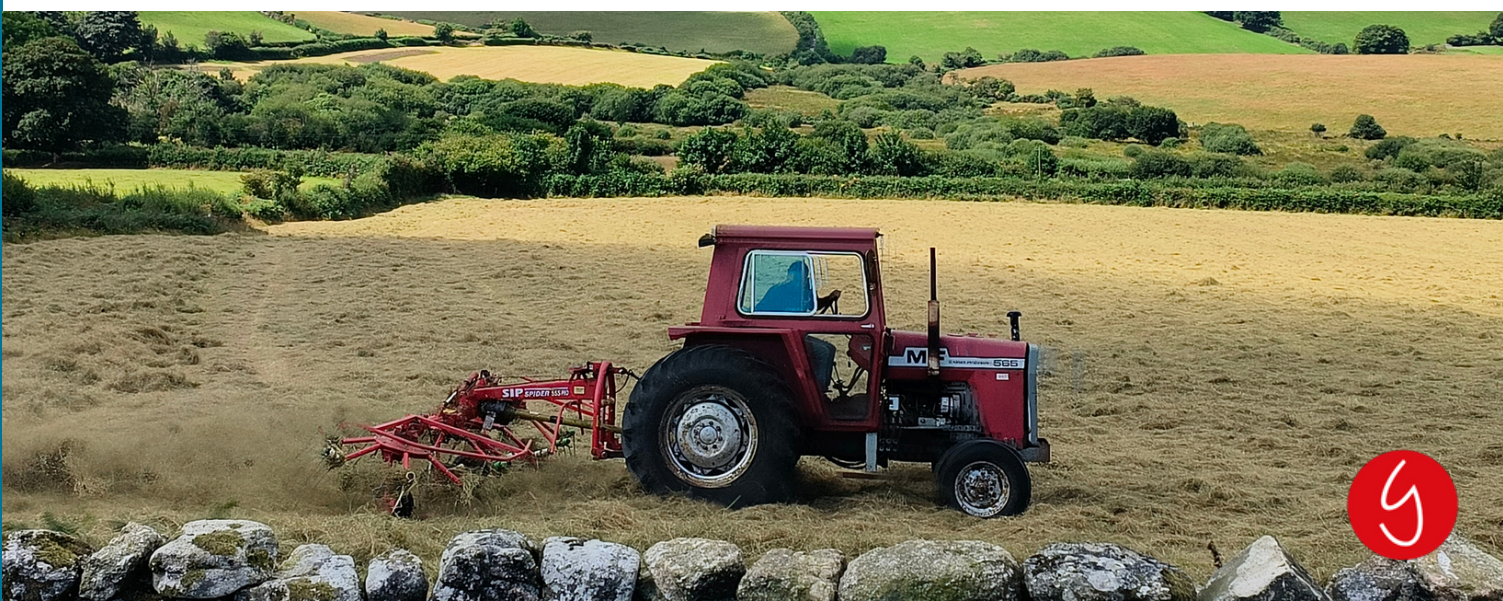
Nearly all of Devon's rivers rise on its uplands making it critical to the region's drinking water supplies and food production. These wetlands are especially important for key habitats and species including sedge species and bog mosses; wading birds such as the curlew; otters and butterflies. Dartmoor is also home to the UK's rarest species of bats such as the barbastelle, greater and lesser horseshoe.

Dartmoor is....

Unique; a remarkable example of the dual forces of nature and human influence. Dartmoor holds an unparalleled concentration of Bronze Age remains largely untouched by development. This means archaeological features remain in their original setting, offering rare insights into social structures and how land was managed.

Dartmoor is...

Extraordinary. With 2026 marking the National Park's 75th anniversary the mission to protect the qualities that make it special remain at the heart of everything we do. And this remarkable place is now looking for an extraordinary leader to build on our innovative, award-winning work and make it a better place for the future.



ABOUT DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The early origins

National Parks are inextricably linked with the freedom to access our countryside and connect with nature. Their foundations can be traced to the 19th Century when visionary naturalist and environmental advocate John Muir began a passionate and life-long movement to protect wild places.

Muir's pioneering work led to the creation of the Yellowstone National Park, USA, and the establishment of the national park system. The Industrial Revolution enabled people to visit wilder places more easily, inspiring them to see landscapes as vital for health and wellbeing, creativity and the enjoyment of open-air recreation.

On Dartmoor, artists such as R.D Sherrin and father-and-son duo William and Frederick Widgery saw beauty in its untamed landscapes; Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle vividly portrayed a place of menacing bogs and baying hounds while the legacy of folklorist and hymn-writer Sabine Baring-Gould spans a remarkable body of songs, books and transactions that influence people today.

In the late 1800s, organisations such as the Dartmoor Preservation Association and the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty (now the National Trust) were established with others founded during the interwar years.

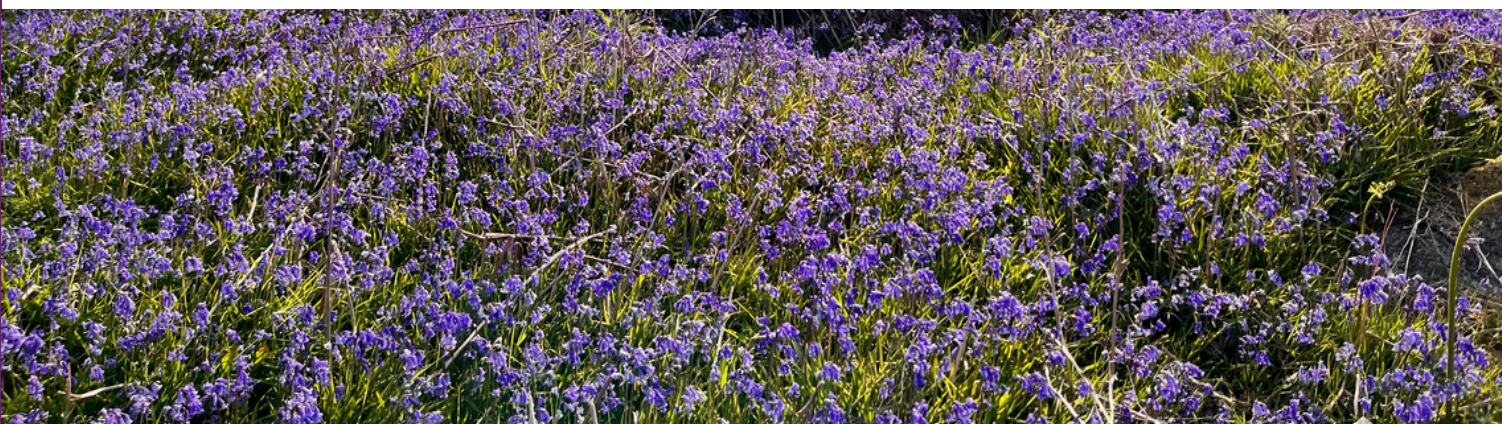
In 1932, a mass trespass at Kinder Scout in the Peak District triggered further reform. The movement towards the creation of National Parks gained momentum during and after World War Two.

The legal framework

In 1945, John Dower's White Paper 'National Parks in England and Wales' was a pivotal moment in establishing the principles for how National Parks should be designated. A National Parks Committee, chaired by Sir Arthur Hobhouse, considered administrative systems and boundaries.

In 1947, the new Town and Country Planning Act established a land use planning system which included National Parks. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 was the key piece of legislation that created the legal mechanism for National Parks to be established in England and Wales.

On October 30, 1951, Dartmoor gained its National Park status.



Establishment in law

Over time, legal changes refined the roles, membership, governance and powers. At first, a committee of Devon County Council managed Dartmoor.

The Local Government Act 1972 led to the appointment of the first National Park Officer. The Dartmoor Commons Act of 1985 protected the moor and allowed public access, while setting up a Dartmoor Commoners Council to manage grazing.

In 1991, the Edwards Review of English and Welsh National Park Authorities proved decisive in modernising National Park structures. This was adopted in the Environment Act 1995, leading to an independent National Park Authority for Dartmoor.

Statutory Purposes

The Environment Act was important because it defined the statutory purposes:

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

The Act introduced the Sandford Principle which is that if there is a conflict between conservation and public enjoyment, conservation takes priority. It also set out a Duty in pursuing those purposes:

- To seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Park by working closely with the agencies and local authorities responsible for these matters, but without incurring significant expenditure.

The Authority is legally required to produce several statutory documents. As the Local Planning Authority, we prepare and adopt a Local Plan. We must also produce a National Park Management Plan, known as the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan.

Both deliver National Park purposes and do so in a way which supports local communities.



Who we are and what we stand for

Today, Dartmoor National Park Authority is a leading public sector organisation with people who are committed to delivering exceptional work in support of our statutory purposes.

We believe Dartmoor's status as a National Park is as important today as it was in 1951. We believe National Parks should be protected, conserved and enjoyed by all sections of society, rich in nature and heritage and at the forefront of national efforts to tackle inequalities and climate change.

Our work is delivered by a dedicated, highly skilled and knowledgeable team of 100 staff and approximately 150 enthusiastic, committed volunteers.

Together, and working alongside Authority Members, they are Dartmoor's greatest ambassadors. We offer training and development programmes and wellbeing support so people grow and thrive

Our head office is situated on the beautiful Parke estate, near Bovey Tracey, Devon, with immediate access to the National Park.

We're one part of the collective voices of UK National Parks and National Parks England.

We work in partnership with other National Parks, including with National Parks England, the collective voice of English National Park Authorities, and all UK National Parks via the National Parks Partnership that bring together companies, investors and environmental funders to support our work.



Team Dartmoor: Our values

We are **high performing** and strive for excellence.

We are **trusted and empowered** to make decisions and use our skills to act in the best interest of Dartmoor.

We are adaptable and open to continuous improvement.

We are **business focused** and forward thinking, doing our best to use resources efficiently, increase commercial awareness and secure value for money.

Finance

Like all National Park Authorities in England we are funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) by a National Park Grant. Our total annual budget is £8.3million. In 2025/26 Defra also provided £1.45M of capital funding to each National Park Authority in England.

We've been hugely successful in securing project funding from income generation, private finance, grants and project-specific funding streams.

The latest set of published accounts is available on our [website](#).



Conserve, protect, enjoy: recent achievements

Dartmoor National Park Authority has a proud history of achieving change and working collaboratively to care for our natural world, bringing cultural heritage to life, supporting communities and enabling people to access and enjoy this special landscape.

Cultural Heritage: After learning an Early Age cist was eroding from the peat on one of Dartmoor's remotest hills, we blended traditional archaeology practices and emerging technology to excavate and conserve the find which we hope will shed more light on life as it was nearly 4,000 years ago

Protecting our peatlands: We're part of South West Peatland Partnership, an internationally recognised programme that's restoring hundreds of hectares of globally rare and internationally important blanket bog each year across Dartmoor, Exmoor and Cornwall. In 2024/25 more than 250 hectares of Dartmoor peatland was restored making a valuable contribution to national targets and benefiting water quality, archaeology, moorland habitats and carbon capture.

Access for all: Together with the Wheeled Access Group, we're developing new easy stile-free routes for everyone that are suitable for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs. Thanks to our new Trampler hire scheme, we're hoping to expand our work so more people with reduced mobility can explore our special places on designated routes.

Award-winning welcomes: We're proud of our work on promoting inclusivity. Our Girls Do Dartmoor partnership with the Dartmoor Preservation Association offers a safe space for young women to build confidence in the outdoors and our visitor centres consistently win awards for the warm welcome they offer.

Farmer-led solutions: Agriculture continues to shape Dartmoor's landscape as it has done for centuries. Since its launch in 2021, the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has delivered significant outcomes across more than 170 projects. Different and innovative approaches enhance business resilience and improve habitats while balancing other - sometimes competing – priorities such as conservation, food production, recreation and military use.



JOB DESCRIPTION

Post title: Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Reports to: National Park Authority

Line management responsibility: up to 6 posts

Purpose:

As Chief Officer and Head of Paid Service of the National Park Authority, and with due regard to the Authority's statutory purposes and core values, to:

- advise on, co-ordinate and act in accordance with the requirements of the Authority, to achieve its legislative requirements and strategic, policy and management objectives;
- ensure the efficient and effective delivery of services and management of resources, including delegation to other Officers, to meet those objectives;
- provide leadership for officers of the Authority, maintain a corporate management approach, and act as an ambassador for Dartmoor National Park.

Duties and Responsibilities

Governance

Advise the Authority, its Committees, Sub-Committees and working groups on the efficient and effective integration and compatibility of its policies across all its duties, strategies and plans. To ensure the implementation of the Authority's decisions accordingly and monitor the forward planning objectives and policies agreed by the Authority.

Ensure that Members receive briefings and information necessary to support the development of policy and good decision-making on Authority business. Guide the staff in the production and presentation of necessary documents and reports in connection with this.

Fulfil duties to ensure formal meetings of the Authority take place appropriately; advise on standing orders and committee processes, taking legal and financial advice when necessary from the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer.

Ensure that decision making within the Authority is undertaken correctly, in accordance with relevant legislation and with high standards of ethical probity, consistent with corporate values.

Ensure that all legislation that applies to the Authority's activities is properly understood, advice on its application taken and services delivered in a way that is consistent with legal obligations.



Leadership and Resources

Create the conditions for the National Park Authority to be regarded as an exemplar organisation where staff and volunteers can flourish and their full potential be realised on behalf of the Authority.

Provide leadership and management to the Authority; lead the Senior Management Team of the Authority, enabling officers to achieve a co-ordinated and corporate approach to the provision of the Authority's services.

Ensure that the Authority takes a systems or integrated approach to decision-making.

Foster a one team or 'Team Dartmoor' mindset and promote a culture of stimulating ideas and innovation that improve the National Park and/or the Authority.

Provide inclusive leadership for the National Park Management Plan (Dartmoor Partnership Plan) process.

Ensure that an effective, managed and monitored business planning and performance management regime is developed and maintained.

Ensure the provision of the financial, human resource and other resource systems and requirements necessary to achieve the Authority's strategic and operational plans.

Ensure that the Authority's activities are undertaken safely with due regard to health and safety law.

Lead the Authority's approach to external funding opportunities, maximising the benefit to the National Park in a way that is consistent with agreed priorities.

Lead the process of continuous improvement for the National Park Authority and ensure the highest standards of customer care are achieved.

External Relations and Representation

Working with the Chair and other members of the Authority as appropriate, establish and sustain wide-working relationships with government and their agencies, other National Park Authorities, public bodies, the local authority network, relevant external groups, local communities and colleagues.

Represent National Parks in England and the UK at a national level to influence thinking within Government departments to the benefit of the wider National Park family.



Work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to maintain and develop trusted relationships that support and delivery National Park purposes and the vision in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan.

Act as a formal adviser to Dartmoor Futures to ensure that this independent charity maximises the benefits of its activities for Dartmoor National Park.

Ensure the effective presentation of the National Park Authority in the media.

Represent the National Park Authority internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally.

Work closely with the local community developing and maintaining an awareness and understanding of community issues whilst seeking to secure and maintain support for the National Park Authority's strategic objectives and its Purposes.

Ensure the maintenance and effective operation of a comprehensive complaints policy. Oversee the Authority's compliance with Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation.

This job description outlines the current duties required for this post to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not a comprehensive or exclusive list and duties may be varied from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate evidence of the following criteria:

Essential

- Proven senior management and leadership experience, at director level or equivalent, with a track record of developing and implementing strategic plans, and driving growth and sustainability.
- A track record of working collaboratively with a Board/s, and with a wide range of stakeholders and partners , including national and local government bodies and local communities.
- An inspirational leader, capable of harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of a committed workforce comprising paid staff and volunteers, with a track record of building and leading engaged and high performing teams.
- Proven experience of managing complex budgets and diverse funding streams successfully, with an ability to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to identifying new sources of revenue.
- Strong political acumen, with experience operating within a local, regional and national public policy context.
- Experience of acting as an ambassador for an organisation with a broad and complex stakeholder network, locally and nationally.
- A track record of creative thinking, ideas and innovation that will help ensure that the Authority and National Park thrive in the future.
- Experience of acting as a media spokesperson, including on contentious matters.
- A passion for the role played by National Parks and an appreciation of the interactions between farming, forestry and cultural and natural assets.

Desirable

- An appreciation and understanding of the major issues facing National Parks, particularly in England.
- An understanding of the statutory regime for National Parks including exposure to planning, environmental or other relevant law.

Qualifications

- Evidence of a standard of education and continued professional development that is commensurate with the role.

Skills and attributes

- Excellent interpersonal skills.
- Calm, confident and resilient especially when under pressure.
- An empathy for wanting to engage everybody in their National Parks.
- Natural inclination to work in partnership with others to achieve stronger shared outcomes.
- Robust commitment to good governance and high standards of probity, comfortable working in a highly scrutinised environment.
- An ability to write clear and easily accessible reports for Members and for the wider public.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Salary

£101,717 - £111,547

Pension

- Membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme: [Home: LGPS](#)
- Our scheme is administered by Peninsula Pensions: [Peninsula Pensions - Helping you get the most out of retirement](#)
- The current employee contribution rate for this role is 9.90% of pensionable pay: [Your contributions - Peninsula Pensions](#)
- Currently, Dartmoor National Park Authority contributes 20% towards your pension.

Benefits

- Permanent contract
- Generous annual leave allowance (30 days) plus public holidays
- Membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (as above)
- Based at our stunning HQ on the National Trust's Parke estate near Bovey Tracey
- Access to pool cars for business travel
- Free staff parking and National Trust café on site
- An extra day off on your birthday!
- Free parking in all National Park operated car parks on Dartmoor

Location

Work base is Parke, Bovey Tracey, Devon, TQ13 9JQ: [Contact us](#) | [Dartmoor](#)

The post holder will be required to travel across the National Park and to meetings across the UK, typically to other National Parks and occasionally in London.

Working pattern

Full-time, Monday to Friday.

Other matters

Terms and conditions of employment

The terms and conditions of employment are a combination of existing collective agreements determined locally, and nationally agreed terms and conditions determined by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities.

Working hours

The working hours are not defined in the National Salary Structure and Conditions of Service Handbook of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities but it is expected that they would amount to not less than 37 hours per week.



Probation

Confirmation of the appointment will be subject to satisfactory completion of a period of probationary service of six months.

Travel allowance

Pool cars provided. Any business mileage undertaken in own private vehicle is reimbursed at the HMRC AMAP rate (currently 45p/mile).

Removal & Disturbance Allowances

An allowance of £6,000 (including VAT) will be made available to the successful candidate subject to compliance with the Authority's policy. Where lodgings are claimed the total reimbursement of any relocation is subject to an overall limit of £8000 (including VAT).

Fitness for work medical assessment

Offers of employment are subject to a satisfactory health assessment conducted by Medigold Health, our Occupational Health advisers.

Equal opportunities

As an equal opportunities employer, Dartmoor National Park Authority is committed to the equal treatment of all current and prospective employees and does not condone discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender identity, or marriage and civil partnership.

Disability Confident Employer

We guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the role. By 'minimum criteria' we mean that you must provide evidence in your application which demonstrates that you meet the level of competence required under each of the essential criteria, as well as meeting any of the qualification, skills or experience defined as essential.

Politically restricted posts

This post has been designated a 'politically restricted post' under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Continuous service

If you have previous continuous service with an organisation covered by the Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) Orders (which cover local authorities and related bodies), this will be included in calculating your entitlement to a redundancy payment, sickness allowance, annual leave, and notice period.



HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be submitted using the link www.gatenbysanderson.com/job/GSe124707

The closing date for applications is 9am on Monday 20 October 2025.

Your submission should include:

- The role title and reference number in the subject line of your email.
- A current CV, including your educational and professional qualifications and full employment history (explaining any gaps), with details of budgets and teams managed and highlighting key achievements.
- A covering letter, no more than two A4 pages, explaining why this appointment interests you and how you meet the criteria set out in the candidate profile.

For an informal discussion or if you require any adjustments to make the recruitment process more accessible, please contact DartmoorCEO@gatenbysanderson.com

If you do not receive confirmation that your application has been received please contact Mary.Dempsey@gatenbysanderson.com



RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Please make a note of the dates below and inform GatenbySanderson as soon as possible if any listed will present significant issues for you.

Whilst we cannot promise any flexibility, there is more chance of this being offered if a good degree of notice is given.

Closing Date for applications:

Monday 20 October 2025

Longlist Meeting - Selection Panel:

Monday 27 October 2025

Preliminary Interviews with GatenbySanderson:

Weeks commencing 27 October & 3 November 2025

Shortlist Meeting - Selection Panel:

Thursday 13 November 2025

Assessment and Final interviews:

Wednesday 3 & Thursday 4 December 2025 (in person, over both days)



