

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 6 October 2017

Present: K Ball, S Barker, W Cann, J Christophers, A Cooper, G Gribble, P Harper, S Hill, P W Hitchins, D Moyse, N Oakley, M Retallick, P Sanders, P Woods

Apologies: M Jeffery, J McInnes, C Pannell, M Simpson, D Webber

Members and Officers observed a minute's silence in remembrance of Nigel Hoskin OBE, (former Chairman of the Authority) who sadly passed away on Saturday 30 September 2017.

3293 Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 1 September 2017

The Minutes of the meeting on 1 September 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

3294 Declarations of Interest

Mr Sanders, Miss Moyse, Mr Ball, Mr Cann and Mr Hitchins declared a personal interest in Item 9 – Proposal for one Council for South Hams and West Devon.

Mr Retallick declared a personal interest, as the Chairman of Haytor Commoners, in Item 7 – Implementation of Car Parking Charges.

3295 Chairman's Report

The Chairman commended the Moor Otters project and stated that he felt it was an exemplar for other National Park Authorities.

He thanked those who had attended the Member Workshop on Friday 8 September 2017. The Head of Business Support advised that the Member training identified, to be provided by Internal and External Auditors, has been scheduled for Friday 15 December 2017.

Members congratulated Mrs A Kohler, Director of Conservation and Communities, who has just completed a cycle ride from Land's End to John O'Groats to raise funds for Huntington's Disease Association and Hospicecare.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) confirmed that the Moor Otters Project is set to make a profit of approximately £55k. In addition, the project reached out to many different visitors; the Authority has received communication from some of those who took part, praising the project. A 'thank you' event, for all those involved, will take place at Parke at the end of October. He also thanked Mr Harper, Authority Member, for the loan of 'Flying Otter' which is now proudly on display in the main Reception at Parke.

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Mr Harper proposed that thanks to all staff who have helped to make the Moor Otters Project so successful be recorded. This was seconded by Mr Ball and unanimously agreed by Members.

3296 Items requiring urgent attention

None.

3297 Implementation of Car Parking Charges

Members received the report of the Head of Recreation, Access and Estates (NPA/17/036).

In April 2017 Members considered five sites for the potential introduction of car parking charges: Postbridge, Haytor Lower and Upper, Meldon and Newbridge, the context for this was a significant reduction in the maintenance budget due to the reduction to National Park Grant, and a clear steer from Defra to find alternative ways to increase funding. Following a resolution made by Members, Officers undertook a public consultation on the introduction of car parking charges. The Head of Recreation, Access and Estates provided a summary of the feedback gathered from the consultation, which Members considered in their discussions.

In discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Need to investigate, in detail, the potential for a season/annual ticket for regular users;
- the possibility of books of tickets to be sold by local vendors rather than installation of ticket machines;
- could the cost of a parking ticket be offset against purchases (over a certain value) within the National Park Visitor Centres;
- need to consider Ten Tors and Duke of Edinburgh groups to avoid them having to pay multiple times if they use several car parks in the same day;
- funds raised / spending (maintenance programme) must be wholly transparent and ring-fenced;
- emphasis to be put on the fact that this would be a '*Pay and Conserve*' scheme.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that there were tough choices to be made. If car parking charges are not introduced the honesty boxes will provide an average of £0.15 per vehicle per annum leaving a funding gap in terms of car park maintenance. The proposed level of charging is considered to be moderate. Although some consideration has been given to the possibility of an annual/season ticket pass, at an appropriate fee, this could be costly to administer and will need careful consideration.

RESOLVED: Members resolved to approve the implementation of formal car parking charges at Haytor, Postbridge, Meldon Reservoir and Newbridge, and consideration in more detail proposals for an annual/season ticket and

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arrangements for minibuses being used by Ten Tors and Duke of Edinburgh groups.

3298 Newbridge Car Park

Members received the report of the Director of Conservation and Communities (NPA/17/037).

A proposed car park agreement has been drawn up in an attempt to find a sustainable approach to future management of the car park at Newbridge. Draft heads of terms have been agreed with the landowner of Newbridge and are detailed within the report. An up-front payment, by the Authority, would be required of £5,800 for the purchase of the ticket machines; it would take around three years to recover these costs. If the Authority does not enter into an agreement then there could potentially be prolonged discussions regarding on going responsibilities for a car park agreement, during which time the car park would continue to deteriorate.

A Member expressed concern regarding the three year break clause, advising that he would wish to see a pay-back condition added in order to cover the Authority's up-front costs, should the land owner wish to withdraw from the agreement.

It was noted that if Members were to agree to the recommendation the Authority would be responsible for the condition of the car park surface.

A Member commented that he would like to see standard charges across the moor in order that a season ticket could be used in this car park also.

The Head of Business Support confirmed that there would be additional costs (e.g. insurance) involved should the agreement go ahead, but as yet they are unknown.

The Director of Conservation and Communities advised that staff had tried to liaise with all of the landowners where car parks have been built on their land, to establish a legal basis for continued management with a possible solution of car parks by the Authority. This landowner is the only one to have come forward.

It was agreed that any final agreement would take into account appreciation over the term of the agreement where Authority resources have be involved; the landowner would not have the power to veto any proposed increases in car park charges; a clear maintenance plan would be drawn up. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that he would ensure that the agreement makes express provision for the Authority to recover a fair proportion of capital investment in surface improvement works should the agreement be terminated before the planned 10 year expiry date. However, the Authority would need to incur costs to make improvements to the car park surface in the short term.

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

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RESOLVED: Members agreed for the Authority to enter into a car park agreement for land at Newbridge, subject to the landowner not having a veto on the level of fee to be charged and a clause to safeguard the Authority's financial position should the agreement be terminated early.

Members welcomed Leo Brooke and Ben Scott, the two Conservation Works apprentices, who were observing the committee meetings today.

3299 Proposal for One Council for South Hams and West Devon

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/17/038).

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised Members that the key issue arising from the proposed merger for the National Park Authority (NPA) is the appointment of Members to the Authority.

It is recommended that the Authority's response to the consultation highlights the appointment of Members issue and that, should the merger take place, the new Council retains the right to appoint three Members to the National Park Authority (NPA). Defra has been approached to obtain clarity on the process of appointments to the NPA.

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

RESOLVED: Members agreed that the Authority's response to the consultation on the proposal for one council for South Hams and West Devon is limited to:

- (i) highlighting the appointment issue; and
- (ii) recommending that, should the Councils merge, the new Council retains the right to appoint three Members to the National Park Authority.

3300 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/17/039).

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the content of the report.

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