



NPA/25/021

Dartmoor National Park Authority

27 June 2025

Capital Investment Strategy

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) **note the capital grant that the National Park Authority will receive in 2025/26 the criteria governing spend and the requirement that spend is incurred before 31 March 2026;**
- (ii) **note the three themes identified for spending the capital grant and agree that we should prioritise spend on investment opportunities that will generate an ongoing revenue return; and**
- (iii) **establish a small Member and Officer Task and Finish group to work at speed to develop a business case for the capital investment opportunities identified above for the Authority to consider at a future meeting.**

1 Background

- 1.1 In 2025/26 the Authority will receive a total National Park Grant of £5,403,865. This comprises of:

Core revenue grant	£3,512,028
Core capital grant	£1,453,837
National Parks England membership	£ 20,000
Dartmoor Land Use Management Grant	£ 418,000

- 1.2 We received the formal Change Control Notice on 28 May 2025. The first grant payment was made on 16 June 2025. The Authority had to use its cash from the bank to fund staff costs and other operations for the months of April and May.
- 1.3 The revenue grant for 2025/26 represents a real-terms reduction on 2024/25 grant of circa 13% (this includes projected pay award and the increase in Employer National Insurance Contributions. Unlike other parts of the public sector (including local authorities) we have not received any support for the increase in Employer National Insurance Contributions.
- 1.4 An allocation of £20,000 of revenue grant has been awarded to be used exclusively for the purpose of covering the Authority's annual membership of National Parks

England (the representative body for all National Park Authorities in England). This money was effectively top sliced off the National Park Grant for 2025/26.

- 1.5 The grant of £418,000 for the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group is ring-fenced for this Group. The Authority is acting as the 'bank' for the Group and does not directly benefit from this element of the grant; Defra is using the National Park Grant mechanism to fund the Group.
- 1.6 Up until 2024/25 National Park Authorities have received a 100% revenue grant. In 2024/25 we received a £250,000 capital grant in addition to the revenue grant. In 2025/26 the revenue grant has been cut (see above) but Defra have awarded each National Park Authority an increased capital grant. Whilst revenue grant can be used for capital spend there are restrictions on using capital for things like staff costs which comprise circa 80% of our core costs. The capital grant is welcome but, in reality, is leading to additional work and increased risks for the Authority.
- 1.7 The Change Control Notice issued by Defra on 28th May 2025 details the criteria for the Protected Landscapes Capital Investment Fund (the capital grant). Under accounting rules, spend can only be treated as capital where it meets the following requirements:
 - It creates a tangible asset. A tangible asset is something which provides economic benefits; provides those benefits for a period of more than 12 months; the asset must be controlled (i.e. the authority spending the money must be legally entitled to the benefits of the asset or decides who gets those benefit and can deny another party access to those benefits; and the cost of creating or acquiring the asset can be reliably measured.
 - Not all spend which might be incurred in creating or acquiring an asset can be treated as capital spend. Only spend which is directly attributable to the creation/acquisition of the asset can be capitalised.
 - Only an incurred spend which directly contributes to the specific asset that is finally built can be capitalised. Costs incurred in feasibility studies, options analysis and supporting internal governance (e.g. preparing a business case) cannot be capitalised.
 - Labour or staff costs incurred in directly contributing to creating or enhancing the asset can be considered as capital.
 - Research and development can be funded via the capital grant if it meets the following definition: 'creative work undertaken on a systematic basis to increase the stock of knowledge, and use of this stock of knowledge for the purpose of discovering or developing new products, including improved versions or qualities of existing products, or discovering or developing new or more efficient processes of production'. Furthermore, activities must include all of the following: aimed at new findings; based on new concepts or ideas with the aim of improving on existing knowledge; uncertain about its final outcome; systematically performed; lead to results that have the potential to be reproduced (transferable).

- 1.8 Defra have indicated that it is for the Authority to make these classifications and to keep adequate records to evidence the spend especially if labour costs are to be charged to capital spend.
- 1.9 In addition to meeting the capital criteria outlined above, the capital must be used for projects that meet the following criteria:

Criteria 1: Innovation, invest-to-save and/or income generating activities

Such projects must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Activities projecting quantifiable cost savings.
- Activities projecting quantifiable income generation or which help leverage other funding.
- Upgrades of capital assets to avoid major defects/maintain operation/reduce carbon emissions and accelerate net zero progress.
- Activities which seek to identify innovative new approaches and efficiencies.
- Direct contribution to furthering the statutory purposes of National Parks to avoid unnecessary use of revenue grant.

Criteria 2: 30 by 30 delivery stream

The objective of this delivery stream is to enable more land within the National Park to count towards the 30by30 target (30% of the land area used for biodiversity by the year 2030). Expenditure has to be considered as capital (see above), meet 30by30 criteria and, if the scheme is on non- Authority owned land, the relevant landowner/manager must commit to the area being formally recognised as a 30by30 area (the formal 30by30 Assessment and Reporting Tool has not yet been launched which creates further uncertainty).

- 1.10 The capital grant needs to be spent in 2025/26. This means that the expenditure has to have been incurred not just contractually committed. There is no commitment to further capital grant in future financial years – this will depend on the Spending Review 2025.
- 1.11 Whilst the capital grant provides opportunities, the criteria governing spend together with the fact that we only received the final criteria at the end of month two of the current spending year represent a considerable challenge and mean that we are having to re-focus staff time and work programmes to focus on the capital investment opportunity.

2 Use of the Capital Grant

- 2.1 Officers have been exploring three 'spend areas or themes' for the capital grant based on the definition and criteria outlined above, these are:
- Labour or staff costs associated with capital projects (circa £200 - 300,000).
 - Capital improvements to our existing land and/or buildings (circa £100,000).
 - Capital investment programme focused on revenue generation (circa £1million).

Theme 1: Labour/staff costs associated with capital projects

- 2.2 We have scrutinised use of staff time and identified some posts that are spending time on capital investment projects (i.e. projects that meet the criteria outlined above). This includes Ranger time spent enhancing or improving the Public Rights of Way network and access to open countryside (as defined under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act) and to registered commons; staff time developing a new website (a key action for 2025/26); staff time project managing the Access for All capital investment programme and enhancements to our own estate (buildings and land). We have spoken to our External Auditors to seek guidance (they are not allowed to provide advice). We are preparing an accounting note, staff are being asked to keep time sheets so there is an audit trail of time spent on capital related projects and we are preparing a short Enhancement Plan for the Public Right of Way network and access land that details projects that are deemed enhancement works/ improvements as opposed to management. If we are successful with this theme it will help protect the Authority's reserves and may set a useful precedent for future years.

Theme 2: Capital improvements to our existing land and/or buildings.

- 2.3 We have identified some capital projects that will improve existing car parks and toilets. This programme of work also includes looking at the feasibility of introducing Pay and Display charges at car parks that the Authority owns and/or operates where such charges are not currently levied.

Theme 3: Capital investment programme focused on revenue generation.

- 2.4 We are exploring how we could invest the majority of the capital grant in projects that would support income generation. We believe that this a priority. If achieved, it means that we will have invested the capital grant in a way that generates revenue for the Authority to use in subsequent years to support National Park purposes. Within this theme we have identified the following potential opportunities:
- Acquisition of commercial premises that would be let to tenants – we have sought legal advice on this option which has clarified that we could acquire buildings within or outside of the National Park for the purposes of letting such buildings providing that the income generated is used to support National Park purposes. This option may provide greatest certainty in terms of securing spend within the financial year and securing a revenue income. However, there are associated costs and risks. The buildings would need to be maintained (unless let on a full repairing lease), there will be insurance and management costs. There are also risks in terms of unforeseen costs.
 - Development of a visitor marketing/promotion initiative that could generate revenue. This option needs further development and engagement with third parties and carries more risk in terms of a defined revenue return. However, it can be related to National Park purposes and offers the opportunity to enhance or streamline our media assets and communications tools.
 - Acquisition of land and development of a Habitat Bank. Under this option we would look for land (ideally within the National Park) that could be used for the purpose of establishing a Habitat Bank with revenue generated through the sale

of Biodiversity Credits. This option could meet criteria 1 and 2 (see above) and help deliver the vision in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan (assuming the land is within the National Park). The biggest risk is the availability of suitable land within the National Park.

- 2.5 We would welcome Members views on the options outlined above and other suggestions.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 Section 1 provides details about the definition of capital and criteria for spend.
- 3.2 As noted above, the capital grant must be used/spent this financial year.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 4.1 The capital grant provides an important opportunity for the Authority but also a considerable challenge given the criteria governing spend and the fact that spend must be incurred within this financial year. Unlike many other National Park Authorities, we do not have an existing capital programme (mainly because we own very little land and very few buildings). Authorities that have an existing capital spend can swap revenue grant allocated to this purpose with the new capital grant, we do not have this option.
- 4.2 We are recommending that Members agree: (i) the three themes identified for spending the capital grant with a priority on seeking investment opportunities that will generate an ongoing revenue return and (ii) establish a Member and Officer Task and Finish group to work at speed to develop a business case for the capital investment opportunities identified above for the Authority to consider at a future meeting of the Authority.

KEVIN BISHOP



NPA/25/022

Dartmoor National Park Authority

27 June 2025

Dartmoor Land Use Management Group – Grant Fund to The Foundation for Common Land

Report of the Head of Business Support

Recommendation: **That Members approve the Authority transferring a grant contribution of £78,720 from the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group funding to The Foundation for Common Land.**

1. Introduction

Dartmoor Land Use Management Group (DLUMG) was formed as one of 26 recommendations from the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor (The Fursdon Review) and was commissioned by Defra Ministers in 2023.

- 1.2 Defra has provided grant to support the administration of the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group with Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) providing secretariat for finance and administration.
- 1.3 Under the formation of DLUMG, they are required to use DNPA regulations for finance and procurement, which includes DNPA financial thresholds.

2. Transfer of Funds

- 2.1 DLUMG wishes to provide grant funding to be paid to The Foundation for Common Land (FCL). FCL is a national organisation, with charitable status, with expertise and experience in the management of commons at a legal, structural and practical level. The work of DLUMG will benefit from their general involvement and FCL potentially offer the chance to add value to our work by dovetailing with other project activities they are involved in. The grant offer is for provision of a 0.6 FTE project facilitator to support the work of the DLUMG. The total grant sum is £78,720 and covers seconded salary, employment oncosts, line management and background support, and equipment provision, for the period of 31 March 2025 – 31 March 2027.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Within DNPA financial regulations, the threshold for the giving of grants is set at £5,000; for anything above this limit approval by Members of the Authority is required.
- 3.2 DLUMG is funded independently of the Authority, so there are no financial implications for the core funding.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 4.1 As the project is short term, running until March 2027, and is funded by Defra, the emphasis on progressing the other 25 recommendations from the independent review by collaboration of DLUMG and FCL staff will avoid delay in the work programme.
- 4.2 It is recommended that Members approve this grant, recognising the DNPA financial thresholds, from DLUMG to FCL.

ANGELA STIRLAND

Background Information:

Further details of Project outline: [Dartmoor Land Use Management Group](#)

Terms of Reference: [Dartmoor Land Use Management Group](#)



NPA/25/023

Dartmoor National Park Authority

27 June 2025

Dartmoor National Park Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Report of the Recreation Strategy Development Officer

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) **Note the work completed to develop a draft LCWIP for Dartmoor**
- (ii) **Note the recommendation in the draft LCWIP for Dartmoor**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Dartmoor. The report seeks to secure support from Members for the publication of the draft plan for public consultation.

2 Background

- 2.1 In April 2024 Active Travel England (ATE) created the National Park's Capability Fund to support National Park Authorities with developing their own LCWIP, equivalent to those developed by local highway authorities and district/borough councils. The main aim of the plan is to develop a network of routes and interventions that encourage more journeys to be made by walking, wheeling and cycling.
- 2.2 The ten English National Parks were invited to submit bids to ATE in April 2024. Each National Park Authority was awarded £100,000 to develop an LCWIP for their park with a deadline for completion of 01 July 2025.
- 2.3 Development of the plan followed the stages set out in Active Travel England's LCWIP guidance. These are:
 - 1. Determining Scope
 - 2. Gathering Information
 - 3. Network Planning for Cycling
 - 4. Network Planning for Walking
 - 5. Prioritising Improvements
 - 6. Integration and Application

- 2.4 Development of the plan is a critical step in ensuring National Park Authorities are 'funding fit' and eligible to access further capability grants through ATE to progress schemes.

3 Approach and Scope

- 3.1 The Authority does not have a dedicated transport officer or team that could develop the strategic plan internally. WSP transport consultants were therefore commissioned to produce the plan through the Authority's framework agreement with Devon County Council (DCC). WSP have experience of developing LCWIPs across Devon including the Exeter, Heart of Teignbridge and Devon Countywide plans. Other consultants have completed LCWIPs for the South Hams, West Devon and Plymouth.
- 3.2 Through discussion with ATE and WSP, officers decided the best approach was to develop a park-wide plan to identify priorities of varying scales which could be addressed through multiple funding streams. To determine the scope of the plan, an assessment of existing interventions in local LCWIPs was undertaken to prevent duplication and maximise opportunities across Dartmoor.
- 3.3 The plan highlights opportunities to work alongside partners, including the local highway authority, district and borough councils, town and parish councils and local communities. Working in partnership to deliver the proposed schemes for Active Travel will support delivery of strategic objectives in the Local Plan 2018-2036 and Dartmoor's Partnership Plan.
- 3.4 It is important to note that detailed proposals for towns within the South Hams and West Devon are covered in the LCWIP for South Hams and West Devon. Additionally, the hub towns of Okehampton, Ivybridge and Princetown have had individual Access and Interpretation Plans developed as part of Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes (DDL), therefore they have received less focus in this plan.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 Stakeholder and public consultations were held to gather priorities for Active Travel across Dartmoor in the Autumn of 2024. A second stakeholder session was carried out in March 2025 to seek feedback on the emerging themes and priorities.
- 4.2 In previous years the Authority completed a consultation regarding opportunities to improve access to the moor along the A38 corridor, these consultation submissions were included in the LCWIP consultation review.
- 4.3 The public consultation, held over 4 weeks from the end of October to the end of November 2024, received 210 responses. In total, 42% of responses came from people who live within the National Park, 36% of responses were submitted on behalf of groups or organisations including the British Horse Society, Cycling UK, and the Ramblers Association.
- 4.4 Parish councils were also invited to submit responses. Follow up meetings were held with Moretonhampstead Town Council, Sticklepath Parish Council and Bovey Tracey Town Council.

- 4.5 The consultation responses included a range of themes including upgrades to rights of way, public transport improvements, safer road crossings and quiet lane designation. Infrastructure and route improvements related to walking featured in most responses. These responses have supported the identification of priorities in the plan.

5 Network Plan Recommendations

5.1 Walking Recommendations

1. Rights of Way Upgrades

Maintaining and improving/upgrading the existing outstanding active travel network on Dartmoor, comprising over 449 miles/ 730km of Public Rights of Way, permissive paths, access land, and promoted routes which traverse the National Park. Challenges such as drainage and surface maintenance, limited wayfinding at popular sites, and accessibility barriers deter wider use, especially among younger and older visitors. To improve this, the report recommends increased and sustained investment, targeted infrastructure upgrades, and enhanced signage and wayfinding to make Dartmoor's walking, cycling and horse-riding network more accessible, coherent, and inviting.

2. Miles Without Stiles

Miles Without Stiles routes on Dartmoor are accessible paths designed for people with limited mobility, including wheelchair users and families with young children. Currently, there are 15 routes. Additional routes have been identified in this plan with further feasibility required prior to delivery. These routes meet a clear demand, as two-thirds of Dartmoor visitors walk less than a mile or stay near their cars. They support equality of access and could broaden the park's appeal to more diverse visitors. While challenges like funding, terrain, and land access exist, the initiative promotes inclusivity and community involvement. Continued investment and improvement are recommended to expand and enhance the network.

3. Settlements and Destinations

Enhancing the visitor experience and onward routes at key access points to the National Park and supporting community-led active travel initiatives in settlements. Examples include improvements on routes to school, supporting applications to Devon County Council for 20mph in villages, traffic calming measures, quiet lane designation, village entrances and gateway features and general infrastructure such as secure cycle parking/storage and rest stops.

4. Templer Way

The Templer Way is an 18-mile historic route connecting Haytor to Teignmouth. The 4.5-mile section between Haytor Quarry and Bovey Tracey is a key focus for improvements aimed at easing congestion at Haytor by encouraging more people to access it from Bovey Tracey through Active Travel. Enhancements such as better surfacing, signage, and accessibility features—especially for mobility-impaired users—would make the route more attractive and inclusive. Reinstating lost permissive paths and working in partnership to improve bus links would also support sustainable tourism and benefit local businesses along the trail.

5. Two Moors Way

The Two Moors Way is a 117-mile scenic walking route crossing Dartmoor and Exmoor, beginning in Ivybridge and passing through moorland, forests, and historic villages. It offers access to key attractions like Castle Drogo, Grimspound, and the Teign Gorge. With its 50th anniversary in 2026, there is growing momentum to enhance the Dartmoor section, addressing inconsistent signage, surface degradation, and limited integration with transport and local amenities. Investment would boost Dartmoor's profile as a walking destination, support local economies, and potentially elevate the route making it eligible for National Trail status, unlocking further funding and long-term improvements.

5.2 Multi-use Trail Recommendations

6. Yelverton to Princetown

The Yelverton to Princetown route, part of the 'Granite and Gears' mountain biking network, follows a disused railway line and offers potential as a high-quality, accessible walking and cycling trail. Though sections have been improved since 2013, key gaps remain—particularly between Yelverton and Dousland—along with poor surfacing and limited accessibility. With proximity to high-visitor areas like Plymouth, Tavistock, and Burrator Reservoir, the route has strong potential to support active travel, tourism, and local economic growth. Future investment could create a continuous, family-friendly trail, supported by improved crossings, signage, surface upgrades, and bike-friendly infrastructure, with wider regeneration benefits Princetown.

7. Devon Coast to Coast

The Lydford to Tavistock section of the Coast to Coast (C2C) route is currently a challenging, on-road stretch with steep gradients, high-speed traffic, and poor off-road sections.

Short Term: Improvements to the National Cycle Network between Mary Tavy and Peter Tavy including wayfinding, safer crossings, and resurfacing

Long Term: Carry out feasibility work including landowner engagement for potential re-alignment of sections of the route using the historic railway alignment, creating a safer, high-quality, mostly traffic-free route. Priority improvements include avoiding steep climbs and unsafe roads near Lydford, Mary Tavy, and Tavistock.

8. Wray Valley Trail

Recommendations for the Wray Valley Trail and surrounding areas focus on enhancing accessibility, safety, and user experience. In Bovey Tracey, proposed improvements include widening paths, upgrading crossings, introducing 20mph limits on key roads, and creating better links between active travel routes. For the trail itself, suggestions include improving connections to Parke, adding rest areas between Lustleigh and Moretonhampstead, and eventually resurfacing the full route for inclusivity. In Moretonhampstead, key priorities include completing a missing link, widening paths, reducing through traffic in the town centre, enhancing signage, and introducing 20mph zones to support safer active travel.

9. Ashburton to Buckfastleigh

There are long-standing plans to enhance active travel between Ashburton and Buckfastleigh, particularly along the NCN272 Dartmoor Way, identified as a high-priority corridor. Proposed measures include 20mph zones, modal filters,

new crossings and shared-use paths. Additional recommendations suggest improving connectivity between key tourist destinations such as the South Devon Railway and Buckfast Abbey, potentially via a new route under the A38 and upgraded footways along Dart Bridge Road.

6 Challenges to the Development of LCWIPs in Protected Landscapes

- 6.1 Rural guidance for LCWIP development has not yet been produced by ATE. Existing guidance is focussed on addressing urban centred commuter and utility journeys through application of standards in the Local Transport Network (LTN 1/20) document. Application of this guidance would conflict with many of the special qualities of National Parks.
- 6.2 Absence of rural guidance for LCWIP planning in the rural environment has presented a significant challenge as criteria for future funding has been uncertain. Officers and consultants have worked together to propose solutions suitable for the protected landscapes to ensure any route development is in keeping with the special qualities of the landscape, are accessible and demonstrate value for money.

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 Schemes identified as 'quick wins' may be progressed utilising the National Park Authority's project fund and DDL.
- 7.2 The Authority will seek additional external funding to develop the priorities in the LCWIP. Funding will be needed to deliver feasibility studies and designs for larger schemes, including the Princetown Railway improvements and upgrades to NCN27 on the West side of the moor.
- 7.3 Officers will continue to liaise with DCC and South Hams/West Devon councils to progress joint schemes including the Ashburton to Buckfastleigh and Yelverton to Princetown routes.
- 7.4 The government spending review should provide clarity on likely sources of future funding to support delivery of the plan. It is anticipated that ATE will continue to support the work of National Park Authorities to enable delivery of future schemes through additional grant funding.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Staff time will be required to complete the public consultation in summer 2025 as well as facilitate any further feasibility and design work to progress the schemes identified. Any amendment to the plan following public consultation will be completed by the consultants through the existing budget.
- 8.2 As outlined in paragraph 7.3 of this report, the Authority will seek external funding to progress the delivery of schemes identified in the LCWIP.
- 8.3 It should be noted at this stage that LCWIPs are dynamic documents that require frequent updating to remain relevant. These updates can be fulfilled through existing staff capacity within the Access and Recreation team.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 The development of the LCWIP provides a strategic approach to encouraging more people to walk, wheel and cycle in and around the National Park with less reliance on private motor vehicles.
- 9.2 The plan will enable the Authority to access future funding for Active Travel schemes across the National Park.
- 9.3 Officers recommend that Members note the recommendation in the draft plan which will be shared for public consultation in summer 2025.

JAMES WRIGHT