

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 1 October 2021

Present: A Cooper, W Dracup, G Gribble, P Harper, J McInnes, S Morgan, D Moyse, J Nutley, N Oakley, M Renders, P Sanders, P Smerdon, D Thomas, P Vogel, P Woods

Officers: K Bishop, Chief Executive (NPO)
C Giles, Head of Conservation and Land Management

Apologies: G Hill, C Pannell, L Samuel, D Webber

The Chair welcomed Mrs Shewan, Independent Person

3355 Declarations of Interest

None

3356 Minutes of the Authority meeting held on Friday 3 September 2021

The minutes of the Authority meeting held on Friday 3 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

3357 Chair's Report

None

3358 Items requiring urgent attention

None.

3359 Public Participation

None.

3360 Dartmoor Nature Enhancement – A Collaborative Approach

Members received the report of the Head of Conservation and Land Management (NPA/21/022).

The Head of Conservation and Land Management reported to Members that the 25 year environment plan has 6 main aims: Clean air, clean and plentiful water, thriving plants and wildlife, reducing the risks of harm from environmental hazards, using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently and enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement. By 2030, the Government has stated that the aim is for 30% of the UK will be protected including National Parks and AONB's, which links to the Landscapes (Glover) Review published in 2019.

The Authority has responded to the Better for Nature policy with an ambitious vision which is detailed in the report. The key themes are:

- Soils are well managed: achieve good condition and are functioning to improve biodiversity, productivity, maximise carbon storage and reduce flood risk.
- Hydrological systems are functioning naturally, providing clean, plentiful water and supporting abundant biodiversity.
- Manage existing priority habitats adaptively, reflecting environmental change at landscape scale, delivering larger better connected and diverse habitats.
- Resoration of natural processes by supporting dynamic, diverse and well-functioning eco systems at landscape scale
- Ensure there is an abundance and diversity of species on Dartmoor, which are widespread and thriving.

It will be implemented by the restoration of natural processes, repairing the ecosystems that have been compromised and degraded, usually as a result of human activity over the course of many hundreds of years. The aim is to reinstate or approximate natural systems such as functioning soils, unaltered watercourse, presence of key species, functioning blanket bogs and reconnected floodplains. The catchment approach is an ecosystems approach operating within a natural system with an emphasis on actions that reflect how nature works rather than working solely within man made administrative boundaries. The collaboration with other partners is needed in order to achieve the step change needed, working together is more critical than ever. Operating in isolation and protecting fragmented pockets of habitat or species is unsustainable, ecological systems require enhancement at scale to function and help reserve the biodiversity.

With regard to establishing pilot catchments a desk audit was carried out in 2020 to better understand the ecological resource on Dartmoor and help identify 17 catchments that could offer the greatest opportunities for local enhancement.

The delivery approach will encourage groups or “clusters” of farmers, land-owners and other land managers and communities within high potential landscapes to develop and deliver collaborative plans that will transform nature across all or part of a catchment. DNPA and other partners will provide support to help realise the potential identified through the ecological feasibility study. Over time the clusters will grow and join with others helping to increase their reach.

In response to Members questions the Head of Conservation and Land Management stated that there will be blended financing for the projects from partners and Palladium. Palladium are involved in the carbon market which is very immature at this stage, but is likely to gain momentum, there is work with Devon County Council in regards to carbon gain. The role of the Authority is to audit the programmes and ensure there is an assurance programme in place.

The Chief Executive (NPO) stated that this project is covering Government priorities and National Parks are playing a key role in delivering the projects. The team has been successful in previous bids at securing funding and will hopefully continue to put in successful bids. The plan has to be ambitious in order to achieve the Governments targets. If the funding doesn't materialise the projects will have to be scaled back.

The university of Exeter has carried out some research in ground truthing, which will join up with the desk exercise. The satellite data is much more detailed than previous efforts at recording habitats and DEFRA have shown interest in developing this project.

The team will be reporting back to Members on a regular basis and measurable targets will be set (e.g. 1000 hectares of blanket bog to be restored in 5 years), these will be recorded as Performance Indicators and brought to Audit and Governance and Authority for Members to scrutinise.

Members agreed that this is good news for Dartmoor and should be promoted in the media, so the public can see the efforts going towards climate change and the climate emergency action plan. The Chief Executive stated that he would request the communications team promote the work.

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

RESOLVED: Members endorsed the approach to nature enhancement as outlined in the report.

3361 Tree Preservation Orders, Section 211 Notifications (Works to Trees in Conservation Areas) and Hedgerow Removal Notices Determined Under Delegated Powers

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/21/030).

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the content of the report.