



## **DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Friday 1 March 2024**

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

Apologies: M Williams, J Nutley

Officers: K Bishop, Chief Executive (National Park Officer)  
A Stirland, Head of Business Support  
D Kinsella, Director of Spatial Planning

Independent Person in Attendance: C Shewan

Public Speaker: Mr J Funnell

### **3550 Declarations of Interest**

Mr Dracup and Mr Owen have both received FiPL grants and are contributors towards Hill Farm Project.

Mr Harper and Mr Dracup on the FiPL Board.

Mr Sanders - Devon & Torbay Devolution Deal - Member of Devon County Council, (no direct involvement with Devolution).

Mr Renders - Hessary View - he will leave the room at this point.

Mr Thomas – Devon & Torbay Devolution Deal - opposition County Councillor (no direct involvement with Devolution).

Mrs Samuels - Devon & Torbay Devolution Deal - Cabinet Member of SEND in Devon County Council.

Mr Owen – Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor - Recipient of FIPL Grant and involved in Landscape Recovery Scheme.

Ms Hill – Hessary View - Member of Chagford Parish Council (she will not vote on this report).

Mr Gribble – Devon & Torbay Devolution Deal - Devon County Council member.

Mr Jeffery – Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor - Educational Walks Guide for National Parks

Mr Smerdon - has had an email conversation with Mr Funnell (the external speaker today) in the past.

### **3551 Minutes of the previous meetings**

There were some amendments requested to the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 2 February 2024, as follows:

Page 1, 3540 Chair's Report - Rebecca Powell should read Rebecca Pow.

Page 10, 3546 Car Park Charging Policy Proposal – Mr Saunders should read Mr Sanders

Page 13 – Following the resolution of 3549 Strategic Risk Register, the Minutes should record that -

“The Members voted to move to Part 2.

The Meeting moved back to Part 1.

The Meeting was closed”

Subject to the above amendments, it was agreed that the Minutes were a true and accurate record of the Meeting. Mr Sanders proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Gribble.

### **3552 Chair's Report**

The Chair reported attending the following Meetings:

- Teams Meeting with Sir Gary Streeter MP which included issues of funding amongst other matters. He promised to pass our comments on to the relevant people.
- Team Devon – Homeless Grant Support by Devon County Council
- Devolution Deal – based on report from the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

The Chair, along with the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) will be attending a meeting with the Secretary of State of DEFRA to discuss our funding issues, which has been facilitated by Mel Stride MP.

### **3553 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

It was reported that there was nothing requiring urgent attention.

### **3554 Public Participation**

Mr Funnell spoke to the Meeting for 3 minutes on the proposed Plymouth and South Devon Freeport.

In 2022 The Plymouth and South Devon Freeport - a private limited company (exempt from Freedom of Information) - imposed an outer boundary over most

of Dartmoor. At a diameter of 75km, this boundary was far larger than the maximum permitted size of 45km.

UK Government Freeports are for 'fast tracked regulation'. A body has been created for Freeport companies and regulators to implement "...pro-innovation regulatory tools".

In parallel, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology ("DSIT") will work with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ("DLUHC") to promote and enhance the Freeports Regulation Engagement Network ("FREN"). DSIT will expand the FREN offer to support businesses within Investment Zones and, drawing on the expertise of the Department of Business and Trade's ("DBT") Smarter Regulation programme, will widen its focus beyond regulatory innovation to address broader regulatory barriers to business investment.

The FREN will work with other government departments to explore, and develop a plan for implementing, pro-innovation regulatory tools, such as regulatory sandboxes, within Freeports and Investment Zones and they state, "To ensure we continue to protect the environment while delivering the new development needed, DEFRA and its arm's length bodies will work with Freeports to consider Freeport masterplans, where they are developed. This will inform where cost-recovered pre-app advice services may be needed, for example, on environmental evidence, assessments, and proposed solutions to identified challenges. Where appropriate, opportunities might be considered for embedding staff to work with the Freeports. Natural England and the Environment Agency will engage with applicants and the Planning Inspectorate to identify and resolve environmental issues with National Infrastructure Planning ("NSIP") schemes prior to examination, including working with the enhanced services being put in place to support the fast-track route.

Already published examples of innovation include autonomous delivery vehicles that can deliver across an entire Freeport boundary area between tax and customs sites, i.e. the full area within the outer boundary.

The Freeport Consultation Review (2020) states:

Section 1.13: "All [Freeport] measures should be applied within this outer boundary – planning, regeneration, and 'innovation' measures."

Section 1.10 states that the additional customs sites 'may be empty spaces.'

Dartmoor could fit within both statements.

The zone within the boundary is intended to feel the Freeport's economic effects.

Mr Funnell then posed some questions to the Meeting:

- Has there been any screening for these effects or what they may be?

- Is there a situation of ongoing unlawfulness with an imposed boundary that was not within the Freeport's remit to impose? What precedent does this set for future claims?
- What if Government changes regulations within Freeport outer boundaries- National Parks or not?
- Has the Authority asked whether the Freeport is, will be or could be considered a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project? If yes, then anything within the outer boundary could - from this Spring- be subject to a reformed consenting process. It's in the Freeport delivery roadmap, published in December 2023.
- Perhaps the real question is not, what does the imposed boundary mean, but why on earth should it stay? If it's meaningless, it should go.
- What if the Freeport suggests that any discussions are 'commercially sensitive' and is unable to fully disclose and openly publish its reasons for its imposed boundary?

In short, Mr Funnell summarised, if the outer boundary is not in the public interest and details cannot be disclosed, it cannot stand.

Mr Funnell confirmed that he had previously received assurances on the boundary both verbally and in writing, however, he added that no-one but the Freeport company itself, or its legal team, has the authority to make any assurances.

He suggests this creates many challenges for Dartmoor, although protecting its integrity is a fundamental priority. I welcome the Authorities engagement on this issue.

In response to a Member asking whether Mr Funnell had posed these questions to the constituent bodies that represent the Freeport, Mr Funnell advised that the Environmental Information Regulations ("EIR") mean they are not legally bound to answer, and although he has asked about the boundary, he has not received an answer.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that our answer to Mr Funnell's FOI request would also answer his questions posed at this meeting.

### **3555 Fees and Charges 2024/25**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support. (NPA/24/012)

For a small number of services, a charge can be made so that the cost of provision can be partially or even fully met. The Government requires us to generate income streams wherever possible and lawful to do so. NB. This does not include planning fees, which are set centrally by Government.

We undertake a formal review each year as part of the budget setting process and whilst not a major source of income, the charges applied may influence our decision as to whether to provide the service or not.

At the last Authority meeting members agreed to the policy of raising car park charges on an annual basis, in line with the consumer price index from September of the previous year. The budget and MTFP report have been produced with this increase in mind.

Section 2.2 of the report summarises the changes that we made during the last review and Appendix 1 provides a summary of the income received as at end of December, with a forecast for year-end.

The proposed fees & charges are attached at Appendix 2, which shows the current fees and the proposed fees going forward.

An explanation for the proposed changes this year is set out in Sections 3.2 to 3.6 and are related to car parking charges.

It was proposed that unless there are any further amendments required, Members should:

- (i) approve the recommendations made in section 3 of the report; and
- (ii) approve the 2024/25 schedule of fees and charges as set out in Appendix 2

It was to be noted that filming to be charged at a price FROM £360 per day. Exact amount to be negotiated at a later date.

It was noted that other rates have not gone up by rate of inflation. It was felt there was no requirement to uplift these now and that only car park charges needed to be raised.

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

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the report provided and

- (i) approved the recommendations made in section 3 of the report; and
- (ii) approved the 2024/25 schedule of fees and charges as set out in Appendix 2

### **3556 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (“MTFP”)**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support. (NPA/24/013)

Each year the Authority is required to set a balanced budget, with recommendations for members to approve.

The Budget and MTFP presented is on the assumption that our core funding will remain static for the 6<sup>th</sup> year running. To date we are yet to receive confirmation from DEFRA about our funding for 2024/25, but they have indicated we should expect a flat cash settlement.

When taking into consideration the rate of inflation, and the nationally-set pay awards, which are both outside the Authority’s control, the value of our DEFRA

grant, in real terms, is a cut. If our funding had kept pace with inflation our revenue grant this year should be £6.8m, however we are receiving £3.8m.

We received a one-off grant of £440,000 in March 2023, which generated an in-year underspend in 2022/23 and allowed the Authority to place internally generated income into reserves. Members were made aware that we would make use of this underspend to help balance the revenue budget in 2023/24 and 2024/25 as well as to keep the Princetown Visitor Centre open until March 2025.

A summary of the revenue budget for each year of the MTFP, can be found in Appendices 1-3.

Section 3.1 of the report sets out the main assumptions used in building the MTFP.

Section 4 gives more detail regarding the budget and MTFP.

Section 5 sets out our capital strategy. Note that Section 5.9 of the report, does not take additional capital grant into account, as this is still to be confirmed. If this funding is confirmed a revised capital programme will be presented to a future Authority meeting for approval.

Section 6 of the report describes how and why reserve balances are held and used. Our reserve balances are regularly reviewed, and we use a risk-based approach when making allocations to or from them. Most of our reserve balances are earmarked for specific purposes and many result from the carry-forward of partnership contributions and match funding. Full details are set out in Appendices 4 & 5.

As S151 Officer, the Head of Business Support, reported on the adequacy of our reserve balances and whether our spending plans are affordable. She confirmed that this was the case for the 2024/25 budget. Our reserve balances are working balances, and we have an adequately funded contingency (or unallocated) reserve to cover unforeseen circumstances.

In Section 7 of the report, there is a risk analysis matrix reflecting the assumptions and uncertainties that have been considered whilst building the current MTFP.

In conclusion, a priority-focused and robust budget has been built for 2024/25; based on sensible assumptions, but with the requirement to use in-year underspend held in reserves to produce a balanced budget. With each successive year of continued flat cash settlement, it is making the budget-setting process extremely difficult, with tremendously difficult decisions having to be taken.

Although we do have the proposed additional capital funding, which will need to be spent within the financial year, it is not revenue funding which is what we most need. With a continued flat cash settlement, like many other local authorities, we are facing a cliff edge, however unlike other local authorities, we do not have a levy on council tax.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) reminded Members that in November 2023 it was announced that an additional £10 million would be made available for areas of protected landscapes, which would equate to approximately £500K for Dartmoor. This is currently capital funding (not revenue funding) which therefore does not resolve our current funding crisis. Planning to meet with the Secretary of State to discuss and one of the items on the agenda is to suggest that this amount can be converted to revenue money.

In response to a question regarding Development Management and the budgeted loss for this, it was advised that pre-app income has been included in the budget and that we are looking closely at what we provide and charge for. Unfortunately, a lot of these fee levels are set centrally. It was further advised that this service was withdrawn previously due to staff capacity but will be relaunched in April 2024.

A Member asked what would happen if we had not received the £440K and what effect this would have on our reserves and it was advised that the budget and activities would have had to be reassessed.

It was agreed that although we have no capital business interests at the moment, we would review this if the additional amount given is confirmed as capital.

It was emphasised that in Appendix 2, it states that we are heading for a £0.5 million deficit in 2025-26.

Also highlighted that Auditors previously suggested we should be working with a 5-year plan, but this is rather absurd as we have no idea how much we will have next year, let alone in 5 years' time.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that unlike local authority, we don't have full power of competency. We have a functional power of competency. Must be linked to National Park purposes so it is restricted. He went on to advise that £500K is not much to invest to gain revenue and this has to be spent in the next financial year. It will also involve more work to see how to spend and where, against backdrop of resource scarcity. He also commented on the Auditors' suggestion, which he felt was not the most sensible recommendation, as this would involve a lot of officer time producing, when we have no idea for the revenue budget going forward.

It appears doubtful that the capital amount will be changed to revenue, however we must ask the question. Members to lobby other MPs where possible. Mel Stride will attend the meeting with us, as he is actively trying to support us with the future of the National Park.

It was proposed:

That subject to any amendments proposed at the meeting and in the knowledge that amendments may be forthcoming regarding capital funding, Members:

- (i) approve the 2024/25 budget and note the indicative budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 as shown in Appendices 1 – 3;
- (ii) approve the use of Earmarked Reserves balances as set out in Appendix 5; and
- (iii) approve the Capital Investment Strategy as set out in section 4 of the report.
- (iv) Note that the Authority faces an uncertain financial future and that without further core funding for service delivery will need to undertake a business review to reduce costs to set a balanced budget in the medium term. Such a business review will have significant implications in terms of the Authority's ability to deliver National Park purposes.

Mr Gribble the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Cooper.

Further debate consisted of congratulating the Officers who continue to provide a service with little funding. It is hoped that the Press, who were present in the Meeting, will do everything they can to highlight our issues.

The Chair reported that the planned meeting with the Secretary of State would now have to be reorganized, which was very disappointing and it was hoped this would be rescheduled before the end of the financial year, in order to emphasize this critical situation to him.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the report provided and it was agreed:

That, Members:

- (i) approved the 2024/25 budget and noted the indicative budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 as shown in Appendices 1 – 3;
- (ii) approved the use of Earmarked Reserves balances as set out in Appendix 5;
- (iii) approved the Capital Investment Strategy as set out in section 4 of the report;
- (iv) noted that the Authority faces an uncertain financial future and that without further core funding for service delivery will need to undertake a business review to reduce costs, in order to set a balanced budget in the medium-term. Such a business review will have significant implications in terms of the Authority's ability to deliver National Park purposes.

### **3557 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25**

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support. (NPA/24/014)

Each year in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management, we must set out and adopt a Treasury Management & Investment Strategy.

This is normally a simple and straightforward document as:

- We are debt free and have no plans to borrow.
- We have modest working capital balances that are invested in bank treasury deposits.
- We rarely have a capital programme of any substance.



- We do not have any other type of investment activity that falls outside of the Treasury management policy, i.e. commercial investments in property, companies, or other financial assets.

The details of the Authority's Capital Plans are set out in the Budget report and on page 38 of this report.

There are no changes to the CIPFA Code this year, so the TM Policy, the Strategy and our Treasury management practices remain unchanged.

The overriding objective of the strategy (required by the Code) is to invest prudently, with priority being given to Security & Liquidity before Yield

It was proposed:

That the Authority approves and adopts the 2024/25 Treasury Management & Investment Strategy (Appendix 1)

Mr McInnes proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Mr Harper

**RESOLVED:** Members approved and agreed to adopt the 2024/25 Treasury Management & Investment Strategy (Appendix 1)

### **3558 Draft Business Plan**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/24/015)

The Business Plan is reviewed annually – actions can run across the years. The Business Plan does not cover everything that we do.

There are 21 key actions listed:

1. Peatland Restoration - Hoping for 1 year extension to the Peatland Restoration project (which is externally funded) past April 2025.
2. The target areas for the Natural Flood Management project are under discussion. This is also externally funded.
3. Three areas for landscape recovery on Dartmoor have been identified for the Landscape Scale Nature Enhancement – this is the highest density on any National Park which achieves our 30 by 30 target.
4. Support for key species. At last National Park Forum Meeting, we heard about curlew recovery programme in partnership with the Duchy of Cornwall Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. To continue this with Citizen Science. Also reintroduction of Pine Martens
5. Archaeological excavation on North Moor. Raising funding to improve historical environment features with some trained volunteers.
6. Fursdon Review – pending Government actions.

7. FiPL – in its last year with £1 million available next year for farmers.
8. Hill Farm Project – funding in place until August 2024/March 2025. We need to see how we can sustain this going forward.
9. Uplands Common – Externally funded. Comes to an end in September 2024. Can we extend.
10. Visitor Management programme – plans in place for summers 2024 and 2025. Hopeful that Police and Crime Commissioner will offer the money for the summer Marshals for a 3-year period. Still waiting for a response on this.
11. Bye-law review – paused currently subject to Darwall's High Court case re backpack camping.
12. Access for All – 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of legislation by upgrading Two Moors Way. With the capital funding from DEFRA in the last financial year creating better access. Funding will start again in 2025/26.
13. Dartmoor For All – educational visits and also reaching out to those from different backgrounds (measured by one of our Performance Indicators)
14. Better communities - Dartmoor introducing walking trails to encourage footfall in towns and villages and therefore for their struggling businesses. Also looking at how we can support on climate action vision for Princetown.
15. Digital Dartmoor – bid to BDUK to get provision of Gigabit across the park. Decision around Easter 2024 with work to start in December 2024. Also, looking at AI use across the National Park.
16. Race to Zero – climate action plan. Currently no officer capacity but have appointed someone. Start at end April.
17. Volunteering – hoping to establish a cohort of long-term volunteers who can offer practical support on a regular basis. Could in time supplement staff and carry out works without staff supervision.
18. Dartmoor Foundation – hope it will be launched by December 2024.
19. Dartmoor Dynamic Landscapes - funding. Full bid to be submitted in August 2024. Should start delivery in January 2025.
20. Integrated Management Plans for common land that we own. Lead by example in partnership with the Commoners. This has been a long-standing ambition. Hoping to take this forward in the next financial year.
21. Revised State of Park Report, and will become the basis of the next Partnership Plan.
22. Explore the idea of a Dartmoor Observatory.

23. Committed to implementing a new financial system this summer. Procured by Devon County Council. This will be a key infrastructure project.

Revised Performance Measurement framework outlined in report. Quarterly basis reporting for 2024-2025. New PFIs – see Appendix 2 - which is a working draft list with some targets outstanding. Developed in consultation with Leaders and Managers reflecting national and local requirements and is based on a flat cash settlement. Shows a significant risk area due to lack of financial and staff resources.

Staff retention and recruitment has been difficult this year. Neil White has done some work on this and calculated that the time in man-hours lost between staff member leaving and new member of staff being appointed is the equivalent of 2 full-time staff members.

It was proposed that Members:

- (i) review the draft Business Plan for 2024/25 and draft list of revised performance indicators and offer any comments.
- (ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair, to agree the final version of the business plan and set of performance indicators and targets for 2024/25.

Members are glad to hear that the need to monitor the actions in Partnership Plan has been recognised. A number of targets have been set for 2022/23/24. The Members are interested in hearing the outcome of this monitoring which will be reported back either to the management working panel or to Authority.

State of the Park report to be reported at Authority Meeting. Governance framework of the partnership plan needs to be picked up as this might have slipped. When this is done, a table form of targets per year will be produced.

It was agreed that this is a very ambitious plan due to level of staffing and wonders if this gives the wrong impression considering our previous discussion on budget? This plan is a public document and puts lots of stress on small amount of people. Should we stop doing so much to make it clear to the Government how the lack of funding is affecting us?

Partnership working is very important and needs to ensure we have as many partners as possible. Hill Farm Project needs to be celebrated for its success over last 20 years. Happy about Commons and clarity over AI.

It should be highlighted that most of the plans are grant funded. We need to set out going forward what we are achieving through grant funding and the danger of the lack of base funding from DEFRA. This core allows us to bid for further funding. It should show that the amount of spend within DNPA is from a small amount of funding from DEFRA and multiplied many times.

In response to points above,

External funding – looking at 21 actions, at least 16 actions are due to external funding. Shows importance of our operating model on back of small core grant.

Partnership working – vast majority in partnership with others with soft powers of partnership.

We can now celebrate the Hill Farm Project.

We are ambitious however, surely DEFRA would not give money to someone with no ambitions/ideas/plans and not delivering, but would give money who shows potential and is forward looking. Surely, it is better to aim high.

Staff are all committed and passionate about the park and prepared to go the extra mile. Cannot trade on goodwill. Staff survey results were very pleasing.

A Member raised the fact that we currently invest 96% of the National Park grant on staffing. This would normally signal no long-term future for a business and shows that if the grant drops then staff will need to go.

The Chair added that investment in staff in organisations like this is the most important thing you can do so the high percentage is not surprising. Without the staff we would not be able to have the business plan as currently have.

Mr Harper proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Mr Dracup.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the content of the report and agreed to:

- (i) the draft Business Plan for 2024/25 and draft list of revised performance indicators.
- (ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair, to agree the final version of the business plan and set of performance indicators and targets for 2024/25.

### **3559 Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/24/016)

Key implications for Authority and National Park outlined. By 2030 every part of England who wants to, will have a devolution deal as the engine of growth.

Devon and Torbay are creating a Level 2 (of 3) Devolution which does not require a change in local government authority. This will not include the Dartmoor National Park Authority. Team Joint Committee membership is being offered (along with Exmoor). Joint Committee will be a Consultative forum only and will not have any decision powers. Proposed deal has no impact on Authority's functions or roles. Devolution deals are likely to be how we will access funding streams going forward. This will likely not change irrespective of winner of next Election.

It does mention housing -small sites and green housing as well as prosperity fund money and transport functions with greater integration with public transport. Net zero, nature recovery and innovative climate changes. Might influence the Landscape Management which will be important for Dartmoor.

It was proposed that Members:

- (i) authorise the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to write a letter outlining the Authority's support for the draft Devolution Agreement; and,
- (ii) agree to the potential appointment of the Chair of the Authority to the proposed Team Devon Joint Committee (subject to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) being satisfied that there is no adverse risk or cost to the Authority through such membership).

Member who is a Devon County Councillor can advise that the Devolution Deal is a high-level strategic partnership. County Council remains the Highway Authority. £16 million is "new money" and is to be directed into new grant energy deals and there will be an extra £15 million for training and employment to be devolved to the partnership. Not a lot currently to concern DNPA but it makes sense to be involved together with other authorities at this stage and signal that we are willing to work in partnership.

Mr McInnes proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Mrs Hill.

Member suggested that at this point it would be rather foolish not to be in with this. We cannot influence anything from the outside. Not restricting further debate and not costing us anything. There is no obligation for them to include National Parks in the future, so we should ensure we are part of this now.

It was suggested by the Chair that we should confirm being consultees as soon as possible with Joint Team Devon to ensure future consultation and agree to work with them. This will likely be the future route for funding as scenarios change.

Another member however felt it unnecessary to write in support, as this will not benefit DNPA. No need for us to support its existence just at this moment as it will go ahead anyway and better to remain neutral while still possible.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) agreed that we have been formally consulted and suggested that a letter of support would need to carefully explain that under the levelling up and regeneration act they have a legal duty to further National Park purposes. He believes in order to do this, we need to be part of the joint committee as this could potentially offer longer term benefits to us and if we are not engaged now this could be detrimental.

The Chair agreed that currently it is best to ensure we are uppermost in the minds of local council representatives (as far as possible).

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the report and agreed to:

- (i) Authorise the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to write a letter outlining the Authority's support for the draft Devolution Agreement. and,
- (ii) Agree to the potential appointment of the Chair of the Authority to the proposed Team Devon Joint Committee (subject to the Chief Executive

(National Park Officer) being satisfied that there is no adverse risk or cost to the Authority through such membership)

### **3560 Hessary View**

Mrs Hill left the room as she declared an interest.

Members received the report of the Director of Spatial Planning (NPA/24/017)

Potential transfer of Section 106 money to West Devon Council with regard to Hessary View in Princetown. Originally granted towards community purposes in two tranches, followed by a Deed of Variation to change to affordable housing.

It was reported that we had a 10-year time frame to spend the money, with the first portion of the payment in 2015 and therefore we have until August 2025 to spend the rest of the money. If not spent, the developer can request a refund of the money.

An investigation has been conducted into how we can spend the money in Chagford which has not been forthcoming. We therefore suggest a change and to spend this money in Hessary View, Princetown which can offer 2 parcels of land for up to 10 dwellings.

Other options include asking the developer for an extension of the time frame or spend the money in Chagford on two open market properties at Lamb Park and subsequently create Section 106s to restrict their use. Hessary View could give Chagford some interest in the freehold or a property purchased just to ensure we keep the money.

Extension of Section 106 with a viable option was not looking positive. Choice between two properties or up to ten. Clearly opportunities like this do not come along often so important to ensure we maximise the money.

First three years in Chagford, after this West Devon Borough Council Area and then finally in the National Park.

It was proposed that Members:

- (i) Agree the principle of transferring up to £175,000 to West Devon Borough Council to enable the delivery of local needs affordable housing at a site known as Hessary View, Princetown. The £175,000 is part of a sum of money paid by a developer in lieu of on-site affordable housing under planning approval 0524/14. The money is restricted to use for local needs affordable housing.
- (ii) Delegate to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, the final decision as to whether to proceed with this transfer.

Mrs Mott apologised and told the meeting that she should have declared an interest previously as she sits on West Devon Council.

A Member asked how this change to the allocation of funding was being viewed in Chagford. In response, it was advised that of course they believe that the money should remain in Chagford. They believe we have got the opportunity to spend the money locally and benefit the parish. However, it was never guaranteed that the money would be spent in Chagford. This is the first instalment of Section 106 money and another £175K is to be spent before 2029 which could be used in Chagford. We have tried our best to ensure that the money is spent to options at local level.

A Member questioned the legality of transferring the money to a development where DNPA is a landowner, and they were reassured that we are acting totally within the law and ethically, with West Devon Council taking the lead.

It was agreed that we should not lose the money, but Member not comfortable with the idea of transferring money away from Chagford without a representative of the parish in the meeting. The Chagford community originally embraced the development, and this led to a great deal of trust between Chagford and the National Park which could well be eroded with this decision.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that we are not where we want to be with this money. We are in a situation where timing means we need to spend the money elsewhere in order to prevent the loss of the money altogether. We have always enjoyed a relationship with Chagford. This might be challenged but we will try to sustain. We want to work closely with Chagford to ensure the remaining £175K is spent in Chagford. If Hessary View does not happen, there is still an opportunity of a fall back.

Members asked whether we have an up-to-date housing needs survey that shows there is a need in Princetown. Survey carried out in April last year. Identified a need of 16 homes.

We will ensure that money is used for local people and local needs and that they are within the cascades.

It was agreed that the money has been split into two parts (£350K) and even though the first part was not spent in Chagford it does not mean that the second half won't be.

Mr Thomas proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Mr Smerdon.

West Devon have declared a housing crisis, so would rather spend the money than not. This situation is very often the case with Section 106 money for affordable housing. It is hoped that further funding was directed towards Chagford area so they are fully supported.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the content of the report and,

- (i) Agreed the principle of transferring up to £175,000 to West Devon Borough Council to enable the delivery of local needs affordable housing at a site known as Hessary View, Princetown. The £175,000 is part of a

sum of money paid by a developer in lieu of on-site affordable housing under planning approval 0524/14. The money is restricted to use for local needs affordable housing.

- (ii) Delegated to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, the final decision as to whether to proceed with this transfer.

### **3561 Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor**

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/24/018).

Last year Natural England wrote to the commoners about renewal which would involve huge stocking reductions. This led to uproar.

Agro-environment Stake Holder Group was created and the government put the Fursdon Review in place.

David Fursdon and his panel did an excellent job in de-escalating the situation. The review was also very positive about the role of DNPA, mentioning certain projects and our leadership and facilitation role.

Amongst recommendations made, highlights were:

- Land use management group should be created
- Review SSSIs are still as when notified
- Grazing on Dartmoor / potential agro-environmental scheme
- Evidence / monitoring – more monitoring data in central repository

Ask Paper has been produced by DNPA in response to the Fursdon Review. To include:

- Resource for Hearts and Minds. Farming community and Natural England – need to work together to do more for nature to try and get them working together and engage the younger generations.
- Evidence Call – suggesting resource for a living Observatory – where partners come together to identify data needs. Engage the local community in the collection. Use data to help informative decisions. Not passive but active. DNPA is well placed to secretariat, but we do not have the resources to do this.
- SSSI Review – work on how we measure nature. Moves away from habitat conditions and towards a systems approach – soil, habitats, species etc and engage farming community.
- Governance – create a shadow group of existing stake holders. Have set out some ideas for this.

Use Steve Barclay meeting to outline these requests and he will visit Dartmoor. We will then have a rough list of requirements. Staff have been redeployed on this. We do not want to miss this opportunity or miss his recommendations.

It was proposed that Members:



- (i) endorse the findings from the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor.
- (ii) Support the priority areas for action identified in section 3; and
- (iii) note that the leadership and facilitation role envisaged for the Authority by the independent panel will require additional resources.

Good report and well received. Although it says The Government will act on it quickly, but won't be that quick. Is the Govt going to come back on the report or will it be Natural England. The review was commissioned by DEFRA so it is for DEFRA to respond. Natural England will be involved in responding (they are part of DEFRA and individual advisers), so it will be a DEFRA response.

Further to a Member's question, it was replied that no other Parks have done anything similar, but many would like something similar and we could potentially set a precedent. This is an opportunity for Dartmoor as a collective and we need to seize this opportunity.

A Member commented that this has given Dartmoor a fantastic opportunity. We should take it and run / continue to give that leadership to pull people together and collaborate. However, we will have to find resources to do this. Need to ensure we are not duplicating any work. Great opportunity to respect the farmers' voices.

At Meeting on 15 March, Will Dracup will be representing Authority along with David Atwell – this was previously agreed by the Members.

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

**RESOLVED:** Members agreed to:

- (i) endorse the findings from the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor.
- (ii) support the priority areas for action identified in section 3; and
- (iii) note that the leadership and facilitation role envisaged for the Authority by the independent panel will require additional resources.

The Meeting was closed.