

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Public Minutes of Annual Meeting held on 27 June 2025

Present: Will Dracup, Michael Fife Cook, Peter Harper, Gay Hill, Mike Jeffery, Richard Keeling, Jack Major, Sally Morgan, Caroline Mott, John Nutley, Mark Owen, Guy Pannell, Mark Renders, Stuart Rogers, Mary Seddon, Catherine Shewan (Independent Person), Peter Smerdon, Dan Thomas, Mark Williams, Pamela Woods

Apologies: None

Officers in attendance: Kevin Bishop (Chief Executive (National Park Officer)), Neil White (Head of Organisational Development), Penny Bailey (Business Support – Minutes)

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) welcomed the Press, Mrs Shewan, Independent Person and new Members Mr Fife Cook, Mr Keeling, Mr Major and Mr Rogers. He also thanked Ms Woods who had served as Chair since her election in 2019. He added that, during this time, she had provided strong leadership, excellent chairmanship and passionate support for the Authority and the National Park.

The Chief Executive informed the meeting that under Standing Orders it fell to him to preside over the first item of business, namely the election of Chair. Once elected, the Chair would conduct the rest of the meeting. He asked Mr White, as Monitoring Officer, to inform Members of nominations for Chair.

3675 Election of Chair

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mr Dracup. No other nominations had been received. Mr Dracup confirmed his willingness to stand for election and thanked his fellow Members for their support, adding that he would consider it an honour to serve as Chair of the Authority for the next 12 months.

RESOLVED:

Mr Dracup was duly elected to serve as Chair until the next Annual Meeting.

Mr Dracup added his sincere thanks to Ms Woods for her excellent leadership as Chair over recent years.

3676 Election of Deputy Chair

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mr Renders. No other nominations had been received. Mr Renders confirmed his willingness to stand for election.

RESOLVED:

Mr Renders was elected to serve as Deputy Chair until the next Annual Meeting.

3677 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

There were no apologies.

3678 Appointments to Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Panels

Development Management Committee

The Monitoring Officer reported that no written notifications had been received from any Members to signify that they did not wish to serve on the Committee.

RESOLVED:

All Members were appointed to serve on the Development Management Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Audit and Governance Committee

The Monitoring Officer advised that there is a requirement for ten Members to sit on the Audit and Governance Committee to include at least one local authority Member and one Member appointed by the Secretary of State. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee would be ex-officio Members. Expressions of interest had been amended since the meeting papers had been published and were as follows: Mr Dracup, Mrs Hill, Mrs Morgan, Mr Nutley, Mr Owen, Mr Renders, Dr Seddon, Mr Smerdon, Mr Williams and Ms Woods to serve on the committee.

RESOLVED:

Mr Dracup, Mrs Hill, Mrs Morgan, Mr Nutley, Mr Owen, Mr Renders, Dr Seddon, Mr Smerdon, Mr Williams and Ms Woods were elected to serve on the Audit and Governance Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Standards Sub-Committee

The Monitoring Officer advised that there is a requirement for six Members of the Audit and Governance Committee to sit on the Standards Sub-Committee, of whom at least two Members shall be appointed to the Authority by a local authority. Expressions of interest had been received from Mrs Hill, Mrs Morgan, Mr Nutley, Mr Renders, Mr Williams and Ms Woods.

RESOLVED:

Mr Dracup (ex-officio), Mrs Hill, Mrs Morgan, Mr Nutley, Mr Renders (ex-officio), Mr Williams and Ms Woods were elected to serve on the Standards Sub-Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Park Management Working Panel

The appointment of Members who had indicated an interest, as set out in the report, was proposed. The Chair reminded all that any Members can attend the Park Management Working Panel. Mr Owen, Mr Harper and Mr Dracup also expressed an interest in joining the panel.

RESOLVED:

Mr Dracup, Mr Harper, Mrs Hill, Mrs Morgan, Mrs Mott, Mr Nutley, Mr Owen, Mr Pannell, Mr Renders, Dr Seddon, Mr Williams and Ms Woods were appointed to serve on the Park Management Working Panel until the next Annual Meeting.

Planning and Sustainable Development Working Panel

The appointment of Members who had indicated an interest, as set out in the report, was proposed. The Chair reminded all that any Members can attend the Planning and Sustainable Development Working Panel. Mr Pannell and Mr Dracup also expressed an interest in joining the panel. Mr Thomas requested that his expression of interest be removed.

RESOLVED:

Mr Dracup, Mrs Hill, Mrs Morgan, Mrs Mott, Mr Nutley, Mr Pannell, Mr Renders, Dr Seddon, Mr Smerdon, Mr Williams and Ms Woods were appointed to serve on the Planning and Sustainable Development Working Panel until the next Annual Meeting.

3679 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair – Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Panels

Chair – Development Management Committee

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mrs Mott. No other nominations had been received.

Mrs Mott confirmed her willingness to stand for election.

RESOLVED:

Mrs Mott was duly elected to serve as Chair of the Development Management Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Deputy Chair – Development Management Committee

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mr Pannell. No other nominations had been received.

Mr Pannell confirmed his willingness to stand for election.

RESOLVED:

Mr Pannell was duly elected to serve as Deputy Chair of the Development Management Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Chair - Audit and Governance Committee

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mrs Morgan. No other nominations had been received.

Mrs Morgan confirmed her willingness to stand for election.

RESOLVED:

Mrs Morgan was duly elected to serve as Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Deputy Chair – Audit and Governance Committee

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Dr Seddon. No other nominations had been received.

Dr Seddon confirmed her willingness to stand for election.

RESOLVED:

Dr Seddon was duly elected to serve as Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Chair – Standards Sub-Committee

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mrs Morgan. No other nominations had been received. Mrs Morgan confirmed her willingness to stand for election.

RESOLVED:

Mrs Morgan was duly elected to serve as Chair of the Standards Sub-Committee until the next Annual Meeting.

Chair – Park Management Working Panel

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mr Harper. Mr Harper confirmed his willingness to stand for election.

The Monitoring Officer clarified for Members that Mr Harper's term of office with the Authority is currently until the end of September 2025. It had been determined that it would be prudent for the Authority to nominate a successor in the event that Mr Harper was no longer a Member at the end of September 2025. An expression of interest had been received from Dr Seddon to substitute/deputise in this role should Mr Harper no longer be a Member of the Authority.

Dr Seddon confirmed her willingness to stand for election as substitute/deputy.

RESOLVED:

Mr Harper was duly elected to serve as Chair of the Park Management Working Panel.

Dr Seddon was duly elected to serve as substitute/deputy in the event of Mr Harper no longer being a Member at the end of September 2025.

Chair - Planning and Sustainable Development Working Panel

The Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that one nomination had been received for Mr Smerdon. Mr Smerdon confirmed his willingness to stand for election.

RESOLVED:

Mr Smerdon was duly elected to serve as Chair of the Planning and Sustainable Development Working Panel until the next Annual Meeting.

3680 Appointments to Working Groups

Chair's Advisory Group

The Monitoring Officer advised that Standing Orders anticipate a convention that the membership of this group will fall to the various Chairs of the Authority's Committees and Working Panels. Members indicated that they wished to continue to apply this convention.

RESOLVED:

Mr Dracup, Mr Renders, Mrs Mott, Mrs Morgan, Mr Harper and Mr Smerdon were appointed to serve, alongside the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), on the Chair's Advisory Group until the next Annual Meeting.

Chief Executive Performance Review Group

Membership is determined by the Authority at the Annual Meeting and usually consists of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority and Chair of Development Management Committee.

RESOLVED:

Mr Dracup, Mr Renders and Mrs Mott were appointed to serve on the Chief Executive Performance Review Group until the next Annual Meeting.

3681 Appointments to Outside Bodies 2025/26

The Monitoring Officer asked Members to note that when an appointed Member representative is unable to attend a meeting, that Member will be required to contact the appointed substitute Member direct, at the earliest opportunity, to arrange for the substitute Member to attend the meeting in their absence.

The Monitoring Officer stated that this is in addition to Standing Order 5.3 which requires Members "to notify Parke of their apology not less than 3 days prior to the meeting."

He advised Members that the Authority would contact all external 'outside bodies' to advise of Member representation and would provide Members with relevant contact details in order that they could be advised of meetings.

The Monitoring Officer also reminded Members to confirm their attendance at meetings of 'outside bodies' to which they have been appointed, either shortly after the meeting or

when submitting their quarterly return regarding attendance at Parish/Town Council meetings.

RESOLVED:

Members were appointed to represent the Authority on outside bodies until the next Annual Meeting as per the attached schedule.

3682 Calendar of Meetings 2025/26

Members considered the Calendar of Meetings for 2025/26

RESOLVED:

Members APPROVED the Calendar of Meetings for 2025/26.

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MEMBER APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2025/2026

Please Note: When an appointed Member representative is unable to attend a meeting, that Member will be required to contact the appointed substitute Member direct, at the earliest opportunity, to arrange for the substitute Member to attend the meeting in their absence.

Body/Group	2025/26 Member
Campaign for National Parks (1) The Campaign for National Parks is a charity that works to protect and enhance the National Parks and areas that merit national park status, and to promote understanding and quiet enjoyment of them. (The member is invited by the Campaign, but approved by the Authority)	Mrs Caroline Mott Dr Mary Seddon (Substitute)
Dartmoor Access Forum (2) The Local Access Forum is a statutory advisory body established by the DNPA in accordance with the requirements of the CROW Act 2000. The Forum meets four times a year. At least one member should be a serving member of the Park Management Working Panel.	Mrs Sally Morgan Mr Mark Owen
Dartmoor Commoners' Council (1 Member plus a substitute) The Dartmoor Commoners' Council was set up under the provisions of the 1985 Dartmoor Commons Act, to regulate agricultural use of the commons. It consists of representatives of the commoners, the DNPA, the Duchy of Cornwall, common land owners and a Veterinarian Surgeon. It meets eight times a year.	Mr William Dracup (it was agreed not to appoint a substitute Member)
Dartmoor Hill Farm Project Steering Group (1) The DNPA has secured funding from a variety of sources to extend work of the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project. The overall aim of the project is to contribute to the viability of farm businesses on Dartmoor in ways that help sustain the special qualities of the National Park. In the coming year there will be a review of the project and associated steering group.	Mr Mark Williams
Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative (5) A joint initiative with Devon and Cornwall Police and other partners. It is recommended that the four Secretary of State Parish Members are appointed as 'community representatives' plus the Chair of the Authority. It is proposed to meet twice a year.	Mr William Dracup Mrs Gay Hill Mr Mark Renders Mr Peter Smerdon Mr Mark Williams Ms Pamela Woods
Dartmoor Steering Group (3) The Steering Group was set up by Parliament following the 1975/76 inquiry conducted by Lady Sharp into the military training use of Dartmoor. Its purpose is to reconcile the (sometimes) competing interests of military training and national park designation and to seek ways of minimising the adverse impact of the training requirement at any one time. More recently the Group has focussed in a positive way on conservation and access benefits of the Defence Estate on Dartmoor. It consists of representatives of all the military interest, the DNPA, the Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England, Historic England and the Dartmoor Commoners' Council. It is served by the Dartmoor Working Party comprised of officers of the DNPA, MoD and other bodies. The Steering Group reports to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry for Defence. It meets annually. (It is customary for the Chair and Deputy Chair to take two of these seats)	Mr William Dracup Mrs Caroline Mott Dr Mary Seddon

Body/Group	2025/26 Member
<p>Dartmoor Trust (1)</p> <p>The Dartmoor Trust has one DNPA Member representative on the Board of Management. The purposes of the Trust closely reflect National Park purposes. The Trust was established by the DNPA as an independent charitable Trust in the early 1990s in order to harness public and other donations for the good of Dartmoor.</p>	Dr Mary Seddon
<p>Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes Executive Board (1)</p> <p>DDL is a partnership bringing the Authority together alongside a number of partners to deliver the National Lottery heritage funded programme from 2025 until 2030. The partnership has a landscape focus on Dartmoor's river catchments of the Okement, the Dart and the Erme & Yealm. The programme also has a particular focus on the communities of Okehampton, Princetown and Ivybridge.</p> <p>Requirement: Chair of the Authority to Chair the Executive Board which meets four times per annum. A named member should be identified as a substitute.</p>	<p>Mr William Dracup</p> <p>Dr Mary Seddon (Substitute)</p>
<p>Devon Communities Together (1)</p> <p>Devon Communities Together (former Community Council for Devon) exists to promote local community interests. Member representation is required only at the Annual Conference and the Annual General Meeting.</p>	Mr Peter Smerdon
<p>Joint Advisory Committee on Provision of Housing for Local Needs (3)</p> <p>This is a joint advisory committee of the three District Councils in the National Park, the DNPA, Devon Communities Together and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). It exists to co-ordinate the planning functions of the NPA with the housing functions of the other bodies. It meets twice a year and is chaired by an Authority Member.</p>	<p>Mrs Gay Hill Mr Guy Pannell Mr Mark Renders Mr Mark Williams Mr Jack Major</p>
<p>Land Availability Assessment Panel (3)</p> <p>The Land Availability Assessment (LAA) Panel is set up to consider land submitted to the Call for Sites for the Local Plan. The Panel comprises professionals in their field such as land and estate agents, small and large developers, the Environment Agency and Highways Agency. Three Community Representatives, appointed from the Authority, may also attend the Panel. The purpose of the Panel is to consider whether a potential housing or employment site may be technically deliverable.</p>	<p>Mrs Gay Hill Mr Guy Pannell Mr Peter Smerdon</p>
<p>Meldon Viaduct Company (1)</p> <p>In February 1999, the Meldon Viaduct Company was set up for the sole purpose of safeguarding and maintaining the Viaduct to ensure its future as a monument to Victorian engineering and as a valuable recreational resource. The appointed member will sit on the Board of Directors along with representatives from the Aggregate Industries Limited, Dartmoor Railway, Sustrans, and the County and Borough Councils. The group meets quarterly.</p>	Mrs Caroline Mott
<p>National Parks England (1)</p> <p>A limited Company established by the ten English National Park Authorities to represent their views and promote their needs at a national level. The Directors of the Company are the respective Chairs of the National Park Authorities.</p>	Mr William Dracup

Body/Group	2025/26 Member
<p>National Parks Partnerships Limited (1)</p> <p><i>A limited liability partnership established by all 15 UK National Parks as a vehicle to secure commercial sponsorship to fund conservation and recreation projects in the National Parks. It is recommended that the Chair of the Authority is formally appointed to the Partnership Board, as the Authority's representative, with the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) acting as a deputy. The Board will meet once a year.</i></p>	<p>Mr William Dracup</p> <p>Mr Mark Renders (Substitute)</p> <p>(Mr Peter Harper will continue as informal adviser for continuity purposes)</p>
<p>Team Devon Joint Committee (1 plus a substitute)</p> <p>Team Devon (Leaders and Chief Executives) have established this Joint Committee to formalise the existing partnership that would create opportunities to strengthen joint work, partnership and collaboration. The Joint Committee will focus on how Devon's National Park Authorities, parish, town, district and county councils will work jointly on shared priorities for the benefit of people and places across the county. The functions of the Joint Committee will be to:</p> <p>Support continuous improvement and value for money in the ways that Devon's National Park Authorities, parish, town, district and county councils exercise their duties and responsibilities through, for example, aligning performance measures and sharing or integrating services.</p> <p>Contribute strategically to the environmental, economic and social wellbeing objectives for Devon's people and communities.</p> <p>The Chair of the Authority will be the Authority's representative on the Team Devon Joint Committee and that the Deputy Chair of the Authority will substitute for the Chair on the Team Devon Joint Committee.</p>	<p>Mr William Dracup</p> <p>Mr Mark Renders (Substitute)</p>
<p>Dartmoor Partnership Plan Board (1)</p> <p>The Dartmoor Partnership Plan outlines the strategic oversight to shape the future of Dartmoor, aiming for a climate-resilient and nature-rich environment by 2045. The Board's role includes ensuring alignment with statutory purposes, collaboration, monitoring, and promoting the plan effectively.</p> <p>The Partnership Board, comprising representatives from various organisations, focus is on strategic leadership, collaboration, monitoring progress, data collection, and consensus building to support the Dartmoor Partnership Plan's development.</p> <p>The Board meets quarterly (4 meetings per year) to discuss the plan's progress, with the Dartmoor National Park Authority facilitating the meetings and maintaining oversight of the plan's production and monitoring.</p> <p>The Chair of the Authority will be appointed to the Board, with the Deputy Chair acting as substitute.</p>	<p>Mr William Dracup</p> <p>Mr Mark Renders (Substitute)</p>
<p>Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Assessment Panel (2)</p> <p>FiPL is a ring-fenced grant from DEFRA which is administered by the Authority. It offers grants to farmers and farmer groups and has been extended for this financial year.</p>	<p>Mr William Dracup</p> <p>Mr Peter Harper</p> <p>Mr Mark Williams (to replace Mr Harper at the end of his term of office)</p>

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.45am.