



NPA/25/024

Dartmoor National Park Authority

25th July 2025

Update on Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes programme

Report of the Strategic Planning & Projects Manager

Recommendation: **That Members note of the contents of the report.**

1 Introduction

This report provides a summary update on the progress of the Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes programme since being awarded funding by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in December 2024.

2 Background

- 2.1 In July 2024 Members approved submission of a bid to The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for a partnership programme of work to be delivered between 2025 and 2030 ([NPA/24/032](#)), we duly submitted the bid for funding and were awarded a grant of £3,124,178, towards the total programme value of £5,559,384, at the end of 2024.
- 2.2 Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes (DDL) is a partnership comprising nine organisations, delivering fifteen projects (see Appendix A for a list of projects). Not all projects run throughout the full five years.
- 2.3 DDL has a landscape focus on three of Dartmoor's river catchments, the Okement, Dart, Erme & Yealm as well as the hubs of Okehampton, Princetown and Ivybridge (a map of the programme area is shown in Appendix 3).
- 2.4 DNPA is the lead partner, the Woodland Trust being the other principal partner. The rest of the delivery partnership is made up of the RSPB, Sustrans, South West Water (for the South West Peatland Partnership), Environment Agency (for the Dartmoor Headwaters Project), Shallowford Trust, Emergency Exit Arts, and Westcountry Rivers Trust.

3 Progress & milestones

- 3.1 Not all projects are due to start straight away, or to run for the full five years of the programme. Two that were due to be underway from the start, Moorland Birds and River & Moorland Festivals are going well (see Appendix 1 for a table summarising progress, cost and risk for each project).
- 3.2 We are behind schedule with the formal signing of HF's Permission to Start form (a key contractual document), this has been due to technical problem preventing us accessing the online form. The issue is now resolved, and we gained access to the form in late June.
- 3.3 Some projects have suffered a small delay as a result of this, particularly those for which a new member of staff is to be recruited (we have been able to proceed at risk while waiting for the formal signing of Permission to Start, and have been eligible to claim against the grant since end December 2024. But most organisations will not recruit into new posts until the formal contract is signed). Delays are relatively minor, and all projects/partners anticipate making up the time that has been lost.

4 Governance arrangements

- 4.1 The Partnership is overseen by an Executive Board, comprising representatives from DNPA and the Woodland Trust. This board meets quarterly (aligning with quarterly reporting and claims required by NLHF). The Executive Board is chaired by a member of DNPA, with an invitation to the Chair of DNPA.
- 4.2 A full meeting of the Delivery Board, all Partners represented, takes place twice a year.
- 4.3 Communication and collaboration across the Partnership will be facilitated by a monthly meeting of project delivery leads.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Being at an early stage, the programme shows little deviation from the planned budget. However, some changes to the DNPA programme team structure have been made since submission, added to this is the unforeseen change in Employers' National Insurance contributions, resulting in an increase to the cost of staff employed by DNPA of approximately £34,000. The programme budget contains an allowance for inflation and contingency of over £300,000 so comfortably accommodates this increase.
- 5.2 Partners are committed to finding additional match funding for the programme and included a Fundraising Plan valued at £389,000 as part of the bid to NLHF. £195,000 of this additional funding is intended for the River & Moorland Festivals and we submitted our first bid to Arts Council England (ACE), for £48,000 in April of this year. Unfortunately, this application has not been successful, we will review feedback from ACE and re-submit for a smaller amount.

- 5.3 Most projects requiring additional match funding have the flexibility to be scaled down to still deliver at a reduced budget.

6. Equality and Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The DDL Partnership specifically aims to increase understanding of and between under-represented groups and to provide access to nature and the National Park to a wider range of people, providing better physical access and better information. The Partnership aims to increase the amount, diversity and understanding of natural and cultural heritage on Dartmoor.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes programme provides a significant opportunity to deliver the aims of the National Park Partnership Plan by working in partnership with a range of other organisations, stakeholders and local community groups. We are still at an early stage of programme delivery, but making progress, and the coming months will see increasing benefit provided across the Partnership's aims.

JAMES SHARPE

Background Papers:

Report April 2022 (NPA/22/020)

Report January 2024 (NPA/24/01)

Report & decision July 2024 ([NPA/24/032](#))

Appendix 1: list of DDL projects including summary report

Appendix 2: Table showing roles created within DDL

Appendix 3: Map of DDL area

Appendix 1: Showing brief summary of each project progress

Code	Project title & description	Progress	Cost	Risk	Comment
Dyn01 HAB	Understanding Grasslands: training in grassland survey techniques and recording species rich grassland.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Moor Meadows progressing Big Meadow Count during spring 2025.
Dyn02 RIV	Understanding Rivers: the Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) will recruit, train and support a network of volunteers and volunteer coordinators to undertake water quality and biological monitoring in the DDL focus rivers.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Due to start 2026
Dyn03 BIR	Understanding Moorland Birds: establish a small team of skilled volunteers to undertake annual surveys, aims to help land managers and owners across the Commons and Newtakes understand more about the birds on their land.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Spring bird survey complete, replicating the surveys at sites established in 2024 (during project development) with same volunteers. Recruiting 4 new community volunteer surveyors as one volunteer no longer able to commit and one volunteer currently ill. Liaising with Central Dartmoor Landscape Recovery team.
Dyn04 ATH	Dartmoor's Ancient Tree Hunt: work with local communities to raise awareness about and encourage people to survey and record Ancient and Veteran Trees. The Woodland Trust will collaborate with other partners engaging young people.	Behind schedule	As budget	Risk as expected	Planned to start engagement with audience summer 2025. Delay to dedicated DDL Officer recruitment as WT awaiting Permission to Start before recruiting. Should catch up in medium term.
Dyn05 HAL	Hall Farm: learning from a newly tenanted farm to understand how trees, woodland and other natural capital can be successfully incorporated into a viable family farm business.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Tenant established at Hall Farm, Seb Powell & family.
Dyn06 WNM	Wood n' Moor: further developing an economically viable model for restoration of ancient semi-natural woodland sites on lower value plantations.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	February/March 2025, helped Ivybridge Town Council with felling in Longtimber Wood and ran demonstration day for woodland/land managers to better understand the project.
Dyn07 PEA	Peatland Restoration: While the Peatland Partnership undertake restoration of important peatland sites, other DDL Partners will help people learn more about this natural resource and seek opportunities for other integrated benefits.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Three peatland restoration sites planned for winter 25/6, two in the Okement catchment and one in Yealm.
Dyn08 WLD	The Dartmoor Headwaters Project: is an Environment Agency funded project that delivers natural flood management (NFM) interventions to help reduce downstream flood risk. Alongside flood mitigation, the project aims to enhance biodiversity and build climate resilience across seven priority catchments, including those above Ivybridge and Okehampton.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Tree planting in Erme catchment winter 24/5

Dyn09 FRM	Hillfarm Hub: will provide additional support through the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, this will include knowledge sharing opportunities and targeted help to develop bespoke projects and access funding for farms and Commons.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Started to engage farmers and Commons Association July 2025.
Con10 FES	River and Moorland Festivals: A series of community focused arts festivals in the three towns, developed in consultation with local communities and creative people. The festivals provide a focus for partners to work together and help celebrate the landscape story.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Increased risk	Stakeholder engagement well underway, continuing from development phase and working towards first Festival in June 2026. Steering Group for Ivybridge Festival established and met twice (includes representatives from South Hams District and Ivybridge Town Councils, local artists, partners and local organisations). Match funding application to Arts Council England £48k but just heard unsuccessful (hence increased risk), will resubmit following feedback and look for other funding. Project has been designed flexibly, to adjust scope to budget as necessary. Headwaters and Woodland Trust have committed additional funding from reserves to commission work for Ivybridge Festival.
Con11 MSC	Moorscapes: a community grant scheme for smaller local organisations to deliver their own projects.	Behind schedule	As budget	Risk as expected	Not yet underway but a priority for year one.
Con12 GWY	Harnessing the Flow: volunteers will be trained and supported to undertake surveys of tin streaming features on Dartmoor.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	
Con13 GWY	Gateway Hubs: improving accessibility and knowledge of local green space in the three towns with a focus on better understanding of Dartmoor as a living landscape and responsible visitor behaviour.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Stakeholder engagement and scoping of work planned for year one, also match funding and purchase of Trumper.
Con14 BIK	Bike It Moor: working with primary and secondary schools in Ivybridge, Okehampton and Princetown to increase the number of pupils and their families actively travelling (walk, wheel, scoot and cycle) and connect them to local green spaces.	Behind schedule	As budget	Risk as expected	Recruitment for Project Officer underway, interviews end July. Project start now planned for October 2025 half term (originally September).
Con15 F2C	Farm to City: A programme of activities to connect and engage communities living in Wandsworth, London, with farming and conservation communities on Dartmoor. The project will take a Dartmoor farm to inner London.	Progress as scheduled	As budget	Risk as expected	Delivery planned to start 2027 for event in 2028.

Appendix 2: Table showing roles created within DDL

Staff posts to be appointed (with Dartmoor National Park Authority for 5 years unless specified):	
Conservation Adviser 0.6FTE (RSPB)	RSPB Conservation Adviser position (0.6FTE) in post from mid December 2024 until 30 November 2029
Programme Manager 1FTE	Programme will be managed by the DNPA Strategic Planning & Projects Manager, being allocated full time to this work from June 25.
Land Management Officer 1FTE	Land Management Officer role will be met by existing staff within the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, officer allocated to this work from July 25
Community Engagement Officer 1FTE	During recent planning have changed approach to achieve best value, now allocating Community Engagement Officer 0.6fte from existing DNPA Outreach & Engagement team, creating an additional and new 0.6fte assistant role to work alongside them (assistant post at lower grade). Assistant to be recruited through open process July 2025.
Communications Officer 0.6FTE	Community Engagement Assistant and Comms Officer (DNPA) to be recruited July '25 through an open process.
Finance and Administration Assistant 0.6FTE Programme Assistant 0.6FTE	Finance and Programme Assistants (two 0.6fte roles) to be allocated from exsiting DNPA staff. Should be underway July 2025
Woodland Adviser 1FTE (Woodland Trust)	Woodland Advisor (WT) to be recruited as soon as Permission to Start finalised (July 25)
Farm to City Project Officer 0.6FTE, 1 year (Shallowford Trust)	Farm to City project to commence 2027 so will recruit nearer to that time.
Bike It Moor Project Officer 1FTE, 3 years (Sustrans)	Currently recruiting for September/October start

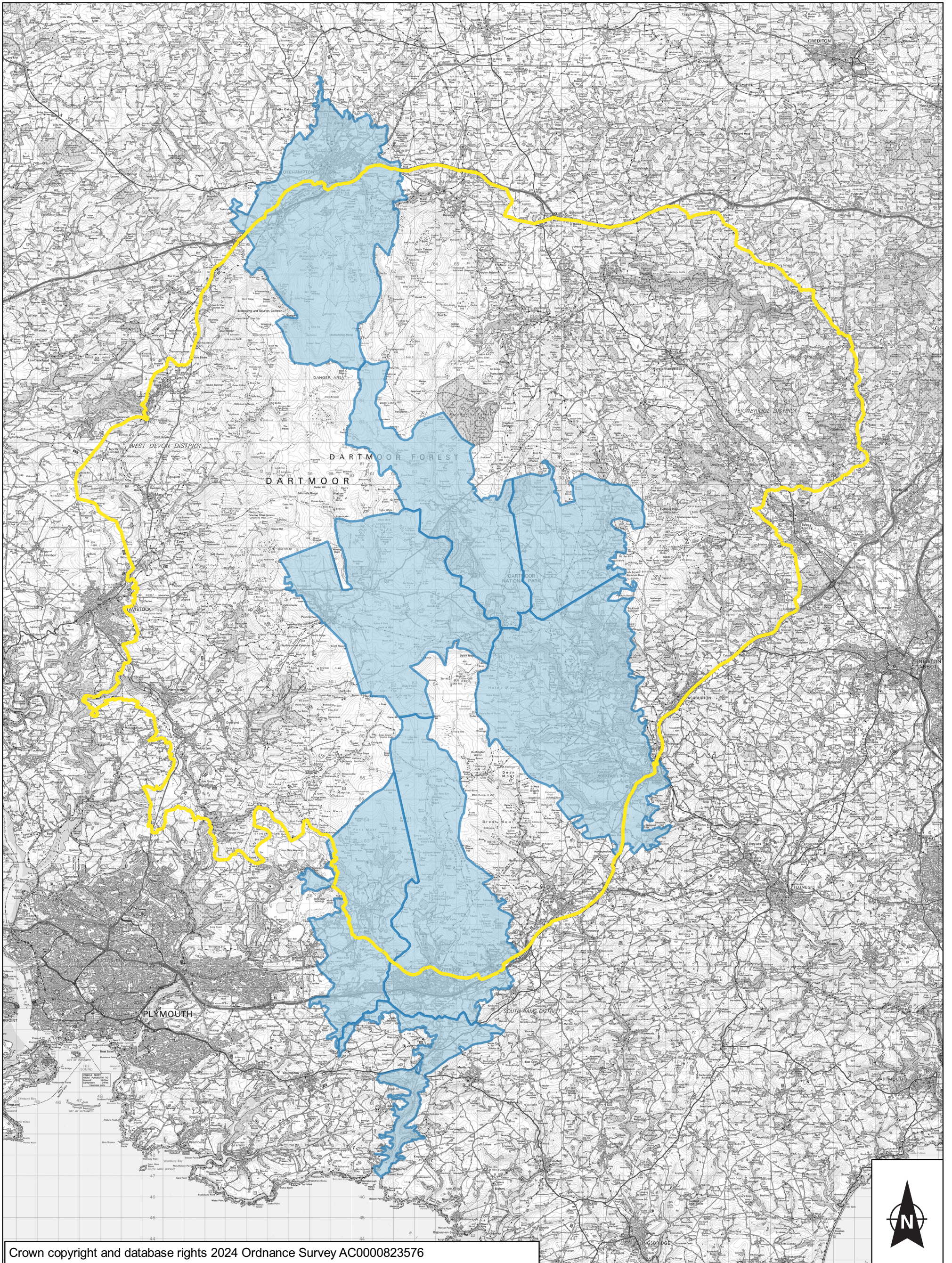
Dartmoor National Park Authority

DDL area AAP Final



Scale 1:170,000

Compiled by jsharpe on 13/03/2024





NPA/25/025

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Friday 25 July 2025

Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan

Report of the Director of Spatial Planning

Recommendation: **That Members**

- (i) approve the making (adoption) of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan
- (ii) authorise the Director of Spatial Planning to publish the Decision Statement set out at Appendix 1.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Development Plans are a community right introduced by the Localism Act 2011. They are prepared by Town/ Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums. Once 'made', or adopted, by the Authority, they become a part of the Development Plan for the National Park and will be used alongside the Dartmoor Local Plan to decide planning applications in the area they relate to.
- 1.2 Tavistock Town Council have prepared the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ('The Regulations'). Once a Neighbourhood Plan is made, a Decision Statement must be published on the planning authorities' websites.

2 Background

- 2.1 This will be the third Neighbourhood Plan to be 'made' in the National Park. The members of the group who have volunteered their time in preparing the plan on behalf of the communities should be recognised for their dedication and congratulated for their achievement in completing the process.

Neighbourhood Plans will normally include development management policies or site related issues for their area. They must meet the following criteria:

- 2.1.1 They must generally conform with the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plan for the area, this being the Dartmoor Local Plan and the Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon Joint Local Plan.
- 2.1.2 They must have regard to national policies and guidance (The National Planning Policy Framework, and National Planning Practice Guidance)
- 2.1.3 Contribute to achieving sustainable development; and,
- 2.1.4 Be compatible with European Union (EU) law and human rights obligations.
- 2.2 The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken by Tavistock Town Council in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations. As the parish straddles the boundary of the National Park the Joint Working Protocol (approved by DNPA in 2017) was followed and, in line with this, West Devon Borough Council acted as lead authority in facilitating the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. It progressed as follows:
 - 2.2.1 2021 - the Neighbourhood Area was designated
 - 2.2.2 Pre-submission consultation was carried out by the Neighbourhood
 - 2.2.3 Plan Group for six weeks between 12th February - 25th March 2024
 - 2.2.4 As lead authority West Devon Borough Council consulted on the submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. The submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan was published on the West Devon website along with the following supporting documents:
 - 2.2.4.1 Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan Policies Summary (July 2024)
 - 2.2.4.2 Map of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan Area
 - 2.2.4.3 Consultation Statement (July 2024)
 - 2.2.4.4 Basic Conditions Statement (July 2024)
 - 2.2.4.5 Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion (AECOM March 2024)
 - 2.2.4.6 Response to SEA Screening Opinion - Environment Agency
 - 2.2.4.7 Response to SEA Screening Opinion - Historic England
 - 2.2.4.8 Response to SEA Screening Opinion - Natural England
 - 2.2.4.9 Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report (WDBC July 2024)
 - 2.2.4.10 Response to HRA Screening Report - Environment Agency
 - 2.2.4.11 Response to HRA Screening Report - Natural England
 - 2.2.4.12 Tavistock Neighbourhood Area Design Codes and Guidelines (AECOM June 2024)

- 2.2.5 Details of the consultation were published on the Dartmoor National Park Authority's website and DNPA submitted comments to the consultation.
- 2.2.6 An independent examiner was appointed in accordance with Regulation 17. The examiner confirmed that, subject to modifications, the plan met the 'basic conditions' as set out in legislation and was suitable to go forward to referendum. The recommended modifications resolved the most significant concerns raised by DNPA.
- 2.2.7 DNPA and West Devon Borough Council agreed with the Examiner's conclusion, and a referendum held on Thursday 1st May 2025 achieved a turnout of 38% of residents. Of these, 87.7% voted in favour of the plan.
- 2.3 Section 38A (4)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that DNPA must 'make' the neighbourhood plan if more than half of those voting have voted in favour of the plan. The only exceptions are where a legal challenge has been brought in relation to the referendum or there are concerns about the compatibility of the neighbourhood plan with any EU or human rights legislation. There are no concerns in this regard and officers recommend that the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is made.

3 The Plan

- 3.1 The Plan sets out a vision for the parish and aims and objectives were formulated based on public consultation responses on the key issues of importance in Tavistock. The vision is positive, ambitious and compatible with the vision for Dartmoor as set out in the Partnership Plan. It has the following aims:
 - 3.1.1 New development takes place in appropriate locations, is well-designed, provides social benefit, and responds positively to the challenges of climate change.
 - 3.1.2 New housing meets the identified needs of the community, is well-designed, provides social benefit, delivers homes that are affordable to local people and response positively to the challenges of climate change.
 - 3.1.3 Tavistock's Town Centre remains the commercial and social heart of Tavistock and sustainable neighbourhood retail sites that meet local needs are supported.
 - 3.1.4 Development that is sustainable and recognises the importance of Tavistock's unique market town heritage and place within a working rural community is promoted.
 - 3.1.5 Community facilities across the parish are maintained and enhanced and new community facilities are supported where they increase the quality of life in the parish and encourage positive economic activity.
 - 3.1.6 Planning decisions enhance and do not adversely impact community facilities.
 - 3.1.7 Development in Tavistock enhances biodiversity and protects the environment, green space, and the landscape attractiveness of the town.
 - 3.1.8 Buildings, structures and streetscapes that contribute to the heritage and history of the parish are safeguarded for the future and protected from harm.
 - 3.1.9 The character of the heritage and history environment in the two Conservation Areas is enhanced for the benefit of the present and future generations.

- 3.1.10 Getting around Tavistock on foot, by bicycle or using mobility aids / vehicles is an attractive and convenient option.
- 3.1.11 Tavistock has good facilities for public and shared transport connecting to nearby villages and towns.
- 3.1.12 Negative impacts of transport, including traffic congestion and pollution, are minimised.
- 3.2 To deliver these aims some of the planning policies within the Neighbourhood Plan are specific to the Tavistock town centre and will not apply to the area within the National Park. Policies relevant to Dartmoor National Park include:
- Policy SD1: High Quality Sustainable Design
 - Policy SD2: Small Scale Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Proposals
 - Policy HOU1: Community Housing Schemes
 - Policy HOU3: Responding to Local Housing Needs (Tenure, Type, Size and Mix)
 - Policy CF3: Enhancing Community Facilities (including Recreation, Sports and Play Facilities) through New and Improved Provision
 - Policy ENV2: Extending Access into the Countryside
 - Policy ENV3: Protecting and Enhancing Habitats and Biodiversity
 - Policy ENV4: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character, Views and Vistas
 - Policy HER1: Protecting Local Heritage Assets
 - Policy TC1: Accessible Development
 - Policy TC2: Protecting and Improving the Local Walking and Cycling Network
 - Policy TC3: Facilitating Pedestrian Access
 - Policy TC4: Supporting the Reinstatement of the Former Railway Line
 - Policy TC5: Protecting and Enhancing Public Transport Infrastructure
 - Policy TC7: Fibre Infrastructure
 - Policy TC8: Parking Provision for Bicycles, E-scooters and Mobility Vehicles
 - Policy TC11: Provision of Electric Charge Points
- 3.3 In many instances the Neighbourhood Plan policies are very similar to or seeking the same objectives as policies within the adopted Dartmoor Local Plan. In our comments to the submission consultation DNPA requested that additional references to the Dartmoor Local Plan are made within the Neighbourhood Plan and while not all of our suggested modifications were recommended by the Examiner this is not a substantive issue. The Neighbourhood Plan does not conflict with the Dartmoor Local Plan and will be used by Development Management Officers in addition to the policies of the Dartmoor Local Plan.

4 Implications

- 4.1 Once made the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan would become a statutory part of the Development Plan and used alongside the Dartmoor Local Plan in determining planning applications within the Neighbourhood Area.

- 4.2 In many cases the Neighbourhood Plan policies have the same aims as the Dartmoor Local Plan policies and provide additional details which should be considered. Where the Neighbourhood Plan states a preference or support for particular development this will be considered as part of the planning balance when assessing a proposal's compatibility with the Development Plan as a whole, particularly the Strategic Policies of the Dartmoor Local Plan.
- 4.3 Once a Neighbourhood Plan is made, regulations stipulate that a Decision Statement setting out the decision and our reasons for making that decision should be published on our website. A draft decision statement is appended to this report for Member's approval.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications to the Authority in agreeing the making of this Neighbourhood Plan.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Tavistock Town Council have prepared the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Regulations and DNPA officers have been consulted as part of that process. The Neighbourhood Plan has been assessed by an Independent Examiner who recommended specific modifications to the plan and that subject to these being implemented the plan should commence to referendum. A majority vote was achieved and therefore in line with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan must be made and used, along with the Dartmoor Local Plan, to assess planning applications within that area of the National Park.

LIZ PAYNE

Background Papers:

Examiner's Report –

https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/569313/2025-01-24-Final-report-on-the-Tavistock-NDP.pdf

Referendum Version Neighbourhood Plan –

<https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/media/9717/bovey-parish-neighbourhood-plan-2021-2033-submission-version-030621.pdf>



Tavistock Neighbourhood Development Plan Regulation 19 Decision Statement

Dartmoor National Park Authority determined at the Authority meeting on 25th July 2025 to make the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan under Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan now forms part of the Development Plan for Dartmoor National Park.

Reason for the decision:

With the Examiner's recommended modifications, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. It is compatible with EU Obligations and the Convention Rights and complies with relevant provisions made by or under Sections 38A and B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

A local Referendum, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, was held in Tavistock Parish on 1st May 2025 to decide whether the local community were in favour of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Development Plan. From the votes recorded, of those who voted 87.7% were in favour of the plan. The turnout of electors was 38.3%.

Section 38A (4)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that the local planning authority must 'make' the neighbourhood plan if more than half of those voting have voted in favour of the plan.

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' and planning applications in the parish must be considered against the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan and the Dartmoor Local Plan.

Further details of the decision, including the full report presented to Members and minutes of the meeting can be viewed at: <https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/about-us/meetings-and-committees/development-management-committee>



NPA/25/026

Dartmoor National Park Authority

25 July 2025

Dartmoor Land Use Management Group – Financial Arrangements

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **note the circumstances regarding the financing of the independent Dartmoor Land Use Management Group; and**
- ii. **approve an amendment to the Authority's Financial Regulations to insert a new section (see below) that details financial arrangements specific to the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group.**

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government established the [Dartmoor Land Use Management Group](#) (DLUMG) as part of its response to the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor (The Fursdon Review) which was commissioned by the then Government in 2023. The DLUMG is independent of the National Park Authority. The Chair of the Group is Phil Stocker. He reports to Daniel Zeichner MP, Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs. The Chair, in consultation with Defra, determines the membership of the DLUMG.
- 1.2 The National Park Authority is acting as the 'banker' for the DLUMG. We have received £418,000 in 2025/26 as part of our grant settlement. This money is ring fenced for use by the DLUMG. This budget is not 'owned or controlled' by the Authority. The Authority has no discretion over how the funds are used. Decisions on spend rest with the DLUMG and, in particular, the Chair. The DLUMG are required to follow the Authority's procurement process and Standing Orders but this is very different to the Authority controlling spend decisions.
- 1.3 The DLUMG has a finite life – it will run until March 2027 and is required to deliver against its terms of reference within that period. The Group will be letting contracts (for services and goods) and awarding grants.

2. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

- 2.1 The Authority's Standing Orders state that:

“The Authority and its committees, sub-committees, working panels & other groups and every Member and Officer shall at all times act in accordance with and behave in conformity with all financial regulations as may be made by the Authority.” (section 27).

- 2.2 The Authority’s Financial Regulations contain a section on External Arrangements which provide for partnership working and external funding. Section A of the Financial Regulations state that grants above £5,000 must be approved by Members of the Authority prior to payment. The threshold for the appointment of consultants is £10,000, above this the prior approval of Members of the Authority is required. These requirements do not work for the operation of the DLUMG: they will slow down decision-making; make it very difficult to deliver against the fixed-term period for the Group; and involve Authority officers in a lot of additional work. Also, the Authority is acting as an agent and the decision on spend rests with the Chair of the DLUMG; our role is to make sure that they those decisions are reached in accordance with our Financial Regulations and procurement processes.
- 2.3 For the reasons identified above, it is recommended that Members approve a formal amendment to the Authority’s Financial Regulations that provides the required governance framework for the DLUMG. Specifically, the insertion of a new Section in the Financial Regulations as detailed below:

New Section – Dartmoor Land Use Management Group

The Dartmoor Land Use Management Group (DLUMG) is a Government initiative with dedicated ring-fenced funding from Defra to fund projects and activities that comply with the Group’s Terms of Reference and help deliver the Government’s response to the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor. The National Park Authority is acting as the ‘banker’ or ‘financial agent’ for the DLUMG. The grant that the Authority receives for the DLUMG is ring-fenced for that use. The Authority has no discretion over how the funds are used. Decisions on spend rest with the DLUMG and, in particular, the Chair.

The Group will be expected to follow the Authority’s procurement processes and Standing Orders.

For the purposes of the DLUMG, the Authority gives the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) and Section 151 Officer delegated authority to authorise expenditure up to the value of £250,000 for a single grant, agreement or contract. This delegated authority is to be used jointly (i.e. both officers need to sign off the expenditure). In the absence of one of the authorised officers another member of the Authority’s Leadership Team may be authorised to delegate. This must be in writing from the Chief Executive (National Park Officer).

Officers of the Authority must ensure that the DLUMG has operated correctly, and within the approved terms of reference, when determining requests for grants, funding agreements, contracts etc.

The Chair of the Land Use Management Group must carry out sufficient checks to satisfy themselves that any organisation or business to be grant-aided will be financially viable for the duration of the appropriate project or activity, that they are not in receipt of or applying for any other funding for the proposed activities (i.e. double funding). This assurance is to be provided to the Chief Executive (National

Park Officer) and Section 151 Officer. A signed grant agreement and/or terms and conditions for payment must be received before any payment is made.

If the Authority is to be a beneficiary of funding from the DLUMG then the expenditure should be approved by another member of the Leadership Team deputising for the Chief Executive (National Park Officer). This is to minimise the risk of conflict of interest due to the fact that the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) sits on the DLUMG.

The general administration of the DLUMG will be overseen by the Group's secretariat who will report to the Chair of the DLUMG. The Authority will maintain a record of income and expenditure for the DLUMG. Such information is open to public inspection.

The DLUMG will report progress, via its Chair to the Minister of State for Food Security and Farming. These reports will include financial monitoring.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 It is anticipated that the Authority may receive funding from the DLUMG for work that it undertakes to support the Group's operation and activities. For example, the Authority may receive a grant to develop the Data Observatory. There is also an opportunity to recover staff costs linked to supporting the operation of the Group (e.g. IT and financial support).

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

- 4.1 The DLUMG is operationally independent of the Authority. The Authority is acting as a financial agent; it holds money on behalf of the DLUMG and will issue grants and contracts on behalf of the DLUMG. The Authority does not determine how the DLUMG budget is spent other than ensuring that it complies with the Authority's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Members are recommended to approve the insertion of a new section in the Authority's Financial Regulations setting out measures for the management of the DLUMG's budget and, specifically, the awarding of contracts and grants.

KEVIN BISHOP



NPA/25/027

Dartmoor National Park Authority

25 July 2025

Dartmoor Foundation (trading name – Dartmoor Futures): Charitable Objects

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **Note the advice from the Charity Commission on the registration of Dartmoor Foundation (trading name Dartmoor Futures) as a charity;**
- ii. **Agree to amend clause 4 of the Articles of Association for the Dartmoor Foundation to incorporate the revised wording proposed by the Charity Commission as set out in paragraph 2.3 below; and**
- iii. **Confirm that they have read and noted the Charity Commission's conflict of interest guidance in relation to structures in which there is a relationship between a sole member and a charitable organisation.**

1. Background

- 1.1 In February 2024 Members agreed to establish the Dartmoor Foundation (NPA/24/10). Members also authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with an agreed Steering Group (comprising the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority, Gemma Mortensen and Alison Kohler [founding trustees] and the Chief Executive), to take the necessary action to establish the Foundation.
- 1.2 The objective in establishing the Foundation is that it will work closely with the Authority to:
 - 1.2.1 identify and develop ideas for projects that would accelerate delivery of the Partnership Plan vision by 2045.
 - 1.2.2 Generate income (philanthropic, legacy, competitive bids, private sector investment etc) and, importantly, exploring and holding innovative forms of capital to finance these projects.
 - 1.2.3 Build and steward the cross-sector partnerships required to deliver these projects.
 - 1.2.4 Deliver projects in partnership with the Authority.
 - 1.2.5 Act as a focus for ideas and innovation.
 - 1.2.6 Help to secure a national and international reputation for Dartmoor as an exemplar of good practice, innovative ideas and delivery.

- 1.3 The Authority agreed a legal structure for the Dartmoor Foundation which gives it operational independence from the Authority but with the Authority as the sole 'share holder'. The Foundation has been registered with Companies House and an application for charitable status was submitted to the Charity Commissioners in 2024. The trustees have agreed that the Dartmoor Foundation will operate under the name 'Dartmoor Futures' (hereafter used as the title for Dartmoor Foundation).
- 1.4 The Charity Commission has recommended minor amendments to Dartmoor Futures' proposed charitable objects and purposes and has indicated that, should these be made, they will then approve charitable status. The Charity Commission has also advised that Authority Members and Dartmoor Futures trustees need to read the Charity Commission's conflict of interest guidance in relation to structures in which there is a relationship between a sole member (the Authority) and a charitable organisation (Dartmoor Futures) – see section 3.

2. Proposed Amendments to Charitable Objects and Purposes

- 2.1 The existing proposed charitable purposes for Dartmoor Futures are:
 - 2.1.1 To promote the sustainability, conservation, protection and improvement of the physical, natural, and cultural environment and heritage, within and in relation to Dartmoor National Park
 - 2.1.2 To advance the education of the public, in particular in the subject of 1
- 2.2 As currently drafted and approved by Members, Dartmoor Futures charitable objects are to:
 - 2.2.1 promote the sustainability, conservation, protection, and improvement of the physical, natural, and cultural environment and heritage, within and in relation to the Dartmoor National Park, including through community engagement and the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure-time occupation in the interests of social welfare; and
 - 2.2.2 advance the education of the public, in particular in the sustainability conservation, protection, and improvement of the physical, natural, and cultural environment and heritage, within and in relation to the Dartmoor National Park.
- 2.3 The Charity Commission have advised they are satisfied that Dartmoor Futures is a charity and that the purposes appear *prima facie* to be charitable in nature except that purpose 1 is, confusingly, written in the form of a charitable purpose. They are recommending the following revised wording:
- 2.4 The charitable objects of the Charity are, for the public benefit, to:
 - 2.4.1 promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of the physical and natural environment of Dartmoor National Park, including but not limited to landscapes, habitat, wildlife and cultural heritage;

- 2.4.2 promote the conservation and preservation of archaeological sites, monuments, architecture and historic buildings within Dartmoor National Park;
- 2.4.3 advance the education of the general public in:
 - 2.4.3.1 the physical and natural environment of Dartmoor National Park and its importance, including the landscapes, habitat, wildlife and special qualities; and
 - 2.4.3.2 the history, built and natural heritage of Dartmoor National Park and the artistic and cultural traditions of its communities.
- 2.4.4 advance the physical and mental health of the general public, including but not exclusively by facilitating opportunities for access, recreational activities, physical exercise and through the provision of education and practical advice on the benefits of taking regular exercise within the natural environment on mental and physical health; and
- 2.4.5 promote the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation and enjoyment of Dartmoor National Park for members of the public at large, in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life of those people.

- 2.5 The changes suggested by the Charity Commission (see above) do not materially affect the operation or remit of Dartmoor Futures. If Members agree to the above changes, then clause 4 of the Articles of Association would be reflected accordingly and the record held by Companies House updated.

3 Conflict of Interest and other guidance from the Charity Commission

- 3.1 The Charity Commission has advised that Authority Members and Dartmoor Futures Trustees read the Charity Commission's conflict of interest guidance in relation to structures in which there is a relationship between a sole member and a charitable organisation. This sets out the fiduciary duties of DNPA's Members towards Dartmoor Futures and the nature of Dartmoor Future's independence. The relevant guidance can be read via the following link:
(RR7):<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independence-of-charities-from-the-state-rr7> This includes, among other things, an explanation that a charity cannot be established simply to implement or carry out a statutory duty of a governmental authority. That is not the intention of the Authority in establishing the Dartmoor Futures.
- 3.2 The Commission has also indicated that they expect the trustees and the sole member to adopt a trustee and a member conflict of interest policy prior to the charity becoming operational or entering into any further funding agreements with each other. This policy will need to clearly express the fiduciary nature of the Authority's role. Work on the conflict-of-interest policy will be undertaken jointly.
- 3.3 The Commission has also advised on the need for a grant making policy prior to the charity becoming operational or issuing any grants. The trustees will lead on this policy.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Authority of the recommendations contained in this paper. The Authority has ring-fenced £150,000 from reserves to support the establishment of Dartmoor Futures. To-date £98,874 has been spent or committed.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 5.1 The establishment and development of Dartmoor Futures is important to the future of the National Park. Officers believe that it has the potential to become an important 'special purpose vehicle' to help delivery of National Park purposes and duty and implementation of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan.
- 5.2 In summary, Members are asked to note the advice from the Charity Commission on the registration of Dartmoor Foundation (trading name Dartmoor Futures) as a charity; agree to amend clause 4 of the Articles of Association for the Dartmoor Foundation to incorporate the revised wording proposed by the Charity Commission as set out in paragraph 2.3 below; and confirm that they have read and noted the Charity Commission's conflict of interest guidance in relation to structures in which there is a relationship between a sole member and a charitable organisation. A conflict of interest policy is to be developed with Dartmoor Futures and will be presented to a future meeting of the Authority.
- 5.3 If Members agree the changes outlined above the Charity Commission have indicated that they can register the company as a charity once the necessary documents have been accepted by Companies House.
- 5.4 The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) and Chair of the Authority are meeting with Dartmoor Futures trustees on 28 July to discuss next steps in the charity's development and how progress is reported back to Members.

KEVIN BISHOP



NPA/25/028

Dartmoor National Park Authority

25 July 2025

Annual Review 2024/25

Report of the Head of Communications and Engagement

Recommendation: That Members note the report and Dartmoor National Park Authority's Annual Review 2024/25

1 Background

- 1.1 Every year the Authority produces an Annual Review of work completed during the previous financial year. The Annual Review is submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra); it also provides us with the opportunity to highlight some of our work from the previous year in a less formal way than normally presented through more detailed Authority Reports reporting against our Business Plan and other performance indicators.
- 1.2 The Annual Review is published as a summary document with key achievements against our Business Plan along with any other significant highlights from the previous year. Following the presentation of the report at an Authority Meeting, and subject to Member comments, the document is designed and presented as a summary PDF. The document is published on our website and circulated to key partners and stakeholders, including Defra, local MPs and constituent local authorities.

2 Annual Review 2024/25

- 2.1 At the start of 2024 we set an ambitious Business Plan with key priority areas to deliver against, setting out how we work in partnership with our partners, stakeholders and communities to successfully deliver our aims.
- 2.2 2024/25 has been a year of high achievement which would not have been possible without the active support and engagement of our partners; individuals and businesses; community groups and corporate sponsors; government departments and agencies; and the volunteers who give their time for free. Within this annual review we formally thank those for their ongoing support over the last 12 months.
- 2.3 2024/25 saw challenges and heightened public awareness of Dartmoor, particularly in relation to the legal challenge over the right to backpack camp, the financial pressures faced by English National Parks, and the announcement of the planned closure of the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown in October 2025.

- 2.4 The Annual Review for 2024/25 (Appendix 1) provides a summary of some of the key areas of work we have delivered under the six business plan priorities:
- **Nature** – how we have managed existing habitats for increased biodiversity and developed greater areas of wildlife rich habitats.
 - **Cultural Heritage** – how we have protected Dartmoor’s cultural heritage, making sure it is well managed and in good condition.
 - **Farming and Forestry** – what we have done to highlight how farming and forestry businesses play a key role in delivering a high-quality environment and local products, alongside a range of other public benefits.
 - **People** – how we have given more people opportunities to enjoy, explore, engage and understand the landscape.
 - **Communities and Business** – what we have done to support people of all ages to enjoy living and working in low carbon, flourishing communities that are connected physically and digitally.
 - **An Excellent Organisation** – evidence that DNPA is an organisation that provides an excellent level of service, celebrating the people (staff, members and volunteers) and partnerships that makes the organisation effective in delivering outcomes for Dartmoor.
- 2.5 The Annual Review is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of everything we have completed over the past year. It provides a summary and a range of different examples of the work we have undertaken, in a visual and digestible way for our audiences.
- 2.6 Our Business Plan reporting process provides the mechanism to report fully against our objectives over the previous year. This information is provided to Members at the Audit and Governance Committee in May of each year.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Members are invited to note this report and Dartmoor National Park Authority’s Annual Review 2024/25, highlighting some of our key achievements from the past year.

CHARLOTTE EASTON

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Annual Review 2024-25

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Annual Review 2024/25

Nature	3
Acquisition of Buckfastleigh Moor	3
Two Moors Pine Marten Project	3
Forked Spleenwort Reintroduction	4
Curlew Recovery Project	4
Dartmoor Headwaters	5
South West Peatland Partnership.....	5
Walkham Valley Landscape Recovery	5
Cultural Heritage.....	7
Cut Hill Cist.....	7
Higher Uppacott.....	7
Farming and Forestry.....	8
Land Use Management Group (LUMG)	8
Farming in Protected Landscapes	8
Boundary Boost.....	9
People	10
Visitor Management.....	10
Dartmoor Marshals.....	11
Visitor Engagement - Outreach and Events	11
Education Guide Service	12
Generation Green	12
Green Skills Week.....	12
Community Engagement.....	13
Girls Do Dartmoor	13
Ranger Ralph Club.....	14
Public Right of Way Upgrades	15
Defra Access for All Fund – Year 2 Achievements	15
Communities and Business	17

Supporting sustainable transport on Dartmoor	17
Visitor Centre Retail Offer.....	17
Princetown Visitor Centre.....	17
Dartmoor’s Dynamic Landscape	18
An Excellent Organisation.....	19
Organisational Climate Action Plan.....	19
Race to Zero	19
Dartmoor Partnership Plan	19
State of the Park Report	20
Dartmoor Futures	20
Devon Tourism Awards.....	20
DNPA Volunteers	21

Nature

Managing existing habitats for increased biodiversity and developing greater areas of wildlife rich habitats.

Acquisition of Buckfastleigh Moor

In 2024 Dartmoor National Park Authority acquired Buckfastleigh Moor. The purchase was 100% funded via a grant from Defra's Protected Landscapes capital grant scheme. The acquisition secures the long-term protection of a key part of southern Dartmoor, supporting nature recovery, climate resilience, and public access.

The area now in the care of DNPA covers 858 acres of ecologically and historically rich common land. The site includes upland heath, blanket bog, ancient rights of way, and designated conservation habitats (SAC and SSSI), supporting rare species such as the bilberry bumblebee and pearl-bordered fritillary. It also features archaeological landmarks like Petre's Bound Stone and Bronze Age reaves. DNPA plans to work closely with the Buckfastleigh West Commoners Association on the management of the land. This new landholding links with existing Authority owned land on Holne Moor, enhancing ecological connectivity and offering fresh opportunities for sustainable land management.

Two Moors Pine Marten Project

The Two Moors Pine Marten Project is a partnership, supported by DNPA and others, led by Devon Wildlife Trust, working to restore a sustainable population of pine martens to Dartmoor and Exmoor.

Once widespread in the UK, pine martens are now classified as critically endangered in England & Wales.

In September 2024, 15 individuals (8 females, 7 males) were moved under licence from Scotland and released on Dartmoor as part of the wider recovery plan. The animals were all fitted with tracking collars prior to their release. Once released, the project team used the tracking collars and camera traps to observe their movement and how they dispersed across their new habitat.

The project team were hoping that some or all of the females may have been pregnant when translocated. Pine Martens mate in June – Aug and give birth to up to 4 kits in March-April. If pine marten kits are born, the first young will leave the den in June-July 2025 and disperse a few months later.

The fitted tracking collars are now falling off, as intended, so the focus is now on using camera traps with bait stations to monitor individual's whereabouts and activity. Pine martens have distinctive markings on their bibs making it easier to identify individuals.

Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) are rolling out a camera loan scheme to landowners, targeting areas around known locations, to monitor dispersal and hopefully get a glimpse of the first pine marten kits to be born in Dartmoor for many years.

The second year of the project will start in 2025, with further animals to be released on Exmoor in the autumn.

Forked Spleenwort Reintroduction

Only found in a few locations across the UK, forked spleenwort, one of Britain's oldest species of fern, once thrived on Dartmoor. The plant grows well in Northern England and Wales but faces extinction in Southern England, with only a few plants remaining on Dartmoor. The Species Recovery Trust (SRT) intend to re-introduce the plant to extinct locations to strengthen its range. Spores were collected from a wild plant that had been found dislodged from its location and grown on.

Under the guidance of the SRT, approximately 80 plants were re-introduced to suitable locations across Dartmoor in October 2024, with the help of DNPA and DWT and a small group of volunteers.

The first monitoring visit in April 2025 has confirmed an approximate 15% success rate of plants re-introduced. The plants failed in heavily vegetated sites. There has been more success on scree slopes where there's less vegetation. These results prove what has been observed in existing locations, that the plant prefers harsher growing environments. A second monitoring visit is planned in autumn 2025.

Curlew Recovery Project

Supported by Dartmoor National Park Authority, this five-year Duchy of Cornwall led initiative is now in its penultimate year.

Young curlews that were released on Dartmoor in the summer of 2024 have been tracked as part of a wider monitoring programme. These young birds have been found to have travelled over 1,300 miles, with some spotted wintering in the Algarve. Their movements offer valuable insight into the species' behaviour and survival.

Crucial to this work is the support of local farmers, who manage the land to create suitable breeding habitats for these ground nesting birds, including shorter vegetation and scrapes. In the spring of 2025, the Headstarting team will be watching closely for the return of these Dartmoor reared Curlew's – identifiable by their distinctive yellow leg flags.

Dartmoor Headwaters

The Dartmoor Headwaters project has funded four schemes across the Erme, Yealm, Mardle and Bovey catchments. This includes an innovative upland tree planting trial (see below), mire restoration, creation of leaky dams, and floodplain restoration.

Project achievements in 2024/25 include:

- Over 2100 trees planted.
- 65 leaky dams installed
- 2 hectares of floodplain restoration
- 3.8km of river restoration

As part of the Headwaters project the National Park Authority has led on an innovative tree planting project on Harford Moor. The project has used the 'Miyawaki Method', to plant around 8.5 hectares of native Devon trees in small, varied-density plots.

This process aims to reconnect fragmented woodland, enhance biodiversity, and strengthen Dartmoor's flood resilience. Supported by the Environment Agency and Devon County Council, the project is being closely monitored by the University of Plymouth to assess long-term ecological and hydrological benefits.

Key partners include landowners the Howell family, local charity Moor Trees, and the Harford and Ugborough Commoners' Association. Volunteers from all partner organisations gathered to help plant the native saplings grown from local seed. This initiative has contributing to broader goals in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan and the Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons initiative.

This collaborative approach exemplifies how innovative land management and community engagement can work together to restore nature, protect heritage, and address climate challenges.

South West Peatland Partnership

This year has seen another busy season of peatland restoration on Dartmoor across a variety of sites from Tavy Head, Cranmere, and Great Gnats Head and Langcombe. At the end of 2024/24 it was confirmed that funding had been extended until 2027 for future works.

Project achievements in 2024/25 include:

- Over 250 hectares of peatland restoration works on Dartmoor

Walkham Valley Landscape Recovery

The Walkham Valley Landscape Recovery (WVLR) scheme is a landowner, farmer and community led initiative set on a tributary of the Tamar within Dartmoor National Park.

The WVLR scheme has been gaining momentum since January 2025, following the establishment of a full project team. Initial 'farm kitchen table' meetings were held in February 2025 to introduce the team to land managers, outline the ambitions of the scheme, and gather ideas. Following these meetings, a series of three thematic groups have been set up to drive forward land management planning; Woody Habitats, Water, and Grasslands & Soils.

Land management advisors have been attending site visits and discussing potential plans with land managers, alongside involvement with key stakeholders including Natural England, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission. A newsletter has been developed which shares updates and news with land managers, and a website is underway.

Throughout the two-year development phase, Landscape Recovery schemes must undertake environmental, social and economic baselining. WVLR scheme appointed Devon Biodiversity Records Centre to undertake broad habitat surveys across the catchment which are currently being carried out. Planning and discussions are underway to progress other baselines that must be completed within the development phase and the WVLR team are making sure to liaise with stakeholders throughout this process.

Cultural Heritage

Dartmoor's cultural heritage is protected, well managed and in good condition. The significance of the historic environment will be understood by both those living and working on Dartmoor and by visitors.

Cut Hill Cist

In August of 2024 a significant Early Bronze Age burial cist was excavated at Cut Hill, one of Dartmoor's most remote locations. The peat around the cist was being eroded and specialists feared that the cist would be damaged if action was not taken. by DNPA Archaeologists, the excavation revealed a remarkably well-preserved one-metre-square cist containing shaped and cut wooden fragments and other undisturbed material, dating to around 1800 BC. This find, larger than the 2011 Whitehorse Hill cist, could offer new insight into prehistoric life and burial practices on Dartmoor.

The project involved a wide partnership, including Historic England, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, University of Leicester, University of Plymouth, and Quantock and Exmoor Ltd., with support from the Duchy of Cornwall, MOD, and other local stakeholders.

The cist is now undergoing micro-excavation and conservation with Wiltshire Conservation and Museums Advisory Service, and we wait to see what further important findings it yields.

Higher Uppacott

In the care of DNPA, Higher Uppacott is a grade 1 listed 14th century longhouse, a building of national importance which offers an insight into how people have lived and worked on Dartmoor for well over half a millennium. Guided tours offer an opportunity to view the Shippon in its unaltered state and explain the subsequent development of the longhouse with two rooms to become what is now the accepted form of a modern-day dwelling.

Improvements to the site in 2024 have included a new door and windows for the parlor wing.

In 2024/25 the longhouse has been enjoyed by 261 members of the public, through 14 public visits and eight private groups.

Farming and Forestry

Farming and forestry businesses play a key role in delivering a high-quality environment and local products alongside a range of other public benefits.

Land Use Management Group (LUMG)

In April of 2024 the government responded to the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor, known as the Fursdon Review, commissioned in 2023.

A key part of the Government's response is the creation of a new Land Use Management Group for Dartmoor (LUMG) with an independent chair who will report to the Secretary of State. The Group is independent of the Authority and following a public appointment process Phil Stocker was appointed by the Secretary of State as the independent chair. It is hoped that the LUMG will build on the work of a group of local stakeholders that the Authority convened when the issue about agri-environment agreement rollovers and protected site management first arose. This stakeholder group brought together commoners, farmers, landowners, environmental groups and statutory bodies* has been working to find a way forward that works for all interests on Dartmoor.

The Fursdon Review and the Government response endorsed the vision in the Dartmoor [Dartmoor Partnership Plan](#). A key part of that vision is the need for farming systems that can deliver a high-quality environment and food production. DNPA firmly believe that you can farm for food and the environment but recognise the need for change from all involved to be able to move forward.

**The Local Stakeholder Group brings together a range of experts, individuals and organisations. This includes Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Dartmoor Common Owners' Association, National Farmers' Union, Tenant Farmers Association, Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, Historic England, Devon Wildlife Trust (representing other environmental non-government organisations), Farm Community Network, Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency.*

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Since the beginning of the programme in March 2021, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) has supported farmers and landowners on Dartmoor, allocating funding to projects that support the natural environment, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide public access opportunities or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

To date, FiPL grants have supported our farmers and land managers to deliver:

- 1,923m created or restored dry stone walls

- 7,146 ha wildlife rich habitat managed for biodiversity outside SSSI
- 18,576 ha wildlife rich habitat managed for biodiversity inside SSSI
- 22 projects that are reducing flood risk
- 283 educational visit days
- 14 projects to enhance rivers and streams
- 6,079 trees planted
- 36 projects making the landscape more inclusive for visitors
- 4 farm clusters supported
- 5 heritage assets that were deemed at risk supported
- 28 projects increasing the resilience of nature friendly farm businesses
- 35 projects to improve understanding of carbon storage, carbon emissions and climate change impacts
- 178 FiPL projects supported in total

Boundary Boost

This Dartmoor Hill Farm Project led initiative (with funding from the Defra Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund) aims to develop a means to acknowledge the values that the extensive network of hedges, walls and banks represent – and which could ultimately reward and incentivise their long-term management. The many miles of Dartmoor boundaries are part of its iconic identity, whilst practically connecting habitats and species, helping to retain, manage or filter water, sequester and store Carbon, provide forage and remain a functional aspect for livestock farmers. The project is generating a new survey methodology for farmers to record condition of their boundaries. The aspiration is that this work could ultimately identify opportunities for financial support for these environmental goods via a matrix, connecting investors who wish to support local, grass roots schemes that have tangible outcomes.

10 farmers across Dartmoor are involved as case study farms which will trial and implement activity to help develop the ideas in practice. These include deployment of innovative and cost-effective biodiversity monitors which represent evidence of current condition, alongside scientific modelling to quantify the scalability of actions or proposed interventions. Two of these will be ‘Pilot’ farms, with further in-depth assessment.

People

Giving more people opportunities to explore, engage, enjoy and understand the landscape.

Visitor Management

Dartmoor National Park Rangers maintain a focus on delivering DNPA's key messages, including Dogs on Leads, with hundreds of interactions reinforcing appropriate behaviour. Supported by the DNPA Communications Team who manage a 'Dogs on Dartmoor' Communications Partnership Working Group*, the Rangers have been paramount in delivering the 'Take the Lead' campaign on the ground, across the National Park.

Recognising that the South West has some of the highest reports of livestock worrying in the country, and is an essential area for ground nesting birds, this campaign has been a key focus for DNPA in the run up to and during the March – July nesting and lambing season.

Trialed in 2024, visitor engagement events were held for a second year at Roborough Down, Shipley Bridge, Cadover Bridge and Haytor during March 2025. Dog owners were approached with offers of dog treats and leads and then offered an explanation of why they're being asked to keep their dog on a lead. The team of DNPA Rangers and supporting partners who worked at these events recorded over 800 public interactions and gave out 700 DNPA branded dog leads during the 2025 events. The results of this approach to visitor engagement have been positive with dog owners on the whole, with Rangers reporting it's felt like more of a conversation than an order.

These engagement events are used to launch a multi-channel approach to the Take the Lead campaign, with the seasonal installation of gateway and access point signage, totem signage at car parks, posters at DNPA Visitor Centres, communications on digital and print media and key messages shared by all our visitor engagement officers including Rangers, Information Advisors, Outreach Officers and Volunteers.

At the start of the 2025 season, targeted signs were created and installed at important nesting sites to put extra effort into the protection of Lapwing and Curlew.

Over 2024/25 Rangers have recorded almost 1,000 targeted 'dogs on leads' conversations and logged 160 conversations from routine patrols from Rangers and Marshals.

*This group includes the Rural Crime Police Team, National Trust and relevant DNPA officers.

Dartmoor Marshals

The summer of 2024 saw the return of the Marshals for the fifth season, to support the Ranger team during a period of high visitor numbers to Dartmoor.

This is a partnership initiative involving the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and contributions from other agencies, a parish council and individual landowners.

The Marshals are trained, supported and deployed through the Authority Ranger team.

This initiative has received widespread support from landowners, farmers, commoners and other agencies. The continuation of the service for a fifth year has provided essential momentum to influence public behavior and reinforce key messages.

In 2024/25 the Marshals focused on deterring and preventing 'fly camping' and other anti-social behaviors and signposted welfare issues such as homelessness. The Marshals recorded interactions with campervan drivers, campers, owners of dogs off leads worrying livestock, and visitors who had started campfires. The Marshals are, first and foremost, an 'engagement tool' to provide advice and to influence behaviour. Evaluation of their role demonstrates that they have been successful in helping to prevent potential raves as well as addressing byelaw infringements. They help ensure that Dartmoor remains safe for all to enjoy whilst recognizing the rights of private landowners, farmers and commoners.

In total the Marshals worked 910 hours, covering 47 evenings over the summer of 2024.

Visitor Engagement - Outreach and Events

The outreach and engagement team facilitate opportunities to reach audiences both on and off the moor. With outreach, this includes attending a mixture of formal occasions such as local shows and events as well as informal outreach such as visiting busy car park locations on Dartmoor to engage with visitors.

Working towards the aims of the partnership plan, the team have continued to focus on engagement with young people from all backgrounds, supporting them to experience the national park.

Through our work, we continue to seek opportunities to engage with new audiences and people from different backgrounds, helping to deepen people's connections to Dartmoor and inspiring them to care.

In 2024/25 the Outreach team attended:

- 54 outreach events/locations open to the public
 - 40 on Dartmoor (2,700 interactions)
 - 14 away from Dartmoor (2,485 interactions)
- 11 Family events (1,638 participants)

- 5 Visitor Centre based events (115 participants)
- 4 self-guided activities (544 participants)

Education Guide Service

Young people are at the heart of DNPA's engagement activities, and the Education Guide Service continues to be an important way to reach them. The Service to local schools has been well used this year. We have offered guided walks and experiences that introduce Dartmoor, investigate Dartmoor's rivers, and explore prehistoric Dartmoor. In 2024/25 we worked with 32 primary schools, reaching 904 participants. A further 286 students from 8 secondary schools and colleges took up our educational offer.

In 2024 the Education Guide Service was inspected and successfully retained its Adventurous Activities License, enabling the guides to operate in more remote moorland areas. The award of this license is a reflection on the skills and knowledge of the team of 15 dedicated volunteer education guides trained to deliver high quality experiences.

Generation Green

DNPA is part of the Access Unlimited Partnership which successfully bid for money from Defra. The project was called Generation Green, and its aim was to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds experience the National Park and connect with nature. The funding enabled the engagement team to remove the main barrier for groups accessing the national park which is the cost of transport. Through the year long project, 240 young people from 8 schools visited the national park to experience and learn about a Dartmoor Rainforest. The funding also enabled the team to facilitate 121 young people across 7 groups to have a Night Under the Stars (NUTS), working with local providers.

Green Skills Week

In 2024, Dartmoor National Park Authority secured £7,000 in funding from AMEX through the National Parks Partnership to launch Dartmoor Future Skills—a residential work experience programme aimed at engaging 16–17-year-olds in green skills development. This initiative combined elements from two successful youth programmes - Dartmoor Youth Rangers and Nights Under the Stars - and was designed to address the lack of accessible work experience opportunities in environmental sectors.

Hosted at Dartmoor Activity Centre, the February half-term programme brought together 19 enthusiastic young participants and a wide range of "skills experts" from environmental organisations, offering practical, hands-on experiences in land management, conservation, archaeology, and communications. The immersive format

also included activities like bushcraft, mindfulness, and team building, to enhance personal growth and build connections among participants.

The programme proved to be highly impactful, providing a rare and meaningful opportunity for young people to explore green careers in a supportive and inspiring environment. Participants not only gained technical skills and knowledge but also grew in confidence and personal resilience, forming strong bonds through shared challenges and a common passion for the landscape. Feedback from both the young people and the professionals involved was overwhelmingly positive, with many noting a significant increase in awareness and interest in environmental careers. Going forward, the Authority aims to continue supporting these young people with mentoring and further development opportunities, including mock interviews and application support. Dartmoor Future Skills has clearly demonstrated the value of targeted, immersive experiences in shaping the next generation of environmental leaders.

Community Engagement

The current focus for DNPA Community Engagement Rangers is young people, the majority being aged 12-17. This work is delivered through a suite of programmes and events tailored to a range of audiences. It is now widely demonstrated that spending time in nature is good for you, and the teenage generation continue to miss these opportunities whilst needing them the most. The work of the Community Engagement Rangers provides opportunities for people to experience Dartmoor who currently feel excluded from it, or struggle to access the National Park. Helping young people to spend more quality time in the natural world benefits them personally but also makes them better custodians of this special landscape.

Core activities delivered to identified cohorts include:

- Dartmoor Youth Rangers
- Girls Do Dartmoor
- Nights Under the Stars

All activities encompass three objectives allowing young people to:

- Connect with nature
- Understand and respect the landscape
- Improve health and wellbeing

Girls Do Dartmoor

Launched in 2024, Girls Do Dartmoor is an initiative to encourage confidence, exploration, and resilience in young women whilst they reap the wellbeing benefits of being active in the outdoors. The programme is led by an experienced Community

Engagement Ranger from the Dartmoor National Park Authority, supported by colleagues, partners, and volunteers.

Girls Do Dartmoor is a safe and nurturing space for female students from years 8 and 9 to experience the special qualities of Dartmoor National Park. The guided sessions within the inspirational landscape will help build their confidence in accessing and experiencing the outdoors, allow the participants to connect to and benefit from the natural world, form a peer support group, and experience a sense of freedom.

This programme provides an opportunity to enjoy the special qualities of Dartmoor for those that may not be able to participate in existing programmes such as Ten Tors and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE)..

This pioneering initiative was shortlisted for a Campaign for National Park's 2024 National Park Protector Award. In December 2024 staff from DNPA and past programme participants from Okehampton College attended an awards ceremony at the House of Lords, where they accepted a double win for the New Perspectives Award and the People's Choice public vote.

Ranger Ralph Club

The Ranger Ralph Club has seen another successful year of outdoor learning and exploration. The young members and their families have experienced a wealth of opportunities that ordinarily may not be accessible to them. We have led and facilitated a variety of events that highlight Dartmoor and everything that makes it special.

Activities have included creative arts at Haytor, story making at Hound tor, a mini three tors challenge over Cox tor on the west of the moor and a magical nature-based pond dip at Langafor Farm in August. A visit to Venford was enjoyed, learning about navigation and things got spooky at Yarner Woods in October when our Ralpher's took part in a night time walk.

Christmas time is loved by all and children made a wealth of natural decorations to take home. We celebrated National Nest Box week by building cosy nest boxes for garden birds and finished the year with Lambing Live, a firm favorite, watching and feeding the newborn lambs is a highlight for all involved.

In 2024/25 we led nine Ranger Ralph events during the last year and engaged 160 children and 120 adults. An average of 31 participants per session.

Our membership base stands at around 80 young people from ages 5 – 12 years with many renewing their membership for several years.

Membership costs £12 per child per year which is a price set to ensure it's accessible to all. This includes a welcome pack full of Ranger Ralph branded stationery and gives access to all the events free of charge once joined.

The Ranger Ralph Club has been impacted by a reduction in staff capacity for leading the events. We are at a crossroads in what we can deliver as part of this programme and prioritisation and investment will be needed in this area of outreach and understanding if we want to develop or grow the programme.

Public Right of Way Upgrades

In 2024 the Ranger team undertook extensive improvements to the Public Rights of Way network, including:

- Pithill Woods – a programme of replacing stiles with gates, and paths with boardwalks.
- A new bridge and riverbank erosion works at Chalk Ford
- Enhancement of the Two Moors Way in preparation of its anniversary in 2026
- Installation of over 120 new Finger Post signs to improve signage on the network and make it more user friendly.

Defra Access for All Fund – Year 2 Achievements

Over 2024/25, Dartmoor National Park Authority has utilised a second tranche of a Defra-funded Access for All Fund (£150k over 2 years), to improve access across the National Park. Collaborating with partners including the National Trust, South West Lakes Trust, Duchy of Cornwall, Ivybridge Town Council, Forestry England, and Natural England, plus funding from Teignbridge District Council and the Ramblers Association, DNPA focused on projects chosen through consultation with user groups like the Dartmoor Wheelchair Access Group (WAGS). The aim was to enhance accessibility and ensure a broad geographic spread.

Key Projects:

- **Bellever Forest Riverside Trail**
Collaboration with Forestry England created easy-access picnic areas and improved all-ability trails alongside the East Dart river, providing accessible green space sheltered from the weather.
- **Miles Without Stiles Tramper Route Improvements**
Drainage and path surfacing enhancements on the popular circular route from Postbridge Visitor Centre, improving accessibility and scenic value. Further improvements are planned.
- **Blackingstone Rock MWS Easy-Access Trail**
DNPA site improvements including lowered car park, new path surfacing, enhanced gateway, accessible viewpoint, accessible picnic table, and seating.

- **Fernworthy Reservoir MWS Easy-Access Trail**
Partnership with South West Lakes Trust to upgrade a 1km easy-access circular route with new surfacing, wider gates, and accessible viewpoints.
- **Fingle Bridge MWS Riverside Trail**
New all-ability trail on National Trust land along the River Teign, with ongoing extensions to create a circular route linked to the medieval Fingle Bridge.
- **Haytor Vale MWS & Dartmoor Way**
Upgraded a popular route by replacing a difficult stile with a gate, addressing local user needs and improving access.
- **Longtimber Woods MWS & Dartmoor Way Access Improvements**
New picnic site and major access upgrades including stiles-to-gates replacement, fencing, and boardwalk installation funded by the Ramblers Association.
- **Meldon Reservoir and Vennford Car Park**
New accessible picnic tables installed to enhance visitor experience at reservoir viewpoints and DNPA car park.
- **South Brent Stiles to Gates**
Two hazardous stiles replaced with gates, improving safety and creating a user-friendly circular walk.
- **Wistman's Wood Viewpoint Access**
New easy-access path and viewpoint developed in partnership with Duchy of Cornwall to allow better views of this iconic woodland without impacting the sensitive environment.
- **Yarner Wood NNR Easy-Access Trail**
New wide footbridge installed with Natural England to improve access near visitor facilities.
- **Tramper Purchase for Dartmoor**
Acquisition of a Tramper (mobility scooter) to support visitors with limited mobility, will be available for hire via Countryside Mobility at Postbridge in 2025/26.
- **Dunsford Riverside Path Improvements**
Funded by Teignbridge District Council's Connectivity Fund, 2 km of bridleway upgraded alongside the River Teign, including installation of three new bridges.

Communities and Business

People of all ages can enjoy living and working in low carbon, flourishing communities that are connected physically and digitally.

Supporting sustainable transport on Dartmoor

The Authority successfully applied for Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) funding from Teignbridge District Council on behalf of Newton Abbot Community Transport Association (NACTA) to expand their bus services further into Dartmoor. This improves services for people in remote villages with accessible transport, where little or no transport currently exists. This project is another example of practical delivery through partnership working.

The grant achieved was £150,000 and enabled the purchase of 2 new low-emission minibuses. The buses are fully accessible, equipped with tail-lifts.

Visitor Centre Retail Offer

The past year has been successful for our retail offer within the National Park Visitor Centres. As well as an overall increase in sales of 3%, profit margins also increased by 1% despite falling visitor numbers over the year. The most successful project was the production of the Official Dartmoor 2025 calendar which featured photographs taken by DNPA staff, was designed in Okehampton, and printed in Tavistock. It was the basis of an exhibition in Princetown which attracted over 20,000 visitors and the calendar sold out before the end of December 2024.

We have continued to support local producers as part of the 'Dartmoor Range' – in 2024/25 we worked with 15 new suppliers including independent authors, artists, photographers and producers.

Princetown Visitor Centre

At the January 2025 Dartmoor National Park Authority Meeting, members of the authority agreed to keep the Princetown Visitor Centre open until the end of October 2025. The decision was made considering ongoing financial pressures and the need to reduce costs.

Located in the Duchy Hotel and leased from the Duchy of Cornwall, the Centre will continue operating under normal hours until the end of October 2025.

Prior to its confirmed closure, DNPA had worked with the Duchy of Cornwall over a number of years to explore options for the future use of the building, that would support the local economy.

Proposals to close the visitor centre at Princetown were first considered in 2022. A £440,000 one-off grant from Defra in March 2023 enabled the centre to stay open until March 2025, though there's never been any guarantee similar funds would become available. In January 2025 Members agreed to keep the Centre open until the end of October 2025 in order to provide an opportunity for the Princetown Business Network to develop its ideas for a Visitor Centre run by local businesses and volunteers.

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscape

At the beginning of 2025, DNPA received news that the Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes partnership has been awarded £3,124,179 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to take forward a major programme of work to restore nature, protect and enhance Dartmoor's cultural heritage and enrich people's understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities.

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes brings together Dartmoor National Park Authority, the Woodland Trust, Sustrans, the RSPB, Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, Emergency Exit Arts & Flock South West, the Environment Agency, Shallowford Trust, Dartmoor Headwaters Project, South West Water for the South West Peatland Partnership and the Westcountry Rivers Trust.

Work will deliver a wide-ranging suite of projects encompassing river, habitat and species conservation; creative events and engagement activities, support for farmers, training and skills and improving access and active travel opportunities.

The communities of Okehampton, Ivybridge, and Princetown, will become 'hubs' for visitors, allowing people from all backgrounds to spend time and money in these places while taking part in events or activities that promote enjoyment and understanding of Dartmoor's special qualities.

Conservation work will advance the excellent woodland, habitat and river restoration already taking place, with a particular focus on the river catchment areas of the Okement, Dart, Erme and Yealm.

Active travel and access will unlock further opportunities for walking and cycling, particularly for children, and giving people the chance to experience amazing views or explore historic remains no matter what their age or ability.

Work on the project is scheduled to start during the 2025/26 financial year.

An Excellent Organisation

An organisation that provides an excellent level of service, where the people (staff, members and volunteers) and partnerships are what makes the organisation effective in delivering outcomes for Dartmoor.

Organisational Climate Action Plan

In 2024/25, Dartmoor National Park Authority commissioned a full organisational carbon footprint from the University of Exeter, to provide an updated baseline for greenhouse gas emissions across Scopes 1 (direct), 2 (energy), and 3 (indirect) for 2023/24.

This data forms the foundation for producing DNPA's revised Climate Action Plan 2025/26. The work identifies key emissions sources and aligns reduction targets with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). It enables DNPA to prioritise effective actions and track progress toward achieving near-term (2030) and long-term (2050) net zero goals.

Race to Zero

In 2024/25, DNPA worked with Small World Consulting to complete an emissions baseline for Dartmoor National Park. This work established decarbonisation targets and outlined a clear trajectory for reducing emissions. The authority is also actively collaborating with the Climate and Energy Working Group across all UK National Parks, exchanging insights and working collectively to accelerate our efforts toward achieving net zero.

Total baseline emissions for Dartmoor National Park: 633,439 tonnes CO₂e.

Dartmoor Partnership Plan

The Dartmoor Partnership Plan (also known as the Management Plan) is the most important policy document for Dartmoor. It provides the strategic framework to ensure that the National Park's statutory purposes and duty are met, while also delivering national and local priorities. The current Plan period runs from 2021 – 2026, the Plan must be reviewed every five years and preparation for the review began in 2024.

As the Partnership Plan is a document for the whole National Park (and not just the National Park Authority) it is essential that the review process involves key partner organisations and stakeholders. To guide the review process, the Dartmoor Partnership Board was established in 2024 and brings together key partners who play a vital role in delivering the Plan. The Partnership Board will provide strategic oversight and ensure a coordinated, collaborative approach to both the review and future delivery of the Plan.

The main review period will take place throughout 2025–26 and will include a series of public and stakeholder engagement events. As part of this process, a new monitoring framework will also be established. It is expected that an updated Partnership Plan will be prepared for adoption in early 2027.

State of the Park Report

In preparation for the review of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021- 26 an updated State of the Park report has been prepared. The State of the Park report is an important evidence base for the review process and ensures that the review is guided by the latest data and trends.

The report draws on a combination of open data, data owned by Dartmoor National Park Authority and data and research provided by our partners. Where data is available and relevant, the report highlights specific projects to demonstrate their impact and contribution towards delivering the Dartmoor Partnership Plan and the Vision for Dartmoor.

Dartmoor Futures

The Authority agreed to establish an independent charity and associated trading company as a vehicle to help deliver the Dartmoor Partnership Plan and fundraise for conservation and access projects across the National Park. The new charity will be called Dartmoor Futures. Gemma Mortensen has been appointed as the Chair of the trustees. Dartmoor Futures will formally launch in 2026 – the 75th anniversary of the designation of Dartmoor as a National Park. DNPA hope that Dartmoor Futures will help secure the next 75 years of the National Park.

Devon Tourism Awards

In 2024 DNPA officers entered the National Park Visitor Centres into the Devon Tourism Awards

After being mystery shopped and its online information and visitor reviews were scrutinised, Postbridge was shortlisted for the ‘Visitor Information Service of the Year’ award and was subsequently awarded silver at the annual award ceremony in Plymouth.

This award is an excellent recognition for the warm welcome, enthusiasm and dedication that all DNPA Information Advisors give to every visitor that passes through the centre doors. While the award is displayed in pride of place at Postbridge Visitor Centre, it is a shared celebration for all DNPA centres and the teams that support them.

DNPA Volunteers

Volunteers play an important role in supporting the work of Dartmoor National Park Authority. In 2024/25 the total number of volunteer days organised or supported by DNPA was 3,782 with the value of these days recorded as £378,223. These volunteers work across our services and fulfil a number of roles, including: Voluntary Wardens, Engagement volunteers, Education Guides, Outreach, Youth Ranger, Photography, Archaeology and Ecology.



NPA/25/029

Dartmoor National Park Authority

25 July 2025

Recruitment of Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Report of the Head of Organisational Development

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) **Approve the process for the appointment of a new Chief Executive (National Park Officer) as outlined in this report;**
- (ii) **Agree a budget provision of up to £30,000 to be funded from the Authority's reserves;**
- (iii) **Agree the establishment of an Appointment Committee determine its membership and agree to delegate the ability to confirm the appointment of the new Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to this Committee;**
- (iv) **Approve in principle the use of an executive search company to assist in the process.**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The current Chief Executive (NPO) of Dartmoor National Park Authority, Dr Kevin Bishop, has tendered his resignation after 18 years' service with the Authority and will leave his post early in 2026.
- 1.2 Under the terms of the Environment Act 1995 ("the Act") which established the Dartmoor National Park Authority as an independent special purpose local authority, it is a requirement upon the Authority to appoint a National Park Officer (NPO), now more commonly referred to as Chief Executive (NPO).
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to propose a programme for the selection and recruitment of a Chief Executive (NPO) and seek approval for the programme and associated budget requirement.

2 Policy Context

- 2.1 The Chief Executive (NPO) is a statutory requirement under "the Act" and for the Authority incorporates the statutory function of the Head of Paid Service.

- 2.2 “The Act” also states that before making or adopting an appointment a National Park Authority shall consult with the Countryside Commission (now Natural England).
- 2.3 Standing Orders provide that every appointment of a Chief Executive (NPO) shall be made by the Authority, except that the interview, selection and appointment of a Chief Executive (NPO) may be delegated to an Appointment Committee or sub-committee of the Authority established for that purpose.

3 Appointment Committee

- 3.1 Clearly this is an important appointment and as well as heading up the paid service and operational delivery, a good working relationship between the Chief Executive (NPO) and the Members of the Authority is essential.
- 3.2 Following discussion with the Chair, it is proposed that the Authority delegates the task of recruitment and appointment to an Appointment Committee which will, as part of its work, ensure there is provision for all Members to meet the candidates shortlisted and give feedback to the process.
- 3.3 It is proposed that membership of the Appointment Committee will be as follows: the Chair of the Authority, Deputy Chair of the Authority, Chair of the Development Management Committee [i.e. the Performance Review Group] plus the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, in order to achieve a good balance and knowledge of the Authority’s work. HR advice and administrative support will be provided by the Head of Organisational Development.

4 Recruitment

- 4.1 Normally the Authority undertakes its recruitment in house and has an excellent track record in attracting strong candidates to nearly all vacancies. However, it is over 18 years since a new Chief Executive (NPO) was recruited and it is considered that the Authority’s normal methods of recruitment may not be sufficient to attract a shortlist of suitably qualified and experienced candidates. It is therefore intended, subject to Members’ approval, to use a company who provide executive search services to assist in the recruitment and selection process.
- 4.2 The Head of Organisational Development has prepared a specification, approved by the Chair, and is receiving quotations from executive search companies to provide support covering the following aspects – briefing from the Panel, project preparation, advertising, executive search, candidate profiling, assistance with the shortlisting/selection process and due diligence in checking applications and seeking references. It is anticipated that the successful company will be notified before the end of August and be briefed by the Panel in early September.
- 4.3 It is expected that shortlisted candidates will undergo a rigorous selection process, consisting of formal interviews and presentations. While selecting the right candidate is clearly critical for the Authority, our long standing recruitment ethos is that the candidate needs to see enough of the Authority to be sure that we are the right choice for them as well. Further to the need to engage with Members, it is also expected there will be opportunities for a wider set of staff and partners to meet the shortlisted candidates. Advice on how to incorporate all this properly and fairly into the selection process will be sought from the executive search company.

5 Timetable

- 5.1 The Chief Executive (NPO) post is one of three statutory posts that the Authority must have in place (the others being the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer). For this and reasons of continuity, it is considered important that any gap between Dr Bishop leaving and a new Chief Executive (NPO) starting be kept to a minimum.
- 5.2 While any significant period without a Chief Executive (NPO) would be likely to cause issues, Dr Bishop has helpfully given extended notice of his decision in the knowledge that recruitment at this level can be a lengthy process particularly as the successful candidate is likely to be on a minimum of three months' notice. It is therefore proposed to advertise the vacancy in mid-September with interviews in mid-October, hopefully allowing the successful candidate to start early in 2026.

6 Equality and Sustainability Impact

- 6.1 The recruitment process for the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) will promote equality, diversity and inclusion and will be aligned with the Authority's sustainability values and commitments.
- 6.2 This will include ensuring all recruitment materials and platforms are fully accessible and actively targeting underrepresented groups through advertising channels and partnerships.
- 6.3 Where possible, digital tools will be used to reduce paper use and any recruitment partners will be required to demonstrate their own sustainability policies and practices.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Subject to Authority approval, provision of up to £30,000 will be allocated from the Authority's reserves for this recruitment exercise, including sufficient funds to pay the executive search company for this purpose. 'Ball park' figures obtained from companies that undertake such work have ranged between £20,000 and £25,000, although the final figure may vary depending upon the precise nature of the support required.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 As well as being a statutory requirement, the successful appointment of a Chief Executive (National Park Officer) is essential to provide leadership for officers, manage the effective delivery of services and ensure that the Authority achieves its strategic, policy and management objectives.
- 8.2 The recruitment process outlined in this report will provide a thorough and transparent approach that balances effective engagement with all Members and the need to act quickly to meet the timeframe for a successful appointment.
- 8.3 Members are being asked to: approve the process outlined above (including the use of an executive search agency) and note that they will be involved in this process; agree a budget provision of up to £30,000 to be taken from reserves; and agree the

establishment of an Appointment Committee with delegated power to confirm the appointment of a new Chief Executive (National Park Officer).

NEIL WHITE