Dartmoor National Park Management Plan and Local Plan Review

Dartmoor Debate 1: Economy held on 29 June 2018

Questions to guide group discussion:

1. In the light of evidence suggesting declines in population and employment on Dartmoor in the future, what should our response be? Is managed decrease of the overall size of the Dartmoor economy an option we can/should plan for? What would the impact be? If not, what is our alternative vision for Dartmoor's future economy?
2. How can we maintain the sectors that support the special qualities of the National Park (agriculture, tourism, food & drink, arts & culture etc) and improve their productivity?
3. Should we aim to move the business profile towards more productive sectors, such as IT, business services, others? If so how can we do this, and who are the partners who can deliver this?
4. What are the barriers facing Dartmoor's economy in future e.g. workforce availability; infrastructure; house prices, earnings, qualifications etc)? What tools do we have to respond to these? How can we address these and who are the key players?
5. Following discussion on the points above, what do we think the vision for Dartmoor's economy should be?

Group 1

Ambition of 'Managed change' rather than no change

lack of housing = shrinking pupil numbers.

Well-being = bringing trade in via new business

Affordable housing – key - small scale housing growth

Need to support 'heart' of economy tourism/farming

IT business expansion encourages new related business start ups

Encourage depth in tourism sector – new opportunities – extend season – increasing demand for 'experience led' offer

Food offer – develop branding & brand recognition linking to tourism

Break affordable housing model – build ourselves, CLT, tied houses, expand/adapt key worker definition to meet Dartmoor needs

Landscape is key plank for national park – people want to enjoy

Our USP – quality of natural environment / cultural environment

Shortage of quality labour - skills & training weakness – work with Atrium, SDC/Careers advice

Increasing productivity of what we do well

Shame we lost Dartmoor Partnership

Dartmoor can't be considered in isolation - Need to engage wider: market towns, districts, value of Dartmoor to Devon

High proportion of Day visitors

'Footloose' businesses

Vision = proactive not just reactive = productivity only a strand

Opportunity = skills, affordable housing, border blind

Captured through LEP, DCC

Shorten supply chain, bring processing closer

Dartmoor USP should be 'Quality' and factored into growth/productivity conversations, develop new understanding of productivity

 Mitigating barriers

Flexibility – planning constraints

Accommodation for workers

Tourism – year round tourism extending the season, experiences, selling the place

Group 2

Leader project funding is available but they are unable to fund certain projects due to the criteria imposed centrally which is a source of frustration. Where grants have been successful they have made a difference and created jobs. Is there an option to create something across the National Park which replaced Leader funding post 2020?

Particularly important to have start up and early years support for small businesses. Is there a case for larger businesses acting as guarantors for new/starter business as loans are hard to come by. Many small enterprises have had to crowd fund to raise the revenue needed.

Lack of accommodation for businesses to move into. It should be noted that this is a problem unique to Dartmoor. Identifying land for commercial use is one thing but getting it released and built on is another. Often there is hope value that land allocated for employment uses will in time be allowed to be developed for more lucrative residential development

High cost of utilities for new build sites are prohibitive so nothing will happen with many of them.

Realistically the best locations for business are the peripheral of the National Park or larger settlements.

Developers keen to act but lack of sites. Type of accommodation required is small units with 2 or 3 offices. Quality accommodation. Many businesses are 'lifestyle' ones, and are 'small by choice' as often people who have worked in large companies and have made a conscious decision to set up their own business which is deliberately smaller in scale - downsizing.

Better use needs to be made of existing redundant (farm) buildings for use as accommodation for workers connected to the business, local housing or commercial use. More flexible policies needed to facilitate this.

Lack of accommodation for workers (young and those without a car) is another problem as the rural nature of certain businesses mean there is no public transport and it is too far to get a lift.

Look to innovators within the business community to show leadership in their area or possibly bring together e.g Ashburton cookery school.

Issues around productivity linked to staff recruitment and retention which lead to high costs due to high turn over. Extending the season to year round opening creates more attractive full time jobs which can help address this e.g NT. The Rural Productivity Commission for HoSW LEP produced a good report and sent to central government but nothing has happened with it since.

Stronger links between service providers need to be encouraged farm, food and drink. Many local businesses buy based on price rather than local sourcing, rather than seeing the potential benefits of buying local and promoting a quality product particularly as visitors expect to buy local produce. Opportunity for farmers to be more proactive, possibly working with local Chambers of Commerce.

Food festivals are good adverts for local produce. Revisit previous attempts to support local produce e.g. Eat the View, Dartmoor Trail, farm visits.

As well as attracting people to Dartmoor e.g. Tour of Britain, Moor Otters, Real Ale trail, opportunity for farmers to connect with local centres of population e.g. Exeter, Plymouth through taking produce to markets there

Perhaps make more of what is already happening on Dartmoor as regards Business. Network for Dartmoor businesses? Tackle specific issues. Working through local groupings where they exist, fill the gaps e.g. need a Dartmoor Commons Chamber of Commerce?

Acknowledged that it is difficult to bring business together which makes building a stronger more resilient business community a challenge.

Future opportunities to support Creative businesses as people like to live in quality locations. Also more opportunities generally as infrastructure improves e.g. Exeter airports, Science park, train services, mobile/broadband coverage.