

Dartmoor

National Park Authority

Annual Review

2023/24



124 square miles of DARTMOOR are now part of a Landscape Recovery Project

That's approximately one third of the National Park

230 engagement activities delivered

(engaging 13,434 people)



Outreach interactions with 5,697 people

45

PRoW signs produced in 2023/24, replacing 35% of posts on the moor

261ha

of peatland restoration on Dartmoor

809

processed planning applications



141 active DNPA volunteers



450

positive engagements with Dog owners on Dartmoor during Ground Nesting Birds Campaign

7,737

YOUNG PEOPLE

AGED 5-17
ATTENDED
BESPOKE
EVENTS



4

new Miles Without Stiles routes added to the Dartmoor network

40ha land and 25km watercourse cleared of Himalayan balsam



21 people

from the rural sector trained in Mental Health Awareness

67 FIPL PROJECTS COMPLETED IN TOTAL



19

new areas of prehistoric interest identified

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Introduction

We should be proud of our National Parks. They are special places designated by Parliament for their natural beauty and their value to the nation. Dartmoor is one of 15 National Parks in the UK, the 'breathing spaces for the nation', a place of enjoyment and recreation for millions, home to around 35,000 people, and a place of work for almost 10,000 people. That work includes those who work the land, and in doing so help to create the landscapes that make Dartmoor worthy of National Park status.

2023/24 has been a year of high achievement with highlights reflected in this annual review. It was particularly gratifying that the Government commissioned independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor commended "much of the work that has gone on under the leadership of the National Park Authority", endorsed the vision and role of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan, and stated that the Authority "has a crucial leadership and facilitation role to play".

The achievements and progress highlighted in the Annual Review for 2023/24 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. We are proud of these relationships and grateful to the ongoing support of everyone that has worked with us over the last 12 months – thank you. We look forward to continuing to work alongside our partners to share our vision for Dartmoor, to make it better for future generations, climate resilient, nature rich, beautiful, connected to the past and looking to the future; a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, work or visit. A place that is loved, cherished and cared for.

Whilst we need to celebrate what has been achieved, we also need to recognise that more needs to be done to address the nature and climate emergencies, and to ensure that the National Park provides a warm welcome for all.



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Nature

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

Three Large-scale Landscape Recovery Areas on Dartmoor

The Walkham Valley in West Dartmoor and the **Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster** were two of the 34 successful bids in the second round of the Government's Landscape Recovery scheme, announced by Defra in November 2023, ahead of COP28.

Both schemes will work with each other and the established **East Dartmoor Landscape Recovery Area** led by Devon Wildlife Trust.

Farmers and landowners are working on ambitious plans to boost nature and strengthen farming resilience across large areas of Dartmoor National Park. This shared ambition, to help create large-scale, connected nature recovery areas, has the power to transform the ecological landscape of Dartmoor National Park and bring about a wealth of public goods.

The Walkham Valley Landscape Recovery Area

With its tor-topped moorland, blanket bog, wooded valleys, enclosed farmland and stunning historic features, the Walkham Valley is a remarkable example of Dartmoor's mosaic landscape formed over thousands of years.

The scheme focuses on the catchment of the River Walkham, an area of 15sq miles, boasting internationally important archaeology and priority species such as the Blue Ground Beetle, Marsh Fritillary and Atlantic Salmon, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Conservation Areas.

Dartmoor National Park Authority is coordinating the scheme with support from participating farmers, landowners and the **Dartmoor Hill Farm Project**. In recognition of the critical role they play in landscape outcomes, the scheme will be farmer-led.

The Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster

The Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster has worked with the **Duchy of Cornwall** and other landowners to develop a proposal covering 90 square miles – around 25% of the National Park. The project area takes in much of the high moor where many of Devon's rivers rise, six commons, 40 farms and more than 200 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

The Cluster, working with the Duchy and other landowners, will build on previous work to collaborate with farmers on ideas that enhance farm business resilience and improve habitats while balancing other (sometimes competing) priorities such as conservation, food production, recreation and military use.

About Landscape Recovery schemes

Landscape Recovery is a key component of the Government's Environmental Land Management scheme. It is for farmers and land managers who want to explore large-scale, long-term and coordinated approaches to producing environmental and climate goods on their land.

*It funds ambitious landscape-scale projects through bespoke, long-term agreements. The aim is to deliver a range of positive environmental and social benefits while meeting local and national ambitions. This includes those in the **Dartmoor Partnership Plan**, the **25-Year Environment Plan** and the **Green Finance Strategy** alongside Defra's commitments to protect a minimum of **30% of land by 2030**.*

All Landscape Recovery schemes have a two-year development phase ahead of 20-year delivery period, allowing time to explore and negotiate options resulting in a collective agreement unique to each individual landscape.



Bluebells at Emsworthy Mire, an area of Dartmoor that falls into the East Dartmoor Landscape Recovery Programme catchment

Ground Nesting Birds Campaign

The DNPA Ranger and Communication teams worked together to focus on the 'Dogs on Leads' message, in the run up to and during the ground nesting bird season (March-July) in 2024.

The Rangers have facilitated engagement days on the moor, utilising their team and DNPA Volunteers, Marshalls, Engagement Volunteers, Outreach and Engagement staff and partner organisations including the National Trust, the Dartmoor Livestock Protection Officer and the Rural Crime Police team.

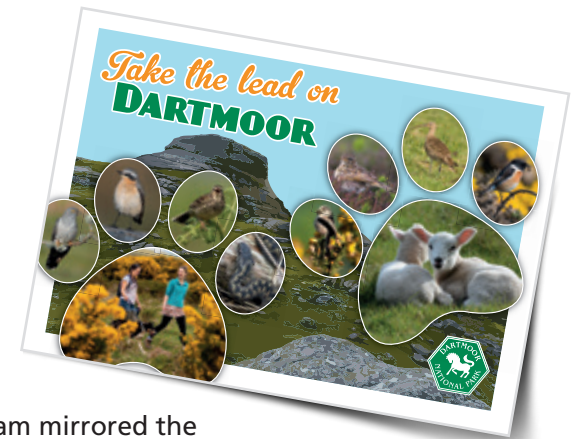
Focus started at Haytor in March 2024 and further engagement days have been planned for Roborough Down and Cadover Bridge – further 'honey pot' sites. The team engaged with hundreds of dog owners and have given out 450 free branded dog leads and information postcards detailing the wildlife that can be found on the moor during this important breeding season. With the help of this literature, dog treats, and 'give aways' as a conversational prompt, Rangers have found engaging with dog owners much more positive than in past years.



Visitors with Dogs on Leads at Haytor

During the campaign the Ranger team have logged over 70 byelaw engagements regarding dogs. The 'dogs on leads' message is crucial for visitors to understand how they can help protect ground nesting birds and prevent livestock worrying.

To support on the ground engagement, the Communication team mirrored the messaging on DNPA social media channels, with a focus on video content and mixing instructive posts about dogs on leads with informative posts about the rich variety of wildlife found on Dartmoor during this time. This format saw considerably more engagement than past static, 'finger pointing' posts, with 61% more shares and 40% more likes/reactions than posts put out in 2022/23.



DNPA officers and volunteers at Roborough Down, ready to engage with dog owners

Hawns and Dendles Nature Reserve

Hawns and Dendles is a nature reserve on the edge of Dartmoor near the South Devon town of Ivybridge. What was once a deeply shaded conifer plantation is now a diverse landscape of wetland and moorland habitats with scattered trees and patches of scrub.

The reserve is a place where DNPA Rangers and volunteers engage farmers and the local community to demonstrate what is possible when natural processes are restored, and nature is given space to develop and thrive.

Funding from Sykes Cottages in 2023 has allowed DNPA to trial innovative virtual fence technology using large grazing animals to manage the site. The objective of the project is to graze the whole valley using cattle, allowing woodland and trees to regenerate naturally along watercourses and up valley sides.

Cattle create bare ground allowing germination of tree seedlings, as well as managing competitive vegetation and maintaining open areas of wetland. All of which benefit moorland birds, such as cuckoo, rare insects including the blue ground beetle and important open heathland habitats.



Hawns and Dendles nature reserve on the edge of Dartmoor

Dartmoor Invasives Project

Now in its sixth year, this DNPA project has been supported with funding by the Moor Otters Project, Donate for Dartmoor, The Duchy of Cornwall and South West Water.

The main focus of the project has been on two plants, Himalayan balsam and Western skunk cabbage, targeting three different catchments: the Wray Brook at Lustleigh, the River Avon at South Brent and the West Dart headwaters at Princetown. However, giant hogweed is equally invasive, and removal has also been carried out where it has been found on four sites in 2023.

- 40ha land and 25km watercourse cleared of Himalayan balsam
- 115 volunteer days and 50 contractor days worked on clearing invasive species in 2023
- Dartmoor Junior Rangers and South Brent Scouts have volunteered time to remove balsam and skunk cabbage.



Dartmoor Junior Rangers volunteer time to remove Himalayan balsam and Western skunk cabbage

Curlew Conservation on Dartmoor

A five-year recovery project (2021 – 2025) continues to help reverse the decline in the Curlew population, improve breeding success and help recolonise former nesting sites. The project, funded by the King Charles III Charitable Fund and the Duchy of Cornwall is supported by Dartmoor National Park Authority, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), Natural England and RSPB and is now in its fourth year.

Curlew are in dramatic, national decline, they are classified on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern's 'Red List' and Dartmoor now hosts the last few pairs of breeding Curlew in Devon, which has seen a population decline of 85% since 1985. Curlews return to Dartmoor to nest from March – July and then return to the estuaries for the autumn and winter. Curlew can breed from two years old, but others take up to five years before they have been proven to return and breed.

Former Curlew nesting areas are being targeted to deliver habitat improvements and restoration on a landscape scale. Predator management is undertaken to protect nests and improve chick survival and in addition, WWT are rearing and releasing young Curlew onto Dartmoor in 2024 and 2025 to boost their numbers and encourage recolonisation in a few years' time. This new conservation technique is known as 'headstarting' and over 70 young Curlew have been released on Dartmoor since 2021.

All released Curlew can be identified individually by yellow marked leg rings and leg flags and Dartmoor farmers, landowners and visitors are all encouraged to report sightings of Curlew so that they can be identified and monitored. Sightings can be reported to curlew@wwt.org.uk or by contacting any of the organisations supporting the project.

In 2023, more Curlew sightings were reported than in the past 18 seasons, which is encouraging news for their future recovery on Dartmoor.



A young Curlew from the 'headstart' project

Dartmoor Headwaters

Delivered in partnership between Dartmoor National Park Authority, the Environment Agency and Devon County Council, the Dartmoor Headwaters natural flood management project works with natural processes to reduce downstream flooding.

The South West Peatland Partnership is working to restore over 2,500 hectares of degraded peatland in the South West by 2025. The partnership uses a variety of methods to rewet upland peat bogs.

Six natural flood management schemes have been completed in 2023/24:

- Six schemes complete across Bovey, Mardle, Dean Burn and Walkham catchments. This includes schemes which have leaky woody dams, tree planting, bridleway flood control, infiltration pits, wetland creation and surveying health of trees on the common.



Timber dams at Tavy Head

261ha of restoration has been completed by the South West Peatland Partnership in 2023/24 on Dartmoor:

- Tavy Head - 128 hectares
- Great Gnats Head - 25 hectares
- Burrator - 108 hectares
- Hangingstone – works has begun



Peatland restoration in action at Great Gnats Head

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.

Predicting and protecting lithic landscapes

On-going PhD research, in partnership with the University of Leicester, and supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, is uncovering the role Dartmoor played in the lives of hunter-gatherers who occupied the southwest peninsula 10,000 – 6,000 years ago.

The research concerns the extent and significance of lithic scatters and associated subsurface archaeology on Dartmoor.

The research conducted in 2023 has involved Dartmoor National Park volunteers in archaeological excavations, made possible by the support of local farmers, landowners and organisations across the moor. The research outcomes are informing the way that prehistoric subsurface archaeology from this period is interpreted, managed and protected.

- 40 DNPA volunteers participated in five weeks of archaeological excavations at 21 locations, giving 1000+ hours of their time.
- 19 new areas of prehistoric interest have been identified through public engagement, predictive modelling and excavation.
- Numerous private collections of prehistoric Dartmoor flints have been made available for further study as a result of the PhD outreach, including one numbering more than 1870 artefacts.



Volunteer archaeologists excavating on High Down

Piles Hill Excavation

A quartz surface, possibly laid deliberately to enhance the setting of a double stone row, was uncovered during excavations at Piles Hill in September 2023.

The find was made by Dartmoor National Park Archaeologists, Isca Archaeology and volunteers during a week-long dig aimed at answering some questions posed by the enigmatic monument. The excavation was part of the **Our Upland Commons** initiative. Funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England** and **Dartmoor Preservation Association**, it's aimed at increasing understanding of upland commons across Dartmoor and other areas.

The double stone row at Piles Hill spans 850-metres across Ugborough and Harford Moors and aligns east-west, curving slightly upwards, and is thought

to date to the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. Monuments like this are thought to have had considerable ritual importance for the people who created and used them thousands of years ago. There are around 40 visible stones; some upright, but most are flat on the ground and hidden by vegetation.

The recumbent nature of the stones has long posed questions about whether they were laid flat deliberately, had fallen over or if the monument had once been on a different alignment. While the dig concluded in September 2023, post-excavation work continues. It's hoped precise dateable evidence and environmental information can be extracted from site samples while funding to set the stones in their original upright position will be explored.



Piles Hill excavation on Ugborough and Harford Moors

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.

Great Gather

As part of the **Our Upland Commons** programme, in summer 2023 there were four supported Great Gather events. The first was a sheep gathering event at Greenwell in July and then in September and October the Dartmoor Hill Pony Association arranged for members of the public to view two pony drifts on Widecombe and Spitchwick commons.

These events gave an opportunity for over 100 people to witness and engage with the commoners working with their stock, from a safe distance. In November 2023 these in person events were followed by a public webinar on the role of ponies on Dartmoor. Over 500 people either attended or subsequently watched this presentation.

The pony drift on Widecombe Common can be seen in more detail here: **Dartmoor Hill Ponies and the Pony Drift — Foundation for Common Land**.



Pony drift on Widecombe common

The Independent Review on The Management of Dartmoor's Protected Sites

The Independent Review was commissioned by Defra ministers in 2023 to make recommendations on the most effective grazing and management regime(s) that would deliver improvements on the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) across Dartmoor, so they can maintain or achieve favourable conditions.

Outcomes should be balanced against the long-term and sustainable delivery of other priorities such as agricultural production, public access and cultural and natural heritage.

The panel, led by David Fursdon, met with a wide range of representatives of the farming and commoning community on Dartmoor in autumn 2023. The panel worked hard to make the process accessible and to visit the commons to discuss relevant issues. In excess of 150 written evidence submissions were presented, which the Panel took into consideration. The report, with recommendations, was issued to Mark Spencer, the Minister for Food Farming and Fisheries, and made publicly available on 13th December 2023.

The final report from the independent review was positive about the work of the Authority: "we commend much of the work that has gone on under the leadership of the Dartmoor National Park Authority" (para. 15.2) and reinforced the 'leadership and facilitation role' that we play. The review also endorsed the vision and delivery strategy in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan (para.18.2).

The official Ministerial response was released in April 2024, the full document is available here; **Government response to the Independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor: full report - GOV.UK** (www.gov.uk).

Healthy Livestock Project

As part of Our Upland Commons, the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project coordinated a Healthy Livestock Project. Working with Harford, Ugborough and Holne Moor Commons Associations, the group explored solutions to cobalt deficiency in lambs, alongside pioneering work surveying for dung beetles on both the common and in-bye land.

Local entomologist Clive Turner, with support from graziers, examined 7,500 litres of dung and identified 86,000 beetles to species level, including some notable finds and new records for Dartmoor. The focus was on species diversity and abundance and highlighted the important role played by sheep (358 beetles were found per litre of dung). Data also looked at preference for dung type showing that many beetle species are specialists. Alongside the fieldwork, the graziers reviewed their vet medication strategies and explored the potential role of commons health plans. A key issue identified was the increasing risk from tick borne disease such as louping ill and tick pyemia.

As a result of the research, the group piloted a long-acting Vitamin B12 injection for lambs to counter cobalt deficiency as part of a broad field trial looking at liveweight gain, morbidity and mortality. A control and treated group were identified on 9 participating farms with data gathered from late April until August 2023. This showed a positive financial benefit of £2.37. Lamb and grazer feedback identified other welfare benefits.

The programme revolved around regular meetings and discussion including a presentation of results to the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor (see previous article) and the common landowners.

- 10 graziers involved in the project
- 7,500 litres of dung examined
- Numbers of beetle per litre of dung quantified at: Sheep (358), Ponies (186), cattle (6)

The farmers have successfully applied for a Farming in Protected Landscape Grant for 2024 with support from Our Upland Commons to extend this work. This will expand the VitB12 trial to include cattle and look at tick levels and disease on the common. The group will also evaluate the impact of four common pour on products on adult dung beetles.



A sheep and her lamb on Dartmoor

Farmers Mental Health and Wellbeing

In parallel to the agricultural, technical or farm business advice delivered by the Hill Farm Project, there is greater recognition of the need to support the farming community themselves.

Following specialist Mental Health Awareness training, and working with Farm Charities the Farming Community Network (FCN) and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI), the Hill Farm project have coordinated a series of social events designed to offer a break from the farm with other like-minded folk. This aims to rebuild opportunities to socialise, reduce isolation and has led to several self-sufficient 'Farmer Breakfast' groups who meet for food and a chat. Alongside these, larger open group events have included a summer BBQ and a winter quiz night.

Funding was sourced from a number of linked initiatives; a local fundraiser supporting Farming Community Network in memory of a local farmer, FCN core support and RABI Community Pillars pilot project.

Going forward, the Hill Farm Project are building connections to offer further Farmer Breakfast host opportunities across the moor and speaking to various groups with ideas to incorporate new events. The Hill Farm Project also work alongside the newly formed Dartmoor Farmers Wellbeing Group, a private Facebook group, specifically for farmers who organise and promote similar charitable events.

- 746 individual attendees across all events
- 50 individual events (inc. the BBQ & Quiz)
- 21 people from the rural sector trained in Mental Health Awareness



Hill Farm Project Wellbeing Breakfast

Farming in Protected Landscapes


The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant funding programme is running on Dartmoor from March 2021 until March 2025.

Since the beginning of the programme, FiPL has supported over 140 farmers and landowners on Dartmoor and allocated over £1,500,000 to projects that support the natural environment, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide public access opportunities or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

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

 **1,774m**
restored dry stone walls


63.8ha wildlife-rich
habitat created or
restored for biodiversity

9 
projects to
reduce
flood risk

*12 projects to
improve our
understanding of
carbon storage, carbon
emissions and climate
change impacts*

23

**projects making landscape
more inclusive for visitors**

179 
**educational
visits on Dartmoor**

**4,251
trees
planted**



18 ponds
created
or restored

67 FiPL projects completed in total



People

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

Promoting Understanding

In 2023/24 the Outreach and Engagement team delivered 230 activities, engaging 13,434 people.

Through additional funding DNPA were able to recruit two Community Engagement Rangers, on fixed term contracts. One was contracted with support of the Dartmoor Preservation Association (DPA) to help develop engagement with young people aged 12-17; the other contract was funded by the National Parks UK BMW **Recharge in Nature Project** and worked with schools and communities in areas of multiple deprivation in Exeter, Torbay and Plymouth.

The work of the Community Engagement Rangers complemented the core DNPA delivery of working with primary school aged children, enabling engagement with 7,737 young people aged 5-17. Engagement opportunities have included one off family events such as Meldon Wildlife Festival and History Hunters Fun Day, and hosting school visits to Dartmoor, to deepen connections through the Ranger Ralph Club and Dartmoor Youth Ranger programme. DNPA has also offered bespoke programmes tackling mental health and wellbeing through Girls Do Dartmoor.

A particular team highlight this year was supporting the Dartmoor Farm to City event. This event brought cows and pigs, and stories of myths and legends to the capital, connecting young people from the heart of London to the sights and sounds of the moor.

The Outreach, Understanding and Education team have worked hard to reach the wider community, on and off the moor, deploying the DNPA Outreach vehicle to urban locations and offering opportunities to visit Higher Uppacott, a Medieval Longhouse. Through these types of outreach interactions, DNPA has engaged with 5,697 people.



DNPA Officers and Volunteers at the History Hunters Event, hosted at Postbridge Visitor Centre

Nature Inclusion for Young People

The current focus for the work of DNPA Community Engagement Rangers is young people, with the majority being aged 12-17. This is delivered through a suite of programmes and events tailored to a range of audiences. Research shows that spending time in nature is good for you physically and mentally and the teenage generation continue to miss these opportunities whilst needing them the most. The work of our Community Engagement Rangers provides opportunities for young people who currently feel excluded from nature, or struggle to access the National Park, a chance to experience Dartmoor. 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.

All activities encompass three objectives allowing young people to:

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

With support of Dartmoor Preservation Association (DPA) in 2023/24 DNPA were able to run three core youth engagement programmes:

- Nights Under the Stars (NUTS)
- Girls Do Dartmoor (GDD)
- Dartmoor Youth Rangers (DYR)

Over the past year, the Community Engagement Rangers have delivered 40 events in total, engaging with 638 participants.

- 1,853 hours of Youth Ranger time given to understanding, exploring, and conserving Dartmoor.
- 28 young people aged 12-14 from schools on the edge of the National Park took part in a six-week Girls Do Dartmoor programme. 83% of attendees reported increased confidence (on and off the moor) from attending the programme.
- 4 Nights Under the Stars (NUTS) events were held across two Dartmoor locations with 52 attendees from across Devon. 76% of attendees said they would 'definitely' like to spend a night under the stars on Dartmoor again.



Girls do Dartmoor at Belstone



Dartmoor Youth Rangers at NUTS event

Connecting with a Wider Audience

Focusing on reaching a wider audience, in 2023/24 the DNPA Outreach and Understanding team were able to engage with people through a mixture of outreach activities, sessions to tackle people's health and wellbeing, supporting community groups such as Refugee Rocks, working with secondary schools and visits to DNPA Visitor Centres.

A particularly rewarding and well received project was ENLIVEN which gave people living with dementia and mobility challenges a 'Dartmoor Experience'. Members of the Tavistock Memory Café were brought to the Burrator Arboretum, where they were offered the chance to ride on a powered trishaw through the woodland. Participants were delighted with the opportunity to get out and participate in something that they felt they couldn't do anymore. With support from South West Lakes Trust the event was a great example of partnership working. The event was led by the DNPA Outreach and Understanding team who worked with Access colleagues to forge new links with local partners including Cycling Without Age and Tavistock Memory Café.

Legal challenge regarding right to backpack camp under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985

In July 2023 the Court of Appeal unanimously overturned the previous High Court's decision that there was no legal right to backpack camp on registered commons under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985. The camping map that is available on the DNPA website indicates where you can legally backpack camp and has been developed with landowners and backpack/access stakeholders. There is also an accompanying code of practice.

Landowners Mr and Mrs Darwall have challenged the Court of Appeal's decision, and the case will now be heard in the Supreme Court in October 2024. The National Park Authority will be defending the position that the right of access for the purpose of open-air recreation, established under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, includes the ability to backpack camp in accordance with the National Park byelaws and camping map.



People living with dementia ride on a powered trishaw through the Burrator woodland

Visitor Management

2023 was the second year post covid, without any restrictions, and was characterised by a dry and warm spring, followed by a cool wet summer coinciding with the school holidays. This weather pattern alongside the cost-of-living crisis meant that visitor numbers were significantly down in the South West in the summer of 2023. Whilst National Park Visitor Centre figures were up by more than 30% compared to 2022, fewer visitors outside did mean less pressure on the moor and the various services.

The key messages (dogs on leads, responsible camping, giving nature space and litter) were delivered through campaigns via social media and in the visitor centres but also by engagement volunteers at key honeypot sites including Haytor, Postbridge, Wistman's Wood and Foggintor quarry; by bright yellow signs at sites across the national park as required, by the ranger team and also the Dartmoor Marshals.

2023/24 was the fourth year the 'Dartmoor Marshals' have been deployed. This is a partnership project supported by the Office of the Police and Crime

Commissioner, Forestry England, National Trust, Woodland Trust, Duchy of Cornwall, a private landowner and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council. This initiative is focused on changing public behaviours, to ensure that Dartmoor National Park can be enjoyed by all. The marshals worked to engage and educate visitors to Dartmoor in the evening from the end of July through to the beginning of September.

- Dartmoor Marshals spent 1,089 person hours patrolling over the summer, covering 44 evenings.
- The Marshals recorded 220 entries on the Ranger App, relating to overnight stays in motorhomes, 'fly-camping' (roadside or other non-permitted locations) including associated open fires, dogs off leads (prior to the end of July) and at least one occasion of stopping a rave proceeding.
- The Marshals dealt with six reports of homeless people living on the moor. These reports often require a police presence, but the Marshals were able to signpost individuals to local councils and support, thus freeing up valuable police resource.



Dartmoor Marshalls starting the season, pictured with DNPA Rangers

Miles Without Stiles

Defra funding through 'Access for All' project is helping to enhance Dartmoor's Miles Without Stiles (MWS) offer. At the end of 2023/24, DNPA had added four new routes to the MWS network including:

- Brent Island (1 km)
- Burrator Arboretum (1 km)
- Norsworthy Bridge to Deanscombe (3 km)
- Yarner Wood (2 km).



New picnic area on Norsworthy Bridge MWS route

Our Shared Boundaries

This programme of activity was delivered by the Hill Farm Project as part of the **Our Upland Commons** project. It provided skill training in different boundary styles from dry stone walls to hedge laying and corn ditches.

Delivered on farms with active grazing rights, the courses were free and attracted a broad range of participants from farmers to ear nose and throat surgeons! The two-day course provides the basic skills with the offer to join the 'walling club' to continue to practice and develop confidence. Each session involved the host talking about upland farming and explaining the challenges of managing livestock and commons in a changing world.

Some of the participants over the past three years have gone on to wall professionally and feedback from the farmers, participants and trainers has been incredibly positive.

As well as developing practical skills a key outcome of the training was improving mental health and well-being and the joy of giving something back to a much-loved landscape.

- Nine events between April – December
- 75 participants at nine different Farms from Okehampton to Badworthy
- 74 metres of dry stone wall restored
- 10 metres of corn ditch
- 90 metres of newtake wall (single skinned)
- 70 metres of hedge laid

The legacy from the training has been a continued programme of activity on farms, now funded by other support including a FiPL grant. A core group of participants meet regularly and will be visiting the Lake District in 2024 to wall with expert Steve Allen.

The HFP website has details on up-and-coming courses **Events & Workshops | Dartmoor Hill Farm (dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk)**



A training group build a dry stone wall at East Okement Farm

Visitor Survey

Surveys were conducted between July and October 2023 at a variety of locations across Dartmoor National Park, including key towns and areas popular with visitors. 409 survey responses were received.

The main objectives of conducting the survey were to gain an understanding of visitor profiles to the National Park and develop a greater awareness of visitors' attitudes towards a range of issues facing Dartmoor. This survey is the first to be carried out in the selected format (the last survey conducted was in 2017) and it is anticipated that the Authority will look to re-do the survey every 2-3 years.

Respondents were asked whether anything had negatively impacted the enjoyment of their visit to Dartmoor National Park. 29% reported litter and a similar percentage reported too many visitors. However, poorly parked and speeding vehicles were the two points that caused the most significant negative impact.

The results of the survey will support our understanding of Dartmoor and will be used in the formulation of the Authority's State of the Park Report as well as other internal functions, including evidence to support the Partnership Plan, Local Plan and funding bids.



© DNPA

Visitors enjoying a winter morning on Haytor

Communities and Business

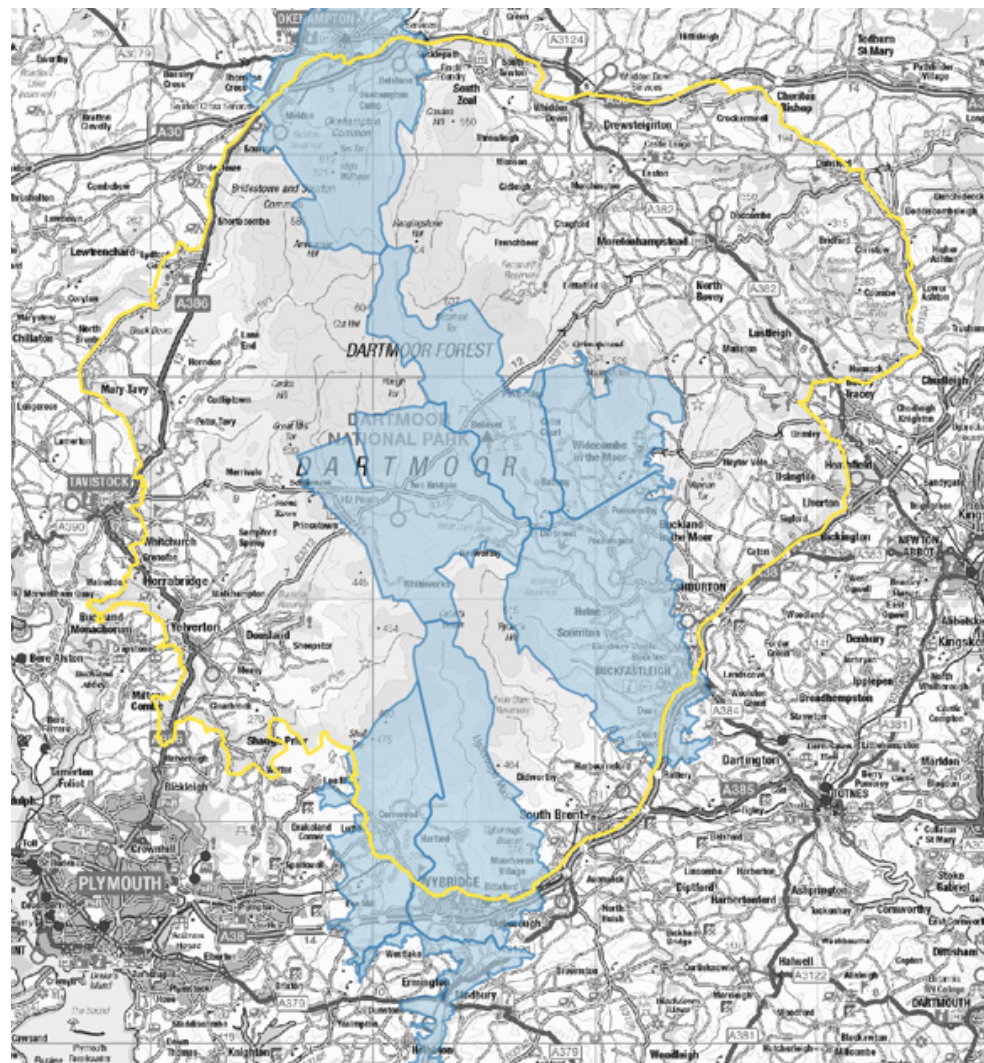
People of all ages can enjoy living and working in low carbon, flourishing communities that are connected physically and digitally.

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes is an area-based partnership led by DNPA and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The programme aims to create more naturally resilient landscapes, to enable better understanding to connect people more sustainably to their place. It focuses on a number of river catchments – the Okement, Dart, Erme and Yealm.

Partners include the Woodland Trust, Sustrans, RSPB, Shallowford Trust, Emergency Exit Arts & Flock SW, Environment Agency, South West Water, Westcountry Rivers Trust.

The partnership is currently in the development phase. In 2023 NLHF granted limited funding to allow partners to consult on and work up detailed proposals. The programme will be submitted in August 2024. If successful, the delivery phase will run for five years from January 2025.



Map showing the Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes scheme area

Climate Action Plan

In January 2024 Members agreed that DNPA would commit to five actions, to be a member of the UN's Race to Zero initiative.

The UK National Park Climate Change & Energy group is the first group of National Parks to submit an application and formalise membership to the UN Race to Zero initiative as a group, and the group has received confirmation that the application has been successful in principle.

Whilst membership to Race to Zero is free of charge. Each Race to Zero member commits to five 'starting line' actions:

1. Pledge: to take action toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global Green House Gasses (GHG) reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest;
2. Plan: within 12 months develop an evidence-based emissions reduction plan in line with the pledge;
3. Proceed: take immediate action towards meeting the pledge;
4. Publish: commit to report data and actions in relation to meeting the pledge, publicly and at least annually - feeding into the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Global Climate Action Portal;
5. Persuade: align lobbying and advocacy activities with net zero by proactively supporting climate policies consistent with the Race to Zero criteria.

RACE TO ZERO

Housing Supplementary Planning Document

As part of the adoption and implementation of the Local Plan, Members agreed in December 2023 to the adoption of the Housing Supplementary Planning Document (Housing SPD). The Housing SPD provides guidance to support the delivery of housing in Dartmoor National Park; it provides detailed guidance on how to use Local Plan housing policies and clarifies the Authority's expectations of housing development.

The Housing SPD also helps applicants make successful and streamlined applications which are good for Dartmoor and its communities; and helps ensure the Authority makes consistent, robust, and streamlined decisions on planning applications. Together with the Local Plan, the Housing SPD forms a material planning consideration when deciding planning applications.



New affordable homes at South Tawton

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.

Dartmoor 'twins' with US National Park



In a first for UK National Parks, Dartmoor is to become the official 'Sister Park' of Cuyahoga Valley National Park, a 33,000-acre protected landscape in Ohio, USA.

The partnership agreement, led by Dartmoor National Park Authority's Deputy Chair Peter Harper, will help each protected landscape

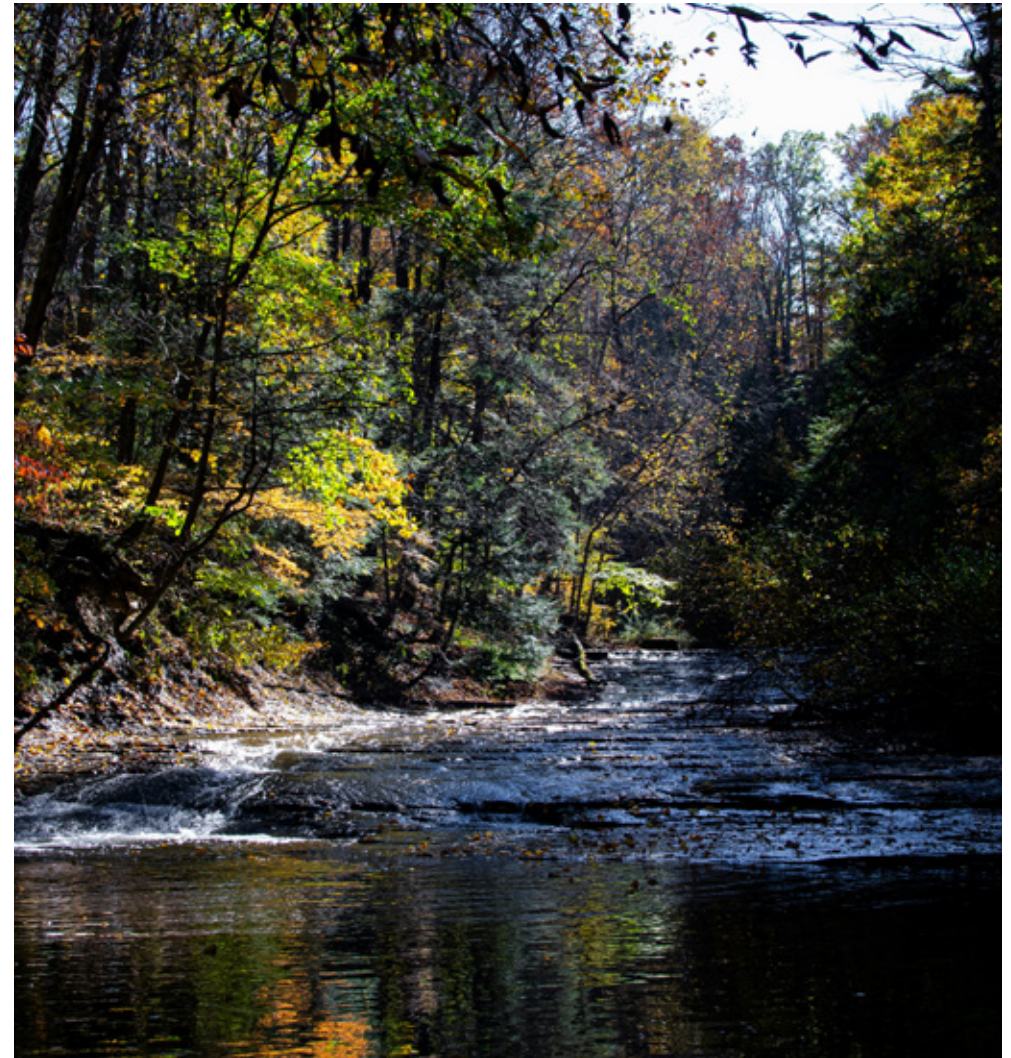
share knowledge and expertise on key issues such as conservation, tackling climate change and sustainable tourism.

The reciprocal agreement was welcomed with unanimous support given by Dartmoor National Park Authority at its September 2023 meeting.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park is in north-east Ohio between the cities of Cleveland and Akron. It was originally designated as a National Recreation Area in 1974 before being redesignated as a National Park in 2000. A central feature is the 22-mile stretch of the Cuyahoga River – meaning 'crooked river' which Indigenous Americans used as an important trade route for thousands of years.

Dartmoor and Cuyahoga share many similarities; both are home to a range of flora and fauna and boast miles of trails for walking, cycling and horse riding. Each park is working hard on priorities such as nature recovery, tackling climate change, making tourism more sustainable and community outreach.

Areas identified for collaboration include outreach and engagement work (particularly with people in socially or economically disadvantaged areas), agri-environment and conservation management, volunteer programmes and access to different funding streams.



The Cuyahoga River stretches through the National Park

Celebrating DNPA Volunteers

With 141 active volunteers across the National Park, DNPA celebrated the cohort at a number of post-season meetings in 2023 and give thanks for the invaluable work that they do for Dartmoor.

Voluntary Wardens

The voluntary warden scheme is managed by the Ranger service. Volunteers help the rangers with their duties and liaise with the community. They advise and help visitors to the Park, help promote enjoyment and understanding of Dartmoor's special qualities and carry out practical projects.

In 2023/24 the 40 active Voluntary Wardens submitted over 4,488 hours of work completed for DNPA.

Engagement Volunteers

Engagement Volunteers are the friendly welcoming face of Dartmoor National Park Authority at weekends and bank Holidays (April – September) covering key family locations.

Engagement Volunteers will offer copies of Enjoy Dartmoor and any other pertinent leaflets, offer advice and information on Dartmoor's special qualities, and promote key messages such as:

- Please keep your dog on a lead between March 1st and July 31st
- Please only backpack camp and follow our camping advice on the website including the camping map
- Please don't have an open fire
- Please don't feed or approach the ponies
- Please close gates behind you
- Please share the roads and bridleways

We currently have 21 active Engagement Volunteers undertaking this work.

Access Volunteers

The Access Volunteer role was established to help the Ranger team maintain access infrastructure that is essential to the public enjoyment of the 450 miles of Public Rights of Way within the National Park. The role involves undertaking the physical repair and installation of infrastructure (Stiles, Gates and Fingerposts) and vegetation clearance on the Public Rights of way Network.

We currently have four active access volunteers undertaking this work.

Fingerpost manufacturing

Two of our DNPA Voluntary Wardens have been giving up their time to help produce fingerposts for the public rights of way network on Dartmoor. Nigel and Steve spend one day per month working using the in-house routing machine in the workshop at Station Yard in Bovey Tracey and so far have produced more than 40 fingerposts for Public Rights of Way signage. Most of which have now been installed and are helping to direct people along rights of way on Dartmoor.

Each post produced in-house saves DNPA approximately 70% in costs.



Two DNPA Voluntary Wardens produce Public Rights of Way fingerposts

Education Guides

These specialist guides lead walks and introductory tours for visiting school groups. Groups will be principally Primary Schools and tours will have a general, introductory feel rather than being very specific. Our Education Guides have a broad understanding of Dartmoor's habitats, wildlife and cultural heritage, along with an enjoyment of Dartmoor's special qualities. Combined with a willingness and enthusiasm to share these with others, our Education Guides are in high demand.

We currently have 19 active volunteer' guides undertaking this work.

Archaeology Volunteers

With over 20,000 archaeological sites on Dartmoor, Archaeology Volunteers play a big role in helping conserve, monitor and understand this hugely important landscape.

The biggest role these volunteers play is undertaking practical conservation tasks to improve the condition of sites and repair damage. This often entails clearing invasive and damaging vegetation to help make the site more accessible or undertaking erosion repairs. Often DNPA works closely with local conservation groups to deliver this.

Some Archaeology Volunteers help monitor the condition of sites, features, and archaeological landscapes to maintain an up-to-date picture of what is happening on the Moor. Recently volunteers successfully assessed the condition of Dartmoor's Premier Archaeological Landscapes. This information is now being directly used to inform conservation projects and management schemes.

Volunteers can also help with researching Dartmoor's past by participating in archaeological excavations and surveys. DNPA conducts "community digs" where the public are very welcome to join in.

DNPA welcome volunteers who can offer specialist skills. For example, officers are grateful to a drone operator currently undertaking an aerial survey of archaeological sites on DNPA owned land, conservation officers work with a very experienced volunteer who is helping update our Historic Environment Record, and the Communications team are investigating support from volunteer photographers and digital creatives.



Volunteers clear gorse on Harford Moor



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Cows at Parke