

Dartmoor National Park, Management Plan Review
Dartmoor Debate No. 7: Natural Environment on 21 November 2018

Transcript of feedback received during the closing session in response to the question:

“After all the various conversations you have been part of today.... And with the future vision for the Dartmoor national park in mind....

What stands out for you... What single thing would you most want to see in the Dartmoor National Park Vision Statement at the heart of the new Management plan for 2020-2024? What should we focus on? What should we let go of?”

Transcript:

- “a substantially more biodiverse landscape richer in both flora and fauna and where farmers are happy in their wildlife friendly farms and once present species return in abundance;
- more landscape restoration projects: - soils, - habitats, - biodiversity , targeted at freely draining land on the hills
- I would like to see a stronger and more forward thinking vision for Dartmoor. A vision which stakeholders can get behind. We need to acknowledge that Dartmoor does not deliver in the way that it could. Catchment based management and co-operation which is able to cut through out dated policy. The need for fencing & liming in appropriate areas. Change is required to effect change in habitats and reduce degradation. Burning is an outdated method of management and should not take place on deep peat.
- A commitment to enhance the biodiversity; support the farmers to deliver more for wildlife incorporate monitoring and management of soils to increase benefit from soils as carbon storage and ecosystem service / water retention on the moor; increase connections between habitats and increase monitoring of habitats and species to improve evidence base
- Restoring woodland – this would have multiple benefits – most diverse habitat, natural flood management, carbon sequestration, water quality, recreation, soils, economics, climate change mitigation etc. Reducing sheep grazing, allowing fencing, reducing swaling would help natural regeneration and planting.
- The future management of the natural environment needs be flexible so that it is tailored to the ends, ways and means that are relevant to each situation. Focus on: a suite of practical options that support the over-riding aim(s). Let go: any fixation with a historical target example (eg ‘back to the way it was in the year X’)
- Keywords: innovation, creativity, collaboration, landscape scale. I think the vision needs to be bolder and more imaginative seeking to work in partnership with other agencies to deliver enhanced habitats & wildlife on an ecosystem services level (soils etc). This [] landowner buy in and agri-environment / private sector blend of finance. Consider Purpose 1 above Purpose 2 of the NP Act. Let go of: Mediocrity! [And..] more of the same
- A bold commitment to biodiversity recovery across the whole National park area, recognising the link between the uplands and the periphery. Plus, a

significant area of the NP where natural processes can recover, including species reintroduction (beavers). Focus on: net biodiversity gain, species and habitat regeneration. Let go: encouragement of damaging mass participation events & even more damaging farming practices.

- Identify 2-3 large areas to prioritise and pilot nature recovery. A commitment to a fundamental shift towards land management for nature restoration and natural resource management supporting those on the land to deliver this for the nation + moving DNP towards being a 'real' national park * repopulate with beavers as a flagship for the new intent.
- There is so much work going on that it needs co-ordinating to increase effective spend of money on valid and viable activities without duplication. That will enable me to better invest in.... Natural flood management (or the better titled "working with natural processes") on Dartmoor in the future to better protect 20,000+ homes and hundreds of businesses whilst enhancing habitat and ecosystems, and increasing agricultural resilience to climate along the all important river corridors. Change. Engaging the people of the moor (practitioners and communities) in what 'nature' and 'natural' mean for Dartmoor and how to become more accepting of moving back to a real baseline for Dartmoor, not what we currently battle against as the 'shifted' baseline.
- Land management systems that deliver a step change for nature & ecosystem services. Farmers & ecologists and other park users having a shared understanding of what good looks like for nature and how it can and will be delivered
- Most want to see connectivity and resilience / adaptation of soils + of habitats + species as part of management plan. Include watercourses and their [] / impact / relevance for both people and wildlife – provision of so many multiple benefits. Let go of preservationist view that Dartmoor is or can only be managed as a farmed and grazed landscape – explore what true wilderness would be here.
- Being bold and prepared to make stand for nature so that "management" of Dartmoor allows nature to breathe, recovery (halt the decline) and become resilient to climate change. Let go of constraints (legal, statutory etc) +think and action how to do
- Soil type, condition and targets as a basis for strategic interventions improving habitats → species. Engage farmers and communities in the solutions.
- The vision must encourage the development / support for landscape scale co-operation to achieve the [] vision.
- A bottom up approach, from good soils come biodiversity, space for nature, food etc. not tackling this would be not to tackle a key problem.
- I would want to see 'high nature value farming' at the heart of the management plan. This should be low intensity farming systems which are managed with the production of public goods at the heart
- Future conservation objections & strategies need to be different from the past. Previous approaches haven't delivered & the challenges are now quite different. I can't say what new objectives should be (& this workshop hasn't agreed them). They must be developed through a process of consensus building with young people, farmers, landowners, tourism & leisure businesses, community representatives.

- The vision statement should place the restoration of ecosystems as its main priority. There needs to be a much greater focus on conservation and restoration. This will mean 'letting go' of farming as it currently stands in some areas. Marginal land of low wildlife value could be used primarily for wildlife and not farming. Greater support to farmers to reform to improve conservation priorities + improve landscape. National Park must be more than it currently is – more than just farmed area. Prioritise nature!
- Stands out: lack of clarity on what we want; fear of the unknown, have we really a license for a clean sheet; lack of targeted advice due to austerity cuts. Single thing: unity of Community of Dartmoor with DNPA in its vision. Focus on: a more flexible approach to land management placing Trust in farmers / landowners once vision sought. Let go of: the past policy drivers.
- Focus on: enabling landowners, tenants, commoners to come up with visions of their own, post Brexit ie encouragement of new thinking, innovative ways of engagement (such as someone's suggestion of having competition for funding to experiment with ecological restoration) helping to put wildlife issues in national and international context. Let go of: tight prescriptive agri-environment schemes (not under NP control, but provide info. For campaigning for letting go).
- There needs to be a master-map of the Park showing the targets habitats for 2025 2030 2035 etc. This will not come quickly through discussion arriving at consensus, so someone has to stick their neck and produce it first. Who? No environmental case has been made for sheep as a beneficial grazer, and sheep are a loss-making farming enterprise. These facts have to be faced and sheep phased out from Dartmoor. How?
- That nature conservation is at the heart of NP policy and is reflected in the resources available. Vision must be ambitious now and not compromising.
- The National park Authority should work collaboratively with other agencies / land owners. Consensus. Keeping every one happy.
- Get the (natural) processes right (eg soils, hydrology, beavers). Record interventions. Monitor results. Be relaxed about outcomes (there will be winners & losers). Learn. Repeat.
- Inspiring, engaging and enabling young people with nature / habitat / environment. If we don't we won't even be having these conversations in the future.
- Restoring natural processes up the river valleys through the introduction of beavers and allowing natural regeneration of woodlands up the valley slopes.
- Increase understanding of the consequences of making any changes prior to making them eg 're-wilding'. Be more consistent in setting targets and in data gathering over time.
- Picking up the 'new' issues of soils – understand more about what we need to do to improve soil conditions as a building block for enhanced nature. + achieving some 'quick wins' (possibly) such as alternatives to ivermectin use in the NP to restore invertebrate populations and from that other species.