

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 6 October 2023

Present: W Dracup, P Harper, G Hill, M Jeffery, S Morgan, C Mott, M Owen, L Samuel, P Sanders, P Smerdon, D Thomas, M Williams, P Woods, G Gribble, J Nutley

Apologies: J McInnes, M Renders, G Pannell, A Cooper

Officers: K Bishop, Chief Executive (National Park Officer)
A Gandy, Acting Head of Forward Planning and Economy

3513 Declarations of Interest

Mr Harper, Mr Dracup and Mr Owen all declared an interest in the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor

3514 Minutes of the previous meetings

The Minutes of the meetings held on 1 September 2023 were agreed pending the following amendments:

Page 3 – 3506 Public Participation last paragraph. Should end with “... be sent to him”

Page 8 – 3510 Sister Park Agreement between Cuyahoga Valley National Park (United States of America) and Dartmoor National Park. Paragraph 2 “...within the National Park is owned by their officers” should be changed to “...within the National Park is largely owned by private landowners and their officers”

Page 11- 3512 Application by Mr and Mrs Darwall.... To insert after the first paragraph “Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, and this was seconded by Mrs Mott”

3515 Chair’s Report

The Chair reported the following:

- Attendance at Team Devon. Leaders of the Devon local authorities discussed the proposed devolution deal and the work of the housing commission.
- Member workshop was very useful. It should be noted that policy decisions are NOT made at Member workshops; however, it is a good opportunity to discuss issues. Thank you to all who attended.
- Formed part of the interview panel for the Director of Spatial Planning post with the Authority.

3516 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

It was reported that there was nothing requiring urgent attention.

3517 Public Participation

The Chair invited Mr S Rowe, who had registered to speak at the Authority meeting, to address Members.

Mr Rowe thanked the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) for his response and wished Mr Hart a speedy recovery.

Mr Rowe stated that he wished to address in more detail the Member's question posed in the previous Authority Meeting on 1 September 2023. He advised that although he did refuse the offer of an extension to his Technical Details Consent (TDC) and a site visit, this was due to the fact that only a three minute speech is allowed at meetings and no interaction is allowed at all during a site visit, which he felt was insufficient to explain his vision.

Mr Rowe requested a two-way discussion to find out what the Authority might deem to be a suitable design for the development he proposes for the disused reservoir near Dunsford and stated that he and his architect would like to work with the Authority in order to find a mutually acceptable building proposal. He has therefore requested a meeting with the Authority to discuss this before he submits another TDC.

The Chair reminded Members that under the Authority's Standing Orders items raised under public participation shall be heard and received without debate. Members may ask questions for clarification but shall not respond on any matter or enter into any debate.

3518 Dartmoor National Park Authority Climate Action Plan – Progress Update

Members received the report of the Acting Head of Forward Planning and Economy (NPA/23/020).

The Acting Head of Forward Planning and Economy reported on findings from the carbon footprint of our land estate and proposed a new carbon neutrality target to guide climate action work for DNPA into the future.

Regarding our 2022/2023 footprint, unfortunately our organisational emissions have continued to rise as the Authority rebounds from COVID due to the following reasons:

- First reporting year without a lockdown period
- Increased commuting emissions, as more staff come back to work
- Increased electrical emissions, as more premises back into use full-time
- Increased reliance on hire vehicles

This therefore suggests that we still need to drive down our core emissions; however, on the other hand, it was reported:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme has made significant in-roads into reducing our investment emissions (scope 3 – but largest emitter), by 6.7%
- Investment in two electric pool cars, although the benefits won't be seen until 2023/2024

- Many beneficial work practices continue, such as paperless working, working from home and digitisation

It was reported that a carbon footprint of our land estate has been carried out with support from the Farm Carbon Toolkit. This was a complicated process particularly on the moorland, open habitat areas that the Authority owns due to:

- there has been no known attempt to determine carbon storage on the open moorland habitats of Dartmoor before;
- the inherent nature of Dartmoor's complex and transitional habitat mosaics, and similarly its soils;
- the amount of sampling required to achieve statistical accuracy and confidence. Points to note on the sampling, include:
 - this exercise surveyed every unique soil and habitat combination and then extrapolated those results out across the estate. We tried to choose the most representative locations but there is significant scope for error.
 - if we had unlimited budget, we would have sampled each soil habitat combination on each site three times, including sampling transitional habitats

Nevertheless, the following conclusions were drawn for open habitats:

- soils over granite have greater carbon storage potential
- carbon increases as habitats move through successional phases from more open habitats of acid grassland to scrub flora such as bracken and heath, relative to soil type
- carbon heat maps begin to show how carbon storage in soils might be spread across our estate

For woodlands, the important conclusion is that our woodland estate sequesters far more carbon than our scope 1 and 2 emissions, at around 1,500tCO₂e which means that even with uncertainties around pests and disease, such as ash die back, or any vagaries in the woodland surveys, we can be confident that we have met our 2020 target to be carbon neutral against our scope 1 and 2 emissions.

We now have a new target for carbon neutrality as the global climate change community have become more rigorous in setting targets for climate neutrality. It is now becoming common practice for targets to be 'science-based', which means aligning targets to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and the approach focusses on delivering direct emissions reductions, rather than focussing on offsetting emissions.

Offsets are now generally only considered suitable for using as part of long-term goals and shouldn't exceed 10% of the total baseline footprint.

It was reported that while the Authority can be comfortable with its work and impacts to date, we do need to consider how to drive further emissions reductions into the future and it is proposed that an imminent review of the Climate Action Plan should be undertaken using a science-based target.

In response to a Member questioning how fixed the science-based targets, evaluation methods and monitoring methods are, the Officer responded that although these initiatives have not been established by the Authority, we can develop in alignment with them.

A Member questioned how much recovery of Ash die-back has been reported on Dartmoor and it was advised that this has not yet been reported on.

Following a Member asking how it is planned to introduce EVs into the Ranger fleet, the Officer advised that this was an ongoing discussion, with no suitable vehicles yet identified that would 'do the job' and be affordable.

A Member asked for a brief explanation of how the science-based targets differ from our current targets, and also asked what the results would have been if we had taken no action at all. The Officer responded by suggesting that the world was slightly naïve in 2020 and since then seems to have woken up to offsetting not being sufficient to reduce emissions. We need to continue to take action to reduce our emissions.

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that the Authority has had an active programme to try to reduce emissions, which are in line with the science-based initiatives. Mr Thomas agreed with this and advised that his question earlier was not meant in any way to denigrate the work the Authority has done.

It was recommended that,

- progress made on the Climate Action Plan is noted (including that the Authority has met its 2020 target to become carbon neutral against its Scope 1 and 2 emissions)
- the review of the Climate Action Plan in 2023/24 is endorsed, and the Authority now works towards a new science-based target for carbon neutrality

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Gribble

RESOLVED: Members:

- i. Noted progress made on the Climate Action Plan, including that the Authority has met its 2020 target to become carbon neutral against its Scope 1 and 2 emissions; and
- ii. Endorsed review of the Climate Action Plan in 2023/24, and working towards a new science-based target for carbon neutrality

The Deputy Chair added his thanks to the Acting Head of Forward Planning and Economy for his work on this incredibly complex area and welcomed debate on how best to reduce current carbon emissions. Revising tree planting across the Estate and selling the carbon offset or using this ourselves was suggested.

A Member added his congratulations to the Authority on the work done on this and the work to be done on taking this forward.

3519 Dartmoor National Park Authority submission to the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/23/021).

The Chief Executive explained the background to the current situation and the role of the Authority. He also outlined the terms of reference for the independent review that the Government has commissioned and outlined the key messages that were proposed as a framework for the Authority's submission, namely:

1. An integrated approach that focuses on all public benefits, including nature, associated with a National Park. Food and food production comes alongside the public benefits to be considered as well.
2. A shared vision to identify the outcomes from common land, so that everyone understands and agrees. Previous example of this is The Dartmoor Vision which was developed in partnership in this way.
3. The approach needs to be one of engagement and partnership
4. Trusted facilitation and advice is necessary
5. National priorities and local priorities to be considered and combined
6. Moving beyond SSSIs and the notion of the favourable condition
7. Rewarding delivery and encouraging innovation to encourage payment by results scheme
8. Tools to do the job, a good example of this would be swaling which is a process which needs more robust evidence of climate change impacts.

Mr Dracup offered a note of thanks to the whole team who have put so much time and effort into this and who have constantly pushed forward, to make the review happen. He asked for this to be noted in the minutes.

On the same note, Mr Harper offered his thanks and appreciation for the work that has gone into this. He also noted one concern, regarding what would happen if the independent review decided that the National Park should oversee agri-environment agreements in the future. It was advised that we should not speculate as to what the independent panel might recommend and how Ministers might react, we can respond once the review has taken place.

A Member asked whether the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) got the impression that other organisations were in alignment with us and making the same points. It was advised that there was a spectrum of stakeholders who will be submitting evidence to the panel and this paper is in the public domain so could be considered by others when responding. The Chief Executive explained that we have sought views from stakeholders as we developed our submission and key messages; officers have also shared draft case studies with relevant stakeholders for comment. Our final submission will be a public document and shared with stakeholders on the agri-environment forum that we established in response to the 'rollover issue'.

A Member asked how the National Landscapes Service fits with our response. The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) responded that the concept of a National Landscapes Service came from the Government and initially focussed on replacing

the National Authority with a new centralised authority. This was completely separate to the independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor. The National Landscape Service concept has now evolved into a Protected Landscapes Partnership which would be non-statutory and bring together National Parks England, the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Trails and Natural England.

Members were asked to note the key messages that would underpin the Authority's submission to the independent review.

Mr Sanders reiterated his thanks to the Authority.

A Members asked wording to be changed within the report of Dartmoor National Park Authority submission to the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor and asked for "design" to be changed to "co-design" in point 3.73.

A Member then asked who from the Authority will attend the panel and it was advised that Kevin Bishop, Chris Giles, Richard Knott and David Attwell are lined up to attend.

It was proposed that a Member should also attend. It was suggested that Mr Dracup should attend if he is available. He agreed that he would be able to do this, if it were requested and this request was formalised. It was proposed that a Member form part of the Panel, hear progress and report back in December's Authority Meeting.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Harper.

RESOLVED: Members:

- i. Noted the terms of reference for the Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor;
- ii. Note that the Authority has been invited to attend an evidence session with the independent panel undertaking the review;
- iii. Noted and commented on the key messages that the Authority will communicate to the independent panel; and
- iv. Authorised the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) in consultation with the Chair of the Authority to agree and submit the Authority's formal response.
- v. Mr Dracup would be part of the National Park Authority delegation that would meet the Fursdon Panel as part of their evidence gathering.

The meeting closed.