



NPA/24/030

Dartmoor National Park Authority

26 July 2024

Amendments to Financial Regulations

Report of the Head of Business Support

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) **Approve the proposed amendments to the Authority's Financial Regulations**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Authority is in the process of implementing a new financial system and officers are considering the implications for the Authority's Financial Regulations.
- 1.2 During this ongoing review, we have identified two sections within the current Regulations that need to be updated now, ahead of a comprehensive set of Financial Regulations being presented to the Authority at a later date.

2 Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

- 2.1 In July 2021, Members agreed that the Authority should participate in the FiPL programme [NPA/21/019]. Members also approved the insertion of a new section in the Authority's Financial Regulations to provide specific authority to operate the FiPL programme.
- 2.2 The current Financial Regulations authorise the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to award grants and agreements up to including £5,000, which was in line with the National Framework guidance provided by Defra at the time. Grants and agreements above £5,000 and up to £250,000 are considered by the Dartmoor Local Assessment Panel.
- 2.3 In May 2023, Defra revised the National Framework guidance to increase the officer approval threshold from £5,000 to £10,000. Since that time, officers have approved 33 grants over £5,000 and below £10,000 in line with the National Framework guidance, however this conflicts with the Authority's current Financial Regulations.
- 2.4 We are therefore proposing the following change (highlighted below) to Section F1 of the Financial Regulations as follows:

For purposes of Farming in Protected Landscapes, grants and agreements up to and including £10,000 may be authorised by the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) or an Officer of the Authority with written delegated authority from the Chief Executive (National Park Officer).

- 2.5 Subject to Members approval of this change to Financial Regulations, Section 6.3 of the Scheme of Delegation will also be amended to reflect the increase to £10,000 for grants and agreements to be delegated to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) or any Officer of the Authority authorised by them.

3 Sale of Assets

- 3.1 The current threshold for reporting the sale of assets with an estimated market value over £2,500 to Members, as specified in the Financial Regulations has been in place for many years. Due to inflation over the years, very few of the Authority's assets fall below this market value, particularly the disposal of the Authority's vehicle fleet.
- 3.2 It is proposed this threshold is increased to £20,000, which will align with our procurement threshold before formal tender. This adjustment would be more appropriate and would reduce administrative burden.
- 3.3 The following amendment (as highlighted) is proposed to paragraph C7.1 of the Authority's Financial Regulations:

The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) may make arrangements for the disposal for surplus items (excluding land, buildings and leased items) with an estimated market value of up to £20,000. For items above £20,000 prior approval must be obtained from Members.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 As Section 151 Officer, I can report there are no financial implications other than changes in policies and procedures.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The changes to financial thresholds set out in this report are in line with Defra's National Framework guidance for FiPL and, in relation to the disposal of surplus items, reflect current financial realities. Members are kept apprised regarding financial implications of significant asset disposals and larger Farming in Protected Landscape grants and the proposed changes will provide for more effective and compliant working arrangements.

ANGELA STIRLAND

Background Papers

NPA/21/019: Farming in Protected Landscapes.
2024 07 26 AS – Financial Regulations.



NPA/24/031

Dartmoor National Park Authority

26 July 2024

Amendments to Fees and Charges 2024/25

Report of the Head of Business Support

Recommendation: That Members approve the amended 2024/25 schedule of fees and charges as per Table 2.

1. Background

1.1 At the June 26 Authority meeting, Members were presented with a proposal to introduce an additional charge for householder inquiries to our pre-application service, reintroduced on June 1, 2024. Members expressed concerns that the proposed £100 fee did not adequately reflect the officer time and Authority resources required. Members pointed out that neighbouring Local Authorities charge up to £210 and often offer a two-tier service with a lower fee for desk-based evaluations compared to site visits.

1.2 The Chief Executive recommended withdrawing the proposal from the June Authority meeting to consider Members' comments, which was agreed upon.

1.3 Planning application fees are set nationally through regulations. However, the Authority can recover the cost of pre-application work by charging under s93 of the Local Government Act 2003 for discretionary services. The legislation states that charges must not exceed the costs of provision over a financial year (s93(3)). The recipient must agree to the charge, and the Authority cannot generate a profit from the pre-application service.

2. Current Situation

2.1 The Authority currently has a range of charges for pre-application services, reviewed annually during the budget process. While not a major income source, these charges contribute to covering service delivery costs and may determine whether a service can be provided.

3. Fees and Charges for 2023/24

3.1 Many fees and charges remain unchanged for years as they are individually small, making annual inflation adjustments inefficient.

3.2 The current pre-application advice fees, agreed by the Authority in March 2024, are:

Table 1

Development Management	NET (£)	VAT (£)	GROSS (£)
Planning Application Fees	See "Government Scale Charges"		
Pre Application Fees:			
Class A: Residential between 31-149 dwellings / Non-residential floor space 5,000-9,999 sq.m - 1 meeting	600.00	120.00	720.00
Class A: Additional meeting fee	300.00	60.00	360.00
Class B: Residential between 10-30 dwellings / Non-residential floor space 1,000-4,999 sq.m - 1 meeting	400.00	80.00	480.00
Class B: Additional meeting fee	200.00	40.00	240.00
Class C: Residential (including holiday lets) between 3-9 dwellings / Non-residential floor space 500-999 sq.m - 1 meeting	300.00	60.00	360.00
Class C: Additional meeting fee	150.00	30.00	180.00
Class D: Residential 1-2 dwellings (including replacement dwellings) including change of use to, conversion & holiday lets / Non-residential floor space up to 499	150.00	30.00	180.00
Class D: Additional meeting fee	50.00	10.00	60.00
Class E: Advertisements / telecommunications proposals/ Change of use where no operational development (except residential / holiday let) - 1 meeting	150.00	30.00	180.00
Class F: Listed Building where site visit involved	150.00	30.00	180.00
Class F: Additional meeting fee	75.00	15.00	90.00
Class G: Other minor development including agricultural based development - 1	83.33	16.67	100.00
Class G: Additional meeting fee	41.67	8.33	50.00
Class H: Domestic Scale Renewable energy - solar, wind, hydro Free unless site visit required	150.00	30.00	180.00
Class H: Non Domestic Scale Renewable energy - solar, wind, hydro	166.67	33.33	200.00
Class H: Additional meeting fee	50.00	10.00	60.00

Given this recent fee structure, the original proposal to introduce a £100 charge (excluding VAT) was deemed insufficient. Members noted that neighbouring authorities charge higher fees, suggesting our fees should align more closely.

Following the June meeting, officers reviewed the fee schedule and concurred that £100 was inconsistent with the approved fees. A revised fee of £150 (excluding VAT) is now recommended, aligning with the current fee schedule. Additionally, a site visit fee of £50 (excluding VAT) is recommended, bringing the total to £200 (excluding VAT) if a site visit is necessary.

This rationale for the revised householder pre-application advice fee is provided. A comprehensive review of the pre-application service and fees will be conducted over the next 12 months to ensure high-quality service and fair fees moving into the future.

Table 2

Development Management	NET (£)	VAT (£)	GROSS (£)
Planning Application Fees	See "Government Scale Charges"		
Pre Application Fees:			
Class A: Residential between 31-149 dwellings / Non-residential floor space 5,000-9,999 sq.m - 1 meeting	600.00	120.00	720.00
Class A: Additional meeting fee	300.00	60.00	360.00
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Class F: Additional meeting fee	75.00	15.00	90.00
Class G: Other minor development including agricultural based development - 1	83.33	16.67	100.00
Class G: Additional meeting fee	41.67	8.33	50.00
Class H: Domestic Scale Renewable energy - solar, wind, hydro Free unless site visit required	150.00	30.00	180.00
Class H: Non Domestic Scale Renewable energy - solar, wind, hydro	166.67	33.33	200.00
Class H: Additional meeting fee	50.00	10.00	60.00
Class G: Household advice (excluding site visit)	150.00	30.00	180.00
Class G: Household advice site visit	50.00	10.00	60.00

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The Authority's MTFP set the pre-application income at £6,000. It should be noted as a demand led service, it is difficult to estimate, but the additional fee is expected to generate an additional £1,000 compared to the current 2024/25 forecast.

5. Equality and Impact Assessment

5.1 All Authority policies consider implications for access to services and the local economy, especially when charging for services. Efforts are made to engage those who may not otherwise access Dartmoor, addressing potential barriers while balancing income generation and maintaining flexible, responsive budgets.

Dean Kinsella
Angela Stirland



NPA/24/032

Dartmoor National Park Authority

26 July 2024

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes

Report of the Strategic Planning & Projects Officer

Recommendation:

That Members:

- i. Approve submission of a Stage 2 funding application, as described in this paper, to the National Lottery Heritage Fund during the 2024/25 financial year.
- ii. Approve a contribution from the Authority's financial reserves of up to £120,000 to be used as match funding, during the 2025/26 - 2029/30 financial years, in the event of this Stage 2 application being successful.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides an overview and update on the Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes partnership programme, and to request approval to proceed with submission of the grant application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).
- 1.2 This paper follows an initial paper on 01 April 2022 (NPA/22/020) , outlining the application for stage one submission of the funding application; and a further paper on 05 January 2024 (NPA/24/01) which updated on the application to date and DNPA's commitment to match-fund the programme with up to £100,000 across the five years of the programme, which has been allocated from reserves

2. Background

- 2.1 Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscape is a Partnership Programme, led by Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA), with a landscape scale focus on three of Dartmoor's river catchments, taking in the peat bogs on the high moor, nature rich grasslands and upland heath, descending off the moor through wooded valleys and connecting to riverside communities in the towns inside and outside the National Park. While the Partnership aims to conserve and enhance natural

heritage, this will be achieved through additional support for those already managing our landscape. The National Lottery Heritage Fund will support this type of investment in Dartmoor's people, while other funders tend more toward capital investment.

- 2.2 DNPA is the lead partner for the programme, 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 (Headwaters/Natural Flood Management); the Shallowford Trust; Emergency Exit Arts & Flock South West; and Westcountry Rivers Trust. The involvement of other stakeholders is vital, including local councils, our farming community, residents and businesses in Okehampton, Ivybridge and Princetown as well as local community groups and volunteers.

3 Partnership aims

The Partnership aims to benefit Dartmoor, its people and landscape by:

Creating more naturally resilient landscapes, through working with land managers and farmers -

- *we will have a better understanding of grassland and river habitats, moorland birds, and ancient trees;*
- *capturing more water and carbon in the landscape through natural flood management, peatland restoration and restoration of ancient woodland sites;*
- *facilitating knowledge sharing through mentoring opportunities and events.*

and connecting people to their place, with a specific focus on the gateway towns of Okehampton, Ivybridge and Princetown –

- *improving access and route knowledge in and from the towns to enable active travel to green spaces;*
- *celebrating landscape heritage, for example through a programme of river and moorland festivals;*
- *opportunities for community grant funding.*

4 NLHF Stage 1 funding

- 4.1 Members received a paper in April 2022 NPA/22/020, (April 2022 Reports to Authority) describing the proposed programme and for funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) while also confirming support in principle for the wider programme. submission of a Stage 1 application for funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) while also confirming support in principle for the wider programme.

- 4.2 That Stage 1 application was submitted in August 2022 and was successful. NLHF offer a two-stage process for programmes of the funding scale sought the first stage is for detailed development funding with the second stage funding the main programme of work.
- 4.3 Members then received an update on the programme development on 5 January 2024 (NPA/24/01). Members approved the allocation of £100,000 from match-funding reserves as match-funding from DNPA.
- 4.4 NLHF's funding for the main programme is contingent on submission of a strong Stage 2¹ application. DNPA is lead partner for both stages and we have been working hard to develop our plans for this landscape scale programme over the past year.
- 4.5 Our Development Phase is now complete as are our detailed proposals for delivery of the programme, termed the Area Action Plan by NLHF. The deadline for submission of our Stage 2 application for funding is mid-August. If our request to NLHF for funding is approved the main programme will run from January 2025 for five years.

5 Development Phase, the last twelve months

- 5.1 This Development Stage has been a rich learning environment for the central programme team and partners. In order to capture this learning and ensure any actions as a result are embedded into the Delivery Stage, an evaluation process has been ongoing during the Development Stage. This process has included extensive consultation and trialling with potential target audiences, ongoing discussions with stakeholders and an internal self-reflection on the process.
- 5.2 Partnerships continue to build – The Development Stage has provided a valuable window in which partners have become better connected and started to build true collaboration. Cross-links between projects are a very visible sign of this. Further opportunities for partnership development are embedded into the Delivery Phase plan.
- 5.3 A cohesive portfolio of projects - The partners explored how projects can work as a cohesive whole and how cross-links between both work streams and organisations can be strengthened – the Festivals and Gateway Hubs have both emerged as nexuses. These areas of work will therefore be particular focal points for collaboration and key links across the Scheme.
- 5.5 The way in which the overall Scheme is communicated has evolved and been refined as the Development Stage has progressed. Creating a vision together has helped partners get clarity on the overall Scheme and for them to be able to communicate it to their organisations, stakeholders and audiences. Tailoring messaging to different audiences and stakeholder-types has also

¹ Terminology used for the two stages is 'Stage 1, development' and 'Stage 2, delivery'.

been very fruitful and will be continued in the Delivery Phase Communications Plan.

- 5.6 Ambitious consultation plans – The Programme team and partners have worked hard developing the trialling and consultation process. Whilst challenging to deliver, this process has been high-quality and directly informed plans. The result is Project Plans which have a strong stakeholder and audience voice and are directly responding to need.
- 5.7 Appendix 1 summarises the changes made from the Stage 1 submission during development.

6. Scope of the programme

- 6.1 Appendix 3 is a map showing the focus area for the programme which has been refined during the development phase and has been formally adopted. The area comprises catchments of the Okement, Dart, Erme & Yealm, includes the Mardle and follows common, farm and woodland compartment boundaries.
- 6.2 The programme focuses on the towns of Okehampton, Princetown and Ivybridge, communities' resident here as well as visitors to the National Park arriving through these gateway towns.
- 6.3 The programme will reach further to engage specific audiences (such as through the Shallowford Trust's Farm to City event) and share knowledge across other protected landscapes (especially relating to upland farming).
- 6.4 The deadline for submission of the Partnership's Stage 2 bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund is mid-August 2024 and the Development Phase funding from NLHF is expected to conclude at the end of September 2024.
- 6.5 The funding decision from NLHF is expected December 2024, if successful the main programme of work will be delivered from January 2025 for five years to 2030. Projects and Partners will follow different timescales within the five-year programme with some delivering activity across all years while others may run for less than one year.
- 6.6 The focus of the programme is natural heritage, however Partners and NLHF recognise landscapes as an interconnected whole. Intended beneficiaries within the focus area include the people who live and work in the three towns (especially younger people) alongside farmers and other land-based workers across the area.

7. Financing the programme

Main programme delivery costs and funding

- 7.1 The delivery value of the main programme totals £5,840,606 this would be supported by a grant from NLHF of £3,114,303. The additional monies would

come from match funding requirement (7.4 below), as well as built-in VAT, contingency and inflation, which are applied across the whole programme.

- 7.2 DNPA will host the Partnership Support team, comprising 3 full time and 2 part time roles. As well as providing overall support for the Partnership, including communications and administration, this team will deliver significant project work aligned with the National Park Partnership Plan actions and DNPA's strategic priorities. DNPA should therefore be considered the main partner beneficiary of the grant as well as lead.
- 7.3 DNPA's current commitment to the delivery of the programme is £100,000 across the five years, this has been allocated from reserves. (see 7.6 below)
- 7.4 At the time of submitting the Stage 1 application inflation was significantly higher than it is as we approach submission a. Inflation affecting staff and non-staff costs is accounted for in the programme delivery budget, but we also need to consider the higher baseline we are now starting from. Partners' project refinement and cost revisions during the development phase have increased to just over £260k higher than at Stage 1. As a result of this we are asking NLHF for a grant increase of £150, 000 with the remainder being raised by Partners.
- 7.5 At Stage 1 the Partnership had identified £2,427,436 of match funding for the programme, subject to confirmation this had been secured. Following the more detailed planning and development work undertaken by Partners over the past year the expected cash match contribution is now £2,488,073 of which £ 2,141,473 has been secured.

Cash Contribution, value committed	
Partner	Cash Contribution (Partner secured)
Central Dartmoor Landscape Recovery	£4,400
Dartmoor National Park Authority	£100,000
Natural Flood Management (EA)	£1,254,087
SW Peatland Partnership	£480,000
RSPB	£15,036
Shallowford Trust	£12,000
Woodland Trust	£275,950
Grand Total	£2,141,473
Total Match funding Required	£2,488,073
Programme Delivery Match funding outstanding	£346,600

- 7.6 This leaves a further £346,600 for the Partners to find over the duration of the programme delivery. A fundraising plan will be submitted with the Stage 2 application to NLHF that sets out the funding applications still to be made as well as how the Partnership will adjust plans in the event of additional funding not being realised. For example, £195,000 of the funding not yet secured will

be for the delivery of the Festival programme. The Festivals are planned over several years and follow a flexible delivery model, the scope of delivery can be adjusted each year to fit the available budget.

- 7.7 Given the increase in costs and our request to NLHF for an additional £150k in grant funding, we have been advised that it would be advantageous to our submission, if DNPA also increased its match-funding contribution. We therefore ask Members to approve an additional £20,000 commitment from reserves towards the programme. This would make a total match-funding commitment over the five years of the programme of £120,000.

8. Strategic fit

- 8.1 The activity proposed by the Partnership responds to the priorities set out in the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP 2021-26). The proposed programme relates to all seven themes within the plan, with particular emphasis on Better for Nature, Better for Farming and Forestry and Better for People.
- 8.2 The activity proposed by the Partnership supports all aspects of the Vision for Dartmoor National Park in 2045
- 8.3 The Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes (DDL) bid is a specific aim of the Authority's 2023/4 Business Plan.
- 8.4 The geographical focus areas for the proposed programme are derived from the pilot Nature Recovery Areas (NRA) identified in the NPPP.
- 8.5 The National Lottery Heritage Fund is the largest funder of heritage in the UK and an ideal funding partner in delivering DNPA's strategic aims.
- 8.6 The Dartmoor Headwaters Programme (partnership between DNPA & Environment Agency) will be extended to 2033, DDL is working in partnership with the Headwaters team, aligned on three of their priority catchments.
- 8.7 DDL provides resource to maintain momentum created through the Our Upland Commons programme, which runs until November 2024, sharing their successes and learning more widely across Dartmoor.
- 8.8 The new Dartmoor Foundation is in the process of being launched, if the new Trustees of the Foundation consider elements of the DDL programme suitable targets for investment the DDL programme could provide early momentum to Foundation fundraising campaigns.
- 8.9 Dartmoor's Partnership Plan (NPPP) recognises the importance of partnership working to achieve its Vision. DDL will sustain long standing partnerships (DNPA, Woodland Trust, RSPB, South West Lakes Trust for example) while developing newer relationships (Sustrans, Arts partners for example).

9. Key risks identified

- 9.1 Appendix 2 presents the key risks linked to the submission to the NLHF for this funding application

10. Conclusion and Recommendation

- 10.1 DNPA and its partners are committed to pursuing the aims of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan and the Dartmoor Dynamic Landscapes bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund allows us to support a holistic, landscape scale programme at diversity and scale.
- 10.2 Members are asked to approve submission of the Stage 2 funding application as described above.
- 10.3 Members are also asked to approve an additional contribution of £20,00 from match-funding reserves to increase DNPA's total contribution to £120,000 over the five-year period from January 2025.

JAMES SHARPE

Attachments:

- Appendix 1 – DDL Changes Paper
- Appendix 2 – Risk Summary Table
- Appendix 3 - Map

Stage 1	Stage 2	Comment
<p>DDL area 311km² (31,098ha)</p>	<p>DDL area 360km² (36,000ha)</p>	<p>The boundary has not changed significantly in area size, but the boundary detail has been refined since Stage 1. The changes that were made to the boundary align with the aims of the programme.</p> <p>The following maximises the ability to create more resilient landscapes –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including the Dean & Mardle sub-catchment, which is an NFM priority area • Including priority ancient woodland sites • Including whole commons and land holdings (if over 50% in boundary, with the exception of Dartmoor Forest Common) <p>The following enable communities to connect more to their place –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The boundary submitted at stage 1 did not include Okehampton (it had been cut at the National Park boundary). • This has been addressed. • The original rationale for the scheme area was around 3 priority nature recovery areas, two further sub-catchments were added to connect to the communities of Princetown and Buckfastleigh.
<p>Partnership –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -DNPA -Environment Agency (Dartmoor Headwaters Team) -Pedall -RSPB -Shallowford Trust -Sustrans -South Devon National Landscape -South West Lakes Trust -South West Water (Dartmoor Peatland Partnership) -University of Exeter Beyond Greenspace Team -Woodland Trust 	<p>Partnership (see section 13) –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -DNPA -Emergency Exit Arts (with Flock SouthWest) -Environment Agency (Dartmoor Headwaters Team) -RSPB -Shallowford Trust -Sustrans -South West Water (South West Peatland Partnership) -Westcountry Rivers Trust -Woodland Trust 	<p>There have been some minor changes to the partnership.</p> <p>The following have moved from being partners to stakeholders as they are not delivering projects –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Lakes Trust – this project has been removed • South Devon National Landscape • University of Exeter Beyond Greenspace Team <p>The following have been removed from the partnership –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedall – this project has been revised to work with local stakeholders <p>The following have been added to the partnership –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Exit Arts (with Flock SouthWest) to deliver the River & Moorland Festivals project • Westcountry Rivers Trust – to deliver the Understanding Rivers project

Stage 1	Stage 2		Comment															
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="185 1346 252 1720">Budget -</th> <th data-bbox="185 1003 252 1346">Stage 1</th> <th data-bbox="185 775 252 1003">Submission draft July 24</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 1346 300 1720">Total delivery costs</td> <td data-bbox="252 1003 300 1346">5,580,422</td> <td data-bbox="252 775 300 1003">£5,840,606</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1346 347 1720">Total delivery income</td> <td data-bbox="300 1003 347 1346">2,559,498</td> <td data-bbox="300 775 347 1003">£2,726,303</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="347 1346 395 1720">Delivery grant request</td> <td data-bbox="347 1003 395 1346">2,964,233</td> <td data-bbox="347 775 395 1003">£3,114,303</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="395 1346 435 1720">Delivery grant %</td> <td data-bbox="395 1003 435 1346">53.12%</td> <td data-bbox="395 775 435 1003">53.32%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Budget -	Stage 1	Submission draft July 24	Total delivery costs	5,580,422	£5,840,606	Total delivery income	2,559,498	£2,726,303	Delivery grant request	2,964,233	£3,114,303	Delivery grant %	53.12%	53.32%		
Budget -	Stage 1	Submission draft July 24																
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<p>Projects – 28 projects organised under 3 themes</p>	<p>15 projects organised under 2 themes <i>(overall level of project activity has increased but the number of projects condensed)</i></p>	<p>Mainly restructuring projects, but a small number of projects were removed from the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWLT Project - This project was changed and was then beyond the scope of DDL. SWLT to look at alternative funding to run a separate project in partnership. John Muir Award - The John Muir Award is in the process of making changes to how it is run, and the redesigned award will not launch until 2025. The uncertainty of the future of the award, combined with the time pressures on staff led to the decision of the removal. Mend Our Moors - This project had a very small budget and didn't align well with the other access focussed projects. 																
<p>Programme Team – 8 paid new posts</p> <p>Employed by DNPA -</p> <p>1 x Project Manager FT</p> <p>1 x Finance & Admin Assistant 0.6FTE</p> <p>1 x Land Management Officer FT</p> <p>1 x Engagement Officer FT</p> <p>1 x Volunteer and Communications Officer FT</p> <p>Employed by RSPB –</p>	<p>Programme Team – 10 new paid posts</p> <p>Employed by DNPA -</p> <p>1 x Programme Manager FT</p> <p>1 x Finance & Admin Assistant 0.6FTE</p> <p>1 x Communications Officer 0.6FTE</p> <p>1 x Land Management Officer FT</p> <p>1 x Engagement Officer FT</p> <p>1 x Programme Assistant 0.6FTE</p> <p>Employed by RSPB –</p> <p>1 x Conservation Adviser 0.6FTE</p>	<p>Projects restructured; partnership working ...</p> <p>DNPA employed team – replaced a full-time Volunteer & Communications Officer with 2 part-time posts –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Officer 0.6FTE – to focus specifically on Comms allowing somebody to be recruited with the required skillset Programme Assistant 0.6FTE – to be able to support programme team and partnership in delivery of activity <p>Shallowford Trust have added a Farm to City Project Officer to deliver that project. This is informed from learning from previous farm to city events.</p>																

<p>1 x Land Management Officer 0.6FTE</p> <p>Employed by WT – 1 x Outreach Adviser FT</p> <p>Employed by Sustrans – 1 x Bike It Project Officer FT (3 years)</p>	<p>Employed by WT – 1 x Outreach Adviser FT</p> <p>Employed by Sustrans – 1 x Bike It Project Officer FT (3 years)</p> <p>Employed by Shallowford Trust 1 x Farm to City Project Officer FT (1 year)</p>	
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NPA/24/032 - Appendix 2 – Risk Summary Table

Risk	Severity	Likelihood	Risk Management	Responsible Body ¹	Contingency Actions (if risk still occurs)
Partners do not deliver on delivery stage commitments	H	L	Partners sign up to a formal collaboration agreement prior to stage 2 submission which outlines responsibilities and liabilities	Partnership Boards ²	Non-delivery escalated to the Management and/or Partnership Board to be addressed
Final proposals delivered through the plans exceed budgeted costs	H	M	Costs have been identified in line with inflation and based on costs of delivering similar projects	Programme Manager	If project proposals are too large to fit within the project outline and proposed budget, additional funding will be sought to deliver the full range of projects for the benefit of the local community and visitors
Security of funding	H	L	Unsecure match funding underwritten by partners. If this is not possible, to reevaluate project delivery.	Partnership Boards	Adjust timing and scope of project activity
No suitable contractor or contractor costs too high	M	L	Specifications have been drawn up in line with similar work that has been delivered. Costs have been taken into account inflation/rising cost of living	Project Manager(s)	Adjust timing and/or specification for works, look at alternatives methods for delivering output & outcomes, reallocate resource from elsewhere in programme/Partnership

¹ Ultimately managing risk is the collective business of the Partnership, so risks will be escalated and addressed through project and programme managers and the Partnership Governance Structure

² Partnership Boards include both Executive and Delivery Partner Boards who will provide programme governance as set out in the Partners' Collaboration Agreement

NPA/24/032 - Appendix 2 – Risk Summary Table

Contractor does not deliver works on time	M	L	Inception meetings will clearly state expectations and timescales. Timescales to be agreed at inception meetings. Regular meetings to be held with contractor and bid development team. Use a contractor with a proven track record	Project Manager(s)	Break clause included in contract if contractor isn't delivering, review specification, possibly re procure or identify another opportunity for delivering outcomes.
Landowners do not want to engage with the project	H	L	Engagement work undertaken during the development stage will build a pipeline of activity for delivery	Project Manager(s)	Projects identified in areas where landowners are willing to engage, Partners will continue to seek and respond to feedback from a range of land managers.
Target audience does not engage with the project effectively	H	L	Strong relationships established during development phase, and ongoing engagement with target groups. Sufficient resourcing allocated/budgeted to lead engagement activity.	Project Manager(s)	Identify additional networks/alternative engagement routes. Maintain two-way communication post submission and during delivery stages
Failure to recruit staff	M	M	Ensure new staff posts are well advertised through standard sources and partner networks. Ensure salary rates are competitive.	Partnership Boards	Consider secondment of internal staff if recruitment isn't successful. Build some flexibility into the schedule

NPA/24/032 - Appendix 2 – Risk Summary Table

Staff retention	M	M	Continual staff development and HR support in place in each partner organisation. Project budget includes additional recruitment costs	Partnership Boards	Consider secondment of internal staff if project staff leave
Negative PR	H	M	Partners to keep each other and NLHF aware of any potential negative PR, plan and prepare for most likely events	Partnership Boards	Timely and coordinated communication
Poor weather impacting survey season	M	M	Realistic timeframes with potential contingencies built in	Project Manager(s)	Consider other sources for survey data
Poor weather impacting event activity	M	M	Indoor and outdoor activity to be arranged. To have back updates organised in case of bad weather.	Project Manager(s)	Additional events during course of the programme or refocus budget as required.
Insufficient volunteers involved in projects	M	M	Advertise volunteering opportunities through a variety of means. And offer taster events with no commitment.	Project Manager(s)	Experience suggests partners are likely to attract significant volunteer contributions but risk more likely this is slow to start or below expected levels. Budgets and delivery models may need to be adjusted in an extreme case
Pandemic event	H	L	Realistic timeframes with potential contingencies built in. To monitor government guidelines.	Partnership Boards	Adjust timeframes; consider how to creatively deliver outputs; consider seconding staff

NPA/24/032 - Appendix 2 – Risk Summary Table

Biosecurity incident (e.g. foot and mouth)	H	L	Realistic timeframes with potential contingencies built in. To monitor government guidelines.	Partnership Boards	Adjust timeframes; consider how to creatively deliver outputs; consider seconding staff
Implications of change of government policy, esp. in relation to NBS	H	L	Programme supports long-standing, cross-party policy areas with high level public support. Funding from government sources is secure until 2033, other funding independent and unlikely to change	Partnership Boards	Project activity is diverse so unlikely all areas affected. Such a significant change is unlikely in next five years but if it were to happen Board would need to agree adjustments to project delivery.
Inability to sustain engagement with targeted audiences	H	M	Seek for activities to be self-led wherever possible and build capacity during delivery stage for community organisations to lead and deliver activities	Partnership Boards	Seek additional funding to support future resourcing
Landowners do not maintain NLHF-funded activities	H	L	Ensure robust legal agreements are put in place during delivery stage to counter this. Build in periodic monitoring visits.	Partnership Boards	
Reduction in agri-environment payments arising out of changes in government-policy	H	M	Through partners, provide strong advocacy to ensure agri-environment schemes continue to meet the needs of landowners on Dartmoor	Partnership Boards	Identify and scope alternative forms of finance e.g. green investment

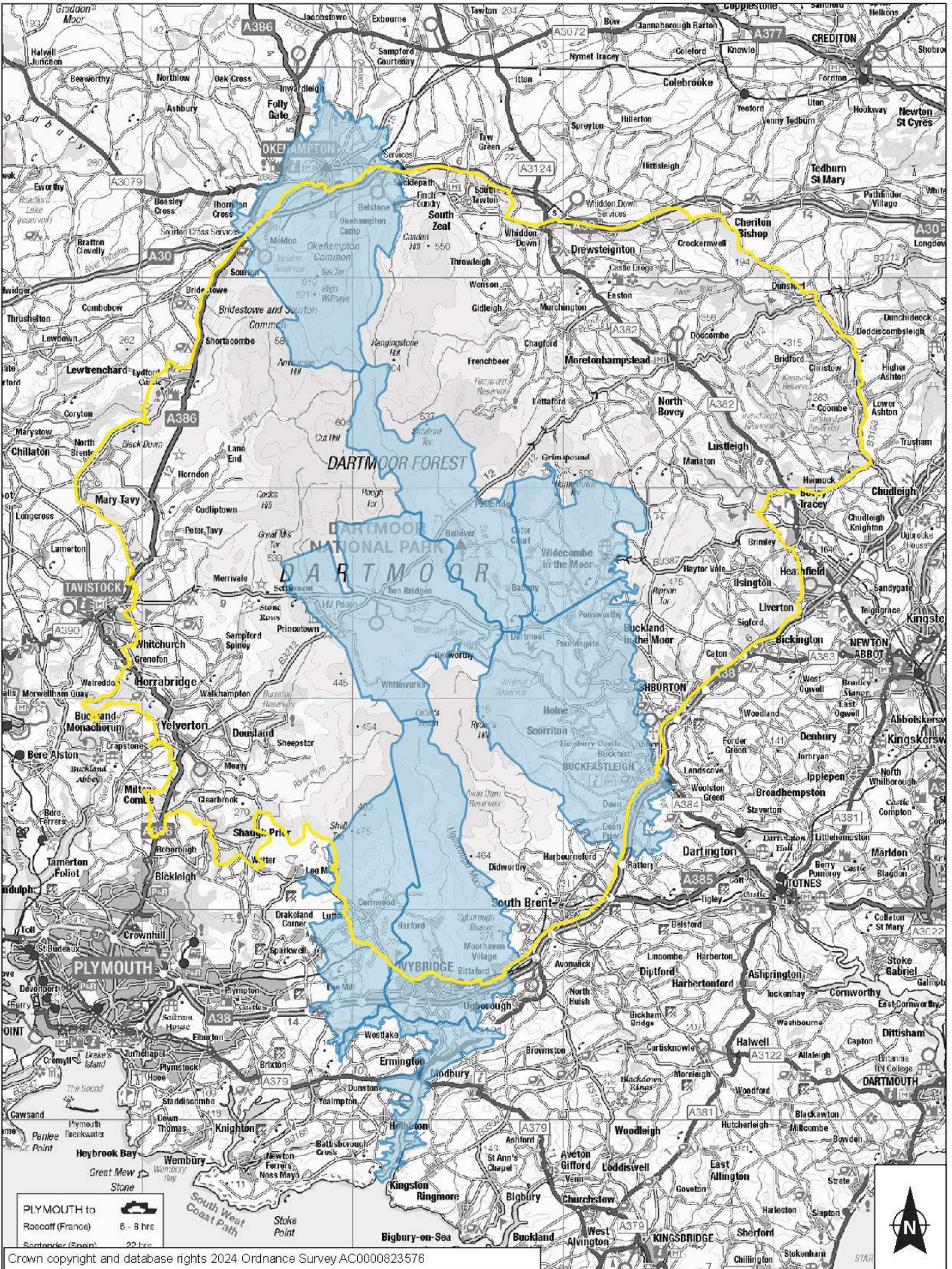
Dartmoor National Park Authority

DDL area AAP Final



Scale 1:170,000

Compiled by jsharpe on 13/03/2024





NPA/24/033

Dartmoor National Park Authority

26 July 2024

Annual Review 2023-24

Report of the Head of Communications and Engagement

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **note the content of the report;**
- ii. **review the draft Annual Review 2023/24 and offer any comments.**

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. It is designed and presented as a summary PDF, following this meeting and subject to Member comments. It is published on our website and circulated to key partners and stakeholders, including Defra, local MPs and constituent local authorities.

2 Annual Review 2023-24

- 2.1 At the start of 2023 we once again 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 2023-24 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 2023-24 offered ongoing challenges and increased public awareness of Dartmoor in respect to the legal challenge regarding the right to backpack camp and the independent review on the management of Dartmoor's protected sites.

- 2.4 The Annual Review for 2023-24 (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 is intended to provide 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. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There is a cost for the design work to deliver the Annual Review, but it is produced as a PDF to save print costs. Please note that the report as shared in Appendix 1 is draft, which if approved by members, will be submitted for final publication.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Members are invited to note this report and offer comments on the Dartmoor National Park Authority’s Annual Review 2023-24, highlighting some of our key achievements from the past year.

CHARLOTTE EASTON

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Annual Review 2023-24

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Annual Review 2023-24

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.

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.

About Landscape Recovery schemes

Landscape Recovery is a key component of the Government's Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs). 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.

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 15 square 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 (DNPA) 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.

Ground Nesting Birds Campaign

The 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, Marshals, 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.

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 FY22/23.

Hawns & 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, secured through National Parks Partnership, 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.

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 4 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.

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.

Curlews 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 5 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.

Dartmoor Headwaters

The Dartmoor Headwaters programme comprises the work of the Natural Flood Management team and the South West Peatland Partnership.

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

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

- 6 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.

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

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.

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 southern Dartmoor, 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 is 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 is 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.

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 farm 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](#)

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 condition.

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 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 grazier 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 liter 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.

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

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
- 23 projects making landscape more inclusive for visitors
- 179 educational visits on Dartmoor
- 63.8ha wildlife-rich habitat created or restored for biodiversity
- 4,251 trees planted
- 12 projects to improve our understanding of carbon storage, carbon emissions and climate change impacts
- 18 ponds created or restored
- 9 projects to reduce flood risk
- 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 to the Ranger Ralph Club and Dartmoor Youth Ranger programme. DNPA have 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. This was delivered in association with the Shallowford Trust.

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 have engaged with 5,697 people.

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 any more. 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.

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 Presevation Association (DPA) in 2023-24 DNPA were able to run three core youth engagement programmes:

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

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 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.

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.

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 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 6 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.

Miles without Stiles

Defra funding through an '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)

Our Shared Boundaries

This program of activity was delivered by the Hill Farm Project as part of the [Our Upland Commons](#) project. It provided skills 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.

- 9 events between April – December
- 75 Participants at 9 different Farms from Okehampton to Badworthy
- 74 Meters of Dry Stone Wall Restored
- 10 Meters of Corn Ditch
- 90 Meters of New Take Wall (single skinned)
- 70 Meters of Hedge Laid

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

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

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.

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 focusses 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 the 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 5 years from January 2025.

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:

- **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;
- **Plan:** within 12 months develop an evidence-based emissions reduction plan in line with the pledge;
- **Proceed:** take immediate action towards meeting the pledge;
- **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;
- **Persuade:** align lobbying and advocacy activities with net zero by proactively supporting climate policies consistent with the Race to Zero criteria.

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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 4 active access volunteers undertaking this work.

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 volunteers' 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 the 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.