

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Public Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 25 July 2025

Present: Will Dracup (Chair), Peter Harper, Gay Hill, Mike Jeffery, Jack Major, Sally Morgan, Caroline Mott, John Nutley, Mark Owen, Guy Pannell, Stuart Rogers, Mary Seddon, Peter Smerdon, Mark Williams, Pamela Woods, Corinne Farrell (Independent Person)

Apologies: Michael Fife Cook, Richard Keeling, Mark Renders, Dan Thomas

Officers in attendance: Kevin Bishop (Chief Executive (National Park Officer)), Richard Drysdale (Director of Conservation and Communities), Charlotte Easton (Head of Communications & Engagement), Dean Kinsella (Director of Spatial Planning), James Sharpe (Strategic Planning & Projects Officer), Neil White (Head of Organisational Development), Cath Burnett (Business Support – Minutes)

3691 Declarations of Interest

Mr Dracup declared an interest in Item 7 (Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes (DDL)) and advised that he would leave the room for this item. He also declared an interest in Item 11 (reference to DDL and Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)).

3692 Minutes of the Annual and Authority meetings held on 27 June 2025

The public minutes of the meetings held on 27 June 2025, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Mr Smerdon asked if there was an update on Capital Investment Strategy (Minute 3688). The Chief Executive (NPO Officer) advised that the Task and Finish group have since met and plan to present recommendations to Members at the next Authority meeting.

3693 Chair's Report

Mr Dracup reported a busy month. A letter has been sent to the Minister, two days were spent interviewing for the Secretary of State position, and he attended National Parks England (NPE) Vision event in London where he met Chairs and Chief Executive Officers from other National Parks.

3694 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

None.

3695 Public Participation

None.

3696 Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes

Considered: Report of the Strategic Planning and Projects Officer (NPA/25/024)

Mr Dracup left the room due to his declaration of interest. Due to the absence of the Vice Chair, Members were asked to propose a stand in Chair for this item. Mr Pannell proposed that Mrs Mott stand in, Mr Owen seconded and all approved. Mrs Mott accepted the proposal and stood in as Chair.

The Strategic and Planning Projects Officer presented his report. In response to Member questions, the Strategic and Planning Projects Officer advised:

- At the Annual Meeting, it was agreed that the Chair of the Authority would Chair the Executive Board which will meet four times a year. Dr Seddon is nominated as substitute.
- Following positive discussions with Arts Council England (ACE), the bid will be resubmitted with some amendments.
- DNPA is responsible for project delivery on budget. The grant is held by DNPA, with all monies being ring fenced for the project. Funding for project roles appointed by partners comes from this budget, with the partner organisation being the employer. There is no financial liability to DNPA, apart from at the end of the project if National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) deem that the project hasn't met delivery targets. Progress is reported quarterly to NLHF, to mitigate risks, with NLHF retaining 10% of the grant before signing off.
- With regards to the permission to start being delayed, the schedule has been adjusted accordingly with no associated negative impacts.

Resolved: Members noted the contents of the report.

Mr Dracup returned to the meeting as Chair.

3697 Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan Report

Considered: Report of the Director of Spatial Planning (NPA/25/025)

The Director of Spatial Planning presented his report. Members commented that the document was well written.

In response to Members questions, the Director of Spatial Planning advised:

- There is protocol at local and national level to support creation of neighbourhood plans.
- The report has been shared with West Devon Borough Council.

Resolved: Members

- (i) Approved the adoption of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan.
- (ii) Authorised the Director of Spatial Planning to publish the Decision Statement set out in Appendix 1.

3698 Dartmoor Land Use Management Group – Financial Arrangements

Considered: Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/25/026)

In response to Member questions, the Chief Executive (NPO) advised:

- DNPA is acting as ‘banker’ for the DLUMG, with the money being ring fenced for use by the DLUMG. The Group has received indicative money for 2026/2027.
- With regards to audit and due diligence, the Chair of the Group is receiving advice from DNPA’s Section 151 Officer. Forms have been designed by DNPA to ensure all due diligence checks are carried out and that the liability lies with the Group.

Resolved: Members:

- (i) Noted the circumstances regarding the financing of the independent Dartmoor Land Use Management Group; and
- (ii) approved an amendment to the Authority’s Financial Regulations to insert a new section (as detailed in the report) that details financial arrangements specific to the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group.

3699 Dartmoor Foundation (trading name – Dartmoor Futures): Charitable Objects

Considered: Report of the Chief Executive (NPO) (NPA/25/027).

The Chief Executive (NPO) presented his report, noting a small amendment to Recommendation ii. that should read ‘as set out in paragraph **2.4**’ (amended from ‘as set out in paragraph **2.3**’).

In response to Member questions, the Chief Executive (NPO) advised:

- There is no timetable for expected response from the Charity Commission (CC).
- The Trustees are unpaid and are working hard in the background.
- That he is attending a meeting on Monday 28th July, in the evening, to discuss the next steps, and that Members will receive an update at the next Authority meeting.
- The formal launch will happen in 2026 and will tie in with the 75th anniversary of the setting up of DNPA.
- There are no concerns about how the money has been spent and that Members should not expect Dartmoor Futures to ask the Authority for further funding support.
- That Members will receive a copy of the revised Articles of Association once approved.
- With regards to Conflict of Interest, Members will receive further information to ensure clear understanding of their relationship with Dartmoor Foundation.

Resolved: Members:

- (i) Noted the advice from the Charity Commission on the registration of Dartmoor Foundation (trading name Dartmoor Futures) as a charity;
- (ii) agreed to amend clause 4 of the Articles of Association for the Dartmoor Foundation to incorporate the revised wording proposed by the Charity Commission as set out in paragraph 2.4 in the report; and
- (iii) confirmed that they have read and noted the Charity Commission's conflict of interest guidance in relation to structures in which there is a relationship between a sole member and a charitable organisation

3700 Annual Review

Considered: Report of the Head of Communications & Engagement (NPA/25/028).

The Head of Communications & Engagement presented her report.

Members were delighted with the reported, showcasing achievements, and passed congratulations onto the wider team for all their hard work. Members commented that the report showed an ambitious organisation, despite the budget restrictions.

In response to Member questions, the Head of Communications & Engagement:

- Thanked Members for bringing additional items for inclusion, such as the visit to Cuyahoga National Park (sister park) and our work with volunteers.
- Advised that once the content is agreed and the report is designed, it will be disseminated through our communication channels. A printed version will also be made available for Members.
- That with regards to increasing our reach and working with young people, she will contact the Member (Mr Rogers) concerned (who was? - Sally? Mary?) outside of the Authority meeting to continue their conversation.
- Advised that the document is a useful resource for Members when attending Parish Council meetings.
- Clarified that the report is a positive celebration of successes, not a place to list and review challenges that we face (these are picked up in the Business Plan and Performance Indicators).
- Shared details of upcoming events that all Members are welcome to attend.

Resolved: Members noted the report and Dartmoor National Park Authority's Annual Review 2024/25.

3701 Recruitment of Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Considered: Report of the Head of Organisational Development (NPA/25/029).

The Head of Organisational Development presented his report.

The Chair, on behalf of Members, thanked the Chief Executive (NPO) for his tremendous leadership over the past 18 years and gave thanks for the extended notice given.

Members advised the Head of Organisational Development to be careful when selecting an executive search agency, to pay particular attention to how the CVs are selected (avoiding those selected by AI) and also to ensure that the person specification is buttoned down and precise.

In response to Member questions, the Head of Organisational Development advised:

- That two other National Park Authorities are also recruiting for new Chief Executive's (NPO's) - Northumberland National Park Authority and the Broads Authority and that he is contact with both.
- That potential candidates will be able to apply to different Authorities.
- That the executive search agency will not be selected based on cost alone.

Members agreed to delegate the recruitment, selection and appointment to the following Appointment Committee: W Dracup (Chair of the Authority), M Renders (Deputy Chair of the Authority), C Mott (Chair of Development Management Committee), S Morgan (Chair of Audit & Governance Committee) and P Woods (former Chair of the Authority). The Appointment Committee will be supported by the Head of Organisational Development who will provide HR advice and administrative support.

Resolved: Members:

- (i) Approved the process for the appointment of a new Chief Executive (National Park Officer) as outlined in the report;
- (ii) agreed a budget provision of up to £30,000 to be funded from the Authority's reserves;
- (iii) agreed to the establishment of an Appointment Committee, determined its membership and agreed to delegate the ability to confirm the appointment of the new Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to this Committee;
- (iv) approved in principle the use of an executive search company to assist in the process.

3702 Member Thanks

The Chair advised Members that Mr Sanders had been invited to attend. Mr Sanders was presented with a gift from the Members in recognition of their appreciation of the years of service he has given as a Member and as Chair of the Development Management Committee.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.25pm.