

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 8 January 2021

Present: K Ball, A Cooper, W Dracup, G Gribble, P Harper, G Hill, J McInnes, S Morgan, D Moyse, J Nutley, N Oakley, C Pannell, M Renders, P Sanders P Smerdon, P Vogel, P Woods

Officers: Dr K Bishop, Chief Executive, (National Park Officer)
Mrs A Kohler, Director of Conservation and Communities
Mr O Rutter, Head of Outreach & Understanding
Mr D Janota, Head of Forward Planning and Economy
Mr J Sharpe, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager
Mr N White, Head of Organisational Development
Ms D Healy, Head of Business Support

Apologies: None

Non-attendance: S Barker, D Webber

3280 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2020 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

3281 Declarations of Interest

None

3282 Chair's Report

The Chair stated that she was pleased with how business has been able to move forward with the use of video conferencing.

The Chair had attended an meeting of the Defra 'Arms Length Bodies' focused on the future of farming.

A meeting with National Parks UK concentrated on issues including climate change and potential role of the National Parks in the COP26 conference due to be hosted in Glasgow later this year.

The Chair and Chief Executive (NPO) had a meeting with Sir Gary Streeter (MP) and discussed the National Landscapes Service as highlighted in the Glover Review and what impact that would have on the National Parks. Sir Gary Streeter has indicated his willingness to Chair the All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks and a meeting is being organised for Spring 2021.

The Chair reported that she had participated in a video conference with the Chairs of the other English National Parks concerning the Landscapes Review and the potential establishment of a new National Landscape Service. There was shared concern that a centralizing quango could be damaging for local autonomy, accountability and delivery.

3283 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

None

3284 Generation Green – funding through Green Recovery Challenge Fund

The Head of Outreach and Understanding presented the report to Members. The project is in the development phase with partnership working with the Youth Hostels Association (YHA), Outward Bound Trust, Field Studies Council, Scouts and Guides as well as the 10 English National Park Authorities. The Generation Green project is a short-term stepping-stone project to the more ambitious five year Access Unlimited Programme - a bid has been submitted to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and been successful.

The aim of the project is to offer progressive opportunities for underrepresented groups of young people and give them the opportunity to access nature, related apprenticeships, reflecting ambitions set out in the Glover Review and in the Defra 25 Year Plan on Connections to Nature. A Covid contingency plan has been drawn up, therefore as larger groups will be unlikely to come together in the near future, there is a plan to run the project with smaller groups and no residential activities, the project still needs to be delivered by March 2022. The Memorandum of Understanding is to be signed off by Trevor Beattie (Chief Executive (National Park Officer) for the South Downs NPA) as Lead National Park Officer for England on education.

The recruitment of a Project Officer at Dartmoor NPA for this project has been delayed until May 2021, although everything is prepared for the recruitment to go ahead when it is appropriate. The contract may well need to be adjusted towards the end of the year, but officers are fully aware of the ever-changing situation.

In response to Members comments and questions the Head of Outreach and Understanding stated that the recruitment for the project officer is fluid and the adverts will be published when they feel the time is right. The funding for the project officer post will come from the Generation Green coalition together with project funding - Dartmoor NPA will provide £2,000 match funding. There will be a central "National Parks Manager" who will be based at the Peak District NPA to co-ordinate the work across the National Parks, and they will take the quarterly claims and reports to the Generation Green coalition in order to draw down funding.

The Head of Outreach and Understanding stated that there are very good connections between the educators and facilitators in Devon which will enable this ambitious but achievable project succeed. There is a danger that the project could start too soon, with too few participants and it lose momentum, but as it stands the project will fulfill local objectives and objectives laid out in the Glover report.

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report.

3285 Your Dartmoor: National Park Management Plan 2014 – 2019; End of Plan Monitoring.

The Head of Forward Planning and Economy gave Members a brief summary of the report. He stated that there are two key elements to the monitoring of the National Park Management Plan. The first element focuses on monitoring of the Actions that took place between 2014 – 2019. The second element is focused on State of the Park indicators. The State of the Park Indicators enable an understanding of whether the Actions have led to an impact on the ground and help to identify the

important issues for the next National Park Management Plan. The report being presented to Members focusses on monitoring of the Actions contained within the Plan. Most of these actions are linked to partnerships and projects (both internal and external) such as Moor than meets the eye (the former Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership).

The outgoing Management Plan is split into the themes of Sustain, Enjoy and Prosper – each of these themes have priority areas detailed in the report, and a broad range of actions behind each theme. The Delivery Board has met once a year to consider detailed reports on the progress of the actions and annual indicators, and respond to any that have fallen behind in the expected progress or decided if some actions are not worth pursuing or changing.

In response to Members questions and comments The Head of Forward Planning and Economy stated that the National Park Management Plan is not a task and finish plan; it has inherited some actions from the previous Management Plan and some will move on to the next Management Plan. Some of the actions which are falling behind or not started, have become new actions, themes which are now stronger in the emerging Management Plan. This includes the ‘next generation’ theme, which is much stronger moving forward.

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report.

3286 “Your Dartmoor” Dartmoor National Park Management Plan 2021 -2026 – Final Draft

The Strategic Planning and Projects Manager informed Members that the final draft of the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan for adoption is in Appendix 1 of the report. A short summary document will be produced, and the full document will be designed for publication.

The consultation for the Management Plan went out to the public in early 2020, 386 responses were received, mostly from residents and key Stakeholder organisations. The responses were broken down into individual comments and analysed. The responses from residents were mainly from the over 40s – this has been noted and engagement with the younger age group will be addressed. Nevertheless there was a specific working group involving younger people that has produced the Next Generation Manifesto. The Management Plan has been further developed in consultation with working groups and a number of redrafts to get to the point it is at now.

The key changes include minor alterations to the vision, as detailed at 5.1 in the report. Ambitious targets have been set, for example the target for Dartmoor (the place, not the Authority) to become Carbon Negative, rather than just Carbon Neutral. The vision is long term and will be reviewed every 5 years. The detail on how some of the targets will be measured is still ongoing, for example tools to measure the level of woodland cover on Dartmoor are still being developed.

With regard to engaging with the younger population of Dartmoor, The Strategic Planning and Projects Manager stated that a more digestible plan would be produced and shared with partners.

In response to members questions The Strategic Planning and Projects Officer stated that he did not know how the level of consultation response to this plan compared with previous plans but that he would endeavor to find out and that different approaches to engage with the community had been used. When publishing the Plan different messages would be tailored to different audiences, a more digestible version of the plan will be available and the Officers involved will learn from this process. The engagement with communities is vital to give those communities ownership of the Management Plan, engagement with the communities will continue through the 5 year span of the plan. In relation to carbon counting, the Devon Carbon Plan would be an important source of information and we will see how Dartmoor contributes to that. The Forward Planning team are looking at the logistics of carbon counting and the issue with double counting. The important part of carbon counting is to see which direction it is going and not who owns it. Dartmoor will be trying to make an impact with the peatland restoration project, green transport strategy and woodland restoration. The photos in the final document will have captions, describing where they are and what they represent.

A Member congratulated the Officers on a fantastic piece of work but suggested that the vision be amended, replacing the word 'enhanced' (in relation to nature) with 'prioritized', the Member also emphasized the link between actions to mitigate against climate change and those to benefit nature. The Officer stated that this would be taken into consideration but wasn't sure about changing the vision at this stage, due to the breadth of consultation in arriving at the current wording, and it would be discussed with Leadership Team. It was also suggested that the link between nature and carbon – linking climate change and biodiversity should be encapsulated more strongly in the document, The Strategic Planning and Projects Officer stated he would take the comments on board for consideration.

A Member stated that the recommendation should include the Deputy Chair and would therefore read "delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, any final minor amendments including changes recommended by the Stainability Appraisal or Habitats Regulations Assessment".

In response to some of the Members statements and questions, which included several topics relating to recreational access, the Director of Conservation and Communities stated that the whole issue around visitor behavior is an ongoing, difficult challenge. New visitors are a positive thing, but they need to be educated and engaged with to avoid the problems accentuated during summer 2020. The Authority need to look at the communications strategy and how to communicate with visitors effectively, the Director confirmed that all stakeholder groups are consulted on issues relating to access. The Authority also aims to develop a Green Transport Strategy, both of these strategies are actions in the new National Park Management Plan.

The Chief Executive (NPO) stated that it is a long process, but this is a robust plan, the Members comments and questions will be considered before the next stage is completed. He reminded Members that they could promote the Management Plan, including at Parish Council meetings.

Miss Moyse proposed the change to the recommendation includes the Deputy Chair, as worded above, which was seconded by Mr Ball. The vote was CARRIED.

The recommendation with the amendment was duly proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED: Members i) Approved the plan for adoption subject to ii) below
ii) delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, Deputy Chair, any final minor amendments including changes recommended by the Sustainability Appraisal or Habitats Regulations Assessment.

3287 Revisions to Standing Orders

The Head of Organisational Development informed members that the Revision to Standing Orders report was taken to Audit and Governance Committee in November. The changes to the Standing Orders included the use of the gender-neutral term of Chair rather than Chairman. Within the Appendices, changes relating to public participation, voting procedures and the rules on elections were also set out. Devon County Council provided legal advice as part of this review and the revised documents were proposed for approval. All other changes to the documents were minor and highlighted in the appendices of the report.

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

A Member highlighted that on page 133 it states “ A Member may at any time resign his membership of the Authority.....” for continuity it should be changed to “his/her”.

RESOLVED: Members approved the proposed revisions to the Authority’s Standing Orders, including the change to the text as highlighted above.

3288 The Annual Audit Letter for Dartmoor National Park Authority for the year ended 31 March 2020 – Grant Thornton

The Head of Business Support reported to Members that Grant Thornton’s Annual Audit Letter summarises the key findings from the work they carried out for the year 2019/20.,

It concludes the issues reported to Members in September in the Audit Findings Report. The Annual Audit Letter confirms that their work is complete, the risks identified and the work carried out in response to those risks. They issued an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements on 27 November 2020. Grant Thornton is satisfied that the Authority meets all the requirements to issue the Value For Money conclusion. On Page 11 of the Annual Audit Letter, the proposed fees for the year are set out, which have not yet been confirmed or agreed between the Authority and PSAA, the Head of Business Support will keep Members informed regarding the fee negotiations and the conclusion.

Members thanked the Head of Business Support and the Finance Team for their hard work.

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report.

3289 Tree Preservation Orders, Section 211 Notifications (Works to Trees in Conservation Areas) and Hedgerow Removal Notices Determined Under Delegated Powers

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/21/005).

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the content of the report.

DRAFT