

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 5 February 2021

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

Officers: Dr K Bishop, Chief Executive, (National Park Officer)
Alex Gandy – Senior Policy Officer
Dan Janota – Head of Forward Planning and Economy

Apologies: C Pannell

Approved leave of absence from the Authority: Mr. D Webber

3290 Declarations of Interest

None

3291 Minutes of the Meeting held Friday 8 January 2021

The minutes of the meeting held Friday 8 January 2021 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

3292 Chair's Report

The Chair congratulated the Chief Executive (NPO) and Mr Dracup on their TV appearance, it gave a good image of Dartmoor.

The Chair and Chief Executive (NPO) attended a video conference with Anthony Mangnall MP, they had a useful discussion and he was supportive and understanding of the issues faced by the National Park. The also had a video conference with Luke Pollard MP, Shadow Environment Secretary who also showed his support for the National Park.

The Heart of the South West meeting was strategic, the Local Industry Strategy was the key topic regarding how it can grow sustainably and be clean and inclusive. The report of South West Mutual highlighted how they plan to establish small regionally owned banks, the Chair stated it will be interesting to see how the idea develops and is commissioned.

The Arms Lengths Bodies meeting heard from Defra regarding the priority framework in the forthcoming business plan. The Environmental Organisations that attend are all waiting to hear the ministerial statement regarding funding.

Mr Harper updated the Members regarding Ten Tors. They are planning for the event to happen, but in a different format this year, as long as the teams can get some training in. Teams will go out for 1 day only, no over night stays, there will still be 3 different route lengths. 130 teams will go out on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday. No spectators or VIPs will be allowed.

3293 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

The Chief executive (National Park Officer) explained to Members that on 2 February 2020 officers had received a request from a member of the public that we bring a situation report concerning the impact of visitors on Wistman's Wood to the Authority meeting.

Wistman's Wood is a National Nature Reserve (NNR). Natural England is the designating Authority and the Duchy of Cornwall own the freehold of the site.

Officers liaised with the member of the public and advised them of their right to register to speak under public participation, but they indicated that they did not wish to do this. An assurance was provided that officers would raise this item under items requiring urgent attention hence this up-date.

The member of the public has specifically asked for a report providing an update on:

- an action plan to prevent the wood from being further despoiled in 2021 (by visitors) and; the
- the funding necessary to achieve this objective.

We will bring a report to the next meeting of the Authority on the work we are doing (with partners) on visitor management. This will be focused on the National Park not just Wistman's Wood. We anticipate a high number of visitors especially if the current restrictions are lifted in phases and meeting outdoors is in the first phase and other attractions such as shops and other leisure attractions remain closed.

We are in discussions with Natural England and the Duchy of Cornwall about Wistmans' Wood. It is for Natural England, as the responsible authority (for NNRs), to determine whether visitor numbers and behaviour are causing irreconcilable damage to the NNR. However, we have suggested that our ecologist and Natural England experts do a joint site assessment in the next few weeks. The Duchy of Cornwall (as landowners are engaged).

The member of the public asked that the local Member of Parliament be made aware. We have briefed all constituent Members of Parliament about the visitor management issues we face – both the positive that more people are enjoying the National Park and many of these are first time or new visitors to Dartmoor; and the . the considerable challenge in terms of anti-social behaviour and, in places, physical damage to the environment.

We have raised the issue of visitor management with Defra and through the cross-government group on visitor management established in response to the scenes we saw last year of the public ignoring social distancing at scenic beauty spots. We have not been successful in getting any additional resource.

In summary, officers will write to the member of the public who raised these concerns to provide a response and we will present a full report on visitor management at the next Authority meeting as it is an ongoing priority for the Authority.

3294 Devon Climate Emergency Response Group Consultation on the Draft Carbon Plan – A Response by Dartmoor National Park Authority

The Senior Policy Officer gave Members an overview of what the Devon Carbon Plan is trying to achieve and how it is planning to achieve a carbon neutral Devon. The Senior Policy Officer's report set out a response to the first Draft Devon Carbon Plan consultation. The next stage of the plan making process involves controversial issues being deliberated in a Citizens' assembly. The final draft plan will be put out for further consultation in 2021/2022. The actions in the Carbon Plan work alongside the Management Plan, which gives a clear road map and realistic dates for completion of the targets.

In response to a Member query on how close a standard measurement for carbon measuring is, The Senior Policy Officer stated that there is a robust framework from the Government for measuring direct emissions, but measuring sequestration and indirect is an emerging area and while good progress is being made in some the methodology will develop as it is a heavily researched area.

A Member suggested that Deputy Chair should be added to the recommendation. This would be added in the proposal.

In response to further questions from Members. Regarding the possibility of footprinting each decision the Authority makes, The Senior Policy Officer stated there is not enough information at the moment to say how much carbon each individual process uses. Trying to establish this would take a disproportionate amount of officer time. The Authority does measure CO2 use through the Performance Indicators and climate change actions are considered when looking at future workplans. 2025 is the target for the Authority to become Carbon Neutral not for Dartmoor as a place. The target for Devon is being established by the Devon Carbon Plan which is proposing that this is aligned with national target of 2050 at the latest. It is likely that Dartmoor itself would need to become carbon positive to balance the effects of essential carbon emissions remaining for urban areas.

Members agreed that it will be difficult and an evolving process to monitor and count CO2, but it will encourage other organisations to look at their options. It is positive that the Authority have a wider partnership signed up to the plan.

Ms Moyle proposed the recommendation to state "That the Members endorse the key elements of the consultation response and delegate authority to approve the final response to the Chief Executive (NPO) in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.", Mr Sanders seconded the proposal.

Mr Barker proposed the recommendation as amended, which was seconded by Mr Sanders.

RESOLVED: Members endorsed the key elements of the consultation response and delegated authority to approve the final response to the Chief Executive (NPO) in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

3295 Weight to be Attributed to Emerging Policies of the Dartmoor Local Plan 2018 – 2036

The Head of Forward Planning and Economy informed Members that as we begin to enter a transition period for the new Local Plan the policies in that emerging Plan will begin to gather weight. Whether a policy might become relevant in decision making is based upon 1) the stage of preparation of the Plan, 2) the level of objection to a particular policy 3) the consistency with national policy. Some emerging policies may therefore start to carry weight, and this will begin to affect Development Management (DM) decision making.

At this stage it should be considered whether emerging policies might be taken into account on a case-by-case basis, focussing largely on where they are relevant to an application where there is a divergence between current and emerging policy. DM case officers would advise Members in any cases where this is relevant in coming weeks and months. This will evolve as the Plan moves from examination hearings, and into consultation on modification and towards adoption. The Head of Forward Planning and Economy took the Members through the table in the report of the overview of policies.

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

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report.