



Dartmoor Access Forum

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To: All Members of the
Dartmoor Access Forum
(see below)

DARTMOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES of meeting held on Tuesday, 21 October 2025

Max Piper
Assistant Access and Recreation Officer
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Present: Mrs A Clish-Green, Mrs I Page, Mrs A Head, Mr C Mason, Mrs S Morgan, Mr Michael Owen, Mr Mark Owen, Mr P Spear, Mr L Fursdon, & Mrs P Warren.

DNPA: Mr A Watson, Mr T Russell, & Mr M Piper.

623) Declarations of Interest None declared.

624) Welcome and Apologies

The meeting was opened by the current Chair Michael Owen who welcomed members. The Chair expressed his gratitude to Dr Kevin Bishop who will be tendering his position as Chief Executive next year. The Chair thanked both Working Groups at Challacombe Farm, led by Mark Owen, for their work, and thanked Ju Lewis for her time as a member. The Chair concluded by expressing the importance of members sending their enquiries to the Chair and Vice Chair to ensure that no content is omitted.

Apologies from Mr J Wright, Mr G Lindsay, Mrs G Branfield, Mrs S Parrott, Mrs S Morgan, Ms K Donohue, and Mrs J Lewis who has submitted her resignation from the Dartmoor Local Access Forum.

625) Minutes of meeting held on 22 April 2025

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 April 2025 were amended to include Inga Page as present at that meeting. Minutes were then accepted as a correct record by A Clish-Green and seconded by A Head.

626) Tim Russell and Max Piper – Update from the Access and Recreation Team

T Russell provided an update on progress with delivery of the Access for All programme funded by DEFRA. This included the Wheeled Access Group (WAGs) at Merrivale where they did some filming with BBC Spotlight about how important it is for people to get out into the National Park for mental health and wellbeing. T Russell spoke about DEFRA funding for access for work in Believer for the Postbridge Tramper Trail. An



extra Trumper has been ordered and both Visitor Centres – Haytor and Postbridge – have been entered for an accessibility award. Ramblers funding for a new gate to the north of Longtimber Woods to improve valley access along the River Erme, including a boardwalk, has been completed. All stiles have been converted to gates along this stretch. A new Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) project at Brimpts featuring a new boardwalk for a future Miles Without Stiles route overlooking Dartmeet will open up an area previously quite inaccessible.

T Russell showed photos of the erosion on the River Erme and the aforementioned gate replacing a stile. South West Lakes Trust volunteers have installed a new accessible bench in Burrator Arboretum, very close to the car park, which adds to the existing Miles Without Stiles route. T Russell expressed the value of working with other partners on these projects.

It was reported that the Haytor Motorhome Trial went well according to T Russell; three bays for overnight parking were provided in the Coach Park, 6pm – 9am, over the summer period. Occasional overstay and one bag of rubbish were reported by Visitor Centre staff, otherwise a positive outcome for those using the site. The team will explore the potential to run the pilot scheme again from Easter 2026 with a formal charge for overnight stays, subject to obtaining planning consent.

The DAF Study visit was held at Challacombe Farm. It looked at interpretation, parking and a discussion about the durability of gates; determining which gates are most suitable for their location. T Russell thanked Mark Owen for hosting and the access and environmental work ongoing at the farm.

627) Amanda Head – Update on the Path Improvements Working Group

A Head introduced the group which had formed following very productive discussions during the Challacombe Farm visit, comprising S Parrott, G Lindsay, Mark Owen and A Head. It covers, and has representatives from, horse riding, cycling, hiking and accessibility. A Head covered linking up existing paths (to avoid roads) and new footpaths/bridleways, as well as upgrading existing rights of way. Funding options will be explored, including the Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster Landscape Recovery Project.

628) Mark Owen – Update on the Signage Working Group

Mark Owen introduced the Signage Working Group, looking at where signing and waymarking are appropriate on rights of way in the National Park – from the road, mid-points, etc. Mark Owen explained that the view of the Working Group is that the signage on Dartmoor is inconsistent – there are lots of missing signs and many different designs of fingerposts and waymark discs, even paint on some. The Group recognise that there has been some improvement of fingerpost designs by including distances and destinations but still described the inconsistencies with signage across the National Park.

Exmoor were commented on the high-quality of their in-house, consistent approach. The Group showed examples from other National Parks and remarked on the identity that the sign design connotes. The Group suggested a signage guide for the materials, display, fonts and style of signs so that Dartmoor's signs can be easily identified.

The Group looked at the open moor signage; fingerposts being clearly visible and being knocked over by animals. The Group suggested granite waymark stones as these are more sacrosanct and less likely to be knocked over.



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Waymark posts – where are they appropriate? The Group suggested, as opposed to using discs, etching the direction arrows into the wooden posts themselves. Waymark discs are there for reassuring the user that they are on the correct route, but they can fade away.

The Group showed that Unsurfaced County Roads (UCRs) on Dartmoor generally are not signed and suggested that they should be, honouring their local names on wooden fingerposts to encourage usage and showcasing the area's heritage.

Funding for signage – the Group discussed options such as the Dartmoor Foundation and others to alleviate stress on DNPA's stretched revenue budget. The predominant cost is the initial installation.

The Group suggested diverting/re-aligning public rights of way where it is clear that the definitive, legal line is not the route used by the majority, if it can be followed at all. Instead, the defined on-the-ground route nearby to the current definitive line should be the route that is signed accordingly and become the new definitive, legal line.

The consultation questions include signing promoted routes such as Miles Without Stiles routes and honeypots, making it easier for visitors unfamiliar to Dartmoor to get around. It needs to be agreed on what needs to be depicted on the signs. The consultation is intended to become available for Dartmoor Access Forum members, Dartmoor Rangers and the main user group organisations of public rights of way.

A Watson explained that Dartmoor National Park Authority is in the process of reviewing its signage and waymarking policy. A Watson thanked the Working Group for their proposals, and the Authority will look at how the proposals may be incorporated into a revised policy.

629) Chris Mason – Update on the Partnership Plan

Central Government targets for National Parks – peatland, access for all; a vision for what National Parks are and how they should be structured. C Mason explained the public survey for the management plan. 2600 people responded to the Dartmoor Partnership Plan survey. The top three priorities were: enhancing nature, improving visitor behaviour and keeping Dartmoor peaceful. C Mason discussed climate change such as the Devon Carbon Plan; improving routes for the visitor experience; workshops on various themes such as nature, communities, cultural heritage and farming. Alison Clish-Green, from her previous experience with the Partnership Plan, added the importance of Stakeholder involvement.

630) Alison Clish-Green – Update on Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

A Clish-Green asked for a substitute for the FiPL panel, which Michael Owen has agreed to and seconded by Inga Page. Since the meeting on 22 April 2025, there have been four meetings – June, July, September and October. £750,000 is available for diverse projects.



Access-related projects are becoming more common in FiPL, such as the Dartmoor Farmers' Association offering school educational visits. 2024 had 25 visits: funding covers the coach travel from the school to the farm; enables city-based pupils to get out onto a Dartmoor farm to learn about, and see, where their food comes from.

FiPL has funded the Brimpts Farm boardwalks and interpretation boards. Additionally, the Dartmoor Commoners' Council are working with FiPL on a fire plan – creation of fire breaks in the bracken which will improve public access and enable vehicular access in the event of a fire. The FiPL criteria is people, nature, climate and place. Projects over £10,000 come to the Local Assessment Panel, those under £10,000 are dealt with by the officers.

631) Dates of Next Meeting

The Members of the Forum have agreed that the next meeting will be **Thursday 23 April 2026** at 6pm.