

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 3 June 2016

Present: K Ball, B Cann, J Christophers, P Harper, S Hill, P Hitchins, M Jeffery, D Lloyd, J McInnes, I Mortimer, D Moyse, N Oakley, M Retallick, P Sanders, D Webber,

Apologies: S Barker, G Gribble, J Kidner, C Pannell

The Chairman welcomed Bill Cann as a new Member of the Authority appointed by West Devon Borough Council and also welcomed Andrew Cooper who is the new Secretary of State appointee to the Authority who will be formally joining the Authority in July.

3169 Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 1 April 2016

The Minutes of the meeting on 1 April 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

3170 Declarations of Interest

None

3171 Chairman's Report

The Chairman confirmed that the Ten Tors event this year in May had been very successful and was a credit to all those involved with its organisation.

Dr Bishop informed the Members that Exmoor National Park Authority will be hosting a joint workshop for Members on 20 October 2016.

Dr Bishop also confirmed that two recent funding bids: one to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund and the other, a national bid led by the Foundation for Common Land to the Heritage Lottery Fund, had both been unsuccessful. Dr Bishop thanked all the staff and partners involved in the bids, in particular Alison Kohler who led the bids. He said that officers would look at lessons to learn and how we might take forward this work in different ways.

3172 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

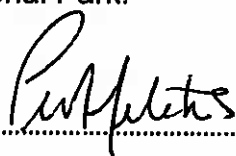
Site Size Threshold for the Use of Section 106 and Affordable Housing Contributions

Members received the report of the Senior Forward Planner (NPA/16/022).

The Senior Forward Planner summarised the background to the report:

November 2014 – A Ministerial Statement set threshold for affordable housing For developments of 10 units or less local planning authorities could not seek a contribution for affordable housing. This threshold was lowered to 5 for land within a National Park.

Signed



Date

2.9.16

January 2015 - In response to Ministerial Statement, Dartmoor National Park Authority adopted an Interim Statement

July 2015 – the High Court quashed the Ministerial Statement and associated elements of the National Planning Practice Guidance.

September 2015 – In response DNPA rescinded its Interim Statement.

May 2016 – The Government successfully appealed and the Court of Appeal overturned the High Court decision with the Written Ministerial Statement and associated National Planning Practice Guidance reinstated with immediate effect. The Government has also included provisions for this change in the Housing and Planning Act that has got Royal Assent.

The Government aim is to reduce the burden on small builders/developers.

The Senior Forward Planner summarised the key elements of the Ministerial Statement as set out in the report with an amendment at 1.1 to read 'For schemes of 10 units or less.'

A revised Interim Statement on Section 106 obligations has been prepared in the context of the updated National Planning Practice Guidance and new Housing and Planning Act. The Statement proposed that the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be reviewed.

Members were recommended to introduce a threshold of "five or less" meaning that schemes of between 6 and 10 houses would still be expected to make a contribution to affordable housing.

The Senior Forward Planner confirmed that Section 106 monies can still be sought where essential works need remedying.

Members commented that the effect of these changes, together with wider initiatives like Right to Buy and Starter Homes will probably further reduce our ability to deliver affordable housing for local needs and, unless we can find other methods of delivery, lead to a potential crisis of affordability in rural areas.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Adopted the Interim Statement on the use of Section 106 Agreements;
- (ii) Agreed to adopt the lower threshold of five units or less;
- (iii) Agreed to the revision of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to explain the Authority's response to the changed government guidance and policy.

3173 Public Participation

None

3174 2015/16 Financial Outturn

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/16/017). An amendment was highlighted on page 10 table 5, the years should read 2015/16 not 2014/15 and the total reserves is as at 31 March 2016 (not 2015).

Signed  Date 2.9.16

This report was presented to the Audit & Governance Committee on 6 May 2016 and has been amended slightly to reflect some last minute transactions.

The Forecast outturn was reported as being £158k after transfers to and from Reserves and has occurred as a result of efficiency savings made, unused Project Fund monies, additional income including planning fees, retail sales and savings in operational running costs, training budgets not fully utilised (but all training requests were granted to staff who requested them), access agreements not being renewed. This represents a -4% variation against budget.

With regard to Reserves used in 2015/16, these amount to £406,812. Members were asked to recommend that a sum of £241,568 be carried to Earmarked Reserves for projects including public rights of way work, website redesign, Mires PR14 and evaluation, works to Higher Uppacott, Farming Futures, to name but a few and also transfer the outturn surplus of £158,018 into reserves, so that it can be reallocated in 2016/17.

The Head of Business Support advised that the statement of accounts were produced to meet the new deadline and the unaudited accounts were issued on 25 May 2016.

The Authority has once again managed to maintain a healthy and robust financial position. The outcome from the 2015 spending review means that the Authority can now plan ahead for the remaining term of the current government.

Members congratulated the Head of Business Support and her team for their hard work.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Noted the content of the report and
- (ii) Approved the transfer of the 2015/16 revenue surplus of £158,018 into Reserves;
- (iii) Approved the transfer of grants and contributions received with specific conditions or restrictions and monies set aside for contractual commitments into earmarked reserves; as set out in section 3.5 of the report, and
- (iv) agreed that it is unnecessary to include a note in the Statement of Accounts relating to the remote possibility of a contingent liability, as set out in section 6 of the report.

3175 2015/16 Annual Governance Statement

Members received the report of the Head of Business Support (NPA/16/018).

This Annual Governance Statement was presented to and reviewed by the Audit & Governance Committee on 6 May 2016.

The Head of Business Support advised Members that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is prepared each year and must accompany the annual Statement of Accounts. It is the culmination of a year-long review process of systems and internal controls.

Signed  Date 2.9.16

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Noted the content of the report and
- (ii) Approved the 2015/16 Annual Governance Statement.

3176 Dartmoor National Park – Ecosystems Approach Report and Action Plan

Members received the report of the Director of Conservation & Communities (NPA/16/019).

Defra asked all National Park Authorities to complete a self-assessment of progress towards the Biodiversity 2020 Outcome 1C: “at least 17% of land and inland water, conserved through effective, integrated and joined up approaches.”

The assessment relates to activity in the National Park not just the work of the Authority.

The National Park Management Plan was used as a basis for this work and in itself this model is an example of an integrated approach.

To make best use of resources the same consultant used by Exmoor was employed to carry out the work and a combined stakeholder workshop held.

The results of the self-assessment clearly evidence that Dartmoor National Park is meeting all the criteria set out in the assessment but there are always things that can be improved. Most of the actions that arose from the stakeholder workshop and the steering group meeting for ‘Your Dartmoor’ have been picked up in current work programmes or through partners.

This was an intensive piece of work requested by Defra that the National Park Authority did not have the capacity to deliver itself, (other National Parks also found this to be the case). The project fund was used to enable completion of this work.

Members thanked the Director of Conservation & Communities for her work in pulling this together.

RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report.

3177 Dartmoor Public Arts Initiative

Members received the report of the Director of Conservation & Communities (NPA/16/020).

The Dartmoor Public Arts Initiative is a project to develop an arts trail, to be in place for 6-8 weeks; linking businesses and sites across the National Park that are free on entry. The art is of a calibre that will attract interest from across the world and can be sold at auction. This is a tried and tested initiative in urban areas and as a fundraising initiative for charitable causes. If successful it may help raise funds for conservation or access projects. The aim is to use a sculpture that helps tell a

Signed  Date 2.9.16

Dartmoor story and ensure that there are options for walking or cycling not just driving.

This project has a number of potential benefits; engaging new audiences (the art community) and particularly young people and families, supporting the local economy, promoting the Dartmoor story and visitors to our Visitor Centres; and the potential for the Authority to generate income. There is a clear synergy with Defra 8 point plan for national parks.

The Director of Conservation & Communities highlighted the possible risks in paragraph 6 of the report, the most significant being costs in the region of £140,000, (being the bottom line if there is no sponsorship or sales income), and based on similar projects elsewhere. It was suggested to Members that if the project goes ahead the amount of £140,000 will be allocated as an earmarked reserve.

The other risk is competition but two recent projects in Dublin suggest that people are still engaged (albeit in an urban location). Rural projects of this nature are still rare.

A significant income is generated by sponsorship. The company we have been liaising with has a good model to engage sponsors in the project and has had success.

Three key elements to a successful project have come from discussions so far:

- Ensuring the right business partners, with experience in sponsorship, marketing and the arts world – to attract sponsorship and visits.
- Developing a quality sculpture that will attract a strong calibre of artist – to generate interest and sales
- Buy in from local businesses so that an attractive trail can be developed.

The project can be managed to allow opt out if we cannot attract the right artists which could bring the financial risk down to approximately £20,000.

The key will be to engage the right Project Manager/Consultant with a proven track record.

This project could bring a number of benefits to the National Park; help deliver the Government's 8- Point Plan for England's National Parks, may generate an income and give the opportunity to learn working alongside specialist in sponsorship and marketing.

Members were in agreement that some calculated and managed risks must be taken in the Authority's search for new funding sources.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Mr Ball.

Signed  Date 2.9.16

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Supported further investigation to allow development of the initiative and allocated £140,000 from the 'invest to generate' earmarked reserve to cover the costs; and
- (ii) Delegated the final decision to proceed to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chairman, subject to further work on community and business buy-in and the implications of competition which will impact on the risk.

3178 Tree Preservation Orders and Section 211 Notifications (Works to Trees in Conservation Areas) Determined Under Delegated Powers

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/16/021) and highlighted some typographical errors in it.

RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report

Signed  Date 2.9.16