

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 9 January 2015

Present: Mr Barker, Mr Gribble, Mr Harper, Mr P Hitchins (Chairman), Miss H Jenny, Mr D Lloyd, Mrs C Marsh, Mr J McInnes, Dr I Mortimer, Miss D Moyse, Mr J Nutley, Mrs N Oakley, Mr M Retallick (Deputy Chairman), Mr P Sanders, Mr J Shears, Mr D Webber, Mr Way

Apologies: Mr K Ball, Mr J Hockridge, Mr M Jeffery, Mr J Kidner, Mr P Vogel

3039 Minutes of the meeting held on

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2014 were signed as a correct record.

3040 Declarations of Interest

Mr Sanders stated that he had a personal interest in the tabled report, Proposed Increase in Charges for Princetown Car Park, due to his involvement with West Devon Borough Council.

3041 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that the chairs of the UK National Parks had agreed to establish a new limited company for commercial activity. He stated that he had suggested to changing National Parks Enterprises Ltd to UK National Parks Foundation, but there may be difficulties with it being a called "foundation". He had also sought clarity on funding and what was happening to the initial £10,000 investment for each National Park Authority.

The Chief Executive informed Members that there still has been no information regarding National Park Grant, and it has been indicated by Defra that the allocation for 2015/16 will not be confirmed until the end of January.

The Chairman informed Members that he had written a strong letter to Lord de Mauley about the lack of information regarding National Park Grant for 2015/16.

The Chief Executive attended the Parliamentary Reception on National Parks and economic development. Tim Jones from the Local Enterprise Partnership, was complimentary about the Authority's work on economic development and had applauded the joint work with Exmoor National Park, the work done by the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project and the new Health and Wellbeing Project.

The Director of Conservation and Communities informed Members that the Countryside Fund bid for The Dartmoor Hill Farm Project had been successful for the full amount requested of £50,000. This will ensure that the Hill Farm Project can continue for 2 years with 2 part time officers and some administration support. The Director of Conservation and Communities requested that her thanks be noted to the Hill Farm Project for their hard work for the bid and to Tom Stratton from The Duchy of Cornwall for his support.

It was announced that the full Moor than meets the eye team is in place.

3042 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Proposed Increase in Charges for Princetown Car Park

The Head of Recreation, Access and Estates reminded Members that a system of Pay and Display car park charging was introduced in the public car park in Princetown, in August 2013 as an alternative source of income following reductions in the National Park Grant. The two ticket machines are managed by West Devon Borough Council through a Service Level Agreement.

The current charges stand at £1 per day for cars and £4 per day for coaches between the hours of 10am and 6pm, which allows local people to carry out their dog walk and errands to the shops first thing without having to pay the fee. These fees were set following consultation and reflected the former suggested donations for users of the car park.

The total income from the machine between October 2013 & September 2014 was £22,616, with reductions for VAT and WDBC commission it resulted in a Net Income of £14,324 for DNPA, i.e. 66p from every pound.

It is proposed that Members agree to increase the charges for cars (free for blue badge holders) and motorcycles, coaches and Public Service Vehicles with a valid community disc from £1 per day, to £2 per full day (more than 3 hours). There would be no change for the coach parking and the charge for less than 3 hours would remain at £1.

The projected income is difficult to assess as it is very much weather dependant, but data collected from people counters in the area suggest a potential increase of 20%.

A Member did ask if it had been suggested to vary Summer and Winter charges. The Officer informed Members that although it had been considered the fixed rate was a community led decision following consultation with local businesses.

It was noted that there was some negative feeling from traders, but there is free on-street parking for up to 30 minutes and £2 for all day is very good value.

It was asked why there wasn't the option for a season ticket/parking permits, but the Officer confirmed that the administration costs were too high to make it viable.

RESOLVED:

It was duly proposed and agreed to consult on proposed increases to the charges for Princetown Car Park as outlined in the report.

3043 Public Participation

None

3044 Section 106 Thresholds – Written Ministerial Statement

The Senior Forward Planner informed Members that the four areas covered in the report are the changes resulting from the Ministerial statement, the implication for Dartmoor, what the options are and Dartmoor National Park Authority's proposal.

The changes brought in by Government at the end of November 2014 impact on how S106 can be used for affordable housing, which are designed to reduce burdens on small builders on developments with a 10 unit and 10,000sqm threshold. Rural authorities can adopt a threshold of 5 units, though 6 -10 units can only require a commuted sum contribution.

The main implication for Dartmoor is that it conflicts with our Local Plan in regards to focussing upon affordable housing to meet local needs. It also conflicts with the National Parks circular which provides a strong foundation for the focus on affordable housing "...Government recognises National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing...". The proposal impacts DNPA's ability to deliver affordable housing on brownfield land, infill sites in local settlements and conversions in local centres, rural settlements and open countryside. There are potential loopholes where applications may be split in to two to avoid monetary contributions. The changes would have a significant impact on the overall affordable housing figures for Dartmoor National Park, where small sites have made a significant contribution.

The options are:

- Do nothing and accept the changes, applying the policies as before, but don't ask for affordable housing. The implications are a significant reduction in affordable housing and other contributions and major changes to how we apply our local plan policies and it contradicts DNPA's strategy for housing.
- Do nothing and ignore the changes, applying the policies as before and continue to request S106. The implications are that applications which do not include affordable housing will be refused, testing the strength of government's policy change, potentially putting the DNPA in risk of challenge and costs against us.
- Take the middle ground and judge each case individually, which would ensure that we stand by key principles which are good for Dartmoor. Accept that there will be proposals for 100% market housing, also judge them on their merits, for example sustainable development. But policies must be upheld and refusal of applications will happen in some cases.

The other policies in the Local Plan are still relevant and whilst this impacts on how affordable housing is delivered, there still the need to make good planning decisions based upon relevant policies.

One Member questioned the threshold for a commuted sum as the wording was ambiguous. It was agreed that the wording "agree to adopt the lower threshold of five units or less.." should be changed to "...threshold of 6 units".

The Senior Forward Planner assured Members that allocated sites would still be subject to a Masterplan in accordance with policy. Members also expressed their concerns regarding the conflict between national guidance and DNPA policy. The Director of Planning and The Head of Legal and Democratic services reassured Members that the adopted policies in the Local Plan are still the starting point in all determinations.

RESOLVED:

- i) Members resolved to; adopt the Interim Statement on the use of Section 106 Agreements
- ii) Adopt the lower threshold. with the amendment "...threshold of 6 units"
- iii) Support the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD on Sustainable Development to explain the Authority's response to the changed government guidance.

Mrs Oakley left the Meeting

3045 Joint Economic Prospectus for Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks

The Chief Executive presented the report on behalf of the Interim Manager Communications and Visitor Services. The report proposes the development of a new Economic Prospectus for Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks.

Dartmoor and Exmoor NPA's are social and economic assets as well as environmental assets. The economic importance is often overlooked, and National Park status is sometimes considered a barrier to growth. The joint prospectus will help to promote the economic potential of the National Parks and will set out the value of the National Parks. For example, both Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks attract approximately 4 million visitors a year, spending over £200 million.

The Draft proposal identifies the need for support and investment in the continued management of these unique places. It also identifies three other areas for investment:

- 1) Improved connectivity with the superfast broadband reaching rural communities and improved mobile coverage in the National Parks
- 2) Increased promotion of the place and product which will help improve the recognition of the distinctive qualities of the region.
- 3) Better support for the key sectors; farming, food and tourism.

A Member suggested that improved connectivity should include road and rail links.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the content of the report

3046 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/15/003)

RESOLVED:

Members noted the content of the report.