

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Friday 6 February 2015**

**Present:** Mr K Ball, Mr G Gribble, Mr P Harper (Chairman), Mr P Hitchins, Mr J Hockridge, Mr J Kidner, Mr D Lloyd, Mr J McInnes, Dr I Mortimer, Miss D Moyse, Mr J Nutley, Mr M Retallick (Deputy Chairman), Mr P Sanders, Mr P Vogel, Mr D Webber

**Apologies:** Mr S Barker, Mr J Shears, Mr M Jeffery, Ms N Oakley

**3047 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2015**

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2015 were signed as a correct record with the following amendments noted:

Top of page 1 - Miss H Jenny, Mr Way and Mrs Marsh were not present and chairman to be corrected to Mr P Harper not Mr Hitchins.

Bottom of page 1 – the word 'nearly' should be inserted in final paragraph to read 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 nearly £50,000.

**3048 Declarations of Interest**

None.

**3049 Chairman's Report**

The Chairman reported that an interview with Western Morning News had proved a useful opportunity to put across National Park purposes.

The Chairman confirmed that together with the Chief Executive, he recently attended a meeting with the MP for National Parks, Lord de Mauley and a meeting of Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA).

The Chief Executive reported on the ANPA meeting highlighting that agreement had been reached to progress the sponsorship initiative. Dartmoor was out voted on the increase in membership cost to ANPA which amounts to an 11% increase. The delivery model was also questioned.

The Chief Executive confirmed the successful bid with Devon County Council for a further £675,000 for Granite and Gears cycle route, which was reported in the media. These funds are reallocated from the New Forest who were unable to implement their scheme. There are also a number of other schemes underway including Princetown railway, Fingle Woods and Plym Valley Trail.

The Chairman informed Members that following recent joyriding in the Haytor lower car park at night, a granite post and chain fence had been installed. The Head Ranger is looking into motion detection cameras. Police are also tackling the problem.

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A Member highlighted concern over the progressive number of vehicles parking further away from car parks causing damage to the moorland.

**3050 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

None.

**3051 Public Participation**

None

**3052 Fees and Charges**

The Head of Resources presented the report (NPA/15/004) to Members.

Authority fees and charges need to be reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process. The Authority provides a number of services for which fees are permitted to be charged, in order to offset the costs involved. Fees and charges help the Authority set a balanced budget and help cover some delivery costs. The budgeted level of expected income, actual performance at month 6 and the projected outturn in 2014/15 was highlighted in Appendix 1.

Planning fees are not included in the report, which are set by Central Government; or Pre-application advice fees, which Members approved on 5 December 2014.

The proposed schedule of fees and charges for 2015/16 was highlighted in Appendix 2, details of the proposed changes described in detail at section 3 of the report. This report was presented to Audit and Governance Committee in November who supported the proposal.

Members agreed to consult on the proposed increases to the car parking charges at Princetown at the Authority meeting on 9 January 2015. This will be carried out by West Devon Borough council this month and Members will be duly notified of any representations made.

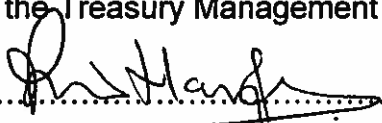
**RESOLVED:** That Members:

- i) approved the recommendations made in section 3 of report NPA/15/004  
And
- ii) approved the fees and charges contained in Appendix 2 to this report for the financial year 2015/16

**3053 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2015/16**

The Head of Resources presented the report (NPA/15/005) and highlighted the requirement under the guidance of CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management to approve an Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy. Dartmoor National Park Authority has always adopted a prudent approach to cash investments.

The Head of Resources confirmed the overall aims of the Treasury Management Strategy continue to be to:

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- Limit the risk to the loss of capital
- Ensure that funds are always available to meet cash flow requirements
- Maximise investment returns, consistent with the first 2 aims and
- Review new investment instruments as they become available to Local Authorities and assess whether they might be used.

The overriding objective remains to invest prudently, with priority being given to security and liquidity before yield.

Members' attention was drawn to The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy at Appendix 1. The current schedule of investments are outlined on page 16 of the report and the prospects for interest rates are outlined on page 17 with the view from industry practitioners that rates may rise during latter half of 2015.

The Head of Resources confirmed to Members that the reasons for not investing in higher risk and less liquid forms of investment are outlined in the report and how the Authority maintain security via the adoption of counterparty lists and by the use of ratings issued by credit rating agencies.

The Authority Treasury management arrangements are maintained to a high standard, no losses have been incurred and consultation continues with and guidance from the Authority's S151 officer and the Investments Manager at Devon County Council, who is expert in the field.

**RESOLVED:** Members approved and adopted the 2015/16 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy at Appendix 1.

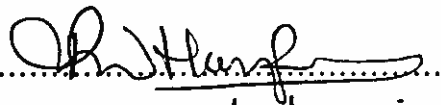
### **3054 2015/16 Net Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Budget**

The Chief Executive confirmed to Members that the indicative figure from Defra for National Park Grant 2015/16 had been verbally confirmed, being £3,573,586. This results in a 1.74% reduction on National Park Grant for 2014/15.

The Chief Executive explained to Members that in real terms the budget has been cut in excess of 40%.

The Chief Executive highlighted to Members paragraph 3.5 of the report (NPA/15/006) in particular:

- The confirmed external funding from The Prince's Countryside Fund to support the Hill Farm Project for the next 2 years
- The closure of The Your Dartmoor Grant fund
- The Mires project is not anticipated to continue after this financial year; the £2m Heritage Lottery Fund Moor than meets the eye Landscape Partnership scheme (reports re the expenditure to go via Audit and Governance); minor structure review saving £65-£95,000

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- The specific allocation in the Authority's reserves for future work on the Dartmoor Local Plan review.
- Additional funding to restore public rights of way damaged by floods. Two significant projects (a replacement bridge over the Swincombe and major repairs to bridleway from Princetown to South Hessary) have yet to be completed.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the National Park Visitor Centre Princetown was allocated funding to improve the facilities available and undertake essential decoration in the ballroom; the majority of which is complete. The original plans included proposals to install a new access ramp to the front of the building. The revised costs for the ramp have meant external funding be sought for a programme of works to include the ramp, improved interpretation within the Visitor Centre and a 'citizen science project' to engage local communities and visitors in the National Park's special qualities. An external bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund is being developed and will require matched funding. Therefore the current provision set aside in reserves will be retained along with the balance of circa £35,000 in this year's revenue budget.

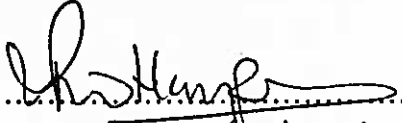
The Chief Executive confirmed that the Authority's two main leased buildings (Parke, Bovey Tracey and Princetown) have "full repairing" obligations which, given their age, can lead to considerable expenditure. A number of works have been carried out at both locations during 2014/15. The cost has been met from the 2014/15 Revenue budget, without drawing on reserves as originally anticipated. There are no plans for any further significant works.

The Chief Executive informed Members that it is proposed the Authority continues with the Project Fund as part of its revenue budget which has enabled the Authority to buy-in support for staff during the financial year to meet unforeseen work demands, fund new projects and invest in new equipment.

It was confirmed that there have been no indicative figures of potential funding provided by Defra from 2016 onwards. This lack of information makes it difficult to prepare a Medium Term Financial Plan and advice has been sought from the Authority's S151 Officer.

The Chief Executive took Members through the tables in the report (NPA/15/006) setting out the net budget requirement for a two year Medium Term Financial Plan, demonstrating the impact of further reductions in National Park Grant (2.5%, 5% and 10% reductions). Whilst work has been done on different scenarios it cannot be developed further until a clearer indication of future funding levels is received. The Authority has maintained a robust level of reserves (though most of these are allocated). Some of these reserves may need to be used to support the revenue budget for a period if faced with further significant reductions in NPG.

The Chief Executive reported that the Authority will also continue to look at ways to increase income and have had success with external grant funding but such external funding bids require staff time to develop and matched funding. Dartmoor National

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Park Authority unlike some National Park Authorities does not have a general power of competency that might enable us to develop trading ventures. This has been raised with Defra and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

The Chief Executive reported on the Pension Fund and provision in the revenue budget to sustain payments at 19.7% to provide resilience. Members' attention was drawn to Reserves in Appendix 3 and Budget details in Appendix 1.

Members congratulated the Head of Resources on the clear presentation and explanations of the financial information contained in the reports.

An A4 factsheet is to be produced for Members to use in discussions with MP's and other politicians.

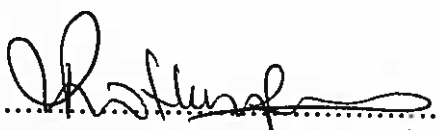
**RESOLVED:** That Members:

- i) approved the net budget of £3,588,586 for the 2015/16 financial year as shown in Appendix 1.
- ii) noted the potential need to revise the revenue budget if Defra impose a further cut to 2015/16 National Park grant and that any revised budget would be presented to the Authority for approval.
- iii) noted the uncertainty about funding levels for 2016/17 and 2017/18 and the difficulty of producing a detailed Medium Term Financial Plan.

**3055 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/15/007)

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the content of the report.

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