

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 30 April 2021

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

Officers: A Kohler, Director of Conservation and Communities
S Hill, Head of Communications and Fundraising
N White, Head of Organisational Development
D Janota, Head of Forward Planning and Economy
A Gandy, Senior Policy Officer
J Sharpe, Strategic Projects and Policy Officer

Apologies: N Oakley, P Vogel, D Webber

3313 Declarations of Interest

None.

3314 Minutes of the Meeting held Friday 9 April 2021

The minutes of the meeting held Friday 9 April 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

3315 Chair's Report

The Chair reported that she had attended a number of meetings organised by National Parks England to discuss the proposed National Landscape Service. She also attended APPG meeting with a focus on Nature Recovery and collaborative work across National Parks and AoNBs; this was a positive and useful meeting. An excellent discussion was had at the meeting with the Dartmoor Preservation Association regarding the proposed National Landscape Service. A Government response to the Glover Review is expected at the end of May/June.

The request for remote meetings to continue has been dismissed by the High Court, therefore the Authority meetings will resume to face to face meetings at Parke on 28 May 2021 for Audit and Governance Committee.

3316 Items requiring urgent attention

None.

3317 Public Participation

None.

3318 Changing Lives, Nurturing Nature – Revised Application to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund 2021

The Strategic Planning and Projects Manager reported to Members that Officers have received positive feedback on our original submission to the Green Recovery

Challenge Fund submitted in 2020 and encouraged to apply to the 2021/22 fund. An Expression of Interest has been submitted and approved and subject to members approval a full application will be submitted on 14 May. The revised application contains all the essential elements of the original bid but we have removed the Motivations Study. If successful the grant will enable us to employ three engagement Rangers and four graduate trainee positions. The grant would also enable us to develop baseline mapping data to support Nature Recovery projects. Once again this is a partnership bid with Woodland Trust, National Trust, and South West Lakes Trust. The total value of the bid is £460k and 5% match funding is required. Members are asked to support the submission of the bid and allocate up to £22,000 as match funding,

Mrs Woods connection was lost for approximately 5 minutes and would not be able to vote.

Members expressed full support for the bid, and thanked the Officers involved for their hardwork. In response to questions, the Strategic Planning and Projects Manager informed the Members that Natural England are not able to be a partner in the bid but we are engaging with them and will continue to work with them if the bid is successful. Devon Wildlife Trust is not a partner in this bid.

Members were informed that the Trainees would be working with all four partners to get a wide range of experience. The key aspect to this bid is job creation and green recovery, which is in line with the criteria set.

Mr Cooper proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Mrs Hill.

RESOLVED: Members agreed the revised and updated application to the 2021 round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and approved the allocation of up to £22,000 from Authority reserves as match funding for the bid.

3319 Dartmoor Local Plan – Draft Modifications

The Head of Forward Planning and Economy reported that the Local Plan hearings had taken place in March. The hearings form a key part of the examination, the purpose of which is to consider whether the Local Plan had satisfied all the legal requirements and if it is sound. Hearings were held online, broadcast live on YouTube and were well attended.

The key issues raised included environmental appraisal, the emerging government policy regarding net gain and sustainable construction, housing numbers and distribution, and the changes that have occurred to the Use Class order since submitting the Plan. Section 4.3 in the report details the proposed modifications for consultation.

DNPA officers highlighted that the refusal of the application on the allocated Holne Road site in Buckfastleigh confirmed the site was not deliverable. The Inspector agreed with officers that an alternative should be identified in the proposed modifications.

Officers noted that technical work on the two alternative sites was ongoing. A Member raised concerns that one of the potential sites lies in Dean Prior Parish and not Buckfastleigh, and considered it would double the settlement size; co-operation

was needed given the site is in South Hams but residents would likely use Buckfastleigh infrastructure/resources. The Officer stated that it was important that the site is chosen for the right planning reasons. A Member raised concern regarding public consultation; the officer stated that both sites have been part of a public consultation at previous stages and that officers would ensure both Buckfastleigh Town Council and Dean Prior Parish Council had advance notice of the upcoming modifications consultation.

In response to a Member's question regarding MM49 in the report, the Officer explained the governments changes to the Use Class order and directed Members to the paper detailing the impact on the Local Plan. In response to a Member's question, officers noted the Glover Review is still awaiting a formal response from the Government and the Local Plan takes account of. In response to a Member question regarding Gypsy and traveler sites, officers noted the pitch requirement is 0.2 pitches per year, and that the Authority works closely with other partners to ensure needs are met through a criteria based policy.

Members will have the opportunity to consider the draft proposed modifications at the Planning and Sustainable Development Working Panel meeting, before they are agreed by the NPO, Chair and Deputy Chair. Consultation on the Modifications only, will take place before the summer holiday period and it is hoped the Inspector's report will be received in time for the Plan to be adopted in the Autumn.

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

RESOLVED: Members agreed the draft proposed modifications for public consultation, and delegated authority to the Chief Executive (NPO), in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair, to agree the final complete list of Modifications prior to publication for consultation.

Mr Ball lost connection and rejoined.

3320 Supporting the Economic Recovery on Dartmoor

The Head of Communications and Fundraising reported to Members that a staycation boom this summer is predicted. Despite the difficulties of the last year, it is expected that the National Park will see an increase in footfall over the summer providing much needed revenue for local businesses. The concern was extending this into the autumn and winter months, to ensure businesses had as much opportunity as possible to recover from the pandemic.

Mr McInnes lost connection and rejoined, but would be unable to vote on this item.

The Head of Communications outlined a number of initiatives that had taken place or were to take place to support the recovery on Dartmoor.

The extension to Postbridge Visitor Centre was completed last year. The aim for this is to be a key economic driver for the area with longer term plans to organise events and activities from Postbridge Visitor Centre, to encourage people to stay for longer and spend more.

Throughout the pandemic a focus on communications has encouraged the continuing support of local suppliers that people relied on so heavily during the first lockdown to ensure local businesses thrive. An online food and drink map has been developed to help people locate and support these local suppliers.

Moor Otters is being relaunched this year after having to be postponed in 2020. One of the key drivers for this project is to support local businesses through an increased footfall with people following the trail. Businesses have been given “tool kits” to help them make the most of hosting an otter and enhance the visitor experience. In December, a report will be brought to Authority summarizing the project and the effect on local businesses.

Last summer we launched a social media campaign called “we are Dartmoor”, to encourage business to self promote and work with other businesses in the area. It has been positively received so far and Exmoor NPA has borrowed the idea.

New opportunities are arising to encourage sustainable tourism and travel, for example the opening of the Dartmoor Line from Exeter to Okehampton. This will provide a huge economic boost to the area. DNPA and GWR are planning on a micro visitor centre being opened at the railway station, which will provide the opportunity for local businesses to share their information.

The Head of Forward Planning and Economy informed Members that the Community Support Network had launched last month. These meetings formed part of the PCF funded project, with the next steps being to help businesses learn from each other, find local support and create connections.

The key matters raised by business and communities in support for community and economic development remain consistent, and include in particular mobile and broadband connectivity, skills and training, access to training, an interest in local branding and buying local. He echoed the message regarding opportunities to extend the visitor season.

Officers are engaged in broader partnerships and networks around community and economic development.

Mr Barker lost connection

Members stated that there needs to be a plan and facilities in place to ensure there is space for the expected high number of visitors. This coming year, with many people taking staycations Devon and Cornwall will be full to capacity, especially with campervans, there needs to be positive information available as to where they can stay. Work needs to take place with partners to ensure this information is easily accessible. The 56 days of permitted camping rule provides some opportunity but does not permit campervans.

The Members were informed that the website is up to date with information for campers and campervan users, with alternative places to camp. Information for landowners regarding the 56 day rule has been published in the Hill Farm Project newsletter.

The Director of Conservation and Communities stated that the idea of car parks being used for overnight Campervans would have to be explored in depth due to the legal, planning and enforcement complexities, and the need to set up a payment scheme.

Mr Barker rejoined the meeting.

Members stated that they would like to see the National Park raise revenue from campervan parking – charging £15 for 2 night like some other places do, there are enough places such as Widecombe and Princetown with suitable parking areas to make this feasible, but unauthorised camping must be enforced.

Mr Renders lost connection and rejoined the meeting.

The Director of Conservation and Communities stated it would be necessary to divert resources from other work if Members wish this to be pursued as a priority. Members asked to be kept informed of progress.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendation, which was carried.

RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report and the work undertaken to support the economic recovery on Dartmoor.

Members and Officers stated their thanks to Mr Barker and Mr Ball for their service to the National Park. Mr Barker had been a Member for 20 years and Mr Ball for 8 years.