

DNPA Opening Statement of Local Plan Hearings

2 March 2021

On behalf of Dartmoor National Park Authority I would like to welcome you to the hearings and extend my welcome and thanks to the Inspector, Ms Barrett, and the Programme Officer, Robert Young, for their expertise and management in the examination so far.

I would also like to thank everyone who has participated in the preparation of this local plan, those individuals and communities who have engaged from the beginning, the organisations and agencies which have contributed their expertise, the input from professional bodies and from colleagues across various sectors who will be key partners in delivering the plan.

We welcome the scrutiny the plan has had which has ensured that the submitted plan is sound, and achieves a careful balance of sustainable development for Dartmoor and its communities.

Most of you will be aware that we are a small team which has prepared this plan. We have though sought well respected expert consultant support in areas such as environmental appraisal, housing, sites, and economic development. And we thank them for their contributions too.

We pride ourselves in having gone several steps further to engage people in the plan, from early issues consultation, and extra stages of engagement with communities, to industry and subject workshops leading to a Plan which, as a result, has been welcomed and well received.

The Plan we have submitted is sound, and meets all the necessary legal and procedural requirements, as we will demonstrate over the coming days. It has been positively prepared, based on an appropriate and proportionate understanding of the area, which has enabled a clear vision for Dartmoor and its communities. We welcome any opportunities to identify modifications which further improve the Plan as part of the examination.

The plan draws together all of the authority's development plan documents into a single, clear, local plan. It covers the fundamental context of national parks with an ambitious vision for Dartmoor, and how that will be achieved. It has clear policies for the protection of its environment. It sets a strategy for housing which responds to the challenges our communities are facing, and aligns that with an economic strategy, both carefully balancing competing challenges around affordable housing, jobs, climate change and conservation. It provides positive policies to support our communities to thrive, including proactively identifying enough land to meet their needs, at an appropriate rate. It identifies how Dartmoor's natural resources can be used sustainably, and in the best interests of the National Park and its communities.

We will, unapologetically, step back in these hearings to reflect upon the bigger picture; to remind us all that we are discussing a local plan for a National Park; Dartmoor is a place of enjoyment and recreation for millions, an area with the highest status of landscape protection, containing habitats and wildlife of international importance, one of the most important archaeological landscapes in western Europe with a chronology of human activity stretching back over 8,000 years. A designation which turns 70 this year and of which as a *national* park, we all have a stake in.

Dan Janota
Head of Forward Planning and Economy

