

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 9 April 2021

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

Officers: K Bishop, Chief Executive, (National Park Officer)
A Kohler, Director of Conservation and Communities
D Healy, Head of Business Support
S Hill, Head of Communications and Fundraising
N White, Head of Organisational Development
A Gandy, Senior Policy Officer

Apologies: G Gribble

Approved leave of absence from the Authority: D Webber

3307 Declarations of Interest

None.

3308 Minutes of the Meeting held Friday 5 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held Friday 5 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

3309 Chair's Report

The Chair reported that she had attended numerous virtual meetings with National Parks England with regard to the proposed National Landscapes Service. She has also undertaken some media interviews about the same.

3310 Items requiring urgent attention

None.

3311 Public Participation

None.

3312 Dartmoor National Park Authority Climate Action Plan Progress Update

Members received the report of the Senior Policy Officer (NPA/21/014).

Members were reminded that the Climate Action Plan was approved in 2020, in response to the Authority declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019. The Plan deals with the Authority's emissions, not the emissions of Dartmoor as a place. One of the key objectives of the Plan was to plot a path towards the Authority being carbon neutral of our Scope 1 & 2 emissions by 2025. This relates to our emissions from using gas, electricity, diesel etc. To become carbon neutral means that the amount

of carbon we emit and the amount we sequester balances out at zero. It does not mean that we do not emit carbon, which is broadly accepted as impossible with technology that is currently available.

As part of the Action Plan the Authority set out a strategy for reducing emissions, in the following ways:

- Avoid emissions where possible;
- Reduce the emissions that the Authority needs to emit in order to undertake its work;
- Use of green sources;
- Offset those emissions that are absolutely essential.

The Authority is also considering Scope 3 emissions: emissions that are not directly attributable but arise 'because' of the work it undertakes.

A year ago, no-one would have envisaged the world that we now live in. The Action Plan was very much written in a pre-Covid world. The current restrictions have entirely changed the way in which the Authority works; virtual meetings, staff working in a virtually paperless environment, working from home hence avoiding commuting emissions. This overcomes a huge obstacle that climate change officers would have previously seen as almost impossible to achieve. However, it is not expected that the Authority will work in this way in perpetuity. A balance will need to be struck.

The Senior Policy Officer drew Member's attention to Table 1 at section 2.4 of the report, which provides the percentage emissions difference between 2019/20 (pre-Covid) and 2020/21. The table at section 2.7 provides a progress update of the projects scheduled for implementation in 2020/21. The capital infrastructure projects have been delayed slightly, whereas those projects that were seen as longer term projects have largely exceeded targets.

What the Authority now needs to do in order to progress to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 is:

- Capture the benefits of those lower emissions gained by new working methods, specifically home working, digital by default;
- Re-prioritise capital investment projects, including those that are proposed to be scheduled for next year e.g., low emission vehicles, solar PV scheme at Haytor Visitor Centre; sustainable travel for staff;
- Secure a clean source of renewable electricity – this is being pursued with Devon County Council;
- Consider how to offset remaining emissions. The Authority needs to look at its land assets as there is no current record of their carbon balance i.e., what they emit and what they sequester year on year. A project is currently being scoped to look into this.

It is necessary, however, to recognise that Authority funding is current flat – the same as that received in for 2020/21; projects should be considered in conjunction with the ongoing work of the Authority in order to strike a balance.

In response to some Member comments and queries, the Chief Executive responded as follows:

- With regard to issues surrounding travel, the Authority does not want to go back to the 'old normal', rather it wants to establish a 'new normal'. The travel budget has been reduced by 25% creating a fiscal push towards reduced travel. It is clear that what has been learned through video conferencing and 'digital by default' must be sustained. However, what has been lost is the informal networking, together with some of the innovation and ideal that comes from working with others – this is not always possible when working remotely.
- Visitor Management – there will be an increase to carbon emissions through travel. There is no programme of capital investment planned. The sort of works planned to deal with erosion and other access issues will be covered by the revenue budget. There is also an opportunity through the government's Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme to use that funding to support access works. These works would not necessarily fall within the Authority's carbon footprint.
- With regard to the request from Mr David Ramsden MBE, the best way forward would potentially be for Mr Ramsden to make another presentation to the National Park Forum. However, the presentation would need to be different to that previously made and ideally focus on practical actions that can be taken to address the climate emergency.
- In response to Mr Ramsden's question, asked via Mr Nutley, "*of Members, what difference their declaration of a climate and ecological emergency has made to the Authority's policies and decisions since it made the declaration ...*" – it has made a big difference; it has put climate change at the heart of what the Authority does, there is an action plan to reduce the Authority's carbon footprint. It is becoming an increasing part of our culture as an organisation and is a central theme within our new National Park Management Plan. We are also working with other National Parks across the UK on this topic and hope to be able to highlight our work at the COP 26 conference that the UK is due to host in late 2021.

In response to Member comments and queries, the Senior Policy Officer responded as follows:

- To Mr Harper, it would be extremely useful to have view of the travel matrix which he uses. It is important to intercept the initial thinking of officers when planning and determining whether to travel to a meeting or attend remotely. Changing behaviour for the better can be difficult and he would welcome any ideal that Members may have to assist with a positive transition.
- There are a lot of potential benefits to working remotely and the transparency it allows. The Forward Planning Team recently held the Local Plan examinations remotely – there was more attendance than there has ever been.
- With regard to transference, there are extremely difficult calculations that would be needed. The Carbon Trust estimated that in respect of emissions from a vehicle, compared to emissions from a home heating system, if you were travelling alone in a car for four miles this would be enough to offset the average heating emissions from home working. Therefore, the savings in travel would more than offset the additional heating that may be used by staff working from home. With regard to printing at home, this has not yet been factored in and would be considered in the future.

A Member impressed upon Members and Officers that the Authority needs to be proactive, rather than reactive, regarding travel. Policies to deal with travel and procedures need to be put in place urgently.

A Member, who joined the Authority at the beginning of Lockdown in March 2020, commented that virtual meetings can be challenging, having never actually met anyone.

The Chair agreed with Members' comments – if meetings have to change and we have no power over that then clearly that change is going to have an impact on individuals, all of which will be beyond our control as an Authority. In response to her query regarding decision making and climate change, the Chief Executive confirmed that all major decisions are tested under the Equal Opportunities, Fairness and Diversity regulations. The Authority also considers sustainability implications.

In response to the Chair's query regarding the Authority's land assets and offsetting capability, the Senior Policy Officer advised that, as an organisation, DNPA does not own much of the National Park. Our land holdings include some existing woodland and areas of open moorland/common land. It is possible that where the Authority is sequestering carbon due to the nature of the management of the land, that sequestration could be run as a negative on the balance sheet. Due to the complexity of understanding carbon below and above ground the Authority is in the process of issuing an invitation to quote for a contractor to assist with calculations and understanding.

Mrs Oakley proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Ball.

RESOLVED: Members NOTED progress made on the Action Plan and ENDORSED projects identified for implementation in 2021/22.

3313 Tree Preservation Orders and Section 211 Notification s (Works to Trees in Conservation Areas) Determined Under Delegated Powers

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/21/015)

RESOLVED: Members NOTED the content of the report.

It was noted that Mr Ball and Mr Barker would be standing down at the May 2021 elections. The Chair stated that they may have one last Authority meeting to attend. In the meantime, she recorded her grateful thanks, on behalf of all Members, for their considerable contributions to the Authority over the years.