

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 29 July 2022

Present: A Cooper, W Dracup, R Glanville, P Harper, G Hill, J McInnes, S Morgan, J Nutley, N Oakley, C Pannell, M Renders, L Samuel, P Sanders, P Smerdon, D Thomas, P Vogel, P Woods

Officers: K Bishop, Chief Executive (National Park Officer)
S Hill, Head of Communications and Fundraising (via Microsoft Teams)
J Sharpe, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager

Apologies: G Gribble, D Moyse

The Chair welcomed Mrs Shewan, Independent Person to the meeting.

3436 Declarations of Interest

Mr Dracup, Mr Harper and Mr Glanville declared a personal interest in Farming in Protected Landscapes. Members can stay to listen, but these interests would preclude Members from joining in any debate etc.

3437 Minutes of the Annual Authority meeting and Authority meeting held on Friday 10 June 2022

The Minutes of both the Annual Authority meeting and the Authority meeting, held on Friday 10 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record

3438 Chair's Report

The Chair reported the following:

- Team Dartmoor Day – A very good and enjoyable Team Dartmoor Day was had by staff and Members. Thanks to the organisers and a special thanks to Abbie Arnold our HR apprentice and all who contributed and helped organise the day.
- National Park Forum – Attendance was down, but some interesting discussions were had, lots of ideas and quite thought-provoking presentations. Thanks to staff and Members who attended.
- The Partnership Board – These are all the partners and stakeholder organisational representatives who have come together as consultees on what was called the National Park Management Plan, now called the Partnership Plan. This document sets out a bold vision for the future of the National Park and actions to be achieved over a five year time horizon to help realise the long-term vision. Next steps confirmed by the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) would be setting up thematic groups, linked to key priorities. There has been a fair degree of support to run a Dartmoor debate each year possibly with a keynote speaker, to ensure the plan is 'kept alive' and relevant. The intention is that such an event would be open to all.
- A letter has been sent to the Secretary of State regarding funding – the Chair confirmed that to date she has had no response to this letter, the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that he had communicated with Defra officials and a response would be forthcoming in the near future.

3439 Items requiring urgent attention

None.

3440 Public Participation

The Chair welcomed Mr S Rowe to the meeting and invited him to make his statement to Members. Mr Rowe made his statement as follows:

'Good morning Chair and Members. I am here today to express my disappointment in the quality of a pre-app response that I received from the Dartmoor National Park Planning department, which resulted in me making a complaint. My complaint was about the quality of the pre-application response and the planning departments refusal to answer the twenty queries that it generated. The response that I received from the complaints officer, Neil White, chose only to deal with the "service" rather than the content. It is the content and the reasons for refusal to discuss further that I want to draw your attention to.

Your local plan encourages making pre-applications, the use of previously developed land, high standards of design and the use of independent design review panels. Mt pre-application has been impeded on every single one of these accounts.

My agent was told by the case officer that his manager had told him that they could no longer afford officer commitment to put any more time into the pre-app owing to staff shortages and financial constraints – this left no room for any discussion at all in the pre-app. This is hardly the proactive approach that the planning department claims to uphold.

The proposal was of a high-quality design and the applicant invited DNP to attend a Design Review Panel meeting, as encouraged in your local plan, but was flatly refused citing cost and officer time. I offered to pay for the officer's time, which is a practice accepted at local authorities throughout the Southwest, but again flatly refused – why is this?

I note that Neil White's letter to me prejudices the Design Review Panel's outcome in an effort to justify the service provided to me. The whole point of an "independent" Design Review Panel is that they are independent and cannot be prejudged. Neil White ascertains that "I note that from the outset successive officers have concluded that the prospects of gaining permission for a new building under the provisions of paragraph 80 (e) of the NPPF are unlikely to be supported".

This is highly opinionated, hubristic and subjective view and not in accordance with the spirit of the NPPF, the DNP Local Plan or Government advice. Mr White also quoted an incorrect NPPF paragraph reference; the pre-ap was made under policy 80(c) not 80(e) – another fundamental mistake.

I am aspiring to build a zero-carbon house of high-quality design meeting the aims, objectives of the DNP Local Plan and planning policies but I am met with resistance and non-proactive approach, based on pre-judgement before examining the detail or applying the appropriate procedure.

I have stated some very serious facts here and I trust that they will be looked into. I am willing to assist, but for completion I would appreciate if you could finish off my pre-application properly and answer queries raised.

The Chair thanked Mr Rowe for speaking and invited Members to ask any questions for clarification explaining that the Authority's Standing Orders precluded a debate or wider discussion.

In response to questions from a Member, Mr Rowe confirmed that he has made two pre-apps and a planning application for 'permission in principle' (PIP), his complaint related to the second pre-app, as after two and a half years this had gone nowhere and he was told to start again, which is the reason for submitting the PIP.

The Chair thanked Mr Rowe for attending the meeting and speaking. She explained that the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) would respond, in writing, to Mr Rowe, addressing the various points and allegations made.

3441 Annual Review 2021/22

Members received the report of the Head of Communications and Fundraising (NPA/22/027).

Each year the Authority produces an annual review summarising achievements in the previous financial year. It also gives the Authority the opportunity to highlight work in a less formal way, than the normal Authority reports. Once written the review is designed and published as a summary document on the Authority's website and circulated to the various stakeholders, including Defra, Local MPs, the Dartmoor Forum and Constituent Local Authorities.

The draft annual review presented to Members today provides a summary of some of the Authority's achievements from the last years business plan, but also other highlights that have been submitted from Heads of Service.

In response to questions and comments expressed by Members the Head of Communications and Fundraising responded as follows:

- The five town hubs within the A38 corridor, on page 22 will be mentioned by name in the final document.
- This is an annual review of the Authorities previous years' work which the Heads of Service and Managers have highlighted, so unable to answer the specific question in relation to the walking and cycle route the Primrose Hill Organisation have been looking into but will ensure this is checked and confirmed with the Officer.
- The the role of the Authority in the wider Devon Climate Emergency Action Plan will be mentioned in the final document.

In response to a Member question The Chief Executive (National Park Officer) advised that the Authority's Head of Organisational Development is involved in a working group set-up by Sir Gary Streeter, looking at Green Social Prescribing. This is something that, subject to staff constraints, the Authority would like to take forward, as it has been highly successful in the past.

A Member commented on how good and how appreciated it was to see a representative of the National Park at a recent local Fair run by the Sustainable Group in South Brent. If this was something the Authority could continue to do, it would mean a great deal to the local communities and would also continue to help spread the good word of the National Park.

RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report.

3442 Farming in Protected Landscapes

Members received the report of the Strategic Planning and Projects Manager (NPA/22/028).

The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) is a Grant programme with funding provided by Defra. It is administered on a local scale by protected landscapes. This enables the Authority to provide grants for projects under four broad headings: Nature, Climate, People and Place. As well as achieving the outcomes under these headings, projects have to demonstrate how they would deliver the vision and actions in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan.

Over the last 12 months, 53 applications have been approved for funding, 42 of which are currently live. Due to the scheme's launch in July to the end of the financial year, this did mean a shorter first year with a reprofiled budget of £250,000. The scheme was successful in awarding all of the projects that were completed in the timescales and the scheme currently runs until the end of March 2024. This is a time limited one-off scheme as part of the Government's agricultural transition. In the current financial year (2022/23) the project funding amount is £566,000 and of this amount £306,000 has been allocated to projects. There has been a high level of interest and one of the aims has been to engage with harder to reach farmers and land managers, there is more work to do on this front and plenty more to do generally. This is a very valuable scheme, and the team is looking forward to giving more support in the future. Within the report is a link to the National Park's website to a page showing the published details of projects that have been awarded so far. This will be added to, as further projects are awarded funding.

The Strategic Planning and Projects Manager delivered a brief presentation detailing and highlighting some of the projects that have been awarded funding under the FiPL scheme.

In response to a Member question the Strategic Planning and Projects Manager advised we have to be clear this funding is public money for public good, provided by Defra. 'People' is one of the four outcomes and Defra has been very positive and want to support access projects. The majority of the projects that have and are coming forward focus on farming and nature and less so on people and access. Defra has been very positive in supporting projects like these, encouraging more farmers to get involved and engage with members of the public.

A Member commented on how innovative and interesting the FiPL programme is; it is good to see farmers and land managers having access to this sort of funding. It is a very useful scheme with the potential to last long term.

RESOLVED: Members asked for the recommendation to be amended to say that Members noted the contents of the report and commend and thank all officers involved for their work on this project so far.

It was duly proposed by Mr Cooper, Seconded by Mr McInnes and agreed that, in accordance with s.100A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, the following Agenda items are taken in the absence of the Press and Public, on the ground that exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 Paragraph 3 to Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act (as amended) will be discussed, namely:-

Information in respect of commercial sensitivity.

RESOLVED: Members resolved to move to Part II private session.

3443 National Parks Partnerships Limited Liability Partnership and UK Communications Team – One Year Funding Proposal

Members received the report of the Head of Communications and Fundraising (NPA/22/029)

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, the decision as to whether to provide a further £10,000 investment to National Parks Partnership for 2022/23
- (ii) delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, the decision as to whether to provide £4,900 to help fund the work of the UK Communications Unit during 2022/23.

3444 Commercial Income and Fundraising

Members received the report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) (NPA/22/030)

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) agreed in principle to establish a 'Dartmoor Foundation' (working title) – a charitable and trading entity – as a vehicle for income generation to support National Park purposes and duty;
- (ii) appointed the following Members to a Working Group to oversee the development of a detailed business case and business plan for the proposed – Mr Renders, Mr Harper, Mrs Oakley and Mr Cooper. The working Group will be chaired by the Chair of the Authority.
- (iii) noted the need to support the Foundation from the Authority's reserves during its set-up period.