



NPA/23/014

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 September 2023

Statement of Accounts 2022/23

Report of the Head of Business Support

Recommendation: **That Members:**
 (i) Note the reasons for delays with the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts; and
 (ii) Note the slides provided by our external Auditors Grant Thornton.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Statement of Accounts (the Accounts) is a statutory document which all local authorities must produce and make available for public inspection. In addition, the accounts are subject to external examination by the Authority's external auditors.
- 1.2 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) publishes The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (The Code) which specifies the principles and practices of accounting that must be followed in preparing the Statement of Accounts. The Statement of Accounts was authorised for issue and made available for public inspection on 16 June 2023.
- 1.3 A copy of the unaudited accounts was published on our website on 16 June 2023 at <https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/funding-and-accounts>. This was after the statutory deadline of 31 May 2023. Members were informed via email of the reason why there was a delay at the time.
- 1.4 Under normal circumstances, Members of the Authority would be approving an audited set of accounts at the September Authority meeting, which ensures we meet the deadline to publish by the end of September.
- 1.5 At the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on the 26 May 2023, Members were informed by Grant Thornton that they had significant capacity issues and they were unlikely to be able to complete the audit in time for the Authority to publish the audited set of accounts by the end of September. Furthermore, they were unable to inform when they would start the auditing process.
- 1.6 Grant Thornton have since given us an update and provided slides, see Appendix 1, with more details as to the reasons why there is a delay and the likely time that the

audit will start. The Authority's newly appointed external auditors, Bishop Fleming, have been made aware of the situation. Defra has also been notified.

2 Conclusion

- 2.1 Members should note these delays are beyond the Authority's control. As indicated in Grant Thornton's slides, the issues regarding delays in Audit have been widely reported, with central and local government, National Audit Office, audit firms and CIPFA working together to find solutions to move the audits forward.
- 2.2 The delay in auditing the Authority's accounts will have significant implications for Authority staff. It means that the audit process will now be taking place at the same time as budget setting for 2024/25 and for the medium term and will also impact on the work (joint with Devon County Council) on a new financial system. In summary, Grant Thornton's capacity issues will mean increased work pressure for Authority staff in early 2024.

ANGELA STIRLAND

Attachments: Appendix 1 - Update from Grant Thornton

2023 09 01 AS Statement of Accounts 2022/23

Progress as at September 2023

Financial Statements Audit

We notified the May 2023 Audit and Governance Committee that the 2022/23 financial statement audit for the Authority would be delayed due to a shortage of Grant Thornton audit staff, meaning that the audit opinion would not be available by the 30 September 2023 publication date for audited accounts.

Local Authority accounts and audit delays have been discussed at previous meetings and have also been subject to significant national consideration and reporting. In 2020 Sir Tony Redmond published his report into the effectiveness of external audit and transparency of financial reporting in local authorities which highlighted some of the structural and sector-wide issues within the Local Audit market – [Local authority financial reporting and external audit: independent review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Earlier this year the National Audit Office also published a report on the timeliness of local auditor reporting on local government in England - [Progress update: Timeliness of local auditor reporting on local government in England - National Audit Office \(NAO\) report](#)

Grant Thornton's report on audit delays is summarised on pages 6 and 7 of this report, which also set out the national performance and that of Grant Thornton over the last six financial years.

The reasons for the national delays are numerous, and there are no simple solutions. Increasing complexity of accounting standards and arrangements at Local Authorities (including National Parks), increased audit expectations and workloads in response to regulatory challenge, reducing quality of draft accounts and knowledge and staff shortages are some of the reasons for the delays. Public Sector Audit Appointments reported in December 2022 that over 630 audit opinions were outstanding and hence late. It is recognised that a sector-wide solution is required to reduce delays and backlogs, and this will be a key role for the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority when this is created. We have not noted a reduction in the quality of the draft accounts at Dartmoor National Park Authority, or staff shortages but our capacity regionally and nationally has become more stretched resulting in the need to delay the start of many audits.

The draft Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 were published on 16 June 2023. A publication date of 16 June 2023 is two weeks after the Government's statutory deadline of publishing draft accounts by 31 May 2023. This follows sector reporting that just 37% of Local Authorities had published their draft 2022/23 accounts by the statutory deadline of 31 May 2023. The Authority published a notice on its website in relation to the delay, setting out the reasons for this and stating its intention to publish the draft on 16 June, as was subsequently the case. The Authority will also be required to publish an audit delay notice prior to 30 September 2023.

We continue to work with officers with respect to timing of the 2022/23 audit. We do not expect the detailed audit work to begin until the beginning of 2024 at the earliest. Our Audit Plan will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee's meeting planned for 3 November 2023, with the Audit Findings Report expected to be presented to the Authority meeting on 1 March 2024.

Delayed publication of audited local authority accounts

In December 2022 there were over 600 local audit opinions outstanding. This means that many stakeholders can't rely on audited accounts to inform decision making – a significant risk for governance and control.

Local authority accounts are becoming increasingly complex as accounting standards evolve and local authorities enter more and more innovative financing arrangements and income generation projects. A significant challenge in managing local audits is the differing needs of various stakeholders. The local government sector, central government and regulators need to agree on the purpose of local audit and find a consensus on improving efficiency in publishing accounts. Grant Thornton has produced a report that explore the reasons for delayed publication of audited local authority accounts.

Table 1 below illustrates the declining performance against the target date for publication of audited accounts in recent years.

Dartmoor National Park Authority's audited accounts were published on or before the target date below in all years.

Table 1 Audited accounts published by target date over the last six years

Financial year	Deadline for publication of unaudited accounts	Target date for publication of audited accounts	% audited accounts published by target date (all firms average)	% audited accounts published by target date (Grant Thornton audits)
2016/17	30 June 2017	30 September 2017	95	97
2017/18	31 May 2018	31 July 2018	87	91
2018/19	31 May 2019	31 July 2019	58	65
2019/20	1 September 2020	30 November 2020	45	54
2020/21	1 August 2021	30 September 2021	9	12
2021/22	1 August 2022	30 November 2022	12	20

About time?

Exploring the reasons for delayed publication of audited local authority accounts

March 2023



Delayed publication of audited local authority accounts

What more can be done?

All key stakeholders in the local audit system will need to continue their efforts to secure improvement and a return to high levels of compliance with timely publication of audited accounts. The report explores several of the causes of delay and steps which might be taken to reduce the incidence of delays.

These steps relate to systems leadership, holding both authorities and auditors to account for their performance, a continued focus on the quality of accounts preparation and audit, and the effective engagement between auditors and audited bodies.

The report makes 20 recommendations for improving timeliness in publishing audited accounts.

The report also sets out a checklist which management and the audit committee should consider. The report recommends DLUHC, CIPFA or the FRC set out expectations for the system as a whole.

[Click here for full report](#)

About time?

Exploring the reasons for delayed publication of audited local authority accounts

March 2023





NPA/23/015

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 September 2023

Government consultation on additional flexibilities to support housing delivery, the agricultural sector, businesses, high streets and open prisons; and a call for evidence on nature-based solutions, farm efficiency projects and diversification

Report of the Acting Head of Forward Planning and Economy

Recommendations: That Members:

- (i) Note and accept the contents of this report; and**
- (ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive (National Park Officer), in consultation with the Chair, to agree the final consultation response.**

1 Summary

- 1.1 On 24 July 2023 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) [consulted on proposed changes to permitted development rights](#) (PDRs) to allow additional flexibilities to support housing delivery.
- 1.2 The proposals include new and extended PDRs to allow for the conversion of a variety of non-residential uses to housing and asks whether these PDRs should be extended to National Parks in England. The consultation on the proposed changes is clearly important to the Dartmoor National Park and the work of the Authority. We are also liaising with the other English National Park Authorities on a joint response to the consultation.
- 1.3 These proposed changes, if implemented, could have a significant detrimental impact on the landscape and character of the National Park and do little to alleviate the need for affordable housing. The proposed changes could also significantly limit the effectiveness of the Local Plan and its ability to positively manage development for the benefit of the protected landscape and its communities.

2 Summary of Consultation

2.1 In summary the consultation proposes the following changes:

Commercial, business and service use (Class E) to dwellinghouses: came into effect in August 2021 and affects a range of high street uses such as shops, restaurants, offices, gyms and light industrial uses. It does not extend to National Parks, and is permitted subject to local assessment of noise impact, floor space limits, flood risk, and a 3 month vacancy period. Proposed changes include:

- Broadening to apply to article 2(3) land, including National Parks
- Currently up to 1,500m² can change use to up to 20 2-bed homes. The consultation proposes to increase this to 3,000m² or for there to be no limit
- Removing the existing requirement for a 3 month vacancy period

Hotels, boarding houses and guest houses (Class C1) to dwellinghouses: a new PDR, it is proposed the prior approval regime will allow for local consideration of the impact proposals would have on the local tourism economy and views on a floorspace limit are requested.

Commercial, business and service (Class E), betting office or pay day loan shop (Class M) to mixed use residential: an existing right which allows for change of use to mixed use with up to two flats. Proposed changes include:

- Broadening to apply to article 2(3) land, including National Parks
- Broadening to include other use classes, while retaining the ground floor business use
- Allowing for up to four dwellings and requiring they meet space standards

Agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses: an existing right, with limitations and conditions including the type of agricultural buildings that can benefit, the size and maximum number of dwellings delivered, and the extent of works. The right allows a maximum of 865m² to change use, delivering four small homes of 100m² and one larger home of up to 465m². The right does not currently apply to National Parks. The consultation proposes:

- Broadening the PDR to apply to other article 2(3) land, including National Parks
- Increasing the total amount of floorspace that can change use to 1,000m²
- Introducing a maximum floorspace limit of either 100m² or 150m², compliant with nationally described space standards
- Increasing the number of homes that can be delivered on an agricultural unit from 5 to 10
- Allowing the PDR to apply to buildings not on an agricultural unit
- Requiring eligible buildings to have suitable public highway access

Other rural buildings to dwellinghouses: the consultation asks what other rural buildings may be suitable for residential conversion, including equestrian and forestry buildings.

Agricultural Buildings to flexible commercial uses: an existing right, allows change of use of agricultural buildings to flexible commercial uses, including storage

and distribution (Class B8), hotels (Class C1), commercial and business services (Class E). The consultation proposes:

- Allowing other rural buildings to benefit from the right, including equestrian and forestry buildings
- Increasing the permissible flexible uses by including outdoor sports and recreation or fitness uses and general industrial (Class B2)
- Allowing for mixed uses
- Increasing the amount of floorspace that can change use from 500m² to 1,000m²

Agricultural development: an existing PDR which allows agricultural units of 5Ha or more to erect or extend agricultural buildings, and excavation and engineering works. Separately another right applies to units of less than 5Ha for the extension, but not erection, of buildings amongst other works. The consultation proposes:

- On units of 5Ha or more, increasing the amount of ground area covered by any buildings on units of 5Ha or larger from 1,000m² to 1,500m², it was previously uplifted from 465m² in 2018.
- On units of 5Ha or less, increasing the amount of ground area covered by any extension from 1,000m² to 1,250m²

Other proposals relevant to Dartmoor National Park: include increasing the time temporary markets can operate without the need for planning permissions and a call for evidence from Defra possible changes to permitted development rights to greater flexibility in making existing agricultural buildings more productive, supporting diversification and nature-based solutions.

3 Dartmoor's need for new homes and the Dartmoor Local Plan

- 3.1 The consultation proposes a raft of new routes for unrestricted open market homes to be delivered speculatively in the National Park, without the need for planning consent or ability for Local Plan policy to be applied. These proposals pose significant and material threats to the success of the Dartmoor Local Plan housing strategy and the achievement of National Park purposes in the long term. It is difficult to see how these proposed changes can be equated to the legal duty on the Government to have regard to National Park purposes. The proposals are also contrary to the recommendations of the Government commissioned independent review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which concluded: *'We think [National Park Authority] planning powers are important, the protections they give are essential and we don't think they hold progress back'*.
- 3.2 With regard to national permitted development rights, the National Landscapes Review concluded, 'The current Permitted Development Rights (PDR) system should also be reviewed and, if necessary, further PDRs should be added to the list of those currently withdrawn within national landscapes to ensure that the full application process applies before determining planning approval.' These proposals run completely contrary to this conclusion of the Government-commissioned review.
- 3.3 The [Government's response to the National Landscape Review was published in January 2022. In this, the Government](#) confirmed that a strong and effective

planning system must sustainably balance protections with supporting local communities and economies. 'This balancing exercise must be carried out differently in protected landscapes, to ensure their statutory purposes and special qualities are meaningfully protected. This involves giving greater weight to their special qualities in planning policies, procedures, and decisions...we recognise the special role that protected landscapes hold within the planning system.' This is correct, but the proposed PDRs that would allow hotels, guest houses, agricultural buildings and shops to be converted to unrestricted housing in National Parks are diametrically opposed to this position.

- 3.4 The Dartmoor Local Plan provides a development framework that avoids speculative open market housing development in Dartmoor National Park on the basis this risks impact on special qualities and will not assist the National Park's communities address strategic socio-economic issues. The Local Plan therefore generally only permits housing development where it is supporting delivery of affordable and other identified local housing needs.
- 3.5 The two statutory purposes for National Parks, laid out in the Environment Act 1995, together with the duty of the National Park Authority to support communities' socio-economic well-being frame how the growth of housing within our National Parks should be prioritised.
- 3.6 The 2010 National Parks Circular provides additional government guidance and policy with regards housing growth and development in our National Parks. It states that:

"78. The Government recognises that the Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing and does not therefore provide general housing targets for them. The expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services.

79. The Government expects the Authorities to maintain a focus on affordable housing and to work with local authorities and other agencies to ensure that the needs of local communities in the Parks are met and that affordable housing remains so in the longer term."

- 3.7 Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) gives the highest status of protection in relation to the conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks.
- 3.8 The Dartmoor Local Plan 2018 - 2036 used this policy framework to shape a sustainable strategy for the growth of housing over the plan period. Evidence supporting the Local Plan identified the following principal issues:
 - Limited land availability due to high environmental constraints
 - High housing unaffordability making it difficult for local people and workers to live locally
 - A reduction in the working age population, making it increasingly difficult for local businesses to recruit and retain staff, and reducing the sustainability of communities and local services

- Continued or increasing under-occupancy of homes by older people or individuals, which runs at odds with the aim of making the best use of the housing stock
- A greater demand for services and facilities to meet the needs of older people, some of which may be difficult to deliver in deeply rural areas (for example home care)
- A decreasing demand for services and facilities for younger people, including schools, making them increasingly difficult to sustain in smaller communities

The Local Plan responded to these issues with a holistic housing strategy and policies which:

- set a housing growth level of 65 homes each year based on what evidence suggests is necessary to reduce demographic trends, provide sufficient housing to meet local housing needs, and for which there is land available. This indicative supply figure has and continues to be met;
- provide appropriate and flexible opportunities for housing development which meet communities' housing needs in a range of sustainable settlements;
- avoid development in unsustainable locations or where it may have an unacceptable impact on National Park Special Qualities;
- ensure a mix of house sizes and types are available to meet communities' housing needs, including those in affordable housing need, needs of first-time buyers, self-builders, elderly downsizers, growing families and small households;
- provide suitable homes for older people and downsizers, by requiring they all meet adaptable homes standard M4(2);
- enable local families and those working locally to live on Dartmoor; and
- support provision of accommodation for farming, forestry and other rural land-based enterprises.

4 Meeting local housing needs

4.1 Evidence suggests that new open market homes delivered via the routes proposed within this consultation, particularly conversion of agricultural and other rural buildings, will not support Dartmoor communities or address the strategic housing issues identified and addressed by the Local Plan. In particular such homes:

- are likely to attract a significant premium and be unaffordable to local persons because:
 - their large allowable size
 - their location in desirable isolated locations in a protected landscape
 - their unrestricted open market nature and suitability for the short-term let and second home market
 - our experience is that open countryside conversions of 93m² discounted by 30% from open market value are often unaffordable to local persons in need, particularly those working in tourism and agriculture who have greater need to be rurally-based and whose jobs are often directly related to the maintenance of the National Park
- are less likely to contribute to the sustainability of Dartmoor's communities and viability of local services and facilities because of their isolated location

- cannot guarantee they will meet the needs of older persons and downsizers. In particular they are unlikely to be located close to services and facilities, or meet adaptability standard M4(2)
- will not contribute to sustainable development and will unnecessarily increase residents' travel needs, simultaneously increasing the climate impacts of new homes

5 Conversion of historic agricultural buildings

- 5.1 DNPA take a positive approach to supporting the sustainable reuse of historic rural buildings via the planning system. This approach will be mostly undermined by the proposed permitted development rights and will severely limit the effectiveness of Local Plan policy to conserve and enhance features of the National Park that are material to its designated National Park status.
- 5.2 The National Park has a substantial number of historic farm buildings many of which are of historic value and contribute to Dartmoor's aesthetic quality and cultural value. Our Historic Farmsteads Survey identified 1100 surviving pre-1919 historic farmstead and over 200 lost farmsteads, many of which are not listed. Our [Historic Farmstead Character Statement](#) details the range and type of farm buildings on Dartmoor.
- 5.3 Traditional farm buildings tell a story of Dartmoor's long farming history and the settlement of Dartmoor's landscape. Their construction often reflects underlying geology and traditional building practices and they therefore contribute to a sense of place, local distinctiveness and landscape character. Traditional agricultural buildings are inherently valuable and worthy of conservation in their own right.
- 5.4 The location of these buildings in isolated rural settings can make them particularly desirable for residential conversion. The significant costs associated with the restoration and preservation of these buildings also means that residential use is often the most economically viable alternative use, but rarely the most sustainable or suitable in socio-economic or conservation terms.
- 5.5 Agricultural buildings generally have a modest setting with few features or embellishments and residential conversions can put a significant amount of pressure on the building's setting to accept domestic gardens, patios, furniture and other paraphernalia which all serve to divorce the building from its modest beginnings. The result is the conversion disturbs the relationship the building has with the surrounding landscape and its value to the National Park is lost irreparably.
- 5.6 Local Plan Strategic Policy 2.7 plans for the sustainable reuse of these buildings whilst ensuring that broader housing objectives are also met. The policy:
- Focusses on finding the optimum viable use, starting with low and medium impact uses. Recognising redundant agricultural buildings provide an important supply of affordable employment space to support Dartmoor's economy
 - Where not feasible, higher impact uses such as holiday let or residential can be considered in appropriate locations providing:
 - new residential uses are considered for affordable discount market sale
 - if not appropriate a financial contribution in lieu is sought and occupancy restricted to local persons

- This approach ensures new housing contribute to meeting local needs, or raises s106 funds to support affordable housing delivery elsewhere

6 Conversion of modern agricultural and other rural buildings

6.1 Beyond PDRs which allow commercial change of use, Local Plan policy does not support the conversion of modern redundant agricultural buildings or those of no historic or architectural significance because:

- these buildings are likely to be suitable for continued agricultural use, on an alternative holding if not the current
- the preservation and conservation of these buildings is not a priority as they are of no intrinsic historic or architectural importance, they do not positively contribute to the architectural legacy of the National Park
- on this basis most modern agricultural buildings were permitted with redundancy conditions requiring them to be dismantled upon them becoming redundant for agricultural purposes
- many of these buildings are isolated and their conversion would have a significant cumulative adverse impact on landscape character, tranquillity and transport infrastructure

6.2 This approach extends to other types of rural buildings which this consultation scopes for residential conversion, including forestry and equestrian buildings. These buildings are permitted because they are needed to support industries that play a part in conserving and enhancing Dartmoor consistent with National Park purposes. Outside of this purpose the location and design of these buildings does not achieve conservation and enhancement and are not appropriate for change of use or to accept more intensive residential uses which would further their adverse impact.

7 Protection of main town centre uses

7.1 The proposed PDR allow for residential conversion of Class E (shops, offices, cafes, restaurants, GPs, light industrial, creches, gyms and more) uses. The consultation also proposes to remove the need for any vacancy period before change of use.

7.2 These changes will likely result in the loss of the above employment floorspace in an uncontrolled manner, and will undermine the Local Plan strategy for providing flexibility and support to these employment uses and town centres throughout the National Park. In particular we would highlight:

- Dartmoor's successful town centres comprise numerous independent retailers reflecting their traditional retailing role. They are inherently more resilient to the broader trends of failing high streets these proposals seek to address
- The potential for town centre development is generally constrained, with all centres containing significant listed buildings and a tightly packed street-scene. Therefore, loss of employment space at the scale proposed will likely not be recoverable through alternative development opportunities.
- There is a risk that loss of employment space will act as a driver of economic decline, reducing accommodation options for businesses and increasing the

likelihood of businesses moving out of the National Park. In turn reinforcing out-commuting as a significant feature of the Dartmoor economy

- Widespread residential conversion in Dartmoor's quaint and characterful centres will likely also undermine the attraction of these centres from a tourism perspective. Instead of supporting the features which make them resilient, it will likely actively support their decline
- The effects of these proposals are likely to be particularly acutely felt in Dartmoor's most successful town centres where residential values outcompete commercial values, such as Chagford, Ashburton and Moretonhampstead

7.3 The Dartmoor Local Plan has a vital role to play in ensuring Dartmoor's Town Centres remain vibrant and active town centre uses are not lost in favour of higher value residential uses.

7.4 Local Plan Strategic Policy 5.3 protects main town centre uses in Dartmoor's Town Centres, understanding that these uses' futures are important to the success of Dartmoor's economy. They should not be decided simply on the short term needs of an owner or tenant, or their current business model. The case must demonstrate a main town centre use is not workable in the long term by exploring the full range of potential uses or ways to operate it.

7.5 This policy also seeks to protect the last shop, general store or pub in any of Dartmoor's classified settlements. Helping ensure these important public services remain available for communities.

7.6 The current consultation proposals would undermine these approaches irreparably.

8 Conclusion

8.1 For the reasons outlined above Officers would like Members support in responding to the consultation proposals discussed.

8.2 Delegated authority is sought for the Chief Executive (NPO) in consultation with the Chair to agree the final consultation response.

ALEX GANDY



NPA/23/016

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 September 2023

Conservation Area Review

Report of the Building Conservation Officer

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) note the result of the technical review; and**
- (ii) agree that the 25 conservation area appraisals are up to date as of 1 September 2023.**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 There are 25 conservation areas within Dartmoor National Park. Each is designated for its architectural and/or historic interest. A conservation area designation brings additional controls over planning development (controlling demolition and removing some permitted development rights) and also over trees within their boundaries.
- 1.2 Each conservation area has a conservation area character appraisal (appraisal) which describes what is important or significant about that place. These documents can be used to inform people who live, work and visit the area why it is important, and they help inform development applications and the making of new planning policy.
- 1.3 The currency of these appraisals is important, ideally the documents should be reviewed every five years. All appraisals are now more than 5 years old.
- 1.4 This report sets out the current position. A technical update following careful consideration of the existing appraisals in line with guidance has been undertaken.

2 Background

- 2.1 The first conservation areas were established under the 1967 Civil Amenities Act. The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, as amended (The Act), supersedes this, and is the current law. Conservation Areas are designated under Section 69. Planning authorities have the duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation Areas under

Section 71 and a duty to pay “special attention” to the preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

- 2.2 The Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 191 requires that when considering designation of conservation areas, that their status is justified on the basis of their architectural or historic interest. This refers to new conservation areas or additions to existing areas. It is prudent every time a conservation area is reviewed, to consider whether the status is justified.
- 2.3 Historic England have produced guidance over the years on the best practice for designating and managing a conservation area. The document entitled Historic England 2019 “*Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second Edition, Historic England Advice Note 1*” Swindon, Historic England (HE Guidance) is the latest of these. It is not a substantial review of the 2015 guidance. It provides best practice but is advisory only.
- 2.4 The Authority’s existing appraisals expand upon the designation of a conservation area, explaining what is important or significant about an area in relation to its architectural, historic, and in some cases archaeological interest. These were subject to the necessary public consultation through a number of public meetings. These documents have been adopted and form Supplementary Planning Documents as part of the Authority’s suite of planning policy documents.
- 2.5 It is best practice to review conservation area appraisals for currency every 5 years. The date of adoption of the Authority’s appraisals ranges from 2011 to 2017.
- 2.6 Historic England Guidance on page 39 states:

“The PPG stresses that ‘local planning authorities must review their conservation areas from time to time’ (section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Resources permitting, every five years is ideal, but review frequency will vary according to the development pressures in the local area.

Further to the reasons given in the PPG as to their usefulness, regular reviews may also highlight areas where designation may no longer be justified through degradation of all or part of the conservation area...With appropriate management procedures in place, the character and appearance of a conservation area should not change rapidly for the worse and a review might typically result in an addendum to an existing appraisal, recording:

- *what has changed;*
- *confirming or redefining the special interest that warrants designation, highlighting additional aspects that contribute to the area’s significance or features newly identified as desirable to preserve or enhance;*
- *setting out any new recommendations; and,*
- *revising the management strategy.*

The updated appraisal and related management proposals can then be re-adopted by the local authority.

The special interest of areas designated many years ago may now be so eroded by piecemeal change or by single examples of poorly designed development that parts of the area may no longer have special interest. In such cases, boundary revisions will be needed to exclude them or, in exceptional circumstances, reconsideration of the overall conservation area designation. Conversely, the existing boundary may have been drawn too tightly, omitting areas now considered of special interest such as historic rear plots with archaeological interest, later phases of development (such as twentieth century housing), or parks, cemeteries and historic green spaces. In such cases the existing boundary may need to be extended.”

2.7 Over the last 12 or so months all the conservation areas and appraisals have been subject to a technical level review, assessing any development harm caused already or proposed under the new local plan, and whether the conservation area boundaries are relevant and necessary together with a review of the content of the appraisals themselves in light of Historic England Guidance.

2.8 The details of this technical review are set out below.

3 The Technical Review Process

3.1 In terms of the HE Guidance the following areas are relevant to consider:

- what has changed
- confirming or redefining the special interest that warrants designation, highlighting additional aspects that contribute to the area’s significance or features newly identified as desirable to preserve or enhance
- any new recommendations

3.2 There are no existing management plans, although in some instances the historic setting is managed via a planning policy.

3.3 The conservation areas are set out below together with the date of their latest appraisal.

Conservation Area	Appraisal Date
Ashburton	September 2012
Buckfastleigh	December 2012
Chagford	June 2017
Crockernwell	January 2011
Drewsteignton	June 2017
Dunsford	September 2011
Horrabridge	September 2011
Ilington	June 2017
Lustleigh	January 2011
Lydford	January 2011
Manaton	January 2011

Conservation Area (cont'd)	Appraisal Date
Mary Tavy	January 2011
Meavy	January 2011
Moretonhampstead	June 2017
Murchington	January 2011
North Bovey	January 2012
North Brentor	January 2011
Princetown	September 2011
South Brent	January 2011
South Tawton	January 2011
South Zeal	September 2011
Sticklepath	June 2017
Throwleigh	January 2011
Walkhampton	June 2017
Widcombe-in-the-Moor	January 2011

3.4 The technical review of current conservation area appraisals investigated the following:

- Whether the existing areas still merit inclusion within a conservation area.
- Whether any significant development within or adjacent to their boundary, which has occurred since their appraisal date has had a negative or harmful impact sufficient to warrant amendment of the conservation area boundary.
- Whether any proposed development sites within the Local Plan would have a significant impact which could not be managed by the planning application process.
- Whether there are any significant inaccuracies in the existing appraisals.

3.5 **The technical issues relating to review and amendment** - On the designation, cancellation or amendment of a conservation area boundary or of amendment, addition or cancellation of an appraisal, public meetings, public consultation and/or advertisement in the local paper and the (London) Gazette, together with the notification of various bodies is required. The exact processes are controlled by law, regulation and guidance.

4 The Results

4.1 The technical review of the 25 conservation areas and appraisals has revealed that there are no changes necessary to the appraisals and the existing conservation area boundaries in the five years to July 2023.

4.2 It will be necessary to publicise that the appraisals are to be considered up to date. It would be sufficient to place a statement on the website which explains that these documents have been reviewed in line with guidance, and are considered up to date, together with the date of review. This statement is shown in Appendix 1.

4.3 Notification of the review date will be sent to Historic England, national amenity bodies, parish councils, chief planning officer and land charges of the relevant district councils, local agents, the Duchy of Cornwall, and social media together with the web pages update.

5 Management Plans and Directions

- 5.1 Management plans are a useful tool to manage expectations within a conservation area for those who live and work there. They can in the first instance direct readers to law, policy and guidance including which matters are controlled differently in a conservation area to a non-conservation area such as demolition, permitted development, trees and local policy.
- 5.2 In the second instance they can provide useful in-depth guidance in specific areas, and help inform the development management process including planning appeals, and also encourage preservation and enhancement of the area by influencing matters which are normally permitted development for utility companies and county highways teams. Perhaps minimising the use of rooflights or requiring all streetlamp posts to be a specific colour. All management plans are subject to consultation and specific rules and regulations as to how they are adopted. They would also be subject to cyclical review.
- 5.3 Typically, management plans will date more quickly than conservation area character appraisals, and ideally are separate from appraisals to enable updating without challenge to the appraisal or the conservation area boundary. No management plans are proposed at this time.
- 5.4 Article 4 Directions can be made by a planning authority to remove permitted development rights in a specifically designated area. These were first used on listed buildings and in conservation areas before being widened to other areas of permitted development as the flexibility of the planning system grew. No Article 4 Directions are proposed for the conservation areas at this time.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Work to-date has been conducted within the existing budget and the key requirement has been staff time. There is no significant financial implication associated with the production of documentation, notification and amendment of the website..

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed update recognises the Authority's duty to review and update as necessary its conservation areas and its conservation area appraisals. The technical review of the 25 conservation areas and appraisals has resulted in a no change position to the existing boundaries and appraisals.
- 7.2 The date of review will be notified to stakeholders and added to the web site.

CLARE VINT

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Appraisal Update Information

2023 09 01 CV Conservation Area Review

Appraisal Update Information

The following page shows the update information on the conservation area character appraisals.

Dartmoor National Park Authority Sections 69 and 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, as amended.

The conservation area character appraisals (appraisals) of the Authority's 25 conservation areas have been reviewed for currency. The review was agreed by Authority on 1 September 2023. No amendment to either the conservation area boundary or the content of the appraisal is amended to any conservation area as part of this review. The review date of the following conservation area character appraisals is September 2023.

Conservation Area	Adopted Date	Review Date
Ashburton	September 2012	February 2023
Buckfastleigh	December 2012	February 2023
Chagford	June 2017	February 2023
Crockernwell	January 2011	February 2023
Drewsteignton	June 2017	February 2023
Dunsford	September 2011	February 2023
Horrabridge	September 2011	February 2023
Ilsington	June 2017	February 2023
Lustleigh	January 2011	February 2023
Lydford	January 2011	February 2023
Manaton	January 2011	February 2023
Mary Tavy	January 2011	February 2023
Meavy	January 2011	February 2023
Moretonhampstead	June 2017	February 2023
Murchington	January 2011	February 2023
North Bovey	January 2012	February 2023
North Brentor	January 2011	February 2023
Princetown	September 2011	February 2023
South Brent	January 2011	February 2023
South Tawton	January 2011	February 2023
South Zeal	September 2011	February 2023
Sticklepath	June 2017	February 2023
Throwleigh	January 2011	February 2023
Walkhampton	June 2017	February 2023
Widcombe-in-the-Moor	January 2011	February 2023



NPA/23/017

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 September 2023

Sister Park Agreement between Cuyahoga Valley National Park (United States of America) and Dartmoor National Park

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- i. **endorse the principle of a Sister Park agreement between Cuyahoga Valley National Park (United States of America) and Dartmoor National Park and comment on the draft agreement attached at appendix 1;**
- ii. **delegate authority to agree the final Sister Park agreement to the Chair of the Authority in consultation with the Deputy Chair of the Authority and Chief Executive (National Park Officer);**
- iii. **note a potential visit to Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Spring 2024.**

1 Introduction

1.1 The Deputy Chair of Dartmoor National Park Authority (Peter Harper) has been negotiating a 'Sister Park' agreement between Dartmoor National Park Authority and Cuyahoga Valley National Park in northeast Ohio, United States of America. This paper outlines the purpose of Sister Park agreements, the opportunities and implications for DNPA and Cuyahoga National Parks Service and next steps.

2 Sister Park agreements

2.1 The [Sister Park model](#) is an initiative of the United States National Parks Service. The key purpose is to provide a framework for collaboration based on joint learning. The partnership provides an opportunity for information sharing and direct park-to-park contacts to address common issues. The programme must be approved by the United States National Park Service Office of International Affairs. Much of the learning can take place via 'virtual meetings' and electronic communication but there is also a potential role for staff exchanges. The collaboration model is funded by the two 'Sisters' or through external funding – there is no funding programme for Sister Parks. Once the

two National Parks have agreed on areas of mutual collaboration a formal agreement is developed and signed. The agreements normally last for three to five years.

- 2.2 A draft version of the potential Sister Park agreement between Dartmoor and Cuyahoga Valley National Parks is outlined in appendix 1. The agreement will need to be approved by the United States National Park Service Office of International Affairs as well as Dartmoor National Park Authority.

3 Cuyahoga Valley National Park

- 3.1 [Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#) is a green space between two cities in northeast Ohio. The 33,000-acre park borders Cleveland to the north and Akron to the south. The park protects 20 miles of the Cuyahoga River, which flows north into Lake Erie.
- 3.2 The National Park is managed as part of the United States (US) National Parks Service (NPS) which is an agency of the US federal government within the US Department of the Interior. The NPS manages all national parks, most national monuments and other historical and recreational properties. The Service is charged with preserving the ecological and historical integrity of the places entrusted to its management while also making them available and accessible for public use and enjoyment. National Parks are designated for their natural beauty, unique geological features, diverse ecosystems and recreational opportunities. The US model of National Park governance is very different to the UK – Cuyahoga Valley is managed as part of the national service and not as an independent authority.
- 3.3 Cuyahoga Valley was originally designated as a National Recreation Area in 1974 and then re-designated as a National Park in October 2000. Designation as a National Park followed a local campaign to protect the area from urban sprawl and to clean up the heavily polluted Cuyahoga River.
- 3.4 Cuyahoga Valley attracts over 2 million visitors per annum. Unlike many US National Parks, Cuyahoga Valley is free to enter, there is no requirement for a permit system. There is a network of trails for hiking, cycling, and horse riding. There are also opportunities for canoeing and cross-country skiing. The National Park operates Boston Mill Visitor Centre and there are other visitor attractions managed by public, private and third sector organisations.

4 Potential Areas for Collaboration

- 4.1 We have discussed several areas of potential collaboration between Dartmoor and Cuyahoga Valley National Park with officials from Cuyahoga Valley, the following provides a summary of the proposed areas for collaboration:
 - Visitor management – as noted above, Cuyahoga Valley National Park is an important visitor attraction and shares some similarities with Dartmoor in terms of the majority of visitors being day visitors.

- Use of volunteers – we understand that Cuyahoga Valley National Park has an extensive programme of volunteer opportunities. It will be interesting to learn more about how the volunteers are ‘recruited’, managed and supported as well as the sort of activities they are engaged in.
- Outreach programmes – we would be interested in how Cuyahoga Valley links with their neighbouring urban areas and, in particular, initiatives to engage socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Similarly we have experience to share through our outreach programmes such as Ranger Ralph, the junior and youth rangers, the work of the Community Engagement Rangers etc.
- Agri-environment and conservation management – Cuyahoga Valley National Park is unusual in terms of American National Parks in that it contains privately owned and managed land and people live within the National Park. Discussions with Cuyahoga Valley National Park officials indicates that this is an area of particular interest for them.
- Role of Rangers – this is an area of mutual interest
- Funding for National Park purposes – Cuyahoga Valley National Park is funded via the US National Parks Service. The US National Parks Foundation (NPF) is the official charity of the National Park Service (NPS) and its national park sites. The NPF was chartered by Congress in 1967 with a charge to "further the conservation of natural, scenic, historic, scientific, educational, inspirational, or recreational resources for future generations of Americans." Learning from the NPF is of potential relevance to the Authority’s plans to establish a Dartmoor Foundation and to the existing National Parks Partnerships Limited (the limited liability partnership established by the 15 UK National Parks to generate sponsorship income).

4.2 A potential visit to Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Spring 2024 has been discussed with their Superintendent. This would provide an opportunity to formalise the collaboration, identify how best pursue joint learning and to potentially sign the Sister Park agreement.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The Sister Park agreement will not include any specific funding commitments. Any future staff exchanges would need to be funded via the Staff Development and Training Budget and this would need to be included within the Medium Term Financial Plan. We believe that there may be opportunities to apply for external funding to support staff exchanges. The proposed trip in Spring 2024 would be funded via the existing revenue budget or the budget for 2024/25 (subject to timing).

5.3 Whilst the opportunities to host and participate in staff exchange programmes is important much can be achieved through virtual meetings (i.e. Teams) and information sharing. The Sister Park agreement does not depend on, nor require, staff exchanges but we see an important added value in such visits.

6 Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 The potential to sign a Sister Park agreement with Cuyahoga Valley National Park is a significant opportunity. We understand that there are less than 30 such agreements with US National Parks and no agreement with another UK National Park. From discussions to-date there are areas of shared interest where both organisations could learn from each other (see section 4 above). The Sister Park agreement provides an opportunity for organisational learning and staff development. It is recommended that Members:

- endorse the principle of a Sister Park agreement between Cuyahoga Valley National Park (United States of America) and Dartmoor National Park and comment on the draft agreement attached at appendix 1;
- delegate authority to agree the final Sister Park agreement to the Chair of the Authority in consultation with the Deputy Chair of the Authority and Chief Executive (National Park Officer);
- note a potential visit to Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Spring 2024.

6.2 Finally, and importantly, I would like to record my thanks to the Deputy Chair of the Authority for his initiative and work in developing this opportunity for the Authority.

KEVIN BISHOP

**Draft Sister Park Agreement between Cuyahoga Valley National Park and
Dartmoor National Park Authority**



Sister Park Arrangement Between

**Cuyahoga Valley National Park National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior United States of America
&
Dartmoor National Park Authority
Bovey Tracey
Newton Abbot, Devon
England**

Cuyahoga Valley National Park, of the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior of the United States of America, hereinafter referred to as “NPS,” and Dartmoor National Park Authority, hereinafter referred to as “DNPA”

RECOGNIZING the mutual interest between NPS and DNPA in the establishment and management of national parks and protected areas for the purpose of conserving ecosystems and promoting natural and cultural tourism;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the advantages of facilitating, coordinating, and amplifying efforts in conservation, management, and development of natural and cultural resources in protected areas of mutual interest;

NOTING the mutual interest in strengthening cooperation in the exchange of information and informal education activities for the management and operation of national parks.

HEREBY seek to further cooperation in protected area management and resource conservation and education through the establishment of a Sister Park Arrangement (“Arrangement”) between Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Dartmoor National Park, hereinafter collectively referred to as the “Participants.”

SECTION 1 - PURPOSE:

The purpose of the “Sister Park” relationship is to promote international cooperation and support for the mutual benefit of both Participants and to enrich the experience and capacity of the personnel of both Participants through exchanges of staff and best practices. The relationship allows the Participants to benefit by sharing experiences and approaches to collaboration, including local efforts to work with gateway communities, regional and local economies, friends groups, and partner organizations. This may be accomplished primarily through the exchange of managerial, technical and professional knowledge, information, data, technology, training, and experience.

SECTION 2 – AREAS OF COOPERATION:

1. Examples of cooperative activities under this Arrangement include the provision and exchange of information; participation in training courses, conferences, and symposia; professional exchanges in areas of mutual interest; and other forms of cooperative activities as mutually decided.

2. The specific areas of interest for cooperative activities may include, but are not limited to:
 - Exchange of experiences regarding cultural and natural resource management methods
 - Exchange of experience and joint learning regarding visitor management (including programmes to influence visitor behaviour) and management of park facilities;
 - Electronic communication and technical information exchanges, including software programs for science and resource management applications;
 - Exchange of experiences regarding environmental education techniques, programs, and facilities, including plans and designs for engaging new audiences, youth education activities and curricula;

- Exchange of experiences regarding recreation and international ecotourism management and planning, including private and public partnerships and economic development;
- Exchange of experiences regarding development of volunteer and “Friends” organizations for park support; and
- Promotion of sister parks on park websites to include information on the parks and protected areas, with the possibility of live webcams, weather information, landform characteristics, wildlife and future activities.

Future cooperation may be guided by an action plan and theme plans. Individual theme plans may focus on specific topics and issues of common concern of the Parks and may be started at any time upon reporting for filing.

SECTION 3 - FUNDING

Any activity carried out under the terms of this Arrangement is subject to the availability of funds.

To fulfil the goals of this Arrangement, the Participants envision occasional staff exchanges. In addition, communications via email and conference calls may also facilitate information exchange. Each Participant intends to arrange its own funding for the fulfilment of the purpose and objectives of this Arrangement, which may include public or private associations or other collaborative partnerships.

Each Participant bears its own costs for travel, board and lodging. The details of each exchange are expected to be negotiated separately and are dependent on the availability of funds. Any cost-sharing arrangement, where authorized by the laws of the United States and England, is expected to be documented by a separate instrument between the Participants.

This Arrangement defines in general terms the basis on which the Participants intend to cooperate, and as such, does not constitute a fiscal or funds obligation document.

SECTION 4 – IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The offices designated to coordinate and implement this Arrangement, and points of contact are:

Pamela Woods

Chair

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Parke, Bovey Tracey

Newton Abbot

Devon, TQ13 9JQ

England

and

Kevin Bishop

Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Parke, Bovey Tracey

Newton Abbot

Devon, TQ13 9JQ

England

and

Lisa Petit

Superintendent, Cuyahoga Valley

National Park, Ohio, USA

If there is a change to any point of contact, the Participant making the change is expected to notify the other Participant in writing of such change with 30 days' notice.

SECTION 5 – OTHER PROVISIONS

The Participants may develop and share reports that describe the results of this Arrangement. Also, the experience deriving from the collaboration and cooperation, as well as the technical data exchanged, may be shared among the staff of the Participants.

This Arrangement is expected to be implemented under the laws and regulations of each country. This Arrangement is not legally binding, and it is not intended to modify or interfere with the respective international obligations of either country.

SECTION 6 - DURATION, MODIFICATIONS AND DISCONTINUATION

Activities under this Arrangement may commence upon signature and may continue for five years. This Arrangement may be extended or modified by written agreement of the Participants.

Activities under this Arrangement may be discontinued at any time by either Participant. The Participant seeking to discontinue cooperation should endeavour to provide written notification to the other Participant ninety days in advance of such discontinuation.

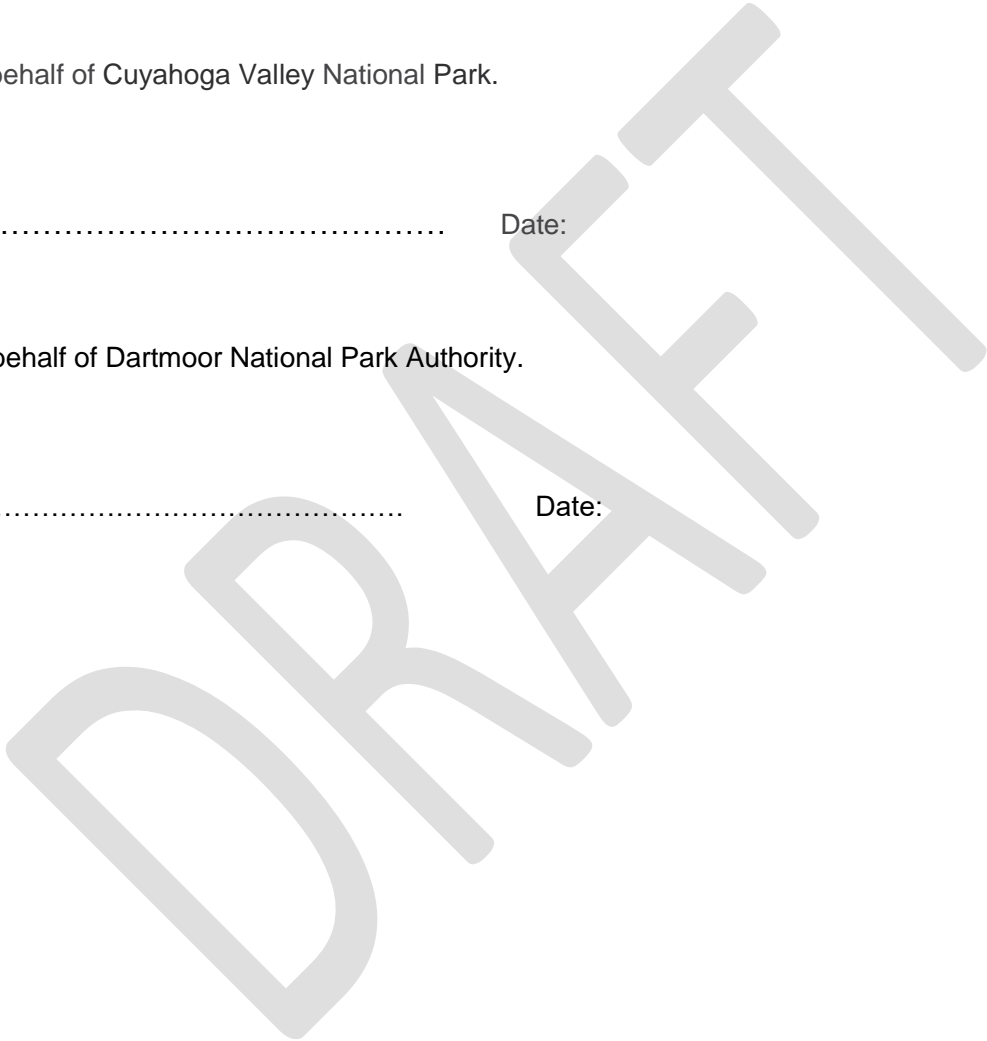
in virtue of the above, the Sister Parks Arrangement is signed in English and is valid as of the date of final signature.

On behalf of Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

..... Date:

On behalf of Dartmoor National Park Authority.

..... Date:





NPA/23/018

Dartmoor National Park Authority

1 September 2023

Annual Review 2022/23

Report of the Head of Communications and Engagement

Recommendation: That Members note the report and Dartmoor National Park Authority's Annual Review 2022/23

1 Background

- 1.1 Every year the Authority produces an Annual Review of work completed during the previous financial year. The Annual Review is submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra); it also provides us with the opportunity to highlight some of our work from the previous year in a less formal way than normally presented through more detailed Authority Reports reporting against our Business Plan and other performance indicators.
- 1.2 The Annual Review is published as a summary document with key achievements against our Business Plan along with any other significant highlights from the previous year. It is designed and presented as a summary PDF, following this meeting and subject to Member comments. It is published on our website and circulated to key partners and stakeholders, including Defra, local MPs and constituent local authorities.

2 Annual Review 2022/23

- 2.1 At the start of 2022 we once again set an ambitious Business Plan with key priority areas to deliver against, setting out how we work in partnership with our partners, stakeholders and communities to successfully deliver our aims.
- 2.2 At the start of the financial year we received the welcome news that we had received a one-off additional grant worth £440,000. We were grateful to Ministers, in particular our local MPs, as this grant meant that we did not have to close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown during 2022/23. However, it is a temporary fix and does not address the ongoing problem of sustaining core services, across the Authority, going forward.
- 2.3 2022/23 also offered new challenges with a High Court case in respect of backpack camping; a new planning IT system and staff and visitors still responding to work/life balance post-Covid.

- 2.4 The Annual Review for 2022/23 (Appendix 1) provides a summary of some of the key areas of work we have delivered under four headings:
- People – how we have given people more opportunities to engage with the landscape in a responsible manner
 - Place – how we have supported the development of thriving communities and enhanced the landscape
 - Nature – how we have managed and improved habitats for increased biodiversity
 - Climate – how careful land management can reduce the risk of flooding and store carbon
- 2.5 The Annual Review is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of everything we have completed over the past year. It is intended to provide a summary and a range of different examples of the work we have undertaken, in a visual and digestible way for our audiences.
- 2.6 Our Business Plan reporting process provides the mechanism to report fully against our objectives over the previous year. This information is provided to Members at the Audit and Governance Committee in May.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Members are invited to note this report and Dartmoor National Park Authority's Annual Review 2022/23, highlighting some of our key achievements from the past year.

CHARLOTTE EASTON

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Annual Review 2022/23

Our National Parks have never been more important, nor have they faced as much pressure. Dartmoor is not immune from the impact of climate and ecological emergencies; core funding for the Authority continues to reduce in real-terms, in spite of a welcome one-off grant of £440,000 in March 2022; the farming community face an uncertain future; access to services and affordable housing remain a challenge for our communities; and yet the value of the National Park to society has probably never been higher.

The Authority set an ambitious Business Plan for 2022/23 working in collaboration with our partners, stakeholders and communities to deliver National Park purposes, support local communities and deliver the vision and aims in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan.

The achievements and progress highlighted in the Annual Review for 2022/23 would not have been possible without the active support and engagement of our partners; individuals and businesses; community groups and corporate sponsors; government departments and agencies. We are proud of these relationships and grateful to the ongoing support of everyone that has worked with us over the last 12 months – thank you.

We look forward to continuing to work alongside our partners to share our vision for Dartmoor, to make it better for future generations, climate resilient, nature rich, beautiful, connected to the past and looking to the future; a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, work or visit. A place that is loved, cherished and cared for.

People

Giving more people opportunities to explore, engage, enjoy and understand the landscape

Changing Lives, Nurturing Nature

Focused on providing a head start for early career graduates, this project was enabled by support from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Partnering with National Trust, Woodland Trust and South West Lakes Trust, four Conservation and Access Trainees and three Community Engagement Rangers were employed throughout 2022.

During the year the Conservation and Access Trainees undertook practical tasks, including work across our partner sites, using baseline habitat surveys to improve 70 hectares of priority habitat.

The Community Engagement Rangers worked with young people living in and around Dartmoor, to help them experience more of the National Park. A highlight of the activities were the Night Under the Stars (NUTS) events. As the name suggests, NUTS provided opportunities for young people from a variety of backgrounds to experience a night under the stars. We reached out to young carers, children from primary schools and young people with a range of disadvantages. We also hosted our own Dartmoor Junior Youth Rangers, who we work with to develop and instill a deeper understanding and passion for Dartmoor. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

“I liked hearing the animals. The quiet took your problems away” – Plymouth Young Carers Member

“What made it really special was sitting on the rock in Dartmoor, looking up at the stars and hearing only my heartbeat - that was really cool” - Junior Youth Ranger

“I loved being out of my house and out of the noisy town and laughing with new people and having a great time. The quiet of Dartmoor is really peaceful.” - Junior Youth Ranger

“The staff were amazing, full of knowledge, kindness and patience, made us all feel welcome and safe – thanks!” – Young Devon Group Leader

“It was great to see everyone enjoying the experience. Not everyone has had a chance like this before” – Tavi Youth Café Group Leader

During the project, over 6,000 young people took part in activities provided by the team, which demonstrated the impact of this early career cohort on inspiring a new generation of nature enthusiasts. All four of the Conservation and Access Trainees have gone on to secure employment in the conservation sector. Two of the Community Engagement Rangers have been retained by the Authority thanks to external funding from the Dartmoor Preservation Association and corporate sponsorship from BMW.

Access for All

The Authority’s Access for All programme was developed in response to the 2019 Landscapes Review which called on the government to open our national landscapes to a more diverse audience. We have been working closely with groups such as the Dartmoor WAGs (Wheelchair Accessibility Group) to identify and implement access improvements.

Grant aid funding from Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) has enabled us to make Dartmoor more accessible to a wider audience, through a targeted programme of works that has enhanced access at ten sites and enabled us to develop a new Dartmoor Walking App with 15 easy access routes.

Visitor Management

During the summer season of 2022 our Outreach and Engagement Officers, Information Advisors, Rangers and engagement volunteers, worked together to engage with visitors and the local community, to encourage responsible behaviour on the moor. Using our Love More Life communications campaign, we offered enhanced information and advice around key messages such as dogs on leads, litter, fires, giving nature space and responsible camping.

During the heatwave event in August 2022, the National Park administered a temporary ban to open fires and barbecues on common land under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985, Section 10(4)c. The ban received the full support of the Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Dartmoor Commons Owners' Association, Natural England and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. The quick roll out of the ban, and adherence by visitors, ensured we were able to protect natural habitats and animals from the catastrophic damage that can be caused by wildfires.

Visitor management was supported for the third year by the Dartmoor Marshals, who patrolled every evening on Dartmoor over the school summer holidays. The marshals were supported by numerous partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Welcoming and Engaging Visitors

Our engagement programme has seen a successful year with a broad offer ranging from one-off activities at visitor centres aimed at new audiences, to our established Ranger Ralph Club for children aged 5-12 years. We ran 12 Ranger Ralph events through the year, totalling engagement with 430 young nature enthusiasts.

We have also utilised our own social media accounts during 2022/23 to convey important messages using a mixture of approaches, including an increased amount of video content. Due to the popularity of film format, thanks to changes in global social media habits, updating our content has helped to achieve an average increase of 132% followers across all our channels, allowing us to share our messages with a wider audience.

With overseas visitor numbers having returned to normal, our three Visitor Centres welcomed over 140,000 people and our Outreach Van was deployed to 110 events across the moor and surrounding cities during 2022/23. These interactions have helped countless people to enjoy Dartmoor's special qualities while promoting positive behaviour choices. We were grateful to Ministers for a one-off additional grant worth £440,000 announced in March 2022. This grant meant that the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown will remain open for the foreseeable future. .

Backpack Camping

The Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 provides a right of access to the commons on foot and horseback for the purpose of open-air recreation. The Authority believed that backpack camping was included within the definition of ‘open air recreation’ and the National Park byelaws provided a framework to manage this activity. After a challenge to the meaning of this act in 2022, a High Court judgment issued on 13 January 2023 stated that the Act does not confer on the public any right to pitch tents or otherwise camp on the Dartmoor commons.

Following the judgment, the Authority worked at speed, and in partnership with the Dartmoor Common Owners’ Association, to develop a new system of permissive access agreements that provided for backpack camping on certain areas of common land with the owner’s permission. This system helped ensure that Ten Tors 2023 went ahead, and that the public could still backpack camp responsibly in permitted areas. An interactive map available on the authority website provides full detail of the permitted areas available for backpack camping.

In developing the new permissive system, the Authority was clear that it reserved the right to seek permission to appeal the High Court judgment. That permission was forthcoming in April 2023.¹ and we await judgment from the Court of Appeal.

Place

Ensuring the quality and character of the landscape and its heritage is reinforced or enhanced. Developing a resilient and thriving economy.

Supporting Business Resilience

We have worked closely with local communities and businesses to support business resilience, improve community facilities and promote a circular economy. Working with the local community we have helped secure funding for a range of projects, including:

- **Christow Village Hall** heat pump installation – National Lottery funded
- **Horrabridge Sports Pavilion** new build pavilion and pitch restoration and repairs – funded by Sport England, Good Foundation, Bernard Sunley and Football Association
- **Drewe Arms Pub** development of Community Shares to take ownership of the pub – funded by Plunkett and Power to Change
- **Ashburton Mobile Post Office** developed to offer rural Dartmoor services – funded by LINK and Teignbridge District Council

¹ The Appeal Court heard the case on 18 July 2023 and judgment was issued on 31 July 2023. The judgment was unanimous, the appeal was allowed, the Court of Appeal found that “the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 confers on members of the public the right to rest or sleep on the Dartmoor Commons whether by day or night and whether in a tent or otherwise, provided that other provisions of the 1985 Act and schedule 2 to the 1949 Act and the byelaws are adhered to”.

The total value of such funding is over £450,000 in 2022/23. An important investment in the community fabric of the National Park.

Developing our Planning Processes

We embarked on a major project to update our planning application database. Once completed, the data will improve public access to planning documents through our website, to provide a fully 'electronic' delivery of our planning service.

Maintaining our service through this period was challenging, however, we have seen a number of major projects reaching conclusion, including:

- The final phase of the urban extension to Chagford, which has provided affordable housing, a new community car park and local business units.
- 39 new affordable homes occupied by local residents in Ashburton.

Work has started on affordable housing schemes in other areas of the National Park including South Brent and Widecombe-in-the-Moor.

Our new Local Plan policies are having a positive impact. For example, we granted permission for the first custom self builds at Horrabridge and our new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements mean we can ensure new development is contributing to the protection and enhancement of the ecology of Dartmoor.

Delivering Housing in Dartmoor National Park

In 2022 we launched a public consultation on a new Housing Supplementary Planning Document. This document provides detailed guidance on our Local Plan's housing policies – helping to ensure Dartmoor's limited land resource is sustainably managed and its communities and special qualities are sustained. A final version of the document, incorporating comments from the public consultation, will be published in 2023/24 – a key tool to help us address the affordable housing required in many of our communities.

Nature

Managing existing habitats for increased biodiversity and developing greater areas of wildlife rich habitats.

Farm for the Future

The Dartmoor Hill Farm Project was set up to provide support to the farming community, help them maintain viable, thriving businesses and deliver public benefits.

Key to this project is the Farm for the Future programme, which is in the second of four years of delivery. Designed to offer free advice and support, this programme was established to help farmers through the Agricultural Transition. Support is given to enable the uptake of new funding streams that will be replacing existing support mechanisms.

Farmers enrolled in the programme have been encouraged to continue their involvement from year to year, as the Transition progresses. Since its launch, 100 farm businesses on Dartmoor have taken part, giving them the opportunity to build a stronger connection within the farming community and enabling them to develop a greater understanding of how they can adapt to the policy changes.

As the local delivery partner, working with the Royal Countryside Fund (previously known as the Prince's Countryside Fund) and Defra, this programme complements many of the other initiatives run through the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project.

Curlew Conservation

Curlew are in dramatic, national decline, they are classified on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern's 'Red List' and Dartmoor provides one of the most important Southerly breeding populations. In Devon the Curlew breeding population has declined by 85% since 1985.

A project funded by the Prince of Wales Charitable Foundation and the Duchy of Cornwall is being supported by Dartmoor National Park Authority, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, Natural England and RSPB to help this iconic bird.

Plans were developed to include working at a landscape scale to enhance habitats, undertake targeted predator control and using a new technique called 'head-starting' to boost population. Developed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, this enables the rearing and release of Curlew.

Initiated in 2021, there have been a total of 60 Curlew released successfully on Dartmoor to date. All released Curlew are identified individually using yellow marked rings and flags. This allows Curlews to be spotted when feeding or roosting on estuaries, where they spend their winter, and if they return to Dartmoor to breed in future years. Most of the Curlews spotted so far have been in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The Dartmoor project is the only upland headstarting initiative in the UK and the lessons learned will be incredibly valuable. The data and knowledge gained will help with other national Curlew conservation work.

Any spotted ringed Curlew can be reported to curlew@wwt.org.uk

Dartmoor Invasives Project

This project, now in its fifth year, was set up by DNPA Ecologist Richard Knott to deal with Himalayan balsam and American skunk cabbage. Funded initially by the Moor Otters Project and Donate for Dartmoor, this partnership project is also supported by South West Water and the Duchy of Cornwall.

To date over half a million Himalayan balsam plants and 1,000 skunk cabbage plants have been removed. Other invasive non-native species have also been tackled, including 130 giant hogweed plants in the Wray Valley and some 2,500 monkey flower plants.

The Himalayan balsam can be found on riverbanks and nearby wet woodland and farm hedgerows. Following the last five years of effort, several areas are now just showing a handful of individual plants when there had been tens of thousands present just a few years before. This has been achieved thanks to the efforts of a mix of contractors and volunteers. Over the last year, contractor cutting was particularly effective as most balsam plants could not re-grow in the very hot weather of 2022. More volunteers will be needed in 2023 and beyond to keep this effort going, and to watch and check the areas cleared to make sure that the plant has been eliminated locally.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Dartmoor's Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme entered its second year in 2022, 41 projects across Dartmoor received grant funding worth over £550,00.

This funding has supported our farmers and land managers to deliver:

- 1,000 new trees planted
- 8 hectares of new woodland created
- 56 hectares of improved woodland management
- 35 hectares of new habitat for biodiversity
- 185 hectares of biodiversity improvements
- 123 educational visits
- 17 new ponds built
- 11km of hedgerow improvement
- 1,147m of dry-stone wall restored
- 7 important archaeological features maintained
- 1,800 hectares of regenerative farming practices established
- 11 nature friendly, sustainable farm businesses supported to boost their resilience

FiPL is an important resource to help deliver the vision of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. Defra have announced that the programme will now run until March 2025 and provided increased funding.

Climate

More carbon is stored through careful management of the land, reducing the risk of flooding and making the landscape more resilient to climate change

East Dartmoor Landscape Recovery

The Landscape Recovery Scheme was announced in 2022 as part of the new Environmental Land Management Schemes being developed and rolled out by Defra, aiming to provide funding to help achieve much needed environmental enhancements. All 22 national initiatives granted funding under the scheme will lead on pioneering ideas to improve the rural landscape and reverse the decline of nature.

We are part of a partnership that has succeeded with an application to develop a bespoke project within the Bovey River catchment. The East Dartmoor Landscape Recovery Scheme is a partnership of environmental organisations and land managers aiming to work together to enhance and connect habitats and ensure important species are protected and thrive.

South West Peatland Partnership

We are a partner in this project, working to deliver peatland restoration across key sites on Dartmoor. Funded for four years until 2025, the partnership is delivering peatland restoration across the region's uplands to meet climate and environmental goals. Most of the project funding is secured through Natural England's Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, with match funding in-kind support from partner organisations. Dartmoor National Park employs four of the partnership team members in restoration, historic environment and assistant roles under the Dartmoor Headwaters programme.

Totalling 303ha restored across the whole project in 2022/23, 139ha have been restored on Dartmoor alone in the past year. Dartmoor's peatlands are an important store of carbon and water. Ensuring they are restored and do not suffer any further degradation is an important part of reaching our climate goals and making the landscape more resilient to climate change.

Progressing our Climate Action Plan

The 2020 Climate Action Plan set out our strategy for achieving our ambition of being a carbon neutral Authority by 2025. The Plan establishes key projects we will pursue to do this, including those targeting emission reductions and offsetting, and indication how projects should be prioritised.

The Action Plan has delivered a number of progressive projects to reduce the organisation's overall climate impact, but also significantly improves staff's understanding of carbon emissions.

As we enter an era in which climate mitigation and sustainable land management become ever more central to all our lives, our work and policy decisions will become critical to maximising climate mitigation on Dartmoor, while we work to conserve and enhance the National Park's Special Qualities for future generations.

Achievements so far and projects actively pursued include:

- Introduced two electric pool vehicles to replace the current fleet
- Completed feasibility and secured funding for the installation of 10 electric vehicle charging points across Princetown, Postbridge and Meldon
- Reduced our print materials across all DNPA services and working with suppliers who offer carbon balancing to support the World Land Trust
- Supporting FiPL applications that will contribute to tackling climate change