

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

6 October 2017

IMPLEMENTATION OF CAR PARKING CHARGESReport of the Head of Access, Recreation & Estates

Recommendation: That Members approve the implementation of formal car parking charges at Haytor, Postbridge, Meldon Reservoir and Newbridge as set out in the report.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members and present recommendations for the introduction of formal car parking charges at Haytor, Postbridge, Meldon Reservoir and Newbridge car parks, following a period of public consultation.
- 1.2 At the Authority meeting on 7 April 2017, Members considered a detailed report (NPA/17/13) outlining the proposed approach to implementing car parking charges. Members approved the principle of implementing formal car parking charges with a “pay and conserve” message, as a way of generating income from our assets to support our work and the future maintenance of facilities. The context for the consultation is the in excess of 40%, in real terms, reduction in the funding of the National Park Authority since 2011.
- 1.3 Prior to implementation, Members also resolved that Officers should undertake a public consultation exercise and the results should be reported to the Authority before a final decision could be made.
- 1.4 Formal car parking charges were introduced at the Princetown car park in 2013 and operate via a Service Level Agreement with West Devon Borough Council. The annual income received has significantly increased since voluntary donations were replaced by formal car park charges at Princetown.

2 Public Consultation Results

- 2.1 The methodology for the public consultation was a self-complete web based survey (using Survey Monkey) which ran between 10 July and 18 August 2017. Letters of invitation to take part were also sent to all parish councils, user group organisations and other interested parties. In addition, hard copies of the survey were made available for completion in our National Park Visitor Centres at Haytor, Postbridge and Princetown during the survey period. The consultation was also promoted through news releases and social media. The overall aim was to obtain a robust representative sample.
- 2.2 A total of 538 responses to the online survey were completed, with a further 25 responses completed at National Park Visitor Centres. In addition a number of

responses were received via email from individual members of the public, Parish Councils and other groups and organisations.

- 2.3 All respondents were asked to express how they felt about each of a number of statements relating to the introduction of formal car parking charges at Haytor, Postbridge, Meldon and Newbridge. The headline results are set out in the following paragraphs. (It should be noted that percentage figures have been rounded and thus may not equate, when added together, to 100%).
- 2.4 Respondents were asked whether people should pay for parking on Dartmoor, which generated a wide range of views and responses. Whilst 50% stated they were against the principle of having to pay within a National Park, 38% agreed or strongly agreed that they should pay for parking, with a further 11% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
- 2.5 Those that supported formal car park charging considered it was a pragmatic and appropriate way for the Authority to increase income from its assets; especially if used to invest in and maintain car parks and to support our work to look after Dartmoor. Respondents in support of car park charging also recognised the financial pressures that the Authority faced and the need to manage the special qualities of the National Park appropriately.
- 2.6 Those respondents who disagreed with the proposals were concerned about the potential for displaced parking, some considered that introducing charges was a “stealth tax,” and that the Authority should consider other ways to increase income. Others respondents disagreed with the overall principle of paying to park, expressing the view that access to all National Parks should be free.
- 2.7 Asked if the proposed charges represented good value for money: 48% thought they were, with 40% disagreeing and 11% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
- 2.8 Respondents were also asked for their views about the proposed level of charges i.e. if they were “too low”, “about right”, or “too high” for cars, coaches and for those with limited mobility holding a Blue Badge. The majority of respondents considered the level of charges for cars (£1 for 3 hours, £2 all day) were about right. Whilst the proposed charge for Blue Badge holders (£1 all day) was less clear, with 44% stating it was about right, and 41% stating it was too high, or should remain free. The proposed charge for coaches (£4.00) divided opinion with 36% of respondents stating it was “about right”, 33% saying it was too high and 30% saying it was too low.
- 2.9 All respondents were asked for their view on the hours of operation which was proposed to be all year round, between the hours of 10.00am and 6.00pm each day. 37% of respondents agreed with the proposed hours of operation, with 52% disagreeing and 10% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Typical views expressed by those disagreeing, did not support charging at all, or that charging should be restricted to the peak season only (April-October).
- 2.10 Respondents were asked how the introduction of charges might impact on them for each site where formal car park charging is proposed. At Haytor Lower, 60% of respondents said introducing parking charges would have little or no impact, with

the other sites reporting similar levels - Haytor Upper 59%, Postbridge 62%, Meldon Reservoir 64% and Newbridge 57%.

- 2.11 Those who stated that parking charges would have an impact on them gave a range of reasons including: that they would make fewer visits, stop using them altogether, use other free car parks, increase the cost of visits, and were concerned that it could lead to vehicles parking on adjacent roads or verges.
- 2.12 Members previously raised concerns about the implication of parking charges for Ten Tors & Duke of Edinburgh Groups. However, this did not materialise as a significant factor in the consultation exercise. Officers will undertake discussions with relevant groups.
- 2.13 A total of twenty-seven responses were received from those saying they were representing the views of groups and organisations or local communities. This included responses from eight Parish Councils. Three Parish Councils supported the proposals and five Parish Councils did not. Responses received from two District Councils supported the proposals. User group organisations representing walking, horse riding and canoeing and an activity provider also supported the proposals.
- 2.14 The Dartmoor Access Forum (DAF) is the Authority's statutory independent advisory body, advising on access to the countryside. The DAF members met informally over the summer and submitted views broadly in support of the proposals. They understand that the Authority is facing financial pressures and noted that the proposed car parking charges are considerably lower than those charged in other National Parks. The DAF suggested that the parking charges could be fixed for three years and then reviewed, and that there was a risk of displaced parking if charges are set to high or increased too rapidly.

3 Common themes and conclusions from the public consultation

- 3.1 Most respondents (53%) expressed the view that income raised should be used to improve car park infrastructure and visitor facilities. This was corroborated by comments which support the principle of income generated being used directly to invest in maintaining car parks, improving visitor facilities and for conserving and protecting Dartmoor so that everyone can enjoy it.
- 3.2 The proposed level of parking charges was broadly supported and considered to be appropriate; however, there were mixed views as to whether Blue Badge holders should pay or be exempt. The issuing of Blue Badges is provided to people with mobility issues and is not an indication of ability (or not) to pay.
- 3.3 There is concern that introducing parking charges may deter visitors altogether, or encourage displaced parking on roads, in gateways or on moorland verges. However, this was not the experience at Princetown. There was also concern that parking charges may lead to more traffic management measures being introduced in the future (e.g. double yellow lines) which would change the character of the moor. This was of particular concern at Haytor and Postbridge.
- 3.4 Some respondents suggested that a season ticket for regular users or a resident's permit could be introduced, either at a discounted rate or even free of charge.

4 Implementation proposals

4.1 After careful consideration of the consultation feedback, it is recommended that formal car park charging is introduced from 1 April 2018 at Haytor, Postbridge, Meldon Reservoir and Newbridge car parks.

4.2 Level of charges and hours of operation:

It is proposed that the parking charges will be the same as those currently in place at Princetown, (i.e., 10.00am to 6pm seven days a week). It is also proposed that a flat rate charge of £1.00 per day would be applied to Blue Badge holders (see below).

Class of vehicle	Up to 3 hours	Over 3 hours
Cars	£1.00	£2.00
Coaches or PSV's	£4.00	£4.00

Blue Badge Holders	£1.00 (all day)
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Note: charges listed above are gross of VAT

4.3 Officers are exploring the potential for the provision of ticket machines that will enable payment by card (chip and pin) and/or by contactless payments which provides a convenient way to paying for parking. However, we are mindful that this may not be a viable option due to the cost of (card processing) transaction fees, especially when set against the low level of income being received per charge (i.e. £0.83 for 3 hours and £1.67 for over 3 hours).

4.4 Postbridge Car Park

At Postbridge car park, it is proposed to install machine(s) and associated signage. This will form part of a wider set of programmed improvements currently being made in the Postbridge and Forestry Commission car parks via the *Postbridge and Believer Trails* project, as part of the Moor than meets the Eye Heritage Lottery Funded scheme.

4.5 Meldon car park

At Meldon it is proposed to install a single ticket machine and associated signage.

4.6 Haytor Lower and Upper Car Parks

The proposals at Haytor are to install ticket machines and associated signage at the Lower and Upper Car Parks.

4.7 It is proposed to undertake further work, in light of concerns raised through the public consultation process, to fully consider the potential for displaced parking. Further discussion is required with the Haytor Commoners Association to consider what practical measures will be needed, prior to implementation. This is likely to include some minor works to the middle car park over the coming winter months, dependent on ground conditions. Implementation should also be managed to coincide with the next mobile vending licence renewal date of 1 April 2018.

4.8 Newbridge Car Park

Discussions have taken place with the landowner seeking to introduce formal parking charges. A partnership agreement has been drafted and is to be considered by Members in a separate report, also on this agenda (NPA/17/037).

4.9 Season tickets and annual permits

The introduction of a season/weekly/monthly ticket or resident's permit system is NOT recommended at this time, as it is considered that the current low level of parking charges proposed represents good value for money. The introduction of a season ticket or permit scheme would also add a significant administrative burden (and cost) for the Authority and as the parking charges are set at such a low level, it is not considered cost effective at this time.

4.10 It would also present difficulties regarding the operation of the Princetown, where the Authority has a Service Level Agreement with West Devon Borough Council to manage the car park. Any season ticket or permit issued by the Authority for its other car parks would not be valid at Princetown under the current arrangements.

4.11 It is suggested that this issue be revisited again in the future following implementation of these proposals and evaluation of the results, which would also include a review of car parking charging arrangements at Princetown too.

5 **Financial Implications**

5.1 Significant financial investment is required to maintain our car parks over the next few years, whether we implement parking charges or not. The car park maintenance programme approved in the current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) includes:

Car Park Maintenance Programme	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	£	£	£
Haytor Lower	22,837		
Hexworthy & Saddle Bridge	2,939		
Dunnabridge	15,699		
Postbridge		72,000	
Pork Hill		35,000	
Meldon			78,000
Venford (west)			32,500
*Newbridge			20,000
Total	41,475	107,000	110,500

*Not included in the MTFP and is subject to partnership agreement with landowner

5.2 Currently the Authority seeks donations from the public by the use of honesty boxes sited within the car parks. The current level of donations received is set out below:

Car Park	Donations (£)
Postbridge	(9,500)
Haytor Lower	(2,000)
Haytor Upper	(500)
Meldon	(1,500)
*Newbridge	(1,800)
Total	(15,300)

5.3 The following table sets out the estimated capital costs to implement car parking charges, the ongoing annual revenue costs and the potential income that could be generated from parking charges, with the number of spaces available (based on experience at Princetown).

Car Park	Estimated capital costs (one-off)		Estimated annual running costs	Forecast Income (Gross)	Forecast Net Income (less VAT)	Net Income (less running costs)
	£		£	£	£	£
Postbridge	10,900		4,150	(27,000)	(22,500)	(18,350)
Haytor Lower	10,900		4,150	(11,000)	(9,166)	(5,016)
Haytor Upper	5,800		1,975	(2,500)	(2,083)	(108)
Meldon	5,800		1,975	(7,000)	(5,833)	(3,858)
*Newbridge	5,800		1,975	(7,000)	(5,833)	(3,858)
All - banking & cash collection			1,000			1,000
Total	39,200		15,225	(54,500)	(45,415)	(30,190)

5.4 Other cost implications include officer time for Finance, Conservation Works Team and Visitor Centre staff (not calculated). Cash counting, reconciliation and banking processes undertaken by third parties are estimated to amount to £1,000.00 per annum (included in table above). Increased insurance cover will also be required for both the machines and the cash, but it is not likely to be a significant sum.

5.5 If income estimates prove correct, net annual income could be circa £30,190 (net of VAT and annual running costs) which is double the donations income, plus circa £18,000 from Princetown. It is anticipated that breakeven on capital costs could therefore be achieved in one year if all costs and income are aggregated. From year two total net income can then be ring-fenced and set aside to fund the car park maintenance programme and / or other conservation projects. However, it should be noted that on an individual basis Haytor Upper car park may only just breakeven each year.

5.6 The capital expenditure required to implement car park charging at a further four sites, estimated to be circa £39,200, will be met from the Project Fund, as set out in report NPA/17/008 Net Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Budget (March 2017) and from in-year Revenue Budget savings.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 The Authority is facing increased challenges to effectively fund the maintenance of the car parks and associated facilities it has responsibility for. It is apparent that the public now expect and are generally supportive of the concept of paying to park; provided that income raised is re-invested towards the cost of maintaining high quality facilities and visitor services.

6.2 The public consultation process showed that there are wide ranging views about the principle of having to pay to park within a National Park. However there is broad support for the introduction of formal car parking charging and Members are asked to approve implementation of the proposals as set out in this report.

ANDREW WATSON

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

6 October 2017

NEWBRIDGE CAR PARKReport of the Director of Conservation and Communities

Recommendation: That the Authority enters into a car park agreement for land at Newbridge as outlined in paragraph 2.2

1 Background

- 1.1 Newbridge car park in the Dart Valley was constructed by the Authority on land owned by Spitchwick Estate in the 1970s. This is a heavily used site with significant visitor management problems. There was a written agreement to undertake the building of a car park and the Authority has undertaken repairs and improvements to that car park since then; however the Authority has no legal interest in the land in terms of a lease, licence, or agreement to maintain the car park. Over the past five years, with a reduction in resources, the Authority has not undertaken maintenance of car parks where it does not have a legal interest in the land. Instead, we have been encouraging landowners to enter into an agreement which clearly outlines responsibilities for the Authority and the owner. An arrangement already exists with the Duchy of Cornwall for car parks on the Duchy estate.
- 1.2 At Newbridge, the owner does have an income from mobile vending. Honesty boxes are also on site and these generate an income of approximately £1,700 annually. This money is collected by the Authority and is used to help fund opening of the public toilets at Newbridge, which are owned by Teignbridge District Council.
- 1.3 Members will be aware that the Dart Valley around Newbridge and Spitchwick has suffered intense visitor pressure this summer resulting in closure of car parks at Spitchwick. There is no intention on behalf of the landowner to open these car parks in the short term. Likewise, the overflow car park at Newbridge itself, marked B on the attached plan, is also closed and any agreement with the landowner would include a provision to open that car park and apply charges, only with agreement from the landowner.
- 1.4 Authority staff have tried to support the landowner to manage visitor behaviour through press and social media, collection of litter (working with dedicated volunteers), Ranger patrols and joint working with Devon County Council Civil Enforcement Officers and Police Special Constables. The partnership approach saw problems reduce during the latter part of the season, though it should be noted that visitor pressure is heavily weather dependent.

2 Proposal

2.1 The proposed car park agreement has been developed in an attempt to find a solution to an ongoing problem and provide certainty over future management and maintenance of Newbridge car park. It is proposed that the Authority enters into a formal car park agreement with the landowner; that we make a formal charge for car parking; that the Authority manages the charging and receives all income and, in return, the Authority maintains the car park. If this agreement proceeds the Authority would also be responsible for public liability resulting from works it has organised and implemented.

2.2 The draft heads that have been agreed with the landowner are as follows:

- The agreement will be between the Authority and the owner of the land;
- It will allow for the land at Newbridge to continue to be used as a car park;
- The overflow car park (marked B on the plan at Appendix 1) will be opened as a car park and charges applied only with consent from the owner;
- Charges would apply during the hours of 10:00am to 6:00pm and charges would be agreed with the landowner;
- The Authority will own and manage the charging infrastructure ('pay and conserve' machines) and receive all income apart from £200 per year which will be provided to the landowner;
- The Authority will be responsible for the maintenance of the car park using the income received from parking charges to maintain the car park and other visitor infrastructure as funds allow. The income will be held as an earmarked reserve to allow for re-surfacing and major works, as required;
- It will allow for the landowner to continue to operate a mobile vending unit from the site;
- The agreement will be for 10 years but with a three year break clause and /or by termination with six months' notice by either party after the third anniversary of the agreement.

3 Budget

3.1 The agreement will require an up-front investment by the Authority for the purchase, erection and management of the pay and conserve machines. This will include purchase, installation and associated signage of 1 machine (approximately £5,800) and annual revenue costs in the form of tickets, servicing and collection of monies (approximately £2,000 per year).

3.2 Officers have inspected the car park and estimate that re-surfacing works will be required in 2021/22, with an estimated cost of £20,000 and thereafter, on a 10 yearly cycle. However, these are estimates and other external factors such as weather and usage could affect both the condition of the car park and costs.

3.3 Counters show that 50,000 vehicles use the car park a year and it is used all year round by walkers, picnickers and canoeists. It is very difficult to predict the income from car park charges and currently the estimated income, based upon experience and charges at Princetown, is £7,000 a year. The landowner would support higher charges at Newbridge - £2 for 3 hours and £4 all day. This would increase the predicted income.

3.4 Table 1 shows projected annual costs and income based upon current estimates. It does not include the one-off capital cost.

	Estimated annual running cost	Estimated annual maintenance costs (based on 10 year resurfacing plan)	Estimated income*
	£1,975	£2,000	£5,633
Total annual cost		£3,975	
Total annual income			£5,633

Table 1

(* Estimated income – minus VAT and payments to owner)

3.5 The Authority's current contribution to the opening of the toilets at Newbridge have not been included in the budget figures and table above. Currently the annual cost to the Authority varies depending on the maintenance works required, but average annual costs are around £3,500. Currently we do not cover our full contribution to Teignbridge District Council with income from the honesty box. If the Authority aims to cover the full costs through the car park agreement the target income is £7,474 and on current predictions there would be a shortfall of £1,841 per annum.

4 Income generation

4.1 There is a risk that we do not generate the anticipated level of income over the first five years of operation and therefore our costs and liability at this site go up. The agreement allows for a three year break clause; the Authority may wish to assess the income generation at the end of two years and consider its longer term position. The draft terms of agreement include a three year break clause.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Officers have been trying to facilitate an agreement for Newbridge car park for a number of years. Previously, the Authority has taken on responsibility for maintenance of the car park. This proposed agreement provides a legal framework for the Authority to manage the car park and generate an income to cover costs.

5.2 The Dart Valley is an area of heavy visitor pressure and our support to the landowner and community in managing the site is appreciated. This has been an on-going issue and there will be a saving in officer time if the agreement can be concluded and responsibilities clarified.

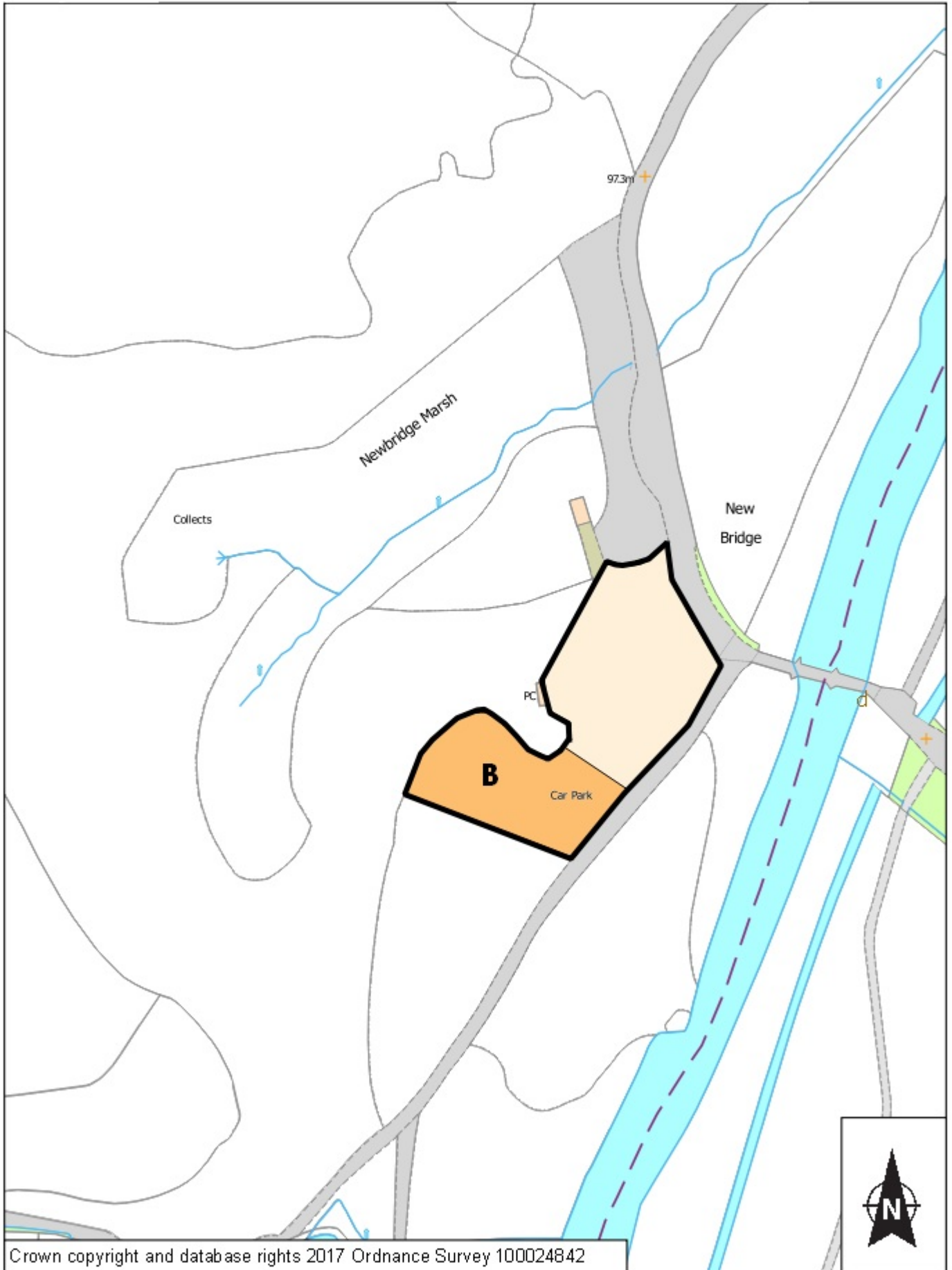
ALISON KOHLER

Appendix 1. Newbridge Car Park



Scale 1:1,400

Compiled by jmanning on 26/9/2017



DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

6 October 2017

PROPOSAL FOR ONE COUNCIL FOR SOUTH HAMS AND WEST DEVONReport of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendations: That the Authority's response to the consultation on the proposal for one council for South Hams and West Devon is limited to:

- (i) highlighting the appointment issue (as detailed below); and**
- (ii) recommending that, should the Councils merge, the new Council retains the right to appoint three Members to the National Park Authority**

1 Background

- 1.1 South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough are proposing to set up one new Council for the areas currently served by the two Councils. Full details of the proposal can be found on www.onecouncil.org.uk.
- 1.2 Both South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council are key strategic partners for the National Park Authority (NPA) and the Authority has traditionally enjoyed a close and productive working relationship with the two organisations which we hope will be sustained should the two organisations merge.
- 1.3 The key issue arising from the proposed merger for the National Park Authority is the appointment of Members to the Authority. Currently South Hams District Council appoints one member to the NPA and West Devon Borough Council appoints two.
- 1.4 The Environment Act 1995, as amended, makes provision about the composition of NPAs. The Secretary of State has the power, subject to parliamentary approval and after consulting relevant local authorities, to set the membership balance and total membership for individual NPAs. This power does not remove the right of each local authority with land in the National Park to appoint at least one member if it chooses. Current Government policy (as set out in the Circular on English National Parks and the Broads, 2010) is that membership of NPAs should be as small as possible consistent with effectiveness.
- 1.5 It is recommended that the Authority's consultation response is limited to:
 - highlighting the appointment issue; and
 - recommending that, should the Councils merge, that the new Council retains the right to appoint three Members to the NPA.

- 1.6 We have approached Defra to seek clarity on the process regarding appointments should the merger proceed but assume that it will (as outlined above) be via an Order made by the Secretary of State.

2 Equality and Impact Assessment

- 2.1 The Government Circular on English National Parks and the Broads states that Authorities should value diversity amongst those who play a role in governance and should strive to ensure that no sector of society is excluded from playing a role as members of an Authority. However, the NPA has no formal role in the appointment process. Local authority appointees to a NPA are required to be serving councillors of their appointing local authority and the Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to have regard to the desirability of appointing members who have divisions or wards situated partly or wholly within the relevant National Park.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 Not significant – the Authority’s Medium Term Financial Plan is based on an Authority comprising 19 members.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Authority limits its response to the appointments issue highlighted in paragraph 1.6.

KEVIN BISHOP

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK PLANNING AUTHORITY

6 October 2017

**TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS, SECTION 211 NOTIFICATIONS
(WORKS TO TREES IN CONSERVATION AREAS)
AND HEDGEROW REMOVAL NOTICES
DETERMINED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

Report of the Trees and Landscape Officer

Recommendation : **That the decisions be noted.**

TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS**Teignbridge****Ref: 17/0019****The Spinney, Bridford****SX 8151 8640**

Application to fell a beech tree. An adjacent tree collapsed and the remaining tree is very exposed and prone to collapse in high winds. Consent was granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Five working days' notice to be given to the Authority prior to the commencement of approved works.
2. Replacement planting of a half standard beech tree within the crown spread of the original during the first planting season following felling.

West Devon**Ref: 17/0025****Lower Hobey, Belstone****SX 6186 9355**

Application to fell a sycamore tree. The tree has a large basal cavity. Consent was granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Five working days' notice to be given to the Authority prior to the commencement of approved works.
2. Replacement planting of one half standard sycamore tree within the crown spread of the original during the first planting season following felling.

South Hams**Ref: 17/0024****Moorhaven, Bittaford****SX 6688 5740**

Application to pollard a mature sycamore tree. The tree has a large basal cavity and pollarding will maintain the integrity of the tree avenue. Consent was granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Five working days' notice to be given to the Authority prior to the commencement of approved works.
2. All works are carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998:2010 Tree Work Recommendations.

SECTION 211 NOTICES

Teignbridge

Ref: 17/0020 **Abbotswell House, Buckfastleigh** **SX 7353 6604**

Notification to fell two cypress trees. The trees have minimal public amenity value and the felling will have minimal impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

A Tree Preservation Order has not been made.

West Devon

Ref: 17/0021 **43 Station Road, Horrabridge** **SX 5126 6974**

Notification to fell a semi-mature beech tree. The tree has minimal public amenity value and the felling will have minimal impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

A Tree Preservation Order has not been made.

Ref: 17/0022 **Vincent House, Horrabridge** **SX 5126 6996**

Notification to fell four sycamore trees. The trees have high public amenity value, but they are growing on the side of a steep river bank and there is concern about their long term stability.

A Tree Preservation Order has not been made.

Ref: 17/0023 **8 Warren Road, Mary Tavy** **SX 5057 7953**

Notification to reduce a branch on an oak tree. The works will have minimal impact on the health or appearance of the tree.

A Tree Preservation Order has not been made.

Ref: 17/0026 **Rose Cottage, Crockernwell** **SX 7530 9245**

Notification to remove a limb from an oak tree. The works are minor and will have minimal impact on the health or character of the tree.

A Tree Preservation Order has not been made.

BRIAN BEASLEY