

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Friday 6 June 2014

Present: Mr K Ball, Mr S Barker, Mr Harper, Mr P Hitchins (Chairman),
Mr M Jeffery, Mr J McInnes, Dr I Mortimer, Miss D Moyse, Mr J Nutley,
Mrs N Oakley, Mr M Retallick (Deputy Chairman), Mr P Sanders,
Mr J Shears, Mr P Vogel, Mr D Webber,

Apologies: Mr G Gribble, Mr D Lloyd, Mr J Kidner, Mr J Hockridge

3053 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2014 were signed as a correct record.

3054 Declarations of Interest

Mr Harper declared a personal interest in Item 10 – Outstanding Debt of £3,476.26 and advised that he would not take part in the debate.

Mr Sanders declared a registerable interest in Item 11 – Dartmoor National Park Authority/Devon County Council Partnership Well-Being as Devon's District Representative on the Health and Well-Being Board.

3055 Chairman's Report

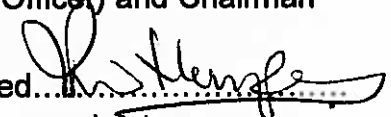
The Queen's speech included a commitment to bring forward a draft bill on the governance of National Parks. The bill, primarily about enabling the direct election of a proportion of an Authority's membership, builds on the coalition Government's commitment to review the governance of National Parks. The bill would also amend the political balance rule and broaden the eligibility of parish members. It is intended that this would be an enabling bill which would provide the Secretary of State with the power to introduce these changes by means of an order. Therefore, the changes could apply to none, all or a number of National Park Authorities.

The annual Local History Day is due to be held at Parke on Friday 20 June 2014. Two Member places are available.

The Chairman thanked those Members who had attended the National Park Forum on 21 May 2014, as well as Mr Vogel and Mr Ball for their help in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

At a recent meeting of private foresters, held at Brimpts Farm, bio-fuels etc were discussed, as well as the possibility of future Euro funding. There had been a recent visit by Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for natural environment and science.

A meeting with Nick Boles, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Planning, has been arranged with the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) and Chairman

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on Tuesday 10 June 2014 in London, with regard to Section 106 issues. The Chairman recorded his thanks to Mel Stride MP, who has been involved in arranging the meeting.

The Deputy Chairman asked to record his thanks to the Director of Conservation and Communities and the Hill Farm Project Team who had assisted the local farming community with regard to a new directive about bovine TB issued by Defra, which had caused much concern.

Members were reminded of the Member Workshop, due to take place on Friday 18 July 2014.

3056 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Mr Ball reported that, on 22 May 2014, he had attended an event with a small number of Okehampton Primary School pupils and Rob Taylor (Ranger). He asked that it be recorded that the event was excellent for the children; Mr Taylor and the Dartmoor Guide did a wonderful job in keeping the children entertained and made the event both amusing and informative.

Mr Vogel asked to record congratulations to all staff involved in the refurbishment of the Visitor Centres, particularly Princetown. The Centre has been revived and is bright and interesting.

3057 Public Participation

None.

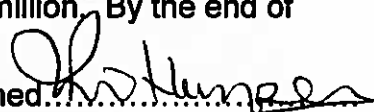
3058 Financial Outturn 2013/14

Members received the report of the Head of Resources (NPA/14/027). The Audit and Governance Committee (A&G) had received a detailed outturn report at their meeting on 16 May 2014 when it was agreed that the Authority should approve the recommendations as set out in the report. Figures had not significantly changed since then. The forecast outturn, whilst starting out at around £90k at month three, gradually reduced during the year. The final outturn surplus of £47,974 represented a -1.07% variation against budget.

Significant additional income was received during the year; £150,000 was received at the end of the financial year from Defra to fund flood and storm damage work. £6,000 New Burdens grant aid was received for meeting obligations to publish data under the INSPIRE Directive. £20,000 has been received for the White Horse Hill work. The sale of land at Peartree Cross, Ashburton has been completed resulting in a £54,000 capital receipt.

Operation and efficiency savings, together with the increased income, has resulted in the £138,000, set aside from reserves at the beginning of the 2013/14 financial year, not being required.

Reserve balances at the start of 2013/14 stood at £2.724 million. By the end of

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2013/14 they totalled £2.984million. The anticipated balance at the end of 2014/15 is £1.933million – well below the 2013/14 opening balance.

Bearing in mind the reductions in National Park Grant and staff numbers and capacity, it has proved a challenge to manage the complex work programme. However, the year has been one of sound financial management; successful attainment of additional income and staff working hard to deliver against Business Plan and Management Plan objectives.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Ball.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) noted the content of the report;
- (ii) approved the transfer of the 2013/14 revenue surplus of £47,974 to reserves;
- (iii) approved the transfers into earmarked reserves, for specific grant income and projects, as set out in sections 3.4 & 3.5 of the report
- (iv) approved the use of the capital receipt of £54,000 received in-year to part finance the capital expenditure incurred

3059 2013/14 Annual Governance Statement

Members received the report of the Head of Resources (NPA/14/028).

Members were advised that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is prepared each year and must accompany the annual Statement of Accounts. It is the culmination of a year-long review process of systems and internal controls; the Authority has once again received exemplary audit reports and Members can be assured that the system of internal control is sound, arrangements are in place to detect and deter fraud and corruption, and effective arrangements are in place to ensure the legality of Authority transactions.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Harper.

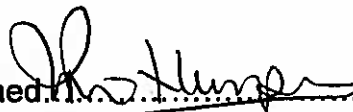
RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) noted the content of the report, and
- (ii) approved the 2013/14 Annual Governance Statement.

3060 Local Code of Corporate Governance

Members received the report of the Head of Resources (NPA/14/029).

The Head of Resources advised Members that the Authority adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance in December 2009. The Authority has experienced significant changes over recent years; Financial Regulations, the Scheme of Delegation of Delegation and Standing Orders have all been amended to reflect those changes. It was felt that a formal review of the Local Code should also take place; this was undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee on 16 May 2014 and was recommended for approval.

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Mr Ball proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Nutley.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) noted the content of the report, and
- (ii) approved the revised Local Code of Corporate Governance.

3061 Outstanding Debt of £3,476.26

Members received the report of the Head of Resources (NPA/14/030).

The Head of Resources reported that the debt related to a sale of logs felled from Sanduck Wood in 2011. All debt recovery processes and procedures were followed but it now appears unlikely that the debt will ever be paid. It is now felt prudent to write the debt off rather than incur additional costs and use more officer time in trying to recover it.

As the accounts for 2011/12 are closed, the debt will be written off in the 2013/14 accounts, in line with financial regulations.

In order to mitigate against this type of risk in the future, it was suggested that the Authority adopted a policy of seeking a reasonable 'up front' payment prior to the removal of any timber. A Member advised officers that under the EU Timber Regulations a 50% 'up front' payment is required.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Ball.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) confirmed that all reasonable enforcement and debt recovery action had been exhausted;
- (ii) agreed to write off the outstanding balance of £3,476.26

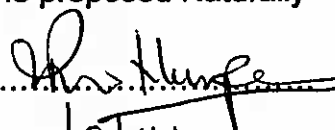
Members sought assurance that, should it come to the attention of the Authority at some point in the future that the debtor was in a position to pay the debt, payment would be sought. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that this would be done.

Members also suggested that consideration be given to amending the Standing Orders, to raise the delegated authority limit for writing off debt by the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to £5,000. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that this would be taken forward.

3062 Dartmoor National Park Authority / Devon County Council Partnership Well-Being Project

Members received the report of the Senior Learning and Outreach Officer (NPA/14/031).

The Director of Conservation and Communities advised that the proposed Naturally

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Healthy project would provide an opportunity for research to be undertaken to exemplify the health benefits of being active in the National Park. It would also improve opportunities and increase the confidence of the local community to enjoy the area.

The total cost of the three year project would amount to £90,000 of which £60,000 would come from Devon County Council. The main costs incurred would be for the appointment of a co-ordinator to work in the community. The project would aim to build good relationships with local General Practitioners in order to encourage the use of 'green prescriptions', and would work with health specialists to deliver a range of appropriate activities in the National Park. The activities would be open to all and would look to help address physical and mental health. The project would be trialled in Buckfastleigh and it is hoped that a model could be developed for adoption in other areas.

In response to Member queries, the Director of Conservation and Communities confirmed that through Public Health Devon, Teignbridge District Council and Buckfastleigh Town Council have been informed of the proposals.

Some Members expressed concerns regarding the possibility of a rush at the start of the project, followed by a dwindling of enthusiasm. In addition, it was felt that the gathering of data and the monitoring of outcomes could prove problematic; very clear means for measuring 'long term good' would be required. They added that, in their opinion, the £25k allocated would not even come close to the amount required to evaluate the scheme.

Other Members felt that the project would emphasise the already recognised impact on health and well-being that Dartmoor has and could also serve to highlight the social aspects of the National Park Authority's work. They added that, longer term, improving health would a key feature in reducing costs. Projects would become more prevalent and would help to reduce the strain on medical services.

The Director of Conservation and Communities assured Members that Devon County Council's public health team was clear that there are ways to measure the benefits of such a project.

Mr McInnes proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Harper.

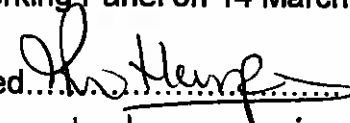
RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Supported the naturally healthy well-being project, and
- (ii) Approved £25,000 from the match funding reserves as the Authority's contribution to the project

3063 Community Safety Accreditation Scheme

Members received the report of the Head Ranger (NPA/14/32). He advised that the proposal was based on the snowy conditions experienced during the winter of 2013 and the ensuing problems regarding the general management of visitors to the moor.

The proposals were discussed at the Park Management Working Panel on 14 March

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2014 when Members agreed that the scheme could prove worthwhile for the Authority. The scheme would provide a closer link to the Police and, potentially, provide specific powers and additional training; no real costs would be involved, except perhaps for the provision of reciprocal training. Authority Rangers would not have any extra powers but would have backup from the Police, particularly when they are required to go to 'hot spots' to enforce the byelaws.

Mr Webber proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Dr Mortimer.

RESOLVED: Members gave their approval for the Authority to enter into a Community Safety Accreditation Scheme with Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.

3064 Traffic Restriction – Dart Valley

Members received the report of the Director of Conservation and Communities (NPA/14/33).

Following visitor management problems during the warm summer of 2013 and issues including litter, car parking and damage to the area, Devon County Council (DCC) has revised the existing traffic order for Newbridge. The revised order is to be advertised in early June in order to allow formal consultation. The proposal is to increase the length of road covered by the restriction, and for the restriction to be upgraded to 'No Waiting at Any Time'. The health, well-being and welfare of the local community and access for the emergency services must remain paramount.

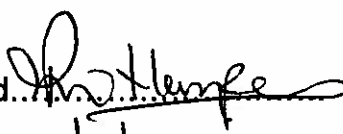
Members were pleased that the issues were to be addressed. However, it was felt that any restriction would need to be controlled and enforced properly by DCC. In addition, the restrictions would need to be publicised as much as possible. One Member felt that the proposal for double yellow lines would not solve the problem; he believed that the only way to solve the issues would be for the right amount of car parking spaces to be made available and for cars to be physically prevented from parking in the affected areas. Another Member suggested that the current proposal could be seen as a first step. He felt that the Authority should support the proposal and continue to work with the community, district and county councils, and the Highways Authority.

Mrs Oakley left the meeting.

The Director of Conservation and Communities advised Members that the landowner did not want an increase in parking spaces; he would not want to see the damage caused last year increased.

Mr Shears proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr Harper.

RESOLVED: Members supported the proposed revisions to the waiting restrictions at Newbridge on the understanding that resources would be available to enforce the restriction when the weather dictates.

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3065 Dartmoor Communities Fund

Members received the report of the Communities Officer (NPA/14/34).

The Director of Planning advised Members that the 'New Homes' Bonus is a Government scheme aimed at encouraging local authorities to grant planning permission for the building of new homes in return to additional revenue. The Government expects local authorities to negotiate an acceptable sum to be paid to the National Park Authority (NPA) in recognition of its role as a local planning authority. These funds are not ring-fenced and so can be used as the Authority determines. The Dartmoor Communities Fund, which will consist of a proportion of those funds paid to the NPA, will be available to communities wanting to enhance facilities and infrastructure on Dartmoor. Projects would need to be community led and for community benefit, provide or improve community owned/managed infrastructure, have local support and meet an identified community need, be capital in nature and have a lasting impact.

The deadline for applications is the end of October 2014. Grants will have to be claimed within two years of any award.

In discussion, Mr Barker indicated that Teignbridge District Council was looking to contribute to the Community Fund so that it covered all National Park communities.

Mr Sanders proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Mr Webber.

RESOLVED: Members:

- (i) Agreed the contents of the report and welcomed the commitment of West Devon Borough Council and South Hams District Council to support Dartmoor communities in 2014/15, and
- (ii) Authorised the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) to arrange the payment of grants

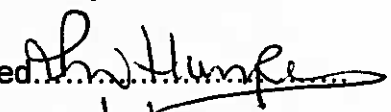
3066 Revision to Standing Orders

Members received the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (NPA/14/35).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised Members that, in preparation for the Annual Authority Meeting, to be held on Friday 4 July 2014, it is proposed that the election of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Development Management Committee, Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards sub-committee take place at the Annual Meeting. This would avoid the disruption of running an election process at later meetings.

In response to a Member query, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that Standing Orders do not require a Member to be present to be elected, but proof that they are willing to stand is required.

Mr Harper proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Mr McInnes.

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RESOLVED: Members approved the proposed amendments to Standing Order 3, to take effect from the conclusion of the meeting

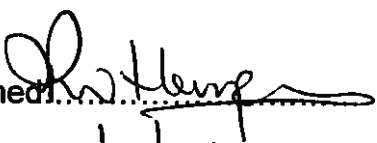
3067 Tree Preservation Orders and Section 211 Notifications "Works to Trees in Conservation Areas) Determined Under Delegated Powers

Members received the report of the Trees and Landscape Officer (NPA/14/36)

RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report.

3068 Park Management Working Panel Notes of the meeting held on Friday 14 March 2014

Members noted the content of the notes.

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