

Auditor's Interim Annual Report on Dartmoor National Park Authority

2022/23 VFM arrangements

December 2023

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We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) requires us to report to you our commentary relating to proper arrangements.

We report if significant matters have come to our attention. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.



The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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1. Executive summary






Value for money arrangements and key recommendation(s)

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to consider whether the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Auditors are required to report their commentary on the Authority's arrangements under specified criteria and 2022-23 is the third year that we have reported our findings in this way. As part of our work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Our conclusions are summarised in the table below. We have not noted any significant weaknesses in arrangements and this represents a good outcome for the Authority.

Criteria	Risk assessment	2021-22 Auditor Judgment		2022-23 Auditor Judgment	
Financial sustainability	No risks of significant weakness identified	G	No significant weaknesses in financial sustainability arrangements identified, although the Authority's critical financial challenge remains. No improvement recommendations made.	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified. One improvement recommendation raised. The Authority's financial challenges continue to be significant and require continued urgent focus.
Governance	No risks of significant weakness identified	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified. One improvement recommendation made.	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified. Three improvement recommendation made.
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	No risks of significant weakness identified	A	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified. One improvement recommendations made.	G	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified. No improvement recommendations made.

	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.
	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.
	Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

Executive summary

VFM arrangements

Financial sustainability



The Authority is operating in an increasingly uncertain financial environment. The Authority, as with all national parks and local authorities, will need to continue to plan on the basis of “flat cash” funding in the medium term, effectively a cut in funding in real terms. This has become particularly acute after the year end at 31 March 2023, given the impact of rising inflation. Our work has not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements to secure financial stability at the Authority. We raised one improvement recommendations on financial sustainability this year. Further details can be seen on pages 9 of this report.

Governance



Our work this year has focused on refreshing our understanding of the governance arrangements in place at the Authority, and the progress made in implementing the recommendations made in the prior year. Our work has not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements. We have raised three improvement recommendation in respect of risk management arrangements. Further details can be seen on pages 13-15 of this report.

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness



The Authority has demonstrated a clear understanding of its role in securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Our work has not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements in relation to delivering economy efficiency and effectiveness.



Audit of the 2022/23 Financial Statements

Our accounts audit is to be completed in January and February 2024 and the outcome will be reported in our ISA260 Audit Findings Report to your Governance Committee in March 2024.



2. Opinion on the financial statements and use of auditor's powers

We bring the following matters to your attention:

Opinion on the financial statements

Auditors are required to express an opinion on the financial statements that states whether they : (i) present a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position, and (ii) have been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23.

We have not yet completed our audit of your financial statements and are therefore unable to issue our audit opinion.

Statutory recommendations

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors can make written recommendations to the audited body which need to be considered by the body and responded to publicly

Our work has not identified any issues requiring a statutory recommendation.

Public Interest Report

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors have the power to make a report if they consider a matter is sufficiently important to be brought to the attention of the audited body or the public as a matter of urgency, including matters which may already be known to the public, but where it is in the public interest for the auditor to publish their independent view.

Our work has not identified any issues requiring a public interest report.

Application to the Court

Under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, if auditors think that an item of account is contrary to law, they may apply to the court for a declaration to that effect.

Our work has not identified any issues requiring an application to the court.

Advisory notice

Under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may issue an advisory notice if the auditor thinks that the authority or an officer of the authority:

- is about to make or has made a decision which involves or would involve the authority incurring unlawful expenditure,
- is about to take or has begun to take a course of action which, if followed to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency, or
- is about to enter an item of account, the entry of which is unlawful.

Our work has not identified any issues requiring an advisory notice.

Judicial review

Under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may make an application for judicial review of a decision of an authority, or of a failure by an authority to act, which it is reasonable to believe would have an effect on the accounts of that body.

Our work has not identified any issues requiring a judicial review.

3. Securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the Authority's use of resources

All Authorities are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. The Authority's responsibilities are set out at Appendix A.

Authorities report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness of these arrangements as part of their annual governance statement. Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, we are required to be satisfied whether the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note (AGN) 03, requires us to assess arrangements under three areas:



Financial Sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the Authority can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years).



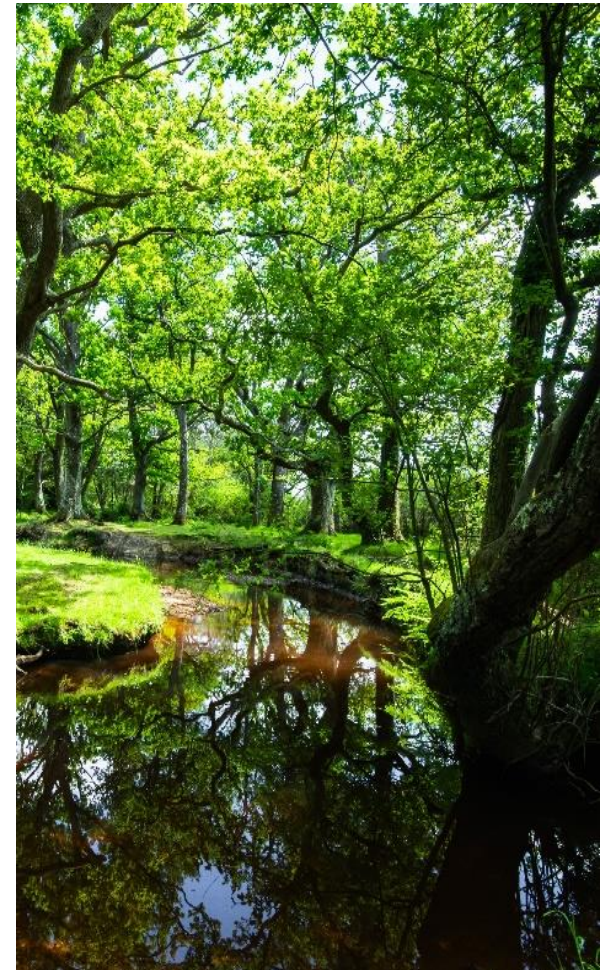
Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the Authority makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the Authority makes decisions based on appropriate information.



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the Authority delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.



Our commentary on the Authority's arrangements in each of these three areas, is set out on pages 7 to 13. Further detail on how we approached our work is included at Appendix B.

4. Financial sustainability



We considered how the Authority:

- identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds them into its plans
- plans to bridge its funding gaps and identify achievable savings
- plans its finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities
- ensures its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system
- identifies and manages risk to financial resilience, such as unplanned changes in demand and assumptions underlying its plans.

Financial pressures

2022-23 revenue outturn

The 2022-23 revenue out-turn reported an underspend of £4k against net expenditure spend of £3.825 million which is a positive achievement given the Authority's continuing financial challenge. A deficit of £112,741 for 2022/23 was forecast at month nine, but the Authority received additional FIPL (Farming in Protected Landscapes) allocation at the year end.

The 2022/23 deficit represented a 0.11% variance against budget, which compares favourably to a deficit of £51,913 and a minus 1.27% variance in 2021/22. The Authority's budget paper, in March 2022, identified significant risks to the 2022/23 financial performance and stated that "the financial outlook from 2022/23 onwards is challenging when the Authority has flat cash grants and inflation is running above 5%." Key risks to 2022/23 financial performance included:

- Customer Driven Income – sensitive to factors beyond the Authority's control including consumer behaviour and the weather;
- National Park Grant Settlement - changes in government policy as a result of wider economic uncertainty which could result in a reduction in National Park Grant;
- Pay Award - any variance from the 3% allowance in the budget would create a financial pressure;
- National economic conditions - inflationary pressures and impact on consumer spend could create financial pressures for the Authority.

2023/24 financial pressures

The significant financial risks facing the Authority for 2023/24 and future years are recognised within its Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The MTFP sets balanced budgets, in March before each financial year, recognising an environment of inflationary cost pressures and other assumptions.

In terms of 2023/24 financial performance, the forecast financial outturn (reported to the November 2023 Audit and Governance Committee) is a deficit of £67,661 at the end of month six. This represents a negative variance of 1.72% against the 2023/24 net revenue budget of £3.927 million. It is predicted that the difference will be an additional draw on the earmarked "Budget Management Fund" reserve.

Medium Term Financial Plan

The MTFP, of March 2023, sets out the Authority's strategic approach to financial management for the 2023/24 budget and the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26. Underpinning the refining of assumptions for the next year's MTFP, a series of proactive in-depth business reviews led by finance, has challenged

- income growth,
- efficiency savings; and
- the use of reserves

The aim is that zero based budgeting, following these reviews, will allow balanced budgets to be set for the current 2024/25 budget setting round, and in the MTFP for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years

Financial sustainability (continued)

Medium Term Financial Plan (continued)

Other authorities, despite uncertainties, extend their MTFP longer than two years and may set the financial scene some 3 – 5 years in their MTFP to invite further debate and direction. Given the Authority's uncertainty around the National Park Grant "flat funding" we suggest that the Authority set a three-year MTFP, for March 2024, to the end of the financial year 2027/28. This will involve more uncertain assumptions, however it is good practice for an authority to have a view of "financial resilience" in terms of its income and expenditure and the impact on reserves over a period longer than two years.

(Improvement Recommendation One: Three-year Medium Term Financial Plan including the financial year 2027/28)

Level of reserves

The MTFP sets out the Authority's Reserves Strategy, which aims to maintain the General Reserve to a target of £500k, some 12% of net budget, whilst also utilising some £242k and £284k of reserves in years 2024/25 and 2025/26 respectively. It is predicted through its "risk based analysis of reserves" that the Authority will have £1.152 million of earmarked reserves at the end of the 2025/26 financial year. Earmarked reserves allow the Authority to put aside monies for "invest to save" schemes and smooth spending between financial years, where appropriate. However, utilising reserves at a rate of some £250k a year is not financially sustainable in the longer term.

Capital Strategy

Capital spend for this Authority is commonly of a small scale relating to vehicles or IT. For larger schemes such as new buildings or conversions, Members receive specific reports to support decision making, with background, reasons why the scheme is being recommended, a cost benefit analysis, and sources of finance. The Authority's capital programme for the MTFP period currently consists of £29k in 2024/25 and £52k in 2025/26.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

The Strategy identifies the need to achieve additional grant income to support delivery of the Business Plan and Partnership Plan. A number of grants have been secured, the single most financially significant being FiPL which is funding for farmers and land managers in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), National Parks and the Broads. The Authority received some £815k for 2022/23, the second year of delivery for the FiPL programme. The Authority has been able to meet its planned budget profile for the grant following the re-profiling in year. It expects to continue into the next year of the FiPL scheme which attracts some £800k of grant and costs in 2022/23.

Conclusion on Financial Sustainability

Overall, we are satisfied that the Authority has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure it manages risks to its financial sustainability. There is a high level of understanding of the Authority's financial challenges in terms of its budgetary pressures in the short and the medium term.

We acknowledge the challenging context arising after the 2022/23 year end, with the significant increase in inflation adding pressures beyond those initially planned for.



Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 1

We suggest that the Authority sets a three-year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the years 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28, for March 2024, so that it has a better medium-term view than its current two-year MTFP.

Improvement opportunity identified

Other authorities, despite uncertainties, extend their MTFP longer than two years and may set the financial scene some 3 – 5 years in advance to invite further debate and direction. Given the Authority's uncertainty around the National Park Grant "flat funding" we suggest that the Authority sets a three-year MTFP, for March 2024, to the end of the financial year 2027/28.

Criteria impacted



Financial Sustainability

Auditor judgement

Our work has enabled us to identify a potential improvement in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.

Management comments

The duration of a local authority's medium-term financial plan can vary, and there is no universal standard for how many years it should cover, but typically span a period of three to five years. Management believes that taking on extra work, with limited resources, would simply emphasize the ongoing issues we are already cognizant of. However, we will consider the option to add an additional year to our MTFP scheduled for March 2024.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Authority in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Authority to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

5. Governance



We considered how the Authority:

- monitors and assesses risk and gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud
- approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process
- ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information (including non-financial information); supports its statutory financial reporting; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed, including in relation to significant partnerships
- ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency. This includes arrangements for effective challenge from those charged with governance/audit committee
- monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of staff and board member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declaration/conflicts of interests) and where it procures and commissions services.

Leadership and committee effectiveness

Appropriate leadership is in place at the Authority. The Authority operates through full Authority meetings as well as through its Audit and Governance Committee, Development Management Committee and the Standards Sub-Committee. The Audit and Governance Committee has delegated power to act as Those Charged With Governance (TCWG) and demonstrates appropriate challenge of financial and non-financial information. The Committee has appointed members with financial and non-financial experience.

In January 2022, we recommended that the Audit and Governance Committee undertake a self-assessment each year, which is considered best practice. Once completed the outcome will be reported in the Annual Governance Statement.

Major decisions are made at meetings of the full Authority, with issues arising from the various committees being reported to the full Authority for information and oversight. The Authority meets eight times a year and appropriate minutes are taken which are approved and available online.

Policies, procedures, and controls

As a public organisation, the Authority aims to maintain the highest standards of conduct and integrity. The Authority expects the highest standards of corporate behaviour and responsibility

from all Authority members and staff. The Authority has in place a range of policies and procedures designed to ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory standards, including Codes of Conduct for Members and Staff, a Local Code of Corporate Governance, and a range of HR policies and procedures. In addition, the Authority has anti-fraud and corruption policy in place. Members' interests are recorded on an individual basis on the Authority's website.

In January 2022, we made an improvement recommendation relating to out of date policies. In the current year we have identified seven policies which need review; eg the Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy 2017 and the Code of Conduct 2012. We therefore draw your attention to the prior year improvement recommendation in Section 7 of this report.

Monitoring and Assessing Risk

The Leadership Team monitors and reviews the Strategic Risk Register on a quarterly basis to ensure they mitigate the Authority's risks. The Strategic Risk Register is then presented to the Audit and Governance Committee every six months in May and November. In the prior year we included an improvement recommendation that the Register should identify specific named officers to own each risk and that the Risk Management Policy should be updated. We are pleased to note that that this recommendation has been implemented.

Governance (continued)

Monitoring and Assessing Risk (continued)

Each risk on the Strategic Risk Register is linked to a specific category (either Performance, Strategy, Finance, or Governance) and has a description, control measures, and a risk score which is RAG-rated. Any additional control measures or resources required are identified. However, the Authority's risks are not mapped to the delivery of its corporate objectives in its business plan. The Authority's arrangements for both performance management and risk management could be better streamlined so there is one integrated reporting framework for the Corporate Objectives, Business Plan, KPIs and the Strategic Risk Register. **(Improvement Recommendation Two; Integration of performance management and risk management through mapping risks to corporate objectives and rating the performance delivery of these objectives.**

The most recent Strategic Risk Register was presented to the A&G Committee on 3 November 2023. The Register details the basis for including risks as well as how they are monitored and scored. However, the rescoring of risks under the new methodology, outlined in the January 2023 Risk Management Policy, has disproportionately increased the severity of the Authority's risk profile (as shown in the next table) without a change in business practices. This change in the severity of the Authority's risk profile has not been picked up by Members nor management as part of the in-year monitoring of risk. The Head of Organisational Development agrees that visually this misrepresents the Authority's true risk profile as for 2022, only four risks were not green and in 2023, only one risk is green. There were 2 red, 2 amber and 16 green; but now, of the 20 risks there are 8 severe (orange), 11 material (yellow) and 1 manageable (green). We suggest that the Authority's risks are re-scored so they better reflect the Authority's true profile. **(Improvement Recommendation Three; Re-scoring of the risks to better reflect the Authority's true risk profile)**

Summary of Strategic Risk Register – November 2023

Impact of new scoring methodology

Risk Ref	Risk Description	Planned Residual Risk – old scoring	Planned Residual Risk – new scoring
PERFORMANCE			
P1	Ineffective internal communication	8	Severe Risk
P2	Inadequate external communication/community engagement	6	Severe Risk
P3	Inadequate Info Management/Business Continuity Planning	15	Severe Risk
P4	Inadequate focus on Performance Management	6	Material Risk
P5	Lack of support to deliver actions in the Partnership Plan	9	Material Risk
P6	Failure to determine major planning applications < 13 weeks	8	Severe Risk
STRATEGY			
S1	Failure to implement culture of risk assessment/management	6	Material Risk
S2	Emergencies affecting DNPA land/buildings or activity	4	Material Risk
S3	Managing officer workload	15	Severe Risk
S4	Workforce planning and resilience	20	Severe Risk
S5	Farming in Protected Landscapes	9	Material Risk
S6	Review of Byelaws	9	Material Risk
FINANCE			
F1	Potential for further reductions in National Park Grant	20	Severe Risk
F2	Inadequate financial management	4	Material Risk
F3	Appeals, Public Enquiries and enforcement action	6	Material Risk
GOVERNANCE			
G1	Fraud & Corruption	2	Manageable Risk
G2	Inadequate procurement practice	6	Material Risk
G3	Inadequate management of partnerships and projects	8	Severe Risk
G4	Inadequate decision-making process and documentation	6	Material Risk
G5	Failure to implement new or changes to legislation or policy	6	Material Risk

Governance

As well as the Authority's identifying, assessing and scoring its strategic risks, it also needs to identify additional control measures that can be implemented along with any resources that might be required to give a "Planned Residual Risk Rating" to show how the Authority is either reducing its risk profile or tolerating the level of risk. However, on review of the Strategic Risk Register we found that of the 20 identified risks, control measures have reduced the severity of the risk in just the following 8 cases.

Risk Ref	Residual Risk	Planned residual risk
P5	severe	material
S3	very severe	severe
S4	very severe	severe
S5	severe	material
S7	very severe	material
F1	very severe	severe
F2	severe	material
F3	very severe	material

The Authority has the option to treat, transfer, terminate or tolerate (known as the 4 T's) its risks depending on its "risk appetite" for each risk. The Authority has yet to determine its "risk appetite" and therefore may wish to clarify whether the "Planned Residual Risk" is appropriate for each of its 20 strategic risks.

(Improvement Recommendation Four: Determining the Authority's risk appetite for its strategic risks.

Internal control

Internal audit is provided by Devon Audit Partnership, a shared service agreement between a number of the local authorities in Devon. Internal audit agrees an annual audit plan with the Head of Business Support and then presents the plan to the Audit and Governance Committee for approval. The Committee use the work and findings of internal audit to consider the operation of key controls during the year which is used to draft the Annual Governance Statement. Internal Audit also issue an Annual Report summarising their work each year, along with the Head of Internal Audit Opinion which provided Substantial Assurance for 2022/23.

Budget Setting Process

The Authority has an established budget-setting process in place. The budget for 2023-24 was approved at full Authority in March 2023. The budget is reviewed regularly to forecast outturn results throughout the year, with a final outturn being presented to the May Audit and Governance Committee. The Audit and Governance Committee provides an appropriate level of routine review, particularly in light of the Authority's track record of delivering a balanced year end outturn position. The current and prior year periods both show small variances which are indicative of the effectiveness of the budget setting and monitoring processes in place.

Budgetary Control

There are good systems in place for oversight of the budget. Budget monitoring is performed on a monthly basis via Microsoft Teams, led by the Head of Business Support. Matters arising are considered by the Leadership Team at regular meetings. Variances are identified and explained on a monthly basis, with actions to mitigate these agreed at Leadership Team level where required. Routine reporting to Members takes place at Audit and Governance Committee, reporting the month 6 and 9 outturn positions to ensure Members are aware of budget variances and how these are being managed.

Conclusion

Overall, we found no evidence of significant weaknesses in the Authority's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. As outlined above, we have raised three improvement recommendations to strengthen governance arrangements as detailed overleaf.



Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Authority integrate its performance management and risk management frameworks through the mapping of risks to corporate objectives and rating the risk around the service delivery of these objectives.

Improvement opportunity identified

Each risk on the Strategic Risk Register is linked to a specific category (either Performance, Strategy, Finance, or Governance) and has a description, control measures, and a risk score which is RAG-rated. Any additional control measures or resources required are identified. However, the Authority's risks are not mapped to the delivery of its corporate objectives in its business plan. The Authority's arrangements for both performance management and risk management could be better streamlined so there is one integrated reporting framework for the Corporate Objectives, Business Plan, KPIs and the Strategic Risk Register.

Criteria impacted



Governance

Auditor judgement

Our work has enabled us to identify a potential improvement in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.

Management comments

The recommendation is noted. The Leadership Team have agreed to review the format of the Business Plan to include a new section for performance indicators and will consider how to streamline risk management. The Head of Organisational Development met with a contact at Lake District National Park Authority to understand their approach and receive a demonstration of their KPI IT system.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Authority in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Authority to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 3

The Authority should re-score its strategic risks on the Risk Register to better reflect the Authority's true risk profile

Improvement opportunity identified

The new risk scoring methodology has increased the severity of the Authority's risk profile without a change in business practices. This change in the severity of the Authority's risk profile has not been picked up by Members nor management as part of the in-year monitoring of risk. The Head of Organisational Development agrees that visually this misrepresents the Authority's true risk profile. There were 2 red, 2 amber and 16 green in 2022; but now, in 2023, of the 20 risks there are 8 severe (orange), 11 material (yellow) and 1 manageable (green).

Criteria impacted



Governance

Auditor judgement

Our work has enabled us to identify a potential improvement in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.

Management comments

The recommendation is accepted and work is underway to rescore the Strategic Risk Register for future monitoring and reporting.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Authority in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Authority to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

Improvement recommendations

Improvement Recommendation 4

We suggest that the Authority discuss and determine the Authority's risk appetite for its each of its 20 strategic risks

Improvement opportunity identified

The Authority needs to identify additional control measures that can be implemented along with any resources that might be required to give a "Planned Residual Risk Rating" to show how the Authority is either reducing its risk profile or tolerating the level of risk. However, on review of the Strategic Risk Register we found that of the 20 identified risks, control measures have reduced the severity of the risk in just 8 cases. The Authority has the option to treat, transfer, terminate or tolerate (known as the 4 T's) its risks depending on its "risk appetite" for each risk. The Authority has yet to determine its "risk appetite" and therefore may wish to clarify whether the "Planned Residual Risk" is appropriate for each of its 20 strategic risks.

Criteria impacted



Governance

Auditor judgement

Our work has enabled us to identify a potential improvement in arrangements which we do not consider to be significant, but have raised a recommendation to support management in making appropriate improvements.

Management comments

The Leadership Team will consider this recommendation at its next performance meeting to be held on 9th January 2024.

Progressing the actions management has identified to address the recommendations made will support the Authority in addressing the improvements identified from our work. We consider that the timescales provided by management are appropriate and encourage the Audit Committee to monitor progress of implementation to gain assurance over the arrangements in place. The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B.

6. Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness



We considered how the Authority:

- uses financial and performance information to assess performance to identify areas for improvement
- evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement
- ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships and engages with stakeholders it has identified, in order to assess whether it is meeting its objectives
- where it commissions or procures services assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits.

Performance review, monitoring, and assessment

The Authority's vision and priorities are set out in its Business Plan which is updated and presented to the Authority meeting in March each year. A Business Plan Monitoring report considering progress against plan is presented to the Audit and Governance Committee twice a year in May and November. The Business Plan links the five-year Dartmoor Partnership Plan to the National Park's individual strategic priorities for the year, and also where relevant to the detailed annual revenue budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Our review identified that performance against the priorities and actions set out in the plan is also monitored routinely by the Leadership Team. The performance monitoring arrangements provide useful and timely information to members and management, and support the overall objectives of the Authority in delivering the Business Plan.

The Authority sets out its key actions across its six priority areas as identified in the plan, with detailed descriptions of what each action comprises, the desired outcome, target start and end dates, and whether these link to the three key aspects of the national policy context. In addition to the Business Plan, there is a Performance Indicator framework in place comprising 37 indicators, a mix of "State of the Park" indicators, national indicators required by central government or agreed with other National Park Authorities, and local indicators set by the Authority.

Performance against the indicators is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee. The report indicated mixed results against the performance indicators; in many cases such as for volunteer days or local engagement. Of the 37 indicators identified for tracking, 21 were either partially or wholly below target at the end of 2022/23. Some targets have not been met for a number of years and the trend is towards worsening rather than improving performance e.g. in timely response to planning applications.

As part of a prior year recommendation we have suggested that The Authority should seek to review its indicators and, where relevant, understand reasons where these have not been achieved. Where achievement is unrealistic, the Authority should consider revising the indicator to be achievable. Where this is inappropriate or impossible (e.g. for nationally-determined indicators), the Authority should agree specific actions to improve performance against indicators, especially those where performance is worsening. In addition, we suggest in the better integration of risk management and performance management, raised in Improvement Recommendation Two, that risks to delivery of performance should be reflected in the Authority's risk register.

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Partnership working and working with stakeholders

Partnership working is clearly established within the Authority's strategic framework documents, including the Authority's Business Plan, and in the way the Authority operates on a day to day basis.

Partnership working is a key focus for the Authority for a number of reasons, including:

- to help generate support funding, for example through the National Lottery Heritage Fund to progress individual projects;
- to encourage volunteering to support the work of the Authority and various projects that the Authority is progressing;
- to support the local community in which the Authority operates

The proactive approach to partnership working is evident from the progress made in a number of key areas including:

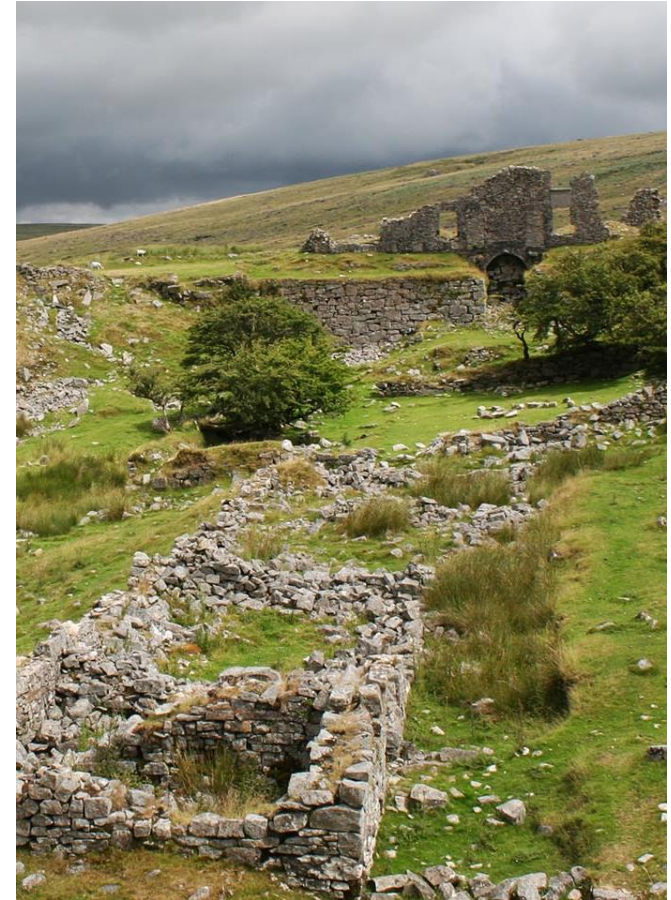
- Continued delivery of the South West Peatland Partnership, with all sites now complete except one and 75% of the Nature for Climate target achieved
- Delivery of the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, and a further bid being prepared in partnership with the Princes Countryside Fund for another three years

Procurement

The Authority has procurement procedures within its Financial Regulations and a Sustainable Procurement Policy which sets out the approach to delivering effective procurement. This supports budget holders who have responsibility for procurement decisions. Budget holders are also supported by the Finance team.

Conclusion

Overall, we are satisfied that the Authority has appropriate arrangements in place for ensuring economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources.



7. Follow-up of previous recommendations

Recommendation	Type of recommendation	Date raised	Progress to date	Addressed?	Further action?
<p>1 Governance The Authority should maintain a register of all its key policy documents with dates of last review, to ensure that all key documents are regularly updated. This register should also document all named officers and job titles included in the policy to ensure that these are kept up to date.</p>	Improvement	October 2022	Work in progress. These policies are being updated.	No	No
<p>2 Introduce an annual self-assessment effectiveness review of the Audit and Governance Committee which is the Committee considered to be Those Charged With Governance.</p>	Improvement	January 2022	Once completed the outcome will be reported in the Annual Governance Statement.	No	No
<p>3 Improving economy, efficiency, and effectiveness The Authority has 37 different performance indicators tracking a variety of different aspects of its performance. The Authority should seek to review its indicators and, where relevant, understand reasons where these have not been achieved. Where achievement is unrealistic, the Authority should consider revising the indicator to be achievable. Where this is inappropriate or impossible (e.g. for nationally-determined indicators), the Authority should agree specific actions to improve performance against indicators, especially those where performance is worsening. Risks to delivery of performance should be reflected in the Authority's risk register.</p>	Improvement	October 2022	A review is ongoing.	No	No

8. Opinion on the financial statements



Grant Thornton provides an independent opinion on whether the Authority's financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2023 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended, and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23

We conducted our audit in accordance with:

- International Standards on Auditing (UK)
- the Code of Audit Practice (2020) published by the National Audit Office, and
- applicable law

We are independent of the Authority in accordance with applicable ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Authority's Ethical Standard.

Audit opinion on the financial statements

We plan to issue our opinion on the Authority's financial statements in March 2024.

Further information on our audit of the financial statements is set out overleaf.



8. Opinion on the financial statements



Audit of the financial statements

The 2022/23 Audit Plan was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in May 2023. The Authority provided draft financial statements in line with the national timetable of 31 May 2023.

The final audit visit will be carried out in February 2024. The Audit Findings Report will be presented to the Authority's Audit and Governance Committee in March 2024. Requests for the Audit Findings Report should be directed to the Authority.



Appendices

Appendix A – Responsibilities of the Authority

Public bodies spending taxpayers' money are accountable for their stewardship of the resources entrusted to them. They should account properly for their use of resources and manage themselves well so that the public can be confident.

Financial statements are the main way in which local public bodies account for how they use their resources. Local public bodies are required to prepare and publish financial statements setting out their financial performance for the year. To do this, bodies need to maintain proper accounting records and ensure they have effective systems of internal control.

All local public bodies are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. Local public bodies report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness with which the arrangements are operating, as part of their annual governance statement

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is required to prepare the financial statements in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom. In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern and use the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention by government that the services provided by the Authority will no longer be provided.

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.



Appendix B: An explanatory note on recommendations

A range of different recommendations can be raised by the Authority's auditors as follows:

Type of recommendation	Background	Raised within this report?	Page reference
Statutory	Written recommendations to the Authority under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.	No	
Key	The NAO Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses as part of their arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the Authority. We have defined these recommendations as 'key recommendations'.	No	
Improvement	These recommendations, if implemented should improve the arrangements in place at the Authority, but are not a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the Authority's arrangements.	Yes	9, 13,14 and 15



Dartmoor National Park Authority

5 January 2024

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes

Report of the Strategic Planning and Projects Manager

Recommendation: **That Members note the update provided and confirm their in-principle support for the Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscape programme and bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.**

1 Introduction

1.1 This paper provides an overview and update on the Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes (DDL) partnership programme.

2 Background

- 2.1 Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes is a developing Partnership Programme, led by DNPA, with a landscape scale focus on three of Dartmoor's river catchments, taking in the peat bogs on the high moor, nature rich grasslands and upland heath, descending off the moor through wooded valleys and connecting to riverside communities in the towns inside and outside the National Park. While the Partnership is ambitious about improving tangible natural heritage, this will be achieved through additional support for those already managing our landscape. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) will support this type of investment in Dartmoor's people, while other funders tend more toward capital investment.
- 2.2 We aim to connect people to each other, and to nature, to catalyse change to conserve and restore nature, encourage healthier, more equitable access to our best landscapes and help national park communities benefit from visitor tourism and future investment in natural capital across the catchments of the rivers Dart, Okement and the Erme & Yealm.
- 2.3 Formal Partners in the development phase are RSPB, Sustrans and the Woodland Trust. In the delivery phase we are to be joined by South West Water (for the South West Peatland Partnership), Environment Agency (Headwaters/Natural Flood Management), the Shallowford Trust, South West Lakes Trust and an Arts Partner (in the process of being appointed December 2023). The involvement of other stakeholders is vital, including local councils, our farming community, residents and businesses in Okehampton, Ivybridge and Princetown as well as local community groups and volunteers.

3 Partnership aims

3.1 Delivering work within the defined area and developing approaches that can be shared more widely, the Partnership aims to address the following needs:

- DNPA and partners have made significant steps forward in ecological data gathering in recent years, but there is still a need for first hand field survey. The Partnership will establish high quality, up to date, accessible and sustainable data management for Dartmoor's nature, focused on non-specialist use and contributions (farmers and volunteers);
- during a time of rapid and significant change for farming we will invest in knowledge networks to ensure farmers feel confident in making choices relating to nature and natural capital as part of their business model;
- accelerate and increase the scale of nature enhancement activity among land managers within the focus catchment areas through better coordination among environmental NGOs and facilitated access to funding schemes for farmers;
- to create a shared sense of place, for those living and working near to these rivers, connected to the nature and natural systems of catchment scale landscapes and with a greater appreciation of Dartmoor as a farmed landscape;
- to increase the understanding, confidence and take up of active travel and outdoor activities among our local community and visitors to the National Park;
- for our communities within and around the National Park to play a greater role in the visitor economy and visitor management.

4 NLHF Stage 1 funding

4.1 Members received a paper in April of last year NPA/22/020, page 76 of the [April 2022 Reports to Authority](#) describing the proposal and [approved submission of a Stage 1 application](#) for funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) while also confirming their support, in principle, for the wider programme.

4.2 That Stage 1 application was submitted in August 2022 and was successful. NLHF offer a two-stage process for programmes of the funding scale sought, the first stage is for detailed development funding with the second stage funding the main programme of work. Our submission made last year was for the Stage 1 development funding, securing a grant of £361,082 from NLHF, alongside an outline proposal for the main programme, valued at £5.5m and supported by £2.9m from NLHF. Their funding for the main programme is contingent on submission of a strong Stage 2¹ application. DNPA is lead partner for both stages.

4.3 Our Development Phase is running until August 2024, our deadline for Stage 2 submission. If our request for funding is approved the main programme will run from January 2025-2030.

¹ Terminology used for the two stages is 'Stage 1, development' and 'Stage 2, delivery'.

5 Development Phase, current to August 2024

- 5.1 The Stage 1 development grant allows Partners to commission a range of consultation and research work using contractors and existing staff, including for DNPA to employ a dedicated Development Officer (Hannah Kingsbury) and the RSPB a dedicated Moorland Birds Officer (Deborah Deveney) in order to produce detailed project proposals, supported by evidence of need and opportunity.
- 5.2 The principal output from the Development Phase will be the [Area Action Plan \(AAP\)](#), this document describes the landscape in detail, including its heritage and people, what matters to who and why. The AAP will also contain plans and budgets that set out how Partners will deliver their projects and bring about positive change. The Area Action Plan is the main component of our Stage 2 request to NLHF for funding.
- 5.3 Research and writing of the Area Action Plan is well underway, alongside a range of development activity, testing approaches where we are planning to work in new or different ways, developing communications for the programme, consulting with beneficiaries. Some projects will gain momentum during development, so that they are primed for early delivery.
- 5.4 Specific development work includes.

Development Activity	Led by
development of an appealing visual identity for the Partnership. We will also commission high quality photographic images that help to convey the range of planned work and the messages around our aims.	DDL Officer with support from DNPA comms
design of promotional materials to support specific projects, especially those running pilots during the development phase.	All development partners
a study to understand the market for, and current capability to deliver Nature Based Solutions (NBS) among Dartmoor's land-based contractors.	DDL Officer
mapping green space and quiet/traffic free routes in the neighbourhoods of target schools to encourage walking and cycling through Bike It Wild.	Sustrans and DNPA GIS Officer
research into and production of an Audience Development Plan.	Contractor will produce the ADP, DDL Officer and Partners will provide material and undertake audience consultation
research into the cultural heritage of the focus area, highlighting human relationships with the rivers through time.	Contractor, guided by DNPA Historic Environment team
commissioning work to understand the perceptions of Dartmoor among underrepresented groups, including the challenges they face in benefiting from the landscape. This work will inform the Audience Development Plan.	Contractor

Development Activity	Led by
preparation of our Moorscapes community grant scheme, with operational approaches tested and risk assessed. We will recruit an Assessment Panel to guide grant awards, who have a good understanding of and can represent the communities we serve.	DDL Officer and DNPA Community Projects Officer
production of a management plan for the Woodland Trust's recently acquired Hall Farm, following a year of detailed environmental survey.	Woodland Trust
commissioning a detailed study to understand Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) in the focus area.	Woodland Trust
commissioning Access and Interpretation plans to guide the Gateway Town Hubs and Miles Without Stiles projects, we will also identify suitable sites and audience for assisted cycling.	Contractor
consultation with property developers and tourism providers regarding our proposed Welcome Packs for new residents	DDL Officer
undertaking studies to understand existing best practice in data collection by non-specialists, especially with regard for land managers need for data within future ELM and green finance initiatives. The RSPB's Moorland Birds Officer will run small scale trials of our proposed natural heritage survey work for habitats and birds, reviewing and sharing learning to establish best practice.	RSPB Moorland Birds Officer, DNPA Ecologists, DDL Officer
engagement of the Arts Development lead for River and Moorland Festivals, starting their consultation and project planning work.	DDL Officer
Sustrans will undertake early consultation and engagement with candidate schools for their active travel work, prioritising those within higher ACORN deprivation areas.	Sustrans
The Woodland Trust will pilot Ancient Tree Hunt with underrepresented audiences and engage local nurseries to assist with propagation of ancient tree seedlings.	Woodland Trust/contractor

6 Scope of the programme

- 6.1 The focus area for the programme is still being refined during the development phase and is expected to be adopted by Partners in early 2024. The area comprises catchments of the Okement, Dart, Erme & Yealm, includes the Mardle and follows common, farm and woodland compartment boundaries. (See Appendix 1).
- 6.2 The programme focuses on the towns of Okehampton, Princetown and Ivybridge, the communities resident here as well as visitors to the National Park arriving through these gateway towns.
- 6.3 The programme is likely to reach further to engage specific audiences (such as through the Shallowford Trust's Farm to City event) and share knowledge across

other protected landscapes (especially relating to upland farming).

- 6.4 The deadline for submission of the Partnership’s Stage 2 bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund is August 2024 and the Development Phase funding from NLHF is expected to conclude at the end of September 2024.
- 6.5 The funding decision from NLHF is expected December 2024, if successful the main programme of work will be delivered from January 2025 for five years to 2030. Projects and Partners will follow different timescales within the five-year programme with some delivering activity across all years while others may run for less than one year.
- 6.6 The focus of the programme is natural heritage, however Partners and NLHF recognise landscapes as an interconnected whole. Intended beneficiaries within the focus area include the people who live and work in the three towns (especially younger people) alongside farmers and other land-based workers across the area.

7 Financing the programme

7.1 Development Phase costs and funding

Costs by Partner	
DNPA direct Costs	192,615
DNPA non cash contributions	2,500
DNPA volunteer time	1,500
RSPB direct costs	28,600
Sustrans direct costs	3,500
Woodland Trust direct costs	163,220
Woodland Trust non cash	51,000
Woodland Trust vol time	4,000
TOTAL	446,935

Source of funding	Description of Income	Grand Total
NLHF	Grant	£ 348,819
Other public sector	FC Planning Grant (WT to secure)	£ 6,750
Own reserves	Dartmoor National Park Authority As agreed by Members on 01/04/2022	£ 22,500
Own reserves	RSPB	£ 2,928
Own reserves	Woodland Trust	£ 10,387
Non cash contributions	Various partner non-cash contributions (primarily WT)	£ 53,500
Volunteer time	Surveys and ancient/veteran tree recording	£ 5,500

7.2 Main programme delivery costs and funding

7.2.1 The delivery value of the main programme totals £5,580,422, this would be supported by a grant from NLHF of £2,964,233 with the remaining funding provided as follows:

Source of funding	Description	Value
Other public sector - corporate	Headwaters and Peatland Partnership	1,700,000
Other public sector	Forestry Commission	297,500
Own reserves	Partner own funds	155,189
Other fundraising	Partner fundraising activity	274,747
Non cash contributions	Various partner non-cash contributions	97,512
Volunteer time	Ancient/veteran tree recording, schools volunteers	34,550
Total		2,559,498

7.2.2 In addition to the funding listed above, DNPA's current commitment to the delivery of the programme is up to £100,000 across the five years, this has been allocated from reserves.

8 Strategic fit

8.1 The activity proposed by the Partnership responds to the priorities set out in Dartmoor's National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). Of seven core themes in that plan, the proposed programme relates to all seven, with particular emphasis on Better for Nature, Better for Farming and Forestry and Better for People:

- The activity proposed by the Partnership supports all aspects of the Vision for Dartmoor National Park in 2045;
- The Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes bid is a specific aim of the Authority's 2023/4 Business Plan;
- The geographical focus areas for the proposed programme are derived from the pilot Nature Recovery Areas (NRA) identified in the NPPP;
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund is the largest funder of heritage in the UK and an ideal funding partner in delivering DNPA's strategic aims;
- The Dartmoor Headwaters Programme (partnership between DNPA & Environment Agency) will be extended to 2033, DDL is working in partnership with the Headwaters team, aligned on three of their priority catchments;
- DDL provides resource to maintain momentum created through Our Upland Commons, sharing their successes more widely across Dartmoor;
- DDL provides opportunities to further develop the work of our Engagement Rangers (in partnership with the Dartmoor Preservation Association and BMW in 2023), helping a wider range of young people understand and enjoy the National Park;
- DNPA intends to launch a new Dartmoor Foundation soon, if the new Trustees of the Foundation consider elements of the DDL programme suitable targets for investment the DDL programme could provide early momentum to Foundation fundraising campaigns;
- Dartmoor's Partnership Plan (NPPP) recognises the importance of partnership working to achieve its Vision. DDL will sustain long standing partnerships

(DNPA, Woodland Trust, RSPB, South West Lakes Trust for example) while developing newer relationships (Sustrans, Arts partners).

Key risks can be seen in Appendix 2.

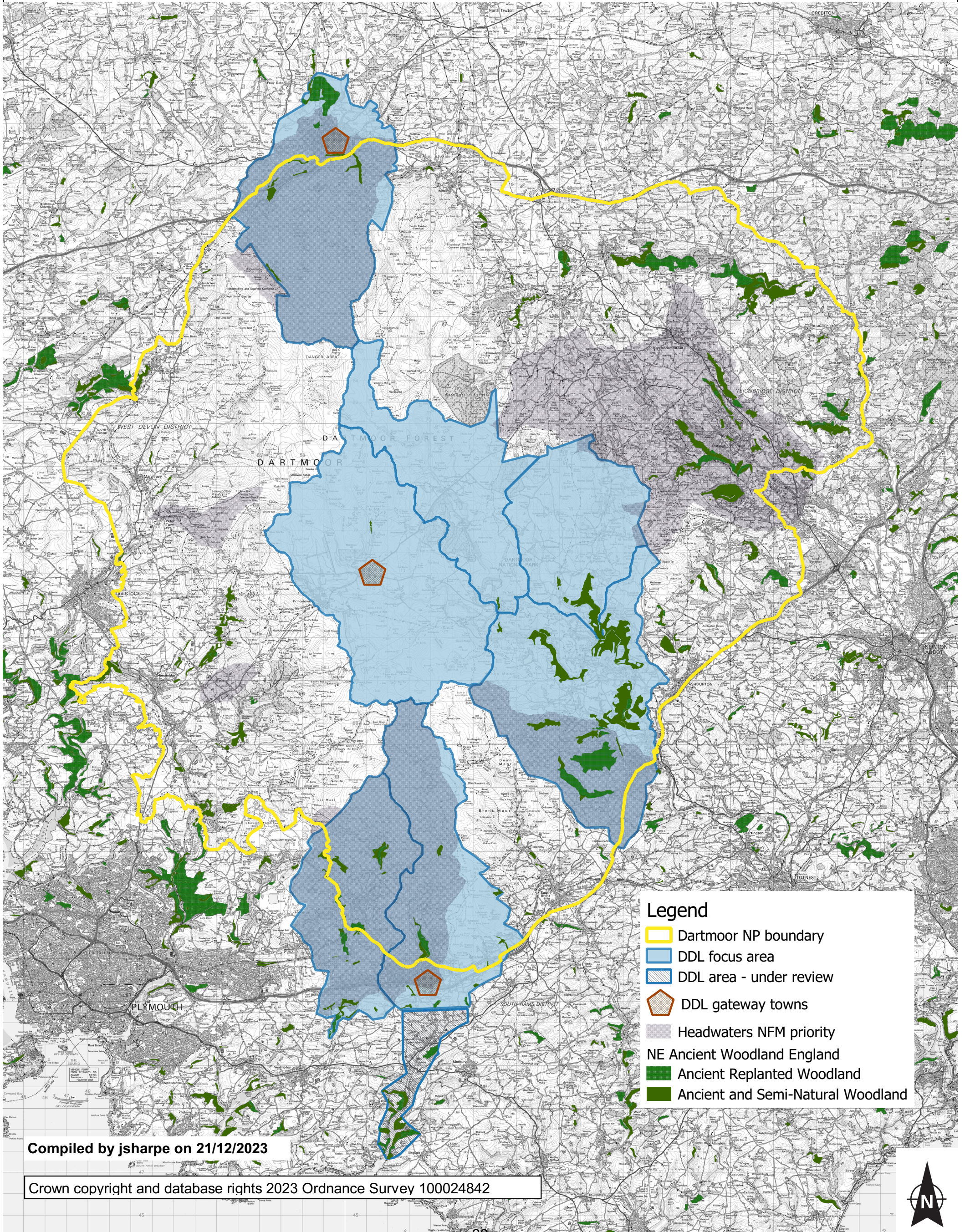
9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes programme provides a significant opportunity to deliver aims of the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP), at a level of resource well above that which partners could provide without support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The proposed work has a good strategic fit with the aims of DNPA and its partners, given the prominence of the issues DDL seeks to address, the programme is likely to deliver under the next National Park Partnership Plan as well as the current one.
- 9.2 Partnership working is an important component of our working effectively, this programme will strengthen links with older partnerships while developing new partnerships where possible.
- 9.3 We believe the proposal is good value for DNPA, progressing work under NPPP aims in a way that complements other programmes on Dartmoor (Central Dartmoor Farm Cluster CIC and the Headwaters programme for example), filling gaps in need and opportunity.

JAMES SHARPE

Dartmoor National Park Authority

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscape



Legend

- Dartmoor NP boundary
- DDL focus area
- DDL area - under review
- DDL gateway towns
- Headwaters NFM priority
- NE Ancient Woodland England
- Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland

Compiled by jsharp on 21/12/2023

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Project	Risk	Severity	Likelihood	Status	Risk Management	Responsible (for risk assessment)	Contingency Actions (if risk still occurs)
Development Stage							
Project-wide	No suitable contractor or contractor costs too high	M	L	No change	Specifications have been drawn up in line with similar work that has been delivered. Costs have taken into account inflation/rising cost of living. Several development contracts have now been let/are underway	Project Manager	DNPA staff seconded to deliver the work
Project-wide	Contractor does not deliver works on time	M	L	Increasing	Inception meetings will clearly state expectations and timescales. Regular meetings to be held with contractor and bid development team. Timescales to be agreed at inception meetings and regular updates provided. Use a contractor with a proven track record	Project Manager	Break clause included in contract if contractor isn't delivering. DNPA staff/bid development team seconded to complete the work
Project-wide	Landowners do not want to engage with the project	H	L	Increasing	Landowner communication and consultation will begin at the very start of the project and their comments fed into proposals, partners will collaborate with other land advisors and use existing networks	Project Manager	Projects will identified in areas where landowners are willing to engage
Project-wide	Failure to recruit staff	M	L	Reducing	Ensure new staff posts are well advertised through standard sources and partner networks. Ensure salary rates are competitive. Development staff in post	Project Board	Consider secondment of internal staff if project staff leave
Project-wide	Staff retention	M	M	No change	Continual staff development and HR support in place in each partner organisation. Project budget includes additional recruitment costs	Project Board	Consider secondment of internal staff if recruitment isn't successful
Gateway Town Access and Interpretation Plans	No suitable routes identified for development (Gateway Town Access and Interpretation Plans)	M	L	No change	The works delivered through the contract will identify existing routes and gaps in provision. The work is being contracted to identify how routes can be developed to improve access and offer more opportunities. Work builds on recent reports commissioned by District and County Councils	Project Manager	If gaps in provision aren't identified, the project will focus in improving additional existing routes and providing interpretation
Princetown Facilitation	Princetown community not engaged	H	L	No change	The project will directly benefit residents of Princetown and will be shaped developed in partnership with the community to ensure it delivers. DNPA Community Projects Officer working regularly with Princetown community	Project Board	Project redesigned to align with needs of Princetown community
River Festival Arts Development Partner	No suitable contractor or contractor costs too high	M	L	Reducing	Proposals have been discussed with arts development organisations and costs shared. Organisations have said they would quote for the work. Procurement process and conditional offer made December 2023.	Project Manager	The work can be delivered through smaller contracts if the scale of the contract is too large
River Festival Arts Development Partner	Local communities not supportive of project development and not engaged	H	L	No change	The festivals will be developed in partnership with local communities and will be designed in a way that benefits local residents. Effective communication will ensure that communities understand the objectives of the project	Project Board	Scale of the project can be changed in line with community expectations to make it deliverable. Location can be changed if major concerns are not alleviated
Dartmoor Welcome/Visitor Packs	Developers not engaged in the project and not willing to support	M	L	No change	Discuss benefits with the developers at an early stage and work in partnership to develop the packs	Project Manager	Work with developers that are willing to engage

Dartmoor Welcome/Visitor Packs	Accommodation providers not engaged	M	L	No change	Discuss benefits with accommodation providers at an early stage.	Project Manager	Work with providers that are willing to engage
Ancient Tree Inventory	Lack of engagement with target audiences	H	L	Reducing	Build on experience/established networks from delivering work with harder to reach groups gained from Fingle Woods project, development work underway with encouraging initial results	Devon Partnership Lead	Approach other networks/deliverers
PEDALL Taster Sessions	No suitable routes to deliver sessions	H	L	No change	The delivery organisation will provide detail of types of routes required. Sessions will tailored to make use of available routes. Considering change to work with a partner based locally (PedALL New Forest based)	D.D. Development Officer	Sessions can be developed to make use of available routes
Project-wide	Negative PR	H	M	No change	Partners to keep each other and NLHF aware of any potential negative PR	Project Manager	Timely communication and coordinated
Ancient woodland	Seasonal timescale	M	H	Increasing	AWR assessments will take place in Spring 2024	WT	
Understanding Moorland Birds	Seasonal timescale	M	H	Increasing	Surveys to take place in spring/summer 2024	RSPB	
Project-wide	Compliance with data regulation	L	H	No change	Seek early expert advice	Partners	
Hall Farm	Finding the right tenant	H	M	No change	Advertisement of this opportunity will seek input from various people to include those close to the farming audience	WT	To continue to be managed by WT
Bike It Wild	No suitable routes to deliver sessions	H	L	No change	To investigate other areas if not suitable in gateways	Sustrans	
Bike It Wild	Lack of engagement with target audiences	H	L	No change	To investigate alternate groups, i.e. youth groups	Sustrans	
Match funding	Securing match funding	H	M	Reducing	Shallowford Trust has established partnership with Dartmoor Farmers Association to deliver on farm education ahead of schedule, securing FiPL funding. Headwaters Communications work may provide additional development match funding as we're collaborating on some public engagement.	Project Manager	
Delivery Stage							
Match funding	Securing match funding	H	M	Reducing	Extension of Headwaters programme to 2033 now aligns completely with DDL timescale for maximum partnership working. Arts Partner has strong track record of fundraising. Shallowford Trust has established partnership with Dartmoor Farmers Association to deliver on farm education ahead of schedule, providing a pilot to attract additional funding		
Project wide	Partners do not deliver on delivery stage commitments	H	L	No change	Partners sign up to a formal collaboration agreement prior to stage 2 submission which outlines responsibilities and liabilities, work is well researched and planned with beneficiaries consulted in advance	Project Board	Non-delivery escalated to the Project Board to be addressed
Project wide	Final proposals delivered though the plans exceed budgeted costs	H	M	Increasing	Costs have been identified in line with inflation and based on costs of delivering similar projects, inflation and cost review is being undertaken for all projects during development	Project Manager	If project proposals are to large to fit within the project outline and proposed budget, additional funding will be sought to deliver the full range of projects for the benefit of the local community and visitors
Project-wide	No suitable contractor or contractor costs too high	M	L	Increasing	Specifications have been drawn up in line with similar work that has been delivered. Costs have taken into account inflation/rising cost of living	Project Manager	DNPA staff seconded to deliver the work
Project-wide	Contractor does not deliver works on time	M	L	No change	Specifications and inception meetings will clearly state expectations and timescales. Regular meetings to be held with contractor and bid development team. Timescales to be agreed at inception meetings and regular updates provided. Use a contractor with a proven track record	Project Manager	Break clause included in contract if contractor isn't delivering. DNPA staff/bid development team seconded to complete the work

Project-wide	Landowners do not want to engage with the project	H	L	Increasing	Engagement work undertaken during the development stage will build a pipeline of activity for delivery and DDL approaches will dovetail with existing Advisors/networks	Project Manager	Projects will identified in areas where landowners are willing to engage
Project-wide	Failure to recruit staff	M	M	No change	Ensure new staff posts are well advertised through standard sources and partner networks. Ensure salary rates are competitive, Partnership vision is clearly articulated	Project Board	Consider secondment of internal staff if project staff leave
Project-wide	Staff retention	M	M	No change	Continual staff development and HR support in place in each partner organisation. Project budget includes additional recruitment costs	Project Board	Consider secondment of internal staff if recruitment isn't successful
Project-wide	Target audience does not engage with the project effectively	H	L	No change	Strong relationships established during development phase, and ongoing engagement with target groups. Sufficient resourcing allocated/budgeted to lead engagement activity.	Project Manager	Identify additional networks/alternative engagement routes
Post project delivery							
Project-wide	Inability to sustain engagement with targeted audiences	H	M	No change	Seek for activities to be self-led wherever possible and build capacity during delivery stage for community organisations to lead and deliver activities	Project Board	Seek additional funding to support future resourcing
Project-wide	Landowners do not maintain NLHF-funded activities	H	L	No change	Ensure robust legal agreements are put in place during delivery stage to counter this and land managers invested in their projects. Build in periodic monitoring visits.	Project Board	
Project-wide	Reduction in agri-environment payments arising out of changes in government-policy	H	M	Increasing	Through partners, provide strong advocacy to ensure agri-environment schemes continue to meet the needs of landowners on Dartmoor. Maintain up to date and thorough understanding of changes as they occur and plan for some flexibility	Project Board	Identify and scope alternative forms of finance e.g. green investment



NPA/24/02

Dartmoor National Park Authority

5 January 2024

BODY WORN CAMERAS AND VIDEO RANGER TEAM REVIEW

Report of the Head Ranger

Recommendation: **That Members note the report and approve the continued utilisation of Body Worn Cameras and Video.**

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Authority meeting held on 4 February 2022, Members unanimously agreed to introduce Body Worn Cameras (BWC) to the Ranger team on a trial basis for 24 months with a review at 18 months. The introduction of BWC was because of concerns raised within the Ranger team regarding an observed increase in anti-social and hostile behaviour by some visitors.
- 1.2 The primary aim of the pilot was to assess whether BWC would help address incidents of verbal and physical abuse and a secondary aim was to assess their usefulness in situations where we need to enforce existing laws through legal action.

2. Review

- 2.1 The Authority recognise that wearing BWC alone was only part of the measures needed to help reduce the risk of situations escalating. The Ranger team therefore undertook some refresher conflict training for the team on 9 May 2022.
- 2.2 The whole of the Ranger team has utilised the BWC to varying degrees depending on the sectors and areas normally patrolled. The team is required to wear them when patrolling the following locations:
 - Deeper Marsh
 - Bellever
 - Cadover
 - Roborough Down

Furthermore, the team must always have them charged and available within their vehicle to be used if any situation warrants their deployment.

During the pilot period the team has worn the BWC on 211 occasions and recorded footage on 7. An analysis of this can be seen in the table below:

Ranger	Times worn	Times activated	Reason for activation
Rob Steemson	45	3	Groups in Dart valley (precautionary)
Bill Allen	18	1	Buckland Bridge incident (verbal abuse)
Ella Briens	9	0	
Peter Rich	6	0	
Andrea Roberts	53	1	Attending a Rave (precautionary)
Stuart Hooppell	17	0	
Serina Rouse	10	0	
Ethan Parsons	43	2	Recording trials bikes on moor (gather evidence)
Simon Lee	10	0	
Totals	211	7	

Table: 1 Analysis of BWC use

- 2.3 One activation of note occurred on 4 June 2022 when Bill Allen had a situation escalate at Buckland Bridge near Deeper Marsh. To summarise, a member of the public accused the ranger of knocking them over with his Land Rover. Fortunately, the ranger was wearing his BWC (after using it at Deeper Marsh) and was able to record the incident. The footage clearly showed that Bill Allen had not made contact with the gentleman. This was a good example of how the BWCs can also offer a safeguard for the team.
- 2.4 To date the Authority has not followed any legal proceedings utilising the BWCs but interestingly could not have been able to be part of the Community Protection Notice process if the Ranger team had not been equipped with BWCs.
- 2.5 There may be an expectation to wear the BWCs more often, but the Head Ranger is keen that the team should use their discretion regarding their deployment. This should be assessed on a case-by-case basis following a dynamic risk assessment.

3. Summary of feedback from the team

- 3.1 The Ranger team are almost unanimous in their opinion that the BWCs are a useful tool to have in the “Ranger toolkit” when dealing with members of the public. The team understands that they need to be worn at key locations and the evidence presented in this report demonstrates they are following the guidance. The team is keen to maintain the current level of flexibility as to when they are worn when not in the key locations where wearing is compulsory.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 This review has two clear areas for consideration, these being the quantitative data on usage and the qualitative information on how it makes the team feel and how many situations have defused because of the presence of BWC.
- 4.2 The numbers of actual incidents of verbal abuse were low so looking at the quantitative data on occurrence is less applicable. However, it is important to say that overall the team feel safer having them available and support their continued use. The presence of BWC has not met with any notable objections from the members of the public or had any noticeable negative impact on conversations.
- 4.3 The presence of BWC during the confrontation that Bill Allen had at Buckland Bridge shows how well it can protect the team from false allegations.
- 4.4 The Head Ranger would recommend continuing to utilise BWC within the Ranger team as he thinks that the need for them will only grow. Since running this pilot, the Authority has been approached by the RSPB, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the Broads National Park who are also interested in utilising BWC.
- 4.5 Finally, that Members note the report and approve the continued utilisation of Body Worn Cameras and Video.

5 Financial implications

- 5.1 The initial cost of the 11 x Reveal D3 Body Cameras was £4,059.00 (£369 per unit). There is now an annual software subscription of £1,980.00 (11 x £180 per unit). The cost in Year 1 was £6,039.00 and Year 2 £1,980. The total estimated cost for the two-year pilot period was £8,019.

6 Equality and Sustainability Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality or sustainability issues to consider.

SIMON LEE



NPA/24/03

Dartmoor National Park Authority

5 January 2024

Race to Zero

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: That Members note the report and agree to pledge, with other UK National Parks, to take action toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global GHG reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 26 July 2019 Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) joined UK Government and public authorities across the UK and abroad in declaring a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency.
- 1.2 Although Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) has limited services and statutory functions, it still has a significant role to play in responding to both climate change and the decline in biodiversity. Our understanding of how we act in response to these issues is, alongside our partners, evolving with time. The latest science shows that climate impacts are happening sooner than climate models predicted just a decade ago.
- 1.3 The Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan sets the target for the National Park to become carbon negative by at least 2045. Work has progressed in understanding what this means and how it could be practically achieved.

2 Developing an approach for achieving a net zero National Park

- 2.1 Members will be aware that DNPA, together with the family of UK National Parks, commissioned Small World Consulting to produce a carbon baseline assessment for the National Park. This assessment was conducted using a consumption-based methodology which includes emissions associated with the manufacture and production of goods, and other emissions not traditionally included in a carbon footprint assessment. The result is a much fuller understanding of carbon emissions associated with activity across the Dartmoor National Park area.
- 2.2 The final version of the assessment was published in June 2022. It provides a comprehensive review of the carbon footprint of the National Park across key sectors and a trajectory for the National Park to achieve Net-Zero by an ambitious

target date of 2037. This target date is aligned with the Paris Agreement and considered to be aligned with what the science is saying needs to be achieved to mitigate climate change. Importantly, it is based on strategic vision that rural areas will need to decarbonise ahead of urban areas, to offset residual emissions in these areas which are unavoidable. We undertook a [webinar](#) with Exmoor National Park to launch the work and discuss its implications with Small World Consulting and Professor Mike Berners-Lee.

2.3 This methodology has subsequently been applied for all 15 of the UK National Parks as a common approach. All UK National Parks now have a shared set of metrics and targets and trajectories to meet Net Zero targets.

3 Furthering commitment to achieving net zero – UN Race to Zero

3.1 DNPA is a member of the UK National Park Climate Change & Energy Group which helps to co-ordinate the UK National Park collective response.

3.2 As part of a package of work developed on the run up to COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, the UK Parks Chairs and Chief Executive group pledged to collectively apply to join the UN's Climate Initiative 'Race to Zero'.

3.3 Race to Zero is the United Nations' global initiative rallying non-state actors (like cities, local authorities, businesses, universities) to take rigorous and immediate action to halve global emissions by 2030 and deliver a healthier, fairer zero carbon world. It was initiated ahead of the Paris Agreement to help:

- Shift the debate from long-term 2050, to near-term 2030 action
- Focus on a 1.5C warming limit, not 2C
- Structure a role for non-state actors that are crucial to deliver decarbonisation in practice
- Introduce greater rigour and transparency

3.4 Membership to Race to Zero is free of charge. Each Race to Zero member commits to five 'starting line' actions:

- **Pledge:** to take action toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global GHG reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest;
- **Plan:** within 12 months develop an evidence-based emissions reduction plan in line with the pledge;
- **Proceed:** take immediate action towards meeting the pledge;
- **Publish:** commit to report data and actions in relation to meeting the pledge, publicly and at least annually - feeding into the UNFCCC Global Climate Action Portal;
- **Persuade:** align lobbying and advocacy activities with net zero by proactively supporting climate policies consistent with the Race to Zero criteria.

3.5 The UK National Park Climate Change & Energy group is the first group of National Parks to submit an application. The group has recently had confirmation that the application has been successful in principle, based on the Small World Consulting work done to define Paris-aligned Net Zero targets. In Spring 2024 UK National Park Authorities are looking to formalise membership of Race to Zero as a group, this requires each National Park to undertake the first action to 'Pledge to take

action toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global GHG reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest’.

3.6 In summary, the main benefits of joining Race to Zero are:

- It provides an international badge of recognition for taking a leadership role in taking climate action;
- As the first national parks to join the programme it enhances the profile of UK Parks internationally;
- It provides a common framework for collaboration, notably with our Local Authority partners;
- The monitoring and reporting requirements are consistent and demonstrate the collective and individual contribution the UK Parks can make to Net Zero targets;
- It makes a strong case for further investment in UK Parks to accelerate progress towards Net Zero;
- It means our Net-Zero targets can be incorporated within our Management / Partnership Plans in a consistent way.

3.7 Members are asked to agree to Pledge, with other UK National Parks, to take action toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global GHG reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

KEVIN BISHOP



NPA/24/04

Dartmoor National Park Authority

5 January 2024

End Of Season Report 2023

Report of the Director of Conservation and Communities

Recommendation: **That Members note the content of the report.**

1 Background

1.1 Summer 2023 was the second summer without any post covid lockdown restrictions and represents an opportunity to report to members our role in visitor engagement and how this has adapted since the last report in December 2021.

2 2023 Visitor Season

2.1 We built on our array of experience gained during the summers of lockdown (2020 and 2021) and post-lockdown (2022) to inform our plans for 2023 and alongside the work that had been done with the 'behaviour management' sub-group of the Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative (DRCI)

2.2 2023 was characterised by a dry and warm late May and early June and then a cool and wet summer from mid-June onwards. Visitor numbers were significantly down to the outdoors across the South West during the summer of 2023, in part to the inclement weather during school holidays, but also attributed to the cost of living crisis as well as a knock-on from the pandemic. However, it should be noted that visits to the National Park Visitor Centres were up by more than 30% against 2022 – **see 4:2 (Visitor Centres)**

2.3 Following our successful collaborative management plan for 2021 we built on the key themes and worked with partners in the DRCI, which includes Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Dartmoor Common Landowners Association, Devon and Cornwall Police, Devon County Council, Devon Fire and Rescue Service, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Natural England, South West Lakes Trust and Woodland Trust. The key themes:

- Communicating key messages
- Providing a warm welcome
- Limiting damaging activity

2.4 As before, the Plan aimed to influence people's decisions and behaviour from the point they decided to visit Dartmoor all the way through their visit. It aimed to help everybody enjoy Dartmoor but in ways, and at times and locations that do not cause harm to the special qualities of the National Park or to local communities and crucially to support local businesses.

3 Communication and Key Messages

3.1 In 2023 we put out a number of key messages to educate and influence visitor behaviour and in particular around dogs and litter.

3.2 Dogs – We added content to our usual static images with the communications team working with our Deputy Head Ranger, Ella Briens, to put a short film together, sharing why it was important to keep your dog on a lead. This format saw considerably more engagement than past posts, with 61% more shares, 40% more likes/reactions when compared against a static image of a dog with our Love Moor Life branding.

3.3 Litter – Our approach this season responded to an increasing number of questions and negative engagement at our visitor centres around rubbish and dog waste bins. This was addressed by additional signage placed outside Haytor and Postbridge, asking visitors if they were 'looking for a bin?' and then explaining the reason why we don't have litter or dog bins in the moorland areas of the National Park.

3.4 We also offered an inexpensive but practical solution to people who had bagged up their dog waste but didn't want to take it in the car with them, in the form of a 'box' that is leak and odour free. Available in the centres, we asked for a small donation to Donate for Dartmoor. Whilst we only sold a handful of these they have led to more productive conversations as to why we ask visitors to take their dog mess away with them. Visitor centre staff have also reported a reduction in disposal of litter questions since the poster has been installed.

3.5 From a communications viewpoint the principal story in 2023 was the backpack camping appeal and The Court of Appeal ruling unanimously in favour of Dartmoor National Park Authority (and Open Spaces Society) on 31st July. This topic achieved the greatest reach and engagement across all our channels. This was due to the extensive media coverage driving traffic to DNPA social media channels and relevant webpages.

3.6 Top 3 performing posts across all social media channels (January to October 2023):

1. Backpack Camping – reached an agreement with Dartmoor Commons Association (Reached 592,634/ Comments 487/ Shares 981)

2. Backpack Camping – court case loss (Reached 64,693/ Comments 509/ Shares 425)

3. Backpack Camping – agreed to appeal (Reached 33,955/ Comments 513/ Shares 162)

3.7 The backpack camping case was also reflected in the most visited pages on the DNPA website.

3.8 Top 3 most visited website pages (January to October 2023):

1. [Dartmoor Home page](#) – 73,516 views
2. [Camping map](#) – 57, 142 views
3. [Camping](#) – 24,383

4 Providing a warm welcome

4.1 2021 and 2022 had seen increased numbers of people spend their holiday on ‘staycation’. Unfortunately for the tourism economy, numbers in 2023 were down on previous years and Dartmoor, as well as the wider South West, saw fewer ‘new visitors’. However, DNPA wanted to ensure that we were able to offer a range of activities, events and opportunities for all visitors. As part of our ‘State of the Park’ work the Authority also undertook a visitor survey during the summer of 2023.

4.2 Access for All

4.2.1 Defra had offered funding over the winter of 2022-2023 which enabled Dartmoor to be more accessible to a wider audience – this included upgraded trails, new ‘easy-to-use’ infrastructure, improved waymarking, wheelchair friendly picnic tables and a new Walking App highlighting 15 routes.

4.2.2 The National Park website also lists six ‘Miles without Stiles’ routes – (<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/outdoor-activities/accessible-dartmoor>)

4.2.3 The importance of these initiatives was highlighted by the 2023 visitor survey which found that one in ten (10%) respondents reported health conditions or disabilities which they consider affects their ability to access and explore Dartmoor.

4.3 Visitor Centres

4.3.1 Summer visitor figures show that there has been a 33% increase in footfall in the 2023 season, compared to 2022. Whilst this would seemingly be at odds with the earlier assertion about less visitors this also shows that the weather plays a major role in driving people to indoor attractions and/or seeking information on where to go when the weather is more inclement over the summer holidays. They also held a variety of events through the holidays.

4.3.2 The biggest increase in footfall was at Postbridge Visitor Centre in May 2023, which saw an increase in coach visits, boosting numbers by 59% compared to the previous year.

4.3.3 In September Princetown Visitor Centre hosted the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. The visit was marked with a group Donate for Dartmoor contribution and the sale of 13 deerstalker hats! Princetown was unable to hold any major exhibition or visits to the Jack Wigmore garden during 2023 due to the ongoing works in the Ian Mercer Room.

4.3.4 Haytor Visitor Centre saw an increase in visitors as well, in part due to visitors paying for parking when the machine was offline. This allowed for increased interactions as to the 'pay and conserve' rationale of the car parking charges.

4.3.5 In total the three centres saw nearly 115,000 people between 1st April and 30th September 2023.

4.3.6 The visitor centres also hosted a number of events and activities including:

- Self-guided 'egg-venture' trails from Haytor and Postbridge looking for the first signs of Spring.
- Exploring water during May ½ term at Postbridge and Haytor with water inspired challenges.
- A redesigned History Hunters event at Postbridge in September (rescheduled from July due to inclement weather) with over 300 people attending
- Arts and crafts activities available at each Centre throughout the summer holidays.

4.4 Outreach and Engagement

4.4.1 The visitor centres are part of our 'Inreach' engagement programme but It has been a busy season for the Outreach and Engagement team. Schools' visits to Dartmoor have returned to pre-pandemic levels and we are indebted to the knowledge, experience and support of the volunteer education guides.

4.4.2 The stand-out event of the summer was one that did not take part on Dartmoor but saw Dartmoor go to London supporting East Shallowford Farm on their ambitions Farm2City project. This is an important event in ensuring that the value of the outdoors and our protected landscapes are shared with all audiences and in different ways to engage them.

4.4.3 Ranger Ralph continues to be very popular, with members coming from across Devon and beyond to attend the monthly events. The team, however, reach out to many more young people and their families through a series of events ranging from the ever-popular Meldon Wildlife Festival at Okehampton and this year by running events in more urban settings where people could walk from their home in Okehampton (Simmonds Park) or Bovey Tracey (Parke) for example. These events ensure the key Dartmoor messages are delivered to people where they live.

4.4.4 Carrying on in this theme, BMW supported our employment of an officer through their 'Recharge in Nature' funding. This has enabled a community engagement ranger to visit schools and communities in Plymouth and Torbay and through an iterative programme where we look at their local green spaces and then look at what makes Dartmoor so special, we have been able to:

- Engage just under 1000 with Dartmoor, who live within a few miles but have never been;

- Nearly 500 young people have taken part in Dartmoor workshops from schools in Torbay and Plymouth, that have not previously engaged with DNPA and have limited resources to access these opportunities.
- Over 50 young people have enjoyed a Night Under the Stars that otherwise would not have the opportunity to engage in this type of experience, with participants from alternative provision schools and community groups who have additional educational needs, are neurodivergent, are young carers, and those from the LGBTQ+ community.

4.4.5 Through support from the Dartmoor Preservation Association, we have ensured continuity with our Junior and Youth Rangers and provide a space to engage with teenagers and connect them with what makes Dartmoor so special. The programme is supported by our own Rangers and staff to allow us to deliver a wide range of tasks across the whole of Dartmoor.

4.4.6 All of these initiatives allow the National Park to engage with a wide range of people and ensure we get across key messages including Love Moor Life and Ranger Code

4.5 Engagement Volunteers

4.5.1 To support our ranger team we have continued to deploy a number of Engagement Volunteers at key honeypot sites including Haytor, Postbridge, Wistman's Wood track and Foggingtor. The weekends run from the beginning of April until the middle of September and Engagement Volunteers are available between 11:00 – 16:00 and relay key messages including dogs on leads throughout the lambing/bird nesting season and responsible backpack camping messages.

5 Limiting Damaging Activity

5.1 We continued to use the using the bright yellow 'emergency signs' that were created in 2020 at sites across the national park as required. We have updated how these signs are affixed on posts and have reduced the size of some following feedback and ensuring their efficacy.

5.2 Bellever – Riddon Ridge

5.2.1 This area received unwanted focus during 2020 when it suffered from a significant amount of 'fly-camping' with litter and fire pits being in abundance. Using the Dartmoor Commons Act the area was removed from the Camping Map and working with partners the investment of time and resources has now ensured that this is once again a family friendly site.

5.3 Dartmoor Marshals

5.3.1 We managed to secure partnership support for the fourth year to deploy the 'Dartmoor Marshals', who engage and help educate the public at a number of key sites across Dartmoor over 44 nights from the end of July through to the beginning of September. This is a partnership project supported by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, Forestry England, National Trust, Woodland Trust, Duchy of Cornwall, a private landowner and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council.

- 5.3.2 The Marshalls supported the Ranger team and worked into the evening, with four on patrol Sunday to Thursday and six on patrol on Friday and Saturday evenings. Over the course of the 44 evenings the Dartmoor Marshalls spent 1089 person hours patrolling key sites on Dartmoor.
- 5.3.3 Their work and interactions were recorded on the recently developed, and launched in 2023, Ranger app. They recorded 220 entries on the app relating to overnight stays in motorhomes, 'fly-camping' (roadside or other non-permitted locations) including associated open fires, dogs off leads (prior to the end of July) and at least one occasion of stopping from a rave proceeding.
- 5.3.4 As well as being a valuable support to DNPA Rangers and partners, the Marshalls value to the Police is highlighted by their work in averting a rave, stopping a variety of anti-social behaviour and ensuring that incidents are recorded through the proper channels.

5.4 State of the Park – Visitor Survey

- 5.4.1 The Visitor Survey in 2023 asked respondents whether anything had negatively impacted the enjoyment of their visit to Dartmoor National Park. 29% reported litter and a similar percentage reported too many visitors. However, poorly parked and speeding vehicles were the two points that caused the most significant negative impact.
- 5.4.2 The survey also asked for suggestions as to how these and other issues could be managed; this included:
- Better signage;
 - Card payment at car parks;
 - Better management of footpaths;
 - Dog poo and litter bins;
 - Better speeding enforcement and lower speed limit;
 - More public access;
 - BBQ ban and more information on protecting Dartmoor.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no further financial implications. We used agreed funds to support each area of the Authority's work but should highlight our thanks to the Dartmoor Preservation Association for their contribution to work of the Youth and Junior Rangers; to BMW for their Recharge in Nature funding in supporting the Outreach work in Torbay and Plymouth; and all of those organisations and individuals who supported the work of the Dartmoor Marshalls. Finally, the time that our volunteers have generously given to support education, events and engagement.
- 6.2 The visitor survey undertaken was as part of the State of the Park reporting. It is hoped that the survey will be repeated every 2-3 years.

7 Conclusion / Recommendation

- 7.1 Our visitor management plan for the National Park, with active involvement and support from a range of partners including statutory bodies, third sector organisation and private landowners, ensures continuity of message and the greatest engagement with visitors.
- 7.2 Whilst the poor summer weather did mean that visitor figures and hence pressure on services were down compared to 2020 and 2021 the importance of the initiatives and engagement mentioned in the report still ensure that Dartmoor offers a warm welcome with clear guidance and advice.
- 7.3 The importance of Dartmoor was highlighted through the visitor survey which asked '*Whether the importance of being outside in a natural environment has changed since the outbreak of Covid-1?*'. 27% reported this has become more important, with 71% answering that this remained as important as always. 82% of visitors reported that they have visited Dartmoor as often as before the pandemic and 15% have visited more often since the pandemic.
- 7.4 Officers will continue to work with partners to consider plans for next summer and with the Dartmoor Rural Crime Initiative to ensure coordination of message and support of projects and messaging.
- 7.5 The success of the visitor engagement is largely due to the support of our partners, the volunteers who gave their time, the dedication of staff and the engagement and support of the public.
- 7.6 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

RICHARD DRYSDALE

