



DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK FORUM BRIEFING NOTE

July 2024

E-news from the National Park

We produce a number of different e-news updates from the National Park, from activities and events to press releases, and getting more involved in our work through consultations, such as the Management Plan Review and the Local Plan Review.

Email updates 'Activities, Events and Volunteering' are sent out regularly and you can sign up for this and our other e-newsletters on our website.

<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/keep-in-touch>

If you prefer real time news you can follow us on LinkedIn (Dartmoor National Park Authority), Facebook (enjoydartmoor1), Instagram (lovedartmoor) and X (@dartmoornpa)

NATIONAL POLICY, GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

The Financial Challenge facing the Authority

The Authority continues to be concerned about future budgets. The flat cash core grant, unchanged since 2019/20, along with inflationary pressures and pay increases, presents challenges in balancing the budget. Had the National Park Grant kept pace with inflation, its value would now exceed £8.2 million. Currently, we receive £3.8 million core grant, but for 2024/25 we received additional £500,000 to be split 50:50 for revenue and capital. We expect to receive £3.8 million for 2025/26.

Funding

Our core grant from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for 2024/25 is £3,825,865. We have also received a one-off additional payment of £500,000 for 2024/25. The additional money is evenly split between revenue and capital. Whilst we welcome the one-off additional payments in 2023/24 and 2024/25 these do not address the fact that our core grant has reduced by more than 40% in real terms since 2010/11. We have no indication of future funding – this will be subject to the Spending Review due in the Autumn.

Our ability to provide a high-quality service in priority areas depends on raising significant funding from other sources (charges for services, fees, external grants etc.). In 2024/25 we are forecasting generating £2,596,155 from external sources such as competitive grants, planning fees, car park charges, etc. Most of our priority actions are focused on securing income to deliver work programmes. External income is not a replacement for our core funding which is essential to maintain key services such as: planning, rangers, conservation advice, access management etc.; the external income enables us to undertake practical projects and programmes of work that deliver National Park purposes.

Business Plan 2024/25

The Authority produces an annual [Business Plan](#) setting out key actions to help deliver the shared vision in the Dartmoor Partnership Plan - to make Dartmoor better for future generations: climate resilient, nature rich, beautiful, connected to the past and looking to the future; a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, work or visit. A place that is loved, cherished and cared for.

The Business Plan sets out:

- Our priorities
- Key actions to deliver our priorities
- Performance targets for our key services
- The funding available to deliver our services and key actions

Changes to Authority Membership

There are two changes to the membership of the National Park Authority:

- Jerry Brook (replaced Mr George Gribble in May 2024 as a Devon County Council appointee)
- Mary Seddon (appointed by the Secretary of State to represent national interests) will replace Andrew Cooper with effect from 1 July 2024

We would like to record our thanks to George Gribble and Andrew Cooper for their contributions whilst acting as members of the Authority.

Dartmoor Foundation

As reported previously, the Dartmoor Foundation is a new charity being established by the National Park Authority to secure increased funding to help deliver the [Dartmoor Partnership Plan](#). The Partnership Plan is a plan for the National Park with a vision to make Dartmoor better for future generations: climate resilient, nature rich, beautiful, connected to the past and looking to the future; a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can live, work or visit.

The Foundation will be strategically aligned with Dartmoor National Park Authority but separate from it. The two organisations will work together and collaborate closely but in its day-to-day operations, the Foundation has 'directive' control over its work and will function autonomously. It will be governed by its own board of trustees, run by its own executive team and will work with a range of partners, not just the National Park Authority. Founding Trustees have been appointed and are about to advertise for a new Director to take the Foundation forward.

The Foundation will be a focus for fundraising; promoting collaboration, innovation and creativity and a practical delivery body that can act in ways that the Authority cannot. Later in 2024 the Foundation will be reaching out to local communities, organisations and other potential partners to gather ideas, both big and small, that can help shape its first list of priority projects. Put simply, its mission is to

raise funds for and enable the delivery of projects that can help realise the vision set out in the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan.

The Foundation will be formally launched in December 2024 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the legislation that established National Parks in England and, most importantly, to look ahead to the next 75 years on Dartmoor.

For more information please contact Kevin Bishop: pbailey@dartmoor.gov.uk

Independent Review of Protected Site Management on Dartmoor

The independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor led by David Fursdon published their [report](#) in December 2023. The review is very positive about the role of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan stating that it provides a clear landscape-level vision and as such should be supported by commoners and stakeholders. The panel was also positive about the role that the Authority has played in developing initiatives like Dartmoor Farming Futures and the Dartmoor Vision.

The Panel's report contains 42 separate recommendations. Their findings have largely been supported by all of the key stakeholder groups.

The Government published their [response](#) to the Panel's recommendations in April. Key to the Government response is the commitment to establish a Dartmoor Land Use Management Group to strengthen partnership working and provide a longer-term governance structure. The Authority is identified to provide the secretariat for this Group which will have an independent chair appointed by the Secretary of State.

For more information please contact Kevin Bishop: pbailey@dartmoor.gov.uk

Buckfastleigh Moor

Following a successful funding bid, Dartmoor National Park Authority is pleased to announce it has acquired Buckfastleigh Moor.

The new acquisition, consisting of 858 acres of common land, ensures long-term protection of the National Park's special qualities in this distinctive part of Dartmoor.

In November 2023, Defra announced a new capital grant scheme for land acquisition in protected landscapes that would support management of water resources. The Authority applied to the fund and was successful in securing a 100% capital grant to purchase Buckfastleigh moor which had been for sale on the open market.

The total area acquired is 858 acres and all of it is registered common land. Accessed from Chalk Ford, Lud Gate or Water Oak Corner, the acquisition area runs in a northwest direction to Ryder's Hill – the highest point on Southern Dartmoor – before tracking south east to Snowdon and Puper's Hill. As well as sections of the Two Moors Way and Abbot's Way, it contains rivers such as the Mardle and Dean Burn – already identified as priority areas for reducing flood risk. The acquisition adjoins Holne Moor, part of which the Authority already owns.

Officers have met with Buckfastleigh West Commoners Association and are keen to work with commoners to develop a joint management plan and to get the moor into an agri-environment agreement.

Sister Park Agreement

Dartmoor is the first National Park in the UK to sign a 'Sister Park Agreement' with the US National Parks Service. We now have a formal partnership with Cuyahoga Valley National Park near Cleveland in Ohio. Dartmoor and Cuyahoga Valley National Park share certain similarities: both are free to enter/visit; they are 'lived-in landscapes'; they have large conurbations on their 'doorstep' and they share a desire to do more for nature and the society they serve. The agreement was formally signed in June.

We have already identified some areas where we can learn a lot from our new 'Sister', these include: engagement of volunteers, fundraising and environmental monitoring. We also noted that their budget is more than double ours and the area of the National Park is a lot less.

For more information please contact Kevin Bishop: pbailey@dartmoor.gov.uk

New Duty to Further National Park Purposes

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (section 245) places a new duty on relevant authorities (including local planning authorities) to seek to further the statutory purposes of a National Park (the Broads or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in England in exercising their functions. This strengthens the previous duty to have regard to the statutory purposes of National Parks. This is a welcome development and one that National Park Authorities and the Campaign for National Parks have advocated for a long period. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is due to issue guidance on this new duty.

Campaign for National Parks Health Check Report

In April 2024 the Campaign for National Parks published a [health check report on nature recovery](#). This report highlights the importance of National Parks as the 'last refuges for many species that are on the brink of extinction in England and Wales' and the need for more to be done to address the nature emergency.

A key issue for the National Park Authority is the lack of direct powers and resources to influence land management and other practices. The Authority received a [report](#) on the work we are doing (often in partnership with others) to further nature recovery at its meeting in April. Examples of practical projects and initiatives include:

- Walkham Landscape Recovery and involvement in the Central and East Dartmoor Landscape Recovery projects
- Dartmoor Headwaters project
- Curlew Headstart project (with Duchy of Cornwall and Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust)
- Non-native invasive species programme
- Healthy livestock programme
- Farming in Protected Landscapes – funded the planting of over 1,000 native trees, creation of over 40 hectares of new habitat for nature and improving the condition of hundreds of hectares of habitat for biodiversity, projects have also included trials to reduce the dominance of Molinia on the moor through targeted grazing using virtual fencing systems for cattle alongside mechanical cutting
- Pine Marten re-introduction programme (partnership project led by Devon Wildlife Trust)

For more information please contact Chris Giles: cgiles@dartmoor.gov.uk Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

Defra recently published the [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework](#) (2024) which sets out how the targets established within the Environment Improvement Plan (2023) should be delivered within National Parks and National Landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). This includes collective non-statutory objectives for protected landscapes relating to the protection, enhancement and enjoyment of nature. There are also targets relating to climate change, archaeology, access and recreation. These targets are for the area and not specifically for the National Park Authority. Defra have commissioned Natural England to look at how the national targets for protected landscapes are divided between each protected landscape; the aim is for area specific targets for each protected landscape.

We hope that the Targets and Outcomes Framework will influence the allocation of resources through the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), National Park core grant and other competitive funding streams operated by Government. There may also be a need to review the tools available to deliver nature enhancement at a local level.

Legal challenge regarding right to backpack camp under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985

As previously reported Mr and Mrs Darwall have challenged the legal right to backpack camp under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985. In summary, the High Court ruled that there was no right, the three Appeal Court judges ruled (unanimously) that there was. Mr and Mrs Darwall have been granted permission by the Supreme Court to appeal the ruling by the Court of Appeal. The Supreme Court will hear the case on 8 October 2024. In the meantime, the ruling by the Court of Appeal applies and the camping map on our website indicates where you can legally backpack camp. The camping map has been developed with landowners and backpack/access stakeholders. There is also an accompanying code of practice.

SUSTAIN

Landscape Recovery

The Landscape Recovery (LR) scheme is the third tier of Defra's new Environmental Land Management scheme offering grants to restore nature at a landscape scale through collaborative working over a 20 year period. There are three pilot schemes on Dartmoor covering about 30% of the National Park, these have progressed through a very competitive process to reach a consultative development stage.

The East Dartmoor LR is led by the Wildlife Trust and covers the lower sections of the Bovey catchment with a focus on species conservation. The Walkham project is led by DNPA covering the Walkham river catchment on the west of the moor and the Central Dartmoor scheme is led by a farmer CIC with the Duchy of Cornwall looking at the central portion of the National Park. These latter two schemes will focus on priority and protected habitats. Each scheme includes a two year development phase that aims to bring communities together to agree a long term vision and plan for each landscape that will be fully costed and funded to enable deliver across two decades.

Dartmoor Headwaters

The Dartmoor Headwaters natural flood management team have continued to develop projects in priority catchments which are at risk of downstream flooding, whilst working with the Environment Agency to secure project funding until 2033. In addition to the two Project Officers currently employed on the project, the project has recently recruited an Engagement Officer and later in the year will recruit an additional Project Officer and Archaeologist to help scale up the delivery of this important work for climate resilience and nature recovery.

In the 2023/24 restoration season, the South West Peatland Partnership completed over 250 hectares of peatland restoration on Dartmoor across sites at Tavy Head, Great Gnats Head and Burrator. Project Officers are currently preparing restoration plans for the coming season where works will continue at Hangingstone Hill and begin near Cranmere Pool.

Both elements of Headwaters are currently planning for future phases, which will secure these important environmental benefits (such as the reduction of flooding and drought whilst increasing biodiversity) into the future at a time when their value will become increasingly important to society.

Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes

Following a successful application for development funding, Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) have been working with partners, over the past year to develop a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for a landscape scale programme that benefits people and nature.

The Partnership's aim is to create more naturally resilient landscapes, through working with land managers and farmers -

- *we will have a better understanding of grassland and river habitats, moorland birds, and ancient trees;*
- *capturing more water and carbon in the landscape through natural flood management, peatland restoration and restoration of ancient woodland sites;*
- *facilitating knowledge sharing through mentoring opportunities and events.*

...and connecting people to their place, with a specific focus on the gateway towns of Okehampton, Ivybridge and Princetown –

- *improving access and route knowledge in and from the towns to enable active travel to green spaces;*
- *celebrating landscape heritage, for example through a programme of river and moorland festivals;*
- *opportunities for community grant funding.*

Partners include the Woodland Trust, Sustrans, RSPB, Shallowford Trust, Emergency Exit Arts & Flock SW, Environment Agency, South West Water, Westcountry Rivers Trust.

The programme directly delivers 24 of the aims of the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan.

We will submit our bid for this five year programme in August 2024, if successful in securing the funding, the programme will run from January 2025 to 2030.

For more information please contact: James Sharpe - jsharp@dartmoor.gov.uk

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Farming in Protected Landscapes is a time limited grant scheme for farmers and land managers in National Parks and National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)).

The programme, developed by Defra, and delivered locally by the Authority, is currently funded till March 2025.

Up to the end of March this year the programme has awarded over £1.5m to projects on Dartmoor that deliver benefits for Climate, Nature, People and Place. The funding is flexible within these four outcomes and applicants bring their own ideas forward for funded projects. There is a small Dartmoor FiPL team within DNPA available to help applicants to develop their ideas and make the funding application.

There remains several hundred thousand pounds to allocate in the current financial year, farmers and other land managers should contact the team for an informal discussion about their project ideas, or complete the short Expression of Interest form on the FiPL section of the DNPA website.

To find out more about the programme and to see examples of projects funded to date, visit:

<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/living-and-working/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes>

For information about funding a project, please visit the website and contact the Dartmoor FiPL team - fipl@dartmoor.gov.uk.

ENJOY

Ramblers Funding

DNPA have received a generous donation from the Ramblers to make improvements to rights of way through Longtimber Woods in Ivybridge. The funding will build on the improvements already underway through Defra Access for All project money, which has paid for works to the riverside picnic area, resulting in improved access for trampers and mobility scooter users.

Current plans for the Ramblers funding are to improve the condition of the footpath running alongside the river towards Kings Wood. Some sections of this footpath have become increasingly wet and muddy so we hope that this money will support improvements to what is a fantastic riverside walk through the woods.

Access for All funding – Phase 2 - 2024-25

DNPA are underway with project delivery for the second phase of Defra Access for All funding. In phase 1 (2022-23) we delivered approximately £60,000 worth of access improvement across the park. We are now delivering projects for the second phase of funding which totals £75,000. Projects include access improvements at Fingle Woods, Blackingstone Rock, Fernworthy Reservoir, Longtimber Woods and Wistman's Woods..

For further information please contact Tim Russell – trussell@dartmoor.gov.uk.

Active Travel Funding

DNPA have received £100,000 from Active Travel England to develop a national park equivalent of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

The funding will be used by DNPA to extend the county-wide plan being developed by DCC to cover a more in-depth analysis of provision and opportunity within the national park. A key focus will be on data collection and route identification to promote more sustainable transport both to and on the moor.

Stakeholder consultation will form a key element of this project, DNPA will reach out to the forum in due course regarding opportunities to engage.

Further updates to follow. *For further information please contact James Wright – jwright@dartmoor.gov.uk.*

Community Engagement

The current focus for the work of DNPA Community Engagement Rangers is young people, with the majority being aged 12-17. This objective is delivered through a suite of programmes and events tailored to a range of audiences. Research shows that spending time in nature is good for you physically and mentally and the teenage generation continue to miss these opportunities, whilst needing them the most. The work of our Community Engagement Rangers provides opportunities for young people who currently feel excluded from nature, or struggle access the National Park, a chance to experience Dartmoor. Helping young people to spend more quality time in the natural world benefits them personally but also makes them better custodians of this special landscape.

All activities encompass three objectives allowing young people to:

- Connect with nature
- Understand and respect the landscape
- Improve health and wellbeing

Our three core programmes are:

- Dartmoor Youth Rangers
- Girls do Dartmoor
- Nights Under the Stars

Over the past year, we have delivered 40 events in total, engaging with 638 participants.

For further information please contact Katherine Koster-Shadbolt – kkostershadbolt@dartmoor.gov.uk

Donate for Dartmoor supports a variety of projects across Dartmoor.

Donations of time and money are essential for us to be able to look after the heritage and wildlife of Dartmoor and to make it a place for everyone to enjoy today, tomorrow and for the future

For more information please contact: Richard Drysdale - rdrysdale@dartmoor.gov.uk