

MINUTES OF THE DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN DELIVERY BOARD

Wednesday, 9 December, 2009 held at Parke, Bovey Tracey

Present:

Bill Hitchins (**Chair**) (Member DNPA)
Tim Beavon (West Devon Borough Council)
Caroline Bullock (Natural England)
Ken Carter (South Hams District Council)
Mat Carter (Natural England)
Tony Clark (MoD)
Doug Eltham (Devon County Council)
Sue Goodfellow (DNPA)
Chris Hall (South West Lakes Trust)
Rob Hatt (SWRDA)
Cherry Herbert (Environment Agency)
Dan Janota (DNPA)
John Longworth-Krafft (National Trust)
Phil Markham (DNPA)
Ian Mercer (Dartmoor Commoners Council)
Maurice Retallick (Member DNPA)
Andrew Shadrake (Dartmoor Circle Ltd)
Mark Walker (Dartmoor Partnership)
Patrick Watson (Dartmoor Access Forum)
Sue Halse (DNPA)

- 1. Welcome and introductions:** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all to introduce themselves.
- 2. Apologies:** Kevin Bishop (DNPA), Martin Weiler (EA), Evelyn Stacey (SWLT), Jeanette Ward (NE), David Incoll and Alan Robinson (WDBC/SHDC), Lesley Smith (CCD), Tom Stratton and Roger Halliday (Duchy of Cornwall), Chris Marrow (FC), Phil McMahan (EH)
- 3. Progress report for Year 2 of the Management Plan:** Sue Goodfellow thanked everyone for providing information about their organisation's progress, and noted that a huge variety of work was going on with the key partners. Highlighting statistics to provide a comparison with last year, very good progress was being made overall, with 300 (of 373 total) in progress and on time. A few objectives need reassessment, and of those falling behind, most are programmed to happen later. A number of objectives were waiting on production of the Design Guide, and issues with consultants had delayed this. The Recreation Strategy had also been delayed, but was now making good progress. Nine objectives were in the 'significantly delayed/unlikely to achieve' category, relating mainly to military training or economic activity. Catchment sensitive farming policy had changed, and there had been little expression of interest from communities on town design statements. Areas of slower progress were Habitats & Wildlife, Historic Buildings, Enabling Access, New Development and Military Training. The military issues here related to access on firing ranges, and the position had now been determined and was unlikely to change. Tony Clarke commented that the downturn in numbers 'in progress' on military objectives was because some had been completed, not that they had fallen behind. He proposed that future statistics identified these. This was agreed.

4. **Report back on last year's Delivery Board priorities:** The Board indicated last year that they would like a closer focus on climate change and farming issues and a more detailed report was given on these areas of activity.

- **Climate change:** DNPA and partners were developing 'One Planet Dartmoor', a project to encourage everyone to live within the resources of one planet, and based on the 10 principles drawn up by WWF. The project was launched at the opening summit of the Dartmoor & Exmoor Low Carbon Festival held at the Met Office in October, where everyone was asked to record 3 suggestions to tackle climate change. These were displayed again on a board at the back of the Delivery Board meeting, and Board members were asked to add a contribution. The 'Dartmoor and Exmoor Low Carbon Festival' was very successful, with involvement from local communities including a green street fair, guided walks and visits to renewable energy installations.

Sue Goodfellow read Tom Stratton's (Duchy of Cornwall) report on the woodfuel co-operative to the meeting, a copy of which is appended to these minutes (Appendix 1). Micro-hydro projects were also being considered, though funding would be required. During the year discussions were held between the Environment Agency, Natural England and the DNPA to facilitate proposals, a joint visit was made to the Green Valleys project on the Brecon Beacons with DARE and Dartmoor Circle members as well as EA and DNPA staff, and meetings and site visits were held with a number of key people to explore the potential for micro-hydro on Dartmoor. The Mires for the Moors project to help restore blanket bog on Dartmoor and sequester carbon had received funding from Ofwat, and the Action for Wildlife Partnership (DNPA, NE, EA and the Duchy) were working closely on this with the commoners and MoD.

Andrew Shadrake (Dartmoor Circle) circulated a 'mind map' of the Dartmoor Low Carbon Plan, illustrating where achievement on 10 sustainable principles would benefit One Planet Dartmoor. The Circle had researched the carbon footprint for Dartmoor, including energy, transport and the food sector. He emphasised that a lot of people don't have carbon reduction as a priority; rather, their concerns are issues such as families, money, bills, stress and health. He had drafted a plan that aimed to achieve carbon reduction by addressing these key issues, and the Circle wanted to work the District and County Councils to help achieve their carbon reduction targets, which also achieves for the Management Plan. He requested partners to review the draft Low Carbon Plan and feed back via the Dartmoor Circle website.

Andrew also noted that the sense of place and cultural aspects of Dartmoor are not necessarily related strictly to the park boundary. Dartmoor was, and is, sustained by the towns around it, and this should be taken into account.

- **Farming:** The farming sub-group met in March to address issues in the Management Plan. The Hill Farm Project has moved into a new phase, with funding from the RDA enabling the appointment of new staff; more information was included in the latest 'Farming Matters' newsletter, available at the meeting.

The group had recommended the re-establishment of the Moorland Management Forum: 2 meetings had since been held, at Haytor and Peter Tavy commons, where there had been useful and lively discussion. DNPA's Farmers' Forum had met for the second time recently, where discussion centred on what farmers needed to stay in business and farm sustainably.

A Secretary of State visit had highlighted a new approach clarifying what farmers are being asked to deliver, and how they can be enabled to deliver, utilising their knowledge and experience, and with sufficient funding.

The Dartmoor Partnership was working closely with farmers and other members from tourism businesses and serviced accommodation, where a key message was to buy and eat locally sourced food. Mark Walker emphasised that they worked within the Greater Dartmoor area – Dartmoor National Park plus surrounding parishes.

The Moor Skills apprenticeship scheme was working well, and DNPA continued to run annual rural skills courses for local people.

Ian Mercer voiced concern that biodiversity targets were distorting land management on Dartmoor, with clearly visible effects such as the spread of rowan, and overgrowth of vegetation. The capacity for farmers to manage land was being endangered by the restrictions on stocking, causing hill farmers to turn to other work to balance their books. The next generation may consider that other work is easier and more financially rewarding than farming, resulting in more people leaving farming. National guidelines for agri-environment schemes didn't take account of the significant differences between the north and south of country: for example, the climate in the south is such that Dartmoor farmers could finish their own stock. Ian felt it was extremely important for NE to be working in parallel with the commoners and graziers. Farmers need more ownership of what they are being asked to do, working to an agreed plan which they buy into themselves, and this needs DEFRA agreement, NE support, and sufficient funding.

Rob Hatt commented that it was important to ensure that Axis 2 works for Dartmoor, and emphasised the need to act now for funding, as 50% is already committed, and another 20% would be committed by April 2010. Real, on-the-ground projects should be developed concentrating on individual or a collaboration of businesses.

Maurice Retallick reinforced these points, emphasising the benefits to the landscape of hill farming. Accessing funds was difficult for individual farmers, and the current agri-environment payments didn't replace the headage payments made in pre-SFP days.

Tim Beavon noted that the programme covered the whole of Dartmoor, and 2 measures: development of supply chains and training and support for small businesses, were being supported by Devon Renaissance teams who were working to support applicants. It was agreed that contact details should be circulated with these minutes (Appendix 2).

Mat Carter confirmed that NE were carrying out numerous SSSI condition assessments, and were keen to work with farmers to achieve agreed outcomes. To try and ensure there was no gap between schemes, they were working on long lead-in times before expiry of old and start of new schemes. He was aware that currently stocking rates were not being met, and other restrictions may influence agreements, but NE were open to discussion on new agreements, and would willingly share information to improve understanding on how decisions are made. Caroline Bullock added that at the height of ESA schemes, £5m was going into Dartmoor, and that level was just being reached again now with Environmental Stewardship schemes.

- 5. Identifying and measuring outcomes – links with State of the Park Report:** Dan Janota updated members on the State of the Park report (SotPR). He advised on the progress being made towards:
- filling the gaps identified in the SotPR and at the last Delivery Board Meeting, which included: visitor and non-visitor profiles, habitat monitoring and the impact of climate change on the Dartmoor landscape. The Delivery Board last year discussed climate change (in particular carbon emissions) hill farming and qualitative visitor data.
 - pursuing opportunities for new information identified in the SotPR and at the previous Delivery Board meeting, which included STEAM (a tourism monitoring tool), Landscape Character Assessments, footpath and car park counters, aerial photography, and education / learning outcomes.

Key areas of progress were then identified: good progress has been made by using the STEAM model, which is a trend model for tourism data [DNPA working with the Dartmoor Partnership - contact is Richard Drysdale, Sustainable Tourism Officer, DNPA] . Qualitative data is still lacking, but may be improved by utilising the MENE (Measuring Engagement in the Natural Environment) survey, a project being led by NE, but that information is currently not available at NP level [contact is David Dixon: SWPLF].

A full season's worth of information is now available through counters on footpaths, Information Centres and toilets, and car parks, giving a comprehensive picture of visitor numbers, Haytor being a particularly good example [contact is Andrew Watson, Principal Access and Ranger Officer, DNPA]. Landscape Character Assessment is in progress, led by consultants, to be completed by the end of March 2010 [contact is Phil Markham, Head of Service (Forward Planning and Community) DNPA].

DNPA is also investigating the potential for multi-spectral satellite imagery, able to provide information on vegetation cover, hydrology, erosion, field boundaries, and moorland fires [contact is David Partridge, GIS Officer, DNPA]. DNPA is also working in partnership in the SWPLF to gain access to data held by NE within GENREP (Genesis Reporting Package), to give a clearer picture of how agri-environment schemes are delivering Management Plan outcomes [contact: David Dixon: SWPLF].

The Place Survey, a new government-led residents' survey, gives data on, for example, how people feel about living in the Park, perceptions of crime, and what improvements they would like to see [contact is Dan Janota, Planning Officer (Forward Planning and Community), DNPA]. Priorities for the coming year include economic value and qualitative visitor and non-visitor information, and starting to think about the review of the State of the Park report in order to inform the development of the next Management Plan.

Tony Clark asked if partner contacts could be identified and circulated with the minutes – they are noted within the text above [bracketed beside relevant sections].

Sue G noted that a national ecosystem services pilot project was being trialled by NE in the North of England and in the SW in areas on Dartmoor and Exmoor. This was aiming to quantify ecosystem services under 8 headings including water, and recreational use. Rob Hatt offered assistance from RDA. Maurice Retallick voiced concern over the possibility that work on the Mires on the Moors project was being offered to outside contractors, rather than using local contractors and helping the local economy. He was also concerned about the grazing implications, which Ian echoed. Sue noted that knowledge about all the implications would build up, and asked if any organisations were gathering any monitoring data, whether it could be shared. Cherry

Herbert explained that the Environment Agency published a lot of data on its website, and it might be possible to separate out that information for Dartmoor. The SW Observatory site was also very useful.

Phil Markham commented that there were a lot of people resident on Dartmoor who were not involved in farming, and work was ongoing to support them. DNPA is keen to build further information relating to housing needs, and is working with District Councils to that end. Economic data is important, and research into employment land development allied to settlements was continuing. A key aim in the Management Plan was to retain services within the Park, and a crude guide measured numbers of village halls, Post Offices, primary schools and bus services: all key to healthy communities. Dan added that there is an economic model for Dartmoor, which can provide information on business sectors, but cannot provide detail by village.

Rob Hatt noted that rural services and non-farm businesses went to the heart of rural development, and the RDPE has resources for local services until 2013.

6. Recommendations from the Board for delivery in 2010

Ian asked that the list of demands on partners be reviewed, as some were not achievable, for example 'the number of commoners grazing shall be sustained' for which the Dartmoor Commoners' Council was the lead partner. The Council have no power to ensure this; they can only try to enable and support their members.

It was suggested that the Board continue to focus on farming, climate change, and add economic development as three key priorities. Rob Hatt endorsed this, but felt that there was no momentum for economic development. He suggested a 'task and finish group' comprising key organisations to drive an agenda. Tim Beavon reported that South Hams and West Devon Councils were both producing delivery action plans, which could be pulled together, plus Local Action Group work. Sue G suggested that a sub-group be formed to look at economic development action. Organisation representatives volunteering to work on this were Dartmoor Circle, West Devon BC, South Hams DC, Dartmoor Partnership, SWRDA, DNPA; and it was suggested Teignbridge DC and SW Rural Enterprise Gateway be included.

Doug Eltham asked about updating the State of the Park report, and Dan confirmed that it would be starting in the next 18 months. He felt that the outcomes of the Plan not being achieved should be flagged up.

7. Communication and publicity – Delivering for Dartmoor newsletter

Copies of the 2010 newsletter were circulated, and contributors were thanked. Thoughts about circulation included using Facebook, in order to encourage 2-way interaction. For publishing general news, DNPA has a number of communication channels already set up, but it was felt important that the Management Plan is identified as partnership work. Andrew suggested the use of the One Planet website. John Longworth-Krafft endorsed the use of internet sites such as Twitter, and Youtube, and felt that the case study approach of the newsletter brought it to life.

8. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 8 December 2010

9. Any Other Business: Doug Eltham commented that he had learnt a lot about upland farming at the meeting. He felt there were many people who used Dartmoor who didn't know much about upland farming, and more effort should be put into getting this information out to the public.

Wood-fuel Cooperative Report from Tom Stratton, Duchy of Cornwall, December 2009

The installation of a wood-chip boiler at Brimpts Farm last year inspired Andy Bradford our tenant and a small group of local enthusiasts including the Duchy to begin discussions relating to the establishment of a wood-fuel cooperative. An application was made to Defra's Bioenergy Infrastructure Grant Scheme earlier this year in order to source funding to set this up and purchase capital equipment to extract timber and deliver chip. A chipping machine had previously been obtained by Andy with a 100% Forestry Commission grant.

A grant of £80,000 was secured in the spring and the Cooperative was formed shortly thereafter. It now has a Constitution and an operational committee consisting of 6 members. Timber is being purchased from local Forestry Commission woodlands and it is envisaged that further timber will be obtained from other local producers including the Duchy going forwards.

Timber is dried 'in the round' at Brimpts before being chipped and delivered direct to the four boilers that the Cooperative currently supplies. This includes the system at Brimpts. In the region of 500 tonnes of chip will be supplied this winter.

The Cooperative operates on a not for profit basis and it has been established with the intention of ensuring that locally sourced fuel is available at a sustainable rate to the consumer. This is the key to ensuring that boiler systems prove viable.

We are alive to the fact that use of logs is increasing and we are currently investigating the feasibility of purchasing a firewood processing machine which could be made available within Dartmoor, either with or without an operator.

The Cooperative seeks to provide training and employment opportunities and a small sub-group has been set up to identify future staffing needs and in turn the training that will be needed to support this.

At the time of writing, Andy is also developing an RDPE bid to provide further financial assistance. We are also applying for planning permission to install a hard standing area on the farm to assist with the storage of timber.

You may have heard that we have also been working with Chris France (DNPA) in relation to applying for funding through a British Gas Initiative called 'Green Streets'. This has been with a view to securing in the region of £130,000 to provide a wood-chip boiler for the DNPA visitor Centre and Duchy office. A balance of this funding would be administered through the DSDF fund to provide funding to assist with a range of smaller scale renewable energy projects across the moor. Our bid was selected as one of the final three (from forty) across the South West Region and whilst I am afraid that we were not successful in this second round, we have been advised that the bid is receiving further consideration and we await the outcome.

Carbon Farms Project

This project is progressing well, with fifteen audits now completed and a further four pending. The original target sample was thirty and the audits are being part funded by the Duchy and DSDF fund, with a balance of £100 (from a total of £350) coming from the farmer.

The aim of the audits is to provide a carbon footprint assessment of each holding and areas are identified where carbon emissions can be reduced through prudent management of soil and other on-farm resources. In addition to the half day audit, farmers have the option to obtain an additional half day of advice linked to either soil sampling / management or renewable energy. Soil samples are arranged by FWAG and the renewable energy assessments are carried out by the Devon Association for Renewable Energy.

It has been found in all cases to date that farmers can create annual savings far in excess of the requested £100 contribution through more appropriate use of fertilisers and farm yard manure. Wider issues associated with soil management such as the use of clover to mitigate the need for more frequent ploughing and re-seeding can also serve to reduce costs whilst also reducing carbon emissions.

The DSDF money needs to be spent by February 2010 and we would hope that by then the target of thirty farms will have very nearly been reached.

A launch event was held by kind permission of Philip French at Corringdon Farm in June and a subsequent event was held recently at the Duchy's Higher Shapley Farm. These events have been funded by the Duchy and the latter focused particularly on soil and sward management which proved interesting to the thirty or so attendees.

Appendix 2

Contacts:

The Website for Greater Dartmoor Leaf is:

<http://www.ruraldevon.org/localaction/>

A brief leaflet on the fund is at

<http://www.ruraldevon.org/updocs/LEAF4PRINT150409.pdf>

DNPA working with the Dartmoor Partnership:

contact is Richard Drysdale, Sustainable Tourism Officer, DNPA

Measuring Engagement in the Natural Environment survey:

contact is David Dixon: SWPLF

Information counters on DNP footpaths, Information Centres, car parks:

contact is Andrew Watson, Principal Access and Ranger Officer, DNPA

Landscape Character Assessment:

contact is Phil Markham, Head of Service (Forward Planning and Community) DNPA

The Place Survey:

contact is Dan Janota, Planning Officer (Forward Planning and Community), DNPA].