

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN DELIVERY BOARD MEETING: THURSDAY 9 DECEMBER 2010

Present:

Bill Hitchins, Chair (DNPA)
Kevin Bishop, Chief Exec, DNPA
Sue Goodfellow, Director of Conservation, DNPA
Tony Clark, Dartmoor Training Area
Ken Carter, South Hams District Council
Martin Weiler, Environment Agency
Mary Elkington, Teignbridge District Council
Andrew Shadrake, Dartmoor Circle
Martin Longley, Natural England
Doug Eltham, Devon County Council
Keith Green, Dartmoor Partnership
Chris Hall, South West Lakes Trust
Dan Janota, DNPA
Sue Halse, DNPA

Apologies:

Richard Sheard, Robin Leivers, Professor Ian Mercer.

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and outlined the purpose of the meeting.

2. Progress Report on Year 3 of the Management Plan

Sue Goodfellow emphasised that the report before the meeting showed progress that had been reported so far; updating would continue, if partners could provide any further information by Christmas.

Headlines were: overall, 81% of the goals and means to achieve are in progress or have been completed; 19% are classed as falling behind or significantly delayed / unlikely to be achieved. Although there are more falling behind in this third year, a number are likely to catch up again soon, for example the Local Development Framework and the Recreational Strategy have been delayed but will be published early in 2011.

The ambitions were considered in more detail, noting capacity issues in some cases, and that the effects of financial restraints are starting to show. DNPA's proposed Cultural Heritage Strategy would not now be produced; instead the Business Plan and Directorate plans would focus and direct the work on the ground. It was agreed that it would be helpful to share plans with relevant partners. DNPA was reviewing all activities, starting from the statutory minimum to be provided, and then building up from that. Mary Elkington suggested that an outline of a short direction of travel was needed to see partners though the next few months where things were very fluid. It was noted that partners should ensure that they did not all cover the same areas of work, and that communication was very important.

Climate Change ambitions seemed to be falling behind, possibly due to interpretation of progress, and because not all progress had been updated. There

were interconnecting effects, i.e. the temporary hold on Mires project work was affecting some Learning and Education goals, and Community Wellbeing achievement was being slowed by the delay in producing the LDF.

Energy achievements were particularly affected by the difficulties in progressing hydro power schemes. Some difficulties were directly attributable to the particular landscape of Dartmoor, but work was ongoing with the Environment Agency, to support new schemes. Andrew Shadrake noted that Dartmoor Circle's plan, in preparation for nearly two years, was being hindered by change, such as the availability of grants, and these changing goalposts presented a real challenge. However, focus on the Big Society, and the encouragement of volunteers, may allow climate change groups to do more, even with less funding.

New Development was falling behind, but three of the goals related to the Design Guide due for public consultation very shortly. It was queried whether Village Design Statements had stopped because of the Design Guide production. Kevin noted that villages and communities were identifying and working on things but they weren't badged as VDS. Communities may feel more confident in this area in the future. Goals dealing with energy efficiency were very hard to influence.

In summary, it was noted that overall, progress was being made, but there was some evidence of budget restraint affecting progress; however, voluntary effort may achieve more in the future.

3. Delivery Board priorities 2010:

Climate Change: Further updating of progress was required, and partners agreed to provide more information, however it was noted that DARE was doing good work, and the Green Deal announced on the day of the meeting might provide scope to publicise the climate change message.

Farming: Various actions had been identified during the Farming sub-group meeting held in April 2010, and most are now happening. The sub group had felt it to be a useful meeting, and proposed to meet again in early 2011, if endorsed by the Delivery Board.

Economic Development: A sub group focusing on this area met last March, and had identified priority issues, proving a useful way of driving forward progress with key partners involved.

The Board was asked if the reporting that had been provided was useful and appropriate. Partners identified opportunities for improving the provision of update information. The category of significant delay /unlikely to achieve should be amended, as this category description distorted the reality of progress.

It was suggested that the Board should be asking what really matters, and whether the view of progress was clouded by the detail. A lot of objectives were, and still would be ongoing at the end of the Plan, because the process was the achievement, but they would also be 'completed' at that time.

The Board considered whether a future Management Plan should be more tightly focused, with concise, achievable and measurable targets, covering key objectives

and key strategies. It was suggested that the current Plan tried to be all things to all people, and in future should concentrate on delivering tangible achievements, not processes. Performance indicators linked to SMART targets were suggested. The time scale of the Plan was also an important factor: the world now is a very different place to that of 2006/7 when the Plan was being prepared. Streamlining reporting and data collection, with a finer focus on key issues was considered important.

4. Updating the State of the Park Report

Dan outlined the purpose of the review in identifying whether the actions in the Management Plan were having the desired effect. A Baseline Profile had been introduced. Some key points:

Hill Farming 's contribution to economic output was down from 10% to 4.2%

Climate Change impact data was required

Monuments at Risk had reduced in number

Marsh Fritillary, a good indicator species, was recorded at the highest numbers for 10 years.

SSSI's had met their targets

Tourism spend was increasing, but stays in serviced accommodation reduced by 20%

Dartmoor had recorded high satisfaction rates from local people about their area

An increase in the population aged 65+ was higher on Dartmoor than nationally

Draft copies of the updated State of the Park Report were circulated and partners were asked to identify any missed issues, or updates needed, particularly in their own areas. A SotP report would be presented to DNPA Members in January 2011. Cross referencing between the Management Plan and the State of the Park report is essential.

The Chairman commented on the flagging up of farming and tourism issues, and members discussed their concerns for these issues. Tourism was not supported by public funds as farming was, but there were 4-5 times as many people employed in tourism and related business. Expensive business rates were of great concern, and the closure of tourism-related businesses was noted. A recent consultation on rates had now closed, and the expectation was that rural businesses would be adversely affected in the future. The fall in bed space occupation was not just attributable to reduced bed stock.

These concerns illustrated a key issue around the vibrancy of local communities. Farming and tourism were interlinked in relation to Dartmoor, where the landscape which drew tourists was shaped by farming activity. Hill farming is absolutely fundamental to Dartmoor's future and the Delivery Board has a role to play to raise this profile.

Climate Change datasets were challenging, as they needed to illustrate an impact that people could relate to; financial implications are an important reality that could drive change. Members suggested that a context for the SotP data was needed, as it was difficult to identify the real meaning in isolation.

More consideration of the issues around planning policies, business advice, training, broadband access, local promotion of Dartmoor might be undertaken by a

sub group tasked to look at these issues in more detail and report back to the Delivery Board. DCC has an ongoing project to roll out broadband, with a possible option for Dartmoor. They are also discussing the setting up of economic partnerships replacing the LDAs with District Councils, and an input from DNPA would be welcomed (a representative will be advised).

Kevin summarised the clear message about contextual information, the pressures on hill farming, the need to identify climate change in what it means for communities and on the ground for Dartmoor, and a focus on what is actually happening in communities. Parish Plans deals with small, local issues, but don't address communities as a whole.

The Delivery Board recommended that for 2011 the priorities from last year still stand, and are interlinked These are:

- Farming
- Climate Change (better understanding of impacts, adaptive reporting, opportunities)
- Economic development and supporting communities.(would welcome opportunity to work with DCC on broadband, and the economic partnerships, including the District Councils)

In order to focus on these, the Delivery Board also recommended that sub-groups of key partners should be held for each of these areas in the New Year to identify and take forward relevant actions to achieve the goals of the Management Plan.

5. Communication & Publicity, including *Delivering for Dartmoor 2011*

The newsletter had been circulated to members, who were thanked for their contributions. It will only be available electronically, so links to access it online will be circulated to District and Parish Council members, and other interested groups. Any minor amendments or updates received before Christmas can be incorporated before publishing it in 2011 on the DNPA website, with an accompanying press release to highlight achievements, (particularly relevant to the 60th birthday celebrations in 2011 for Dartmoor as a National Park). Reference was made to the new outreach vehicle recently purchased by DNPA, and partners were invited to make contact if they had any requests for events where it could be used.

6. Any Other Business

Kevin Bishop reported that DNPA would normally have expected to start work on a new Management Plan in 2011, but given the uncertainty of funding may delay this. It would be important to learn lessons from the current one, to be clearer about focus, and the 'products'. He suggested that the Delivery Board continue to meet annually to monitor the progress of the current Plan, but DNPA may call an additional meeting of key partners in the autumn to look at refreshing or renewing the Plan, when the Spending Review outcomes are better known.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their continuing encouragement and commitment, and closed the meeting.