

NOTE OF NATIONAL PARK FORUM MEETING 13 July 2016

The Forum received two presentations. The first was by Dr Tom Greeves and focused on the history of tin working on Dartmoor. This was well received with those present suggesting that it would be useful if such a talk could be provided to school groups. The second presentation was by Jackie Ridley and Sam Hill (Dartmoor National Park Authority) and outlined the [‘Donate for Dartmoor’](#) scheme which the Authority has just launched on its website. The scheme seeks donations of cash and/or time for a range of practical projects. The presentation explained that 100 per cent of any donation goes to practical conservation projects and that donors can allocate their money to one of four areas:

[Recreational Dartmoor](#) – projects to help maintain and improve miles of footpaths and bridleways for everyone to enjoy

[Natural Dartmoor](#) – projects to help us conserve previous wildlife and unique habitats

[Historic Dartmoor](#) – projects to protect Dartmoor’s important archaeological sites and historic buildings

[General fund](#) – smaller, one-off projects throughout the National Park

During the question and answer session there was a discussion about membership of the Authority. Concerns were raised by one participant about the age and sex profile of members and the length of service – why was there not a cap on length of service for Members appointed by constituent authorities and via the Parish Council route; if the Government will not legislate on this should the Authority issue guidance to constituent authorities on a maximum length of service? Should there be a rule on the maximum age for the Chairman and other senior post holders? There were also questions about direct elections and what was referred to as the ‘democratic deficit’ in the Authority – the fact that no one is directly elected to serve on the National Park Authority.

In responding to these questions the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) explained the process of appointment for the three categories of National Park Authority members (parish council, Members appointed by constituent local authorities and Members appointed by the Secretary of State in the ‘national’ interest). He stated that the Authority actively worked to be an equal opportunity employer and sought to extend that approach to member appointments but that member appointments were not determined by the Authority. He gave an undertaking that the concerns would be brought to the attention of the Authority membership (it was highlighted by the person asking the questions that only 4 Authority Members were present at the meeting). The Chief Executive also asked the person raising the questions whether he wanted a show of hands to indicate whether the concerns raised were shared more widely by members of the Forum

present at the meeting. This was declined as the person asking the question felt it inappropriate for a show of hands on an item that was not on the agenda and that members of the Forum had not been briefed on in advance.

Other questions included a request that the Ten Commandments at Buckland Beacon be re-cut. It was explained that this was subject to a Parishscapes bid (this is a grant scheme that forms part of the Heritage Lottery funded Moor than meets the eye Landscape Partnership). There were also questions about the process for preparing a new local Plan for Dartmoor. It was explained that the Authority would work closely with the constituent authorities (Teignbridge, South Hams, West Devon, Mid Devon and Devon) and with neighbouring authorities such as Plymouth and Exeter but would be preparing its own Local Plan, rather than a joint one. There are a number of reasons for this including: the fact that Dartmoor fits within more than one housing market area and to fully recognise the fact that Dartmoor has been designated as a National Park 'by the nation for the nation'.

The Christow Parish Council representative at the Forum up-dated members on the Christow affordable housing scheme and referenced the fact that it was featuring on Countryfile (broadcast on 17 July 2016). Members of the Forum suggested that the next meeting should include a formal presentation on the Christow affordable housing scheme so that other communities could learn from the project.