

## DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY



### NATIONAL PARK FORUM

#### Note of meeting held Wednesday, 12 July 2017

The meeting was attended by 21 members of the Forum, 6 DNPA Members and 3 DNPA officers:

**Present:** Bill Hitchins, DNPA Chairman; Maurice Retallick, DNPA Deputy Chairman; Cathie Pannell, DNPA Member; Andrew Cooper, DNPA Member; Diana Moyse, DNPA Member; Mike Jeffery, DNPA Member; Neil White, DNPA; Sam Hill, DNPA; Dan Janota, DNPA; Peter Thorn, British Canoeing; Phil Hutt, Dartmoor Preservation Association; Tony Clark, Dartmoor Trust; Glyn Richards, South Brent Parish Council; Philip French, Dartmoor Access Forum; Amanda Eversett, Devon Archaeological Society; Theresa Redding, Lydford Parish Council; Neil Reeves, South West Lakes Trust; Bridget Cole, Burrator Parish Council; John Nutley, Ashburton Town Council & Teignbridge District Council; Sue Burkill Shaugh Prior Parish Council; Mervyn Wills, Ilsington Parish Council; R Bainbridge, Ilsington Parish Council; Peter Mason, Lustleigh Society; John Skinner Ramblers' Devon; Derek Coren; Jill Clarence, CPRE; Alison Watt, CPRE; Terry Pearce, Brentor Parish Council; David Smith, SWW; Karen Gilbert, North Bovey, Dean Prior & Buckfastleigh West Parish Councils

**Apologies:** Dr Kevin Bishop, Chief Executive (NPO) DNPA; Kevin Ball, DNPA, Member; Phil Sanders, DNPA Member; Naomi Oakley, DNPA Member; Pamela Woods, DNPA Member; George Gribble, DNPA Member; Kate Ashbrook, Open Spaces Society; Cllr Martin Leaves, Plymouth City Council; Harry Barton, Devon Wildlife Trust; Mark Wells, Bovey Tracey Town Council; Nigel Sharp, Defence Infrastructure Organisation; Dr Tom Greeves, Dartmoor Society; Nik Ward, Natural England; Terry Cummings, Okehampton Town Council; Cllr Curran, Hennock PC; Maddie Bridgeman, Plymouth City Council; Amanda Ford, Teignbridge District Council; Maj Crispin d'Apice, Defence Infrastructure Organisation; Cllr John Squires, Mid Devon District Council; Gavin Dollard, Dartmoor Commons Owners Association; Peter Burgess Devon Wildlife Trust; Tom Archer, Christow Parish Council;

#### **Welcome**

Bill Hitchins welcomed everyone to the meeting and pointed out the fire exits and emergency procedures.

#### **Update from the National Park Authority**

Neil White, DNPA, highlighted some of the key messages in the Briefing Note including the Otter Project, Hill Farm Project, Communities Fund, Moor than meets the eye, National Park Management Plan review, volunteering update, Visitor Management and the current situation at Spitchwick. He also mentioned Operation Granite, a joint exercise between our Rangers & Devon & Cornwall Police, which was very successful, our Award winning Visitor Centres and the recent RTPI Excellence in Planning Delivery award, recognising the Authority's part in delivering a scheme of affordable dwellings in Christow. He

informed the Forum that following the Authority's AGM, held Friday, 7 July, Mr Bill Hitchins had been re-elected Chairman and Mr Maurice Retallick as Deputy Chairman; Messrs James McInnes & Philip Sanders were also re-elected Chairman & Deputy Chairman of the Planning Committee respectively.

He also referred to the two vacant Secretary of State Member positions within the Authority, interviews for which took place earlier in the year and it is understood that the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, is keen to appoint the positions himself, therefore we are awaiting news of his final decision.

Mr Thorn asked about the car parking charges that are coming into effect across the moor and Dr Clarence asked if there would be a period of grace - say 10-15 minutes - for those who only wanted to stop for a short while. Mr Skinner thought the proposed charges were reasonable in comparison to other sites and advised that he would be responding to the public consultation on behalf of the Ramblers' Association. Tony Clark suggested perhaps there could be a season ticket or membership scheme for local people..The problems caused by displacement was raised, as with Haldon Forest car park, where once parking charges had been introduced, people merely left their cars on the side of the road.

All were thanked for their questions and asked to take part in the public consultation so that their views/ideas/suggestions could be considered.

### **A Rough Guide to Medieval Dartmoor**

Forum members then received a presentation on Medieval Dartmoor, from Dr Ian Mortimer, local historian and former Secretary of State Member of Dartmoor National Park Authority, which generated a lot of interest and was very well received. Who would have thought that if you resided in Barnstaple, or Totnes in medieval times, you were not permitted to take your cattle on to Dartmoor!?

### **Moor Otters**

Sam Hill, Head of Communications, Economy & Fundraising updated the Forum on the Moor Otters Project which has now been running for just over a month, and will continue until September. Feedback is extremely good. Visitors to Parke often come just to photograph 'River', the otter on display in reception, record his number & tick it off in their 'otter-spotter' book; and so it is with the other establishments that are hosting otters...Mini otters have been donated to moorland primary schools for the children to decorate. A trail of these is to be held at Princetown and then returned so the schools can auction them off to raise funds. An on-line auction of the large otters is already on-going! There are also 30 'golden' otters all of which have been decorated by very well-known local artists, and these will be sold at a live auction once the Project is complete.

A Forum member asked what sort of amounts had been paid by the host establishments to accommodate these otters, and how would any monies raised be spent?

Sam advised that businesses have donated £100 plus to host an otter, in the hope that having an otter in situ would generate income. Sam reported that early feedback from businesses is very positive in terms of increased footfall. It is the Authority's intention to survey those establishments at the end of the project for their views. There are three areas that will benefit from the money raised.

- 1) The Junior Ranger Programme;
- 2) Conservation projects - such as the 'invasive species' project outlined in the briefing note.
- 3) Access & public rights of way

Cathie Pannell, DNPA Member, informed the audience that three otters are currently in situ at South Brent and the interest has been phenomenal - the number of people who are 'otter-spotting' is quite amazing, this was endorsed by Mr Richards of South Brent PC.

### **Local Plan Review - Progress Update**

Dan Janota, Forward Planning Manager, gave a very well received presentation on the Dartmoor Local Plan. Dan explained what it is; what it includes; why it is important; and how everyone can get involved with its development. There will be opportunities for formal comment, and informal feedback. He stressed how much easier it is to make changes at the beginning of the review, rather than later, and asked people to get involved as early as possible. Our web pages will be updated as to what is happening and when, so everyone is advised to check it for the latest information.

Mr Pearce referred to the Passivhaus affordable housing in Christow and asked if it would be possible to insist that all affordable housing were Passivhaus style, so that residents might save money on energy bills?

Dan advised that the Authority cannot insist on it, the Government has removed the National Park Authorities right to do so.

Alison Watt referred to the National Policy regarding barn conversions and the ability to convert such buildings without planning permission.

Dan confirmed that this Policy is not applicable in National Parks.

In response to Dan promoting the new 'planning alerts' service (which allows anyone to register to receive emails alerts when planning applications are submitted) Dr Clarence queried if neighbours were still notified of planning applications adjacent their properties, as this had not been her experience on two separate occasions.

Dan advised that the Authority aims to notify adjoining neighbours in all cases of neighbouring development as well as continuing to place Planning Notices in prominent positions. The new online Planning Alerts service is an additional service where you can be notified of development, either in a specific area, ie next door, next town or the whole of Dartmoor.

### **Questions & Answers from Forum Members**

The Chairman thanked Dan Janota for his presentation and suggested the Forum move on to the Question & Answer session

Mr Derek Coren expressed his gratitude for all staff/partner organisations that were involved in the recent work undertaken to the 10 Commandments Stones on Buckland

Beacon. He had originally expressed an interest in the Stones at the Forum meeting in November 2016, and was extremely grateful to everyone involved.

Mr Skinner referred to the amount of housing that Plymouth City Council & South Hams District Council aim to construct, which could be visible from the Park, and asked if the Authority was aware.

The Authority has been in discussion with Plymouth CC over the years.

Karen Gilbert referred to the dire broadband connection on parts of Dartmoor and asked what infrastructure the Authority would/could give to the remote areas. Connectivity is constantly affected by the weather and hills but Dartmoor will die unless something can be done.

Bridget Cole enquired about the situation regarding the Director of Planning vacancy. Also, some 18 months ago, Burrator PC had requested a planning training day, but so far nothing has come of it.

Neil White advised that former Head of Planning left in March and that Chris Hart is currently Acting Head of Planning in the interim with James Aven also taking on additional responsibilities. We have taken this opportunity to review our requirements and consider options. We expect to determine a way forward shortly. Neil promised to speak to Chris Hart with regards the planning training day.

Maurice Retallick advised everyone that there have been planning days arranged for All Parishes to attend, as it isn't always practical to have single parish sessions, however, these sessions have not been as well attended as they might be.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending, and for their contributions.

The meeting closed at 4:30