

### Dartmoor Forest Parish Council

Impact of extra visitors on the communities of South West Dartmoor during snow

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To agree how irresponsible & dangerous parking & driving can be addressed

16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 15:00 to 16:30

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For the purposes of this issue South West Dartmoor refers to the civic parishes of Buckland Monochorum, Burrator, Dartmoor Forest & Plasterdown.

### Confirmed Attendees

- John Fewings Devon County Council Highways
- Richard Martin Police & Crime Commissioner
- Layland Branfield Dartmoor Commoners' Council
- Ali Kohler Dartmoor National Park Authority
- Simon Lee Dartmoor National Park Authority
- Karl Bigmore South West Ambulance Service
- Tom Stratton Duchy of Cornwall
- Cllr. Philip Sanders Devon County Council
- Cllr. Mark Renders West Devon Borough Council
- Cllr. Alison Geen Dartmoor Forest Parish Council
- Cllr. Gregg Manning Dartmoor Forest Parish Council
- Cllr. Stephen King Dartmoor Forest Parish Council
- To be confirmed Burrator Parish Council
- To be confirmed Buckland Monochorum Parish Council
- Steve Cox Parish Clerk, Dartmoor Forest Parish Council





### Welcome & Opening Remarks

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- Councillor Alison Geen Dartmoor Forest Parish Council
- Councillor Mark Renders West Devon Borough Council
- Councillor Philip Sanders Devon County Council

Please note usual video meeting etiquette applies:

- Microphone should be muted when not talking
- Raise an actual or virtual hand when you want to make a point the Chair will ask for your contribution
- Chair reserves the right to exclude anyone if she sees fit



### Objectives of the Meeting:

1) To ensure all present understand the full impact to the residents and businesses of

South West Dartmoor.

- 2) To consider a number of potential solutions and agree a final shortlist that will be evaluated by relevant organisations.
- 3) To agree how we actively progress addressing this issue.
- 4) To agree that the Parish Councils, and the communities they serve, must be at the heart of the discussion and decision-making process.





### Impact on Residents

- Results of online survey
  - 1. 89% of respondents stated they had been affected by cars driving and parking irresponsibly when it snows on Dartmoor?
  - 2. Respondents report that this happens every year when it snows.
  - 3. 84 % of respondents said they did NOT report any incidents to the Police.
  - 4. A selection of verbatim responses to the question; 'Can you please describe any impact to you and your family or business?' are on the next page.



- 1. This issue affects an overwhelming majority of residents of south west Dartmoor.
- 2. This issue is a regular, ongoing issue and is not linked to any effects of 'lockdown'.
- 3. As issues are not reported, the true impact is not measured or understood.
- 4. As the responses testify, the impact of this issue presents a real risk to the lives and livelihoods of those that live on south west Dartmoor.

The parish council issued an online survey on 25/02/2021 and received 110 responses from local residents. Survey closed as exceeded maximum number of replies.



### Impact on Residents – Survey Responses



- Not able to get to work, had to take unpaid leave. Not able to get food shop, had to ask friends and family for food. Stuck in for 4 days because people wanted to come and play in snow and block the roads in doing so.
- Having been stuck in traffic on Peak Hill for over an hour and had to negotiate cars parked all along the sides of the road a couple of years back I now cancel any plans I have and remain at home.
- Last year roads were snarled up with cars parked in passing spaces and my child had cut his finger and needed to get to newton hospital, the trip took ages
- We struggled to get an ambulance out for a ill family member and struggled to get too and from work resulting on disciplinary for being late
- We live on Plymouth Hill, Princetown so have a constant stream of cars speeding past our house and more often than not getting stuck on snow and ice trying to exit the village. Blocked roads making shopping trips hazardous and slow. Medical aid hampered by cars blocking roads.
- We struggled to get an ambulance up in March 2018 for our sick child and myself and my partner always struggle to get to work

- Irresponsible parking along the road making it very difficult to pass or cross the road safely with moving animals. Parked cars making it difficult to drive past and often cars parking and blocking access to our house. When people are asked not to park they become abusive and don't care what consequences they are causing. They are only intent on their own selfish interests. They park on the verges and cause massive damage which takes ages to recover
- Missed a hospital appointment and having a 7 month old sitting in a queue in the car when it's freezing out is not ideal!
- it takes to long to get across the moors to get essential food shopping. In the previous years my husband has had to stay at his parents for up to 5 days so he can get work and still haven't managed to get home on his off days due to the road not being ploughed as it couldn't get through. This year we have had trouble getting in and out as the moors where to busy with cars parked irresponsible and to many cars continuing to try and get up here while residents are trying to get out for work and food shopping.
- Cars parked on my drive. Cars parked in road and on verges. Verges chewed up to mud. Massive volumes of people playing in snow around my house and fields. Snowmen and giant snowballs left against gates preventing them from opening. One visitor urinated on my garden fence post. People staring in my house windows. Intimidating. We felt under siege.
- I needed a ambulance in 2019 and they struggled to get to me

## Impact on Farming

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- Councillor Alison Geen Farmer & Dartmoor Forest Parish Council
- Layland Branfield Farmer & Dartmoor Commoners' Council



### Impact on Services (1)

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- GP's Surgery Yelverton
  - In January 2021 the practice manager reported that doctors were having difficulties getting to Princetown to vaccinate care home residents.
     Considered calling for police escort.
- Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service
  - Local officers have reported that it would be difficult getting a large engine from Yelverton to Princetown, and the high moor, to deal with a fire or disturbance at HMP Dartmoor. Princetown Fire Station no longer has a large pump and is served by a Rapid Intervention Vehicle.



## Impact on Services (2)



#### Dartmoor National Park Rangers

Rangers have advised the parish council of the difficulty and abuse they receive: 'As soon as people see snow on the higher parts of Dartmoor from their homes many head out totally ignoring the advice and the current COVID restrictions. Trying to deal with the visitors, many of whom have no regard for Dartmoor, private land, animals or indeed Rangers or Police was not the best experience I have had over my many years of working for DNPA. At the start one was able to get points of advice across, but you always knew as the day went on it was going to get worse.'

#### South West Ambulance Service

- Residents report of ambulances having difficulty reaching them due to the congestion on the roads.
- This photograph illustrates the difficulties the emergency services have on the Yelverton to Princetown road (B3212).

#### Devon & Cornwall Police



## Potential Solutions (1):

Proposal	Advantages	Disadvantages
Snow Gates This is a favoured idea and indeed would work very well. The idea is that one, two or three roads would have these gates that would be shut during heavy snow.	It would be effective in blocking traffic entering the moor.	It could possibly create a new problem outside of the gates, for instance; Dousland as an example, could then become blocked simply moving the problem.  The gates would have to be manned in order to allow village residents or emergency vehicles through.  Although the bulk of these could be volunteers each gate would need at least one police officer, PCSO or Special Constable.  It could also be staffed by Dartmoor Rangers. Would be quite confrontational.
Extra Lane For this to work you create an extra lane on each side of the road where people can park. The grass is cleared for the width of one lane and boulders are removed. The extra lane is not tarmacked but left as dirt.	Less signage needed, relatively low maintenance, would provide the additional parking needed. This would allow Large emergency vehicles to get through.	Would mar the landscape, would be hard to distinguish as it would be covered in snow. Many drivers reluctant to venture off the tarmac.  Could remove land used for grazing.  Allowing vehicles to park at the Dousland end of the B3212 would not alleviate the issues suffered by Farmers, namely leaving gates open, parking across entrances, using sledges and other items in fields, leaving said items behind when finished.

The Parish Councils profess no expertise in highways and traffic management, however have proposed these ideas to progress debate and action. This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

# Potential Solutions (2):

Proposal	Advantages	Disadvantages
Double Lines plus signs The argument here has always been that when it snows the lines would in fact be covered and could not be seen therefore people could argue they did not see them.	The lines would now make it illegal for someone to park. The police or Civil enforcement officers could now ticket the cars. If people wanted to contest the ticket they might have to do so in court. This would allow large emergency vehicles to get through.	The Entry sign would have to be clear about lines and there would need to be additional signs at regular spots emphasising the Double lines. If you are not stopping all this traffic entering the moors, then you need to give them somewhere lawful to park. For this is to work you have to have the ability to enforce. Open to verbal or physical abuse. Very confrontational.
Traffic Lights The biggest problem when it snows is that the parked cars turn a two-lane road into a narrow one lane. The traffic moves in a bullish way, meaning no one is prepared to give way so very long delays build up.	The use of traffic lights ensures that traffic from both directions get a fair share of the road. Traffic is kept moving with only slight delays. This would allow large emergency vehicles to get through.  Could be used as a temporary measure but not really a long term solution.	There is an ongoing cost implication which will be dependent on the number of snow days that have to be covered. The lights have to be put out early by someone.

# Potential Solutions (3):

Proposal	Advantages	Disadvantages
Clearway  For the same reason as double lines you would have to rely on the signage. It must be clear that parking or stopping on the road is not allowed.	Low-cost option, just means changing the gateway signs and backing it up with additional signs at points across the moor. This moves the traffic far enough into the moor to be away from the farmers' fields and livestock.	Would need policing, which is always a problem, Drivers can sometimes follow others, once one car has parked others will too. This is based on the fact that to get a ticket then everyone will have to have ticket. Police would need to be actively involved to keep the traffic moving. This would allow large emergency vehicles to get through.
Parking on Right/Left side only For this to work you do not have to create an extra lane where people can park. We already know that the road is wide enough for two lanes of parked cars plus one lane of traffic moving. On the approach to the cattle grid, you have marker boards at 300, 200, 100 metres stating parking on right only (or left it makes no difference. The gateway sign states the same plus cars illegally parked on the wrong side will be fined and/or towed away.	Relatively low-cost low-maintenance option, would provide the additional parking needed. Would allow the traffic to flow in both directions at the same time.	Would need to back up claims so Police or Civil Enforcement need to be on site to hand out tickets. Tow truck need to be used as well. This is again a measure which could be used in a temporary way. Main disadvantage with this is that you are then making it legal for them to park which we do not want to do. Large emergency vehicles may still not be able to get through.

## Potential Solutions (4):

Proposal	Advantages	Disadvantages
Tow Away Zone This option makes the moorland roads no parking. It once again pushes the drivers to park elsewhere creating a new problem.	The site of a tow truck taking a car away may have a powerful effect on other drivers. This would be best used with a clearway.	This however could be slightly confrontation for the driver of the tow truck. The sheer number of cars involved might become an issue. To be fair quite a number of signs would need to be put up.
Car Parks  DNPA and DCC to identify locations for enlarged car parks, on the edge of the problem areas. To be prioritised for clearance by snow ploughs. It is understood that no new car parks have been built in the National Park for at least 10 years.	Could be very costly. However, land could be identified for temporary car parks.	Could remove land used for grazing.

All solutions would need to be supported by a regular programme of communications and public education.

## Summary of Actions & Owners



- Agreed Actions & Owners Clerk
- Agree Date & Time of Next Meeting All

Thanks & Closing Remarks – Councillor Alison Geen