

<Dartmoor's Dynamic Connections> working title

Programme overview

Our proposal is a wide-ranging Partnership Programme that will work to address urgent societal needs (climate and ecological crisis, health & wellbeing, social deprivation) with a landscape scale focus on three of Dartmoor's river catchments, from the peat bogs on the high moor, down through nature rich grasslands and upland heath, flowing off the moor through wooded valleys and past the many riverside communities in the towns outside the National Park.

Our proposal is organised under three themes, with programmes and projects within these:

Connecting Dartmoor - A Community Outreach Programme, focused on the urban population surrounding Dartmoor, connecting people to heritage in their riverside town and upstream to Dartmoor:

- through the stories of the rivers that flow from Dartmoor's headwaters to the sea, connecting communities on and off the moor.
- With greater opportunity for active and sustainable, independent journeys to green and blue space.
- Through new types of events and activities, developed in response to needs and wants identified through consultation with specific audiences.
- With new opportunities to play a part in Citizen Science and practical conservation activities.
- Supported by a facilitated community grant scheme

Dynamic Dartmoor – working with hill farmers, woodland owners and communities during the highly challenging Agricultural Transition (post Brexit) to help restore and enhance nature and natural systems in Dartmoor's woodlands and the catchments of three of its rivers while helping to sustain the way of life integral to this landscape and the rural communities within it:

- Restoring peatland on the high moor and applying nature-based solutions through upper catchments to slow the flow of water, increasing wetland habitat and biodiversity.
- By developing uses for lower value timber in nature-based solutions, helping to restore native woodlands.
- Nurturing connections within Dartmoor's rural farming community, developing a shared vision for Dartmoor's upland farms, building capacity in the local economy and through volunteering, sharing new skills, knowledge and support through a time of rapid change.
- Celebrating the diverse, nature rich landscape of Dartmoor, including inspiring stories of sustainable land management.

Laying Foundations for the Future – developing opportunities: for the next

generation, for new ways of funding heritage and for more people to enjoy Dartmoor sustainably without damaging the landscape we treasure or the communities that call it home:

- With a Gateway Towns pilot – offering greater opportunity for active and sustainable travel to Dartmoor’s visitors and communities on the edge of the National Park. Co-developing new approaches with those communities and informing future strategy.
- Understanding how future private/corporate investment in natural capital can be shared equitably and benefit rural communities locally, especially tenant farmers and commoners.
- Providing training and advice to support a range of heritage skills for volunteers and land managers that will become increasingly relevant against a background of changing societal and government priorities.
- Providing young people with career development opportunities.

Need for the programme

Connection to nature results in greater wellbeing and pro environmental behaviors but opportunities to enjoy and understand nature are not equally accessed by all. Children from lower income households are more likely to regard cost and other people making them feel uncomfortable as barriers to visiting the outdoors. While surveys show people overwhelmingly regard access to nature as being good for their physical (94%) and mental (92%) health, people from lower income households are more likely to state poor physical and mental health as a barrier to accessing green space.

The population surrounding Dartmoor is growing with new largescale housing developments underway, increasing the number of people who could benefit from experiencing Dartmoor and feeling more connected to nature. But this increases the risk that if higher visitor numbers are not well managed they can impact negatively, eroding the quality of the landscape in the National Park and leading to tensions between visitors and local communities.

National Parks were established for the benefit of everyone in our society, but we know that the profile of our visitors today does not represent that of the people in our region.

Car use is unhealthy, unsustainable, expensive and damages the landscape (of the National Park), we urgently need to increase opportunities for active and less environmentally damaging travel for people to enjoy landscape heritage.

Reference: MENE, Landscapes Review (Glover), study on impact of new development, responses to DNPA Byelaw Review, People and Nature Survey (PANS)

Dartmoor’s Hill Farms sustain the accessible, biodiverse, cultural landscape

we enjoy today primarily through grazing livestock and managing a range of woody habitats (e.g. hedgerow) and woodlands. They form the core of the rural community. With the withdrawal of government funding in the form of the Basic Payment Scheme half of Dartmoor's Hill Farms will cease to be financially viable, particularly smaller family farms. They need to adapt quickly to survive. The government's developing agri-environment (ELM) offer emphasises the importance of collaboration but will provide no support to nurture it. New financial opportunities are becoming available to sustain nature rich traditional farming but the ability to embrace them relies on having the skills, understanding and collaboration at scale available within the farming community or on farm (i.e. not bought in as consultancy services).

Reference: Gov.uk, Nethergill report, DNPA reports

We know that archaeological sites will not be a priority under the government's new ELM scheme, so the need to collaborate and align management to conserve archaeology with options that are funded for nature is more pressing than ever.

In a changing climate we need to understand the ability of species and habitats to survive and adapt, informing future land management. We need to know not just the condition of habitats and populations now but how they are changing in response to changing climate and land management.

Beneficiaries

People in Dartmoor's neighbouring large towns and cities of Okehampton, Buckfastleigh, Ashburton, Ivybridge, Totnes, Paignton, Newton Abbot and parts of Plymouth.

Children at primary school will develop confidence and competence in independent active travel to local green space, their teachers will have the opportunity to join CPD sessions, relating their teaching to the local context of Dartmoor and their nearby river. Children will have new opportunities for adventurous visits to Dartmoor. Children and their families can benefit from new nature-oriented events programmes that are relevant to them.

Young adults, experiencing social isolation and mental health issues will benefit from taking part in an expansion of the pilot green prescription referral pathway, developed in partnership with the North Dartmoor Primary Care Network. Healthcare professionals will have better understanding of Green Prescribing alongside access to nature rich sites.

We will work with a range of local community groups such as Scouts & Guides, Youth Groups, Conservation Groups, Cycle Clubs, Walking Groups as well as those working with health & wellbeing to enrich the offer enjoyed by

their members with greater understanding and enjoyment of heritage.

Through facilitated access to a new community grant scheme, local groups, individuals and their local neighbourhoods will benefit from a range of small projects for nature, community and climate as well as enjoying the personal sense of reward and empowerment from their own good work.

Dartmoor's Hill Farmers and woodland owners will benefit from more coordinated approaches to land management and funding for sustainable, nature rich farming and woodland management twinned with new skills, understanding and free access to sources of high-quality information about their natural environment. The support we propose will fill important gaps in enabling land managers to seize opportunities for nature and natural capital.

Visitors to the National Park will enjoy, greater confidence and, more opportunities to explore Dartmoor on foot and by bike with new activities tailored to less frequent/confident walkers and cyclists. Their opportunity to learn about Dartmoor's heritage and historic links with the surrounding area will be supported by new sources of information situated locally and digitally. Visitors with a wider range of access needs will be better able to enjoy Dartmoor using new Miles Without Stiles routes.

People and businesses in gateway towns will benefit from planning and trials of cheaper and healthier sustainable travel to access the landscape on their doorstep and to travel between towns and villages, schools and work. Local businesses will benefit from promotion to visitors and people in the gateway towns will be able to enjoy all of the engagement activities offered more widely, including the new community grant scheme.

The Partnership

Our partnership includes the Woodland Trust, RSPB, Sustrans, Plantlife, Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, Shallowford Trust, Dartmoor Preservation Association, Environment Agency, South West Water, South West Lakes Trust, Be Buckfastleigh and Dartmoor National Park Authority.

We also plan to work with Dartmoor Commoners Council, Cycling UK, Como, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, Historic England, National Trust, local community arts organisations, Plymouth and Exeter Universities and British Cycling.

And a developing network of local community groups and organisations.

The heritage

The three focus catchments contain significant extent of designated areas

and priority habitats. This includes large areas of SSSI, Scheduled Monuments, Premier Archaeological Landscapes as well as priority species. The condition of most of the ecological areas is degraded and at risk of further deterioration due to gradual abandonment, climate change and diminishing uptake of agri-environment schemes. Dartmoor also contains some of the best and most important archaeological landscapes in western Europe, many of which are at risk of significant deterioration if not managed into the future.

Dartmoor's Wooded Valleys provide vital, rich habitat to a range of wildlife and have been classed by Natural England as "refugia" – special ecosystems that are likely to be able to support our wildlife through the changes associated with climate change. Of the 133 Section 41 species associated with Dartmoor, which are the rarest and most threatened species, 92 species (69%) are reliant in some way on the habitat provided in these wooded complexes. These habitats have become fragmented and damaged as hundreds of years of management has reduced their quality and size. More recently, many of these ancient valley woodlands were converted to conifer to support the post war need for timber, a process which has been particularly damaging to these complex ecosystems.

Development phase

Project Management Plan

Ongoing stakeholder engagement:

- Consultation with woodland owners
- Consultation with farmers in target areas, including development of a shared vision for future land management on Dartmoor.
- Consultation and Audience Development Plan with priority communities
- Consultation with schools
- Assessment of contractor skills and capability on Dartmoor relative to growing needs for natural capital
- Consultation with gateway towns
- Study into perceptions of the benefits derived from experiencing different green space (Dartmoor/woodland/local park) by different audiences and the challenges to experiencing these benefits.

Area Based Plan

Develop Evaluation Plan and gather baseline information

Delivery phase

What we intend to do during the main phase of the programme:

- A series of projects, coproduced with communities, businesses and their

representatives in towns on the edge of Dartmoor NP, to develop opportunities for Gateways to the National Park that are sustainable and benefit both visitors and communities.

- Taking the moor to town, celebrating Dartmoor's upland farming heritage with people in urban settings around Dartmoor and further afield.
- Connecting people to green and blue space along the river valleys that lead out from Dartmoor developing active travel opportunities and celebrating local heritage relating to the rivers.
- Dartmoor in Bloom/Glorious Grasslands, celebrating the rich diversity of Dartmoor's flowering plants, especially upland heath and species rich grassland, providing opportunities for people to take part in citizen science and practical conservation.
- A facilitated community grant scheme, empowering communities to take action for the natural heritage they treasure (within and outside the National Park).
- Facilitated connections with nature for health and wellbeing through social prescribing.
- River observatories, citizen science including remote monitoring stations accessible through website.
- A night under the stars for children from surrounding towns
- Ebike safaris on Dartmoor for people new to cycling
- Farming Connections, facilitated skills share between land managers and people in local communities
- A range of knowledge sharing activities, talks and site visits, connecting Dartmoor's farmers with successful approaches to Agricultural Transition.
- Miles Without Stiles, developing and promoting more accessible routes to enjoy Dartmoor
- Supporting development of community woodlands
- A series of Dartmoor debates to discuss and understand the importance of Dartmoor and future opportunities
- Understanding opportunities for investment in natural capital to benefit the local economy, especially by making sure people have the heritage skills and capability to deliver nature based solutions in the future.
- Celebrating and helping people better understand farming on Dartmoor.
- Telling the heritage stories of Dartmoor's rivers, from source to sea, to the people who live alongside them.
- Exploring the need and opportunity for a new not for profit organisation to serve Dartmoor, with a focus on smaller scale natural capital investment
- Engaging user groups with erosion repair and building connections with the people who live and work on Dartmoor.
- Bringing farmers (commoners) and other landowners and land managers together to agree a shared vision for land management

across Dartmoor's upland

- Providing training and experience to people at an early stage of their career in land based and conservation work, helping them gain employment
- Recording ancient and veteran trees
- Among other things...

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