

261103 – Item 17 – Dartmoor Partnership Plan

Public consultation on Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2027-2032 (outcomes and targets)

The purpose of this report is to recommend how the Parish Council should respond to the public consultation.

The proposed response should broadly support the Partnership Plan's direction while seeking clearer priorities, measurable targets, named delivery responsibilities and stronger commitments on climate resilience, evidence, housing, health, transport, young people, farming and forestry.

The Dartmoor Partnership Plan (DPP) is one of DNPA's most important strategic documents. It fulfils the statutory duty to prepare a management plan and will replace the 2021-26 plan. It will also be closely linked to other plans such as the forthcoming Dartmoor Local Plan which was reported to MPC Planning Committee in July and reflect national targets for protected landscapes.

The DPP reflects an overall vision for 2045 (Dartmoor is a thriving and resilient landscape of moors and valleys where nature, farming, communities and heritage flourish where everyone feels welcome to live, work or visit) and seven themes (better for...). The current consultation is on 26 outcomes reflecting those themes and 104 proposed targets. The outcomes and targets as amended as a result of the public consultation will then sit in a narrative document. The 2021-2026 version was about 68 pages.

The public consultation closes on 22 November. There is a series of four engagement sessions for parish councillors including one in Chagford on 10 November. Councillors Evans, Hodges and Short have requested to attend, and the Clerk has requested that DNPA also offer an online session. The sessions will also provide an opportunity to discuss the new local plan. A copy of an online questionnaire has been provided by DNPA to assist the Parish Council to prepare a response.

The annex below identifies initial issues for councillors to raise at the engagement sessions and, where appropriate, include in the Parish Council's consultation response.

Recommendation:

That authority be delegated to the Chairman, in consultation with the Clerk and the councillors attending the engagement session on 10 November, to finalise and submit the Parish Council's response to the public consultation before the closing date.

Initial issues

While work on the new DPP has been underway since 2025, MPC's knowledge of it and the previous plan is limited. DNPA should engage more actively with parish and town councils. As recognised partners, local councils are likely to play a role in delivering a number of targets, including resilience networks, flood warning coverage and community emergency planning.

The DPP is described as a partnership plan including other organisations such as the three district councils, Environment Agency and Devon Wildlife Trust. It is intended to bring together actions by partners. Their level of commitment to the plan and precise responsibilities to deliver targets will need to be much clearer.

The inclusion of 104 targets risks diluting focus and makes it difficult to understand how priorities and resources will be directed. It is also unclear what the contribution is of partners to each target. The plan would benefit from a focused list of critical success measures, with clear lead responsibility assigned to DNPA. The narrative should identify what are the real priorities.

While some targets are specific and measurable, some are not, such as 'demonstrate measurable progress', 'deliver measures', and 'support partners'. It is difficult to comment upon the outcomes and targets without the explanatory narrative that will eventually accompany them to understand if they are sufficiently challenging but realistic.

Some targets will require significant resources for new baseline surveys of the situation in 2027, it may be easier to use any existing older baseline surveys.

Specific issues

Climate change is happening faster than predicted and the impacts are being felt now. Although this is mentioned in the plan, DNPA and its partners should place greater emphasis on climate adaptation and resilience, ensuring that Dartmoor's communities, environment and economy are prepared for the impacts of climate change that are already being experienced.

There are gaps in the evidence base underpinning some aspects of the plan. DNPA should set out how these gaps will be addressed and identify opportunities for citizen science and volunteer involvement in data collection and analysis.

It is not clear how challenging the affordable housing target of 30 per annum is. Does this merely represent the 45% affordable housing policy requirement applied to total projected housing delivery?

On housing sustainability and climate resilience will targets go beyond that set out in Government guidance?

There is no reference to health and wellbeing such as the retention and development of health facilities and the health of the population. The NHS is increasingly sending people in rural communities to urban centres that are often difficult to reach. The well-being benefits of nature, and opportunities for social prescribing should be better recognised.

Targets for better connected transport are limited; there is no reference to road safety and issues such as delivery of 20 mph speed limits in communities and speed watch schemes. We would like DNPA to commit to working with Devon County Council to achieve a Dartmoor community-wide solution to speed limits.

We welcome the inclusion of targets for youth inclusion. The targets could be more ambitious. A recent survey of young people in Moretonhampstead showed that most youngsters feel there is a lack of opportunities for them to be active.

We welcome the commitment to supporting Dartmoor's farmers and strengthening the sector's resilience to climate change through sustainable land management and Landscape Recovery Areas (LRAs). Good engagement of the farming community in the plan is fundamental to its success.

The forestry objectives should place greater emphasis on resilience to climate change, including species diversity, pest and disease resilience, and long-term woodland management.

Online questionnaire

The questionnaire is attached.

Questions 15-40 cover each of the seven themes, how well the outcomes and targets reflect them, and which should be the greatest focus.

There are four general questions-

- How well do the proposed outcomes reflect what matters most?
- What do you like most about the proposed direction of the DPP?
- Is there anything important missing?
- How can future engagement be more relevant?

It is not proposed to answer each question in the online questionnaire separately. Instead, the Parish Council's response will present a consolidated submission reflecting its overall comments on the proposed outcomes and targets, together with recommendations for strengthening the final Partnership Plan.