

# Dartmoor Partnership Plan

## THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

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### **Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2021-2026**

#### **Review Background Paper**

#### **Theme: Better for People**

#### **Purpose of paper:**

The Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-2026 is the single most important policy document for the National Park (also known as the National Park Management Plan). It is the strategic, overarching plan for the National Park and is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purposes and duty are met and provides a mechanism for combining national and local priorities.

The Partnership Plan is for the National Park and not just the National Park Authority, or any individual group or organisation. It sets the framework for partnership action to deliver outcomes set out in the Plan and the Vision for Dartmoor.

The Partnership Plan is required to be reviewed at least every five years. This paper provides the background evidence required to support the review of the Partnership Plan.

A background paper has been prepared for each of the seven themes within the Partnership Plan.

#### **Forces for Change:**

- Access to green space plays a critical role in mental health and well-being. Dartmoor provides this in abundance and will continue to be an important part of our Natural Health Service.
- Population growth on the periphery of the National Park will continue to increase the number of visitors to Dartmoor which in turn will increase pressure on certain sites.
- Visitors to the National Park are not always aware of the special qualities and sensitivities of Dartmoor. This can lead to conflict and polarisation between visitors and land managers/owners and farmers.
- Advances in smartphone technology has dramatically changed the way people access information to navigate, plan their trips and share their experiences. Social media and GPS activity apps provide a critical means of

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engaging and sharing information with the wider public both before and during visits to Dartmoor.

- Climate change will continue to present challenges to public access and safe enjoyment of Dartmoor through increased wildfire risk and erosion of public rights of way. Extreme weather events may make planning and safety potentially more difficult.
- Uncertainty around future revenue funding scenarios for government bodies means delivery of services will need to be prioritised and alternative delivery mechanisms considered to maximise outcomes.
- Outcomes for nature and climate are critical priorities for Dartmoor. Public engagement and provision of improved access can support delivery of improvements to both.

### **Issues and Opportunities**

- Improving accessibility on Dartmoor continues to be a priority. There is a growing need for a Natural Health Service which supports Green Social Prescribing helping improve quality of life for those with physical and mental health needs. Focus should also remain on improving access to Dartmoor for people not currently visiting because of socio-economic barriers.
- Honey-pot sites on Dartmoor continue to see high numbers of visitors throughout the year with most pressure in the summer months. Population growth around the National Park will continue to increase pressure on certain sites so adequate provision should be made to mitigate impacts as far as possible.
- Conflict can exist between members of the public exercising their rights of access and enjoyment through recreation and landowners, land managers and farmers working the land. There is a need to reduce polarisation and find common ground between those that enjoy the land for recreational purposes and those that rely on it for their livelihoods.
- Dartmoor continues to be a popular site for hosting large scale recreational events with the landscape and level of open access providing a challenging environment for participants to test themselves. Most events are run for

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fundraising purposes with others organised for commercial gain. These events can contribute to the local economy and provide opportunities for active engagement with the landscape but can also cause conflict with landowners, land managers and farmers.

- Partnership working including through the Dartmoor National Park Rural Crime Initiative on key Dartmoor campaigns (e.g. Dogs on Dartmoor, camping, wildfire prevention) has ensured aligned messaging and stronger impact with users of Dartmoor. However, many people are still not appropriately prepared or informed about the special qualities of the National Park and the restrictions around access and recreational activities. The National Park Ranger service and partners have witnessed an increase in Byelaw infringements by those accessing the moor for recreational purposes.
- Digital content – high-performing content often involves interactive features like walking route maps, virtual guides, or trip planners that help users plan their visit in advance. Developing such resources through partnership working will support consistent messaging and help to better manage public access.
- Community outreach events continue to provide valuable means of delivering for Dartmoor, whether through youth and adult education events, conservation activities or volunteer led works to enhance access on Dartmoor. These elements should be strengthened to aid in the management of responsible public access on Dartmoor.
- Use of private vehicles remains the dominant mode of transport for getting to, on and around Dartmoor. Bus services connect larger settlements on the moor and beyond, however, many services are seasonal or run infrequently. Active travel provides an opportunity for more green transport, but the topography of Dartmoor significantly inhibits journeys from outside of the park. Private vehicles will likely remain the dominant transport method of choice for accessing the National Park, a collaborative approach is needed to best manage this going forwards.
- Managing degradation of paths and maintaining public rights of way impacted by changing climate and increased use, especially where unsurfaced and crossing open moorland, has been significantly hampered by reduced funding. This will affect the ability to make Dartmoor more accessible and

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risks limiting the ability to best manage public access to protect nature, minimise impact on farming and improve resilience to climate change.

- The shift in grazing patterns means increased vegetation cover restricts public access to parts of the moor and can inhibit use of bridleways and footpaths. This leads to more frequent conflict with and disturbance of livestock as people and livestock are concentrated along narrow corridors between densely vegetated areas. Public access and safety should be considered as key elements of any land use management advice to reduce disturbance/conflict between livestock and the public.
- Climate change poses a significant threat to users of Dartmoor through increased wildfire risk. These events pose significant threats to local communities and visitors. Communication and education around such issues continues to be a key focus.

### **Policy Drivers**

- [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#), Defra - revises and updates the 25 Year Environment Plan. Includes a detailed delivery plan with policy actions allocated to different government departments, local government, and the private and third sector.
- [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework \(PLTOF\)](#) sets out how Protected Landscapes will meet key goals in the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 and how Defra will track progress. PLTOF targets can be found in Appendix A.
- [National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949](#) The Act that provided for the establishment of National Parks and access to the countryside.
- [Section 245 – Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) This introduced a new requirement for public bodies and statutory undertakers to seek to further the purposes of National Parks and National Landscapes
- [Dartmoor Commons Act 1985](#) The Dartmoor Commons Act of 1985 contains two main parts dealing with the regulation of grazing rights and the control of public access. The legislative framework maintains the values of both, and it is intended to conserve the landscape of the National Park for the future. It is

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essentially a large-scale management and access agreement between the owners, commoners and the Dartmoor National Park Authority.

- [Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000](#) Important legislation that continues to govern and shape policy and strategy on Dartmoor.
- [Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2022](#) The Government's long-term ambition is to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey, by 2040.
- [Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4](#) A plan to facilitate sustainable growth with integrated accessible and inclusive transport.
- [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans \(LCWIPS\)](#) The Transport Planning team develops transport strategies and policies and provides expert advice on new developments and schemes. This supports sustainable economic growth and enables citizens of Devon to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

### **Public consultation on priorities for Dartmoor**

A public consultation on Dartmoor's future priorities was held during August and September 2025. The consultation invited people to share their views on the most important issues to be addressed in the updated Dartmoor Partnership Plan and for Dartmoor's long-term future.

### **Data and trends**

The [State of the Park Report](#), produced on a five-year cycle to inform the review of the Partnership Plan, provides a detailed assessment of data and trends relating to the National Park and is the principal evidence base for all themes within the Partnership Plan.

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### Appendix A. Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

PLTOF Target	Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2027-2032 Target (short term target)	PLTOF long term target (Dartmoor specific)
<p><b>Target 1</b> Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).</p>	<p>Ambition to be agreed in the workshops</p> <p>Target to be agreed over the review period</p>	<p>7,548ha by 2042 (apportioned figure)</p> <p>To be agreed or amended in the review period</p>
<p><b>Target 2</b> Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042</p>	<p>Ambition to be agreed in the workshops</p> <p>Target to be agreed over the review period</p>	<p>80% by 2042</p>
<p><b>Target 3</b> For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.</p>	<p>Ambition to be agreed in the workshops</p> <p>Target to be agreed over the review period</p>	<p>60% by 2028</p>
<p><b>Target 4</b> Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through</p>	<p>Ambition to be agreed in the workshops</p> <p>Target to be agreed over the review period</p>	<p>100% of priority habitat and newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment under favourable management by 2042</p>

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agri-environment schemes by 2042.		
<b>Target 5</b> Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.	Ambition to be agreed in the workshops  Target to be agreed over the review period	At least 65% of land managers have adopted nature-friendly farming on at least 10% of their land by 2030.
<b>Target 6</b> Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.	Carbon negative by 2045.	Carbon negative by 2045.
<b>Target 7</b> Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050	Ambition to be agreed in the workshops  Target to be agreed over the review period	8,030ha peatland restored by 2050 (apportioned figure)  To be agreed or amended in the review period
<b>Target 8</b> Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).	Ambition to be agreed in the workshops  Target to be agreed over the review period	2,867ha of tree canopy and woodland cover created by 2050 (apportioned figure)  To be agreed or amended in the review period
<b>Target 9</b> Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.	Ambition to be agreed in the workshops  Target to be agreed over the review period	Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
<b>Target 10</b>	Ambition to be agreed in the workshops	Decrease the number of nationally designated

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Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.	Target to be agreed over the review period	heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.
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