

# Dartmoor National Park Authority

## General Information - Members



Dartmoor National Park was designated on 30 October 1951 and covers an area of 954 square kilometres (368 square miles) the largest area of open countryside in the South of England. Almost half of the National Park is moorland and 37% per cent of the National Park is common land. Over 34,000 people live in the National Park and there are in excess of 2m visitors per year. The twin purposes of National Park designation are:

- **to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage; and**
- **to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (of the National Parks) by the public.**

*National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as amended by the Environment Act 1995*

Dartmoor National Park Authority came into being on 1 April 1997 as a special purpose local authority, set up under the Environment Act 1995. The Authority exists to secure for the public good the conservation, enhancement, enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of Dartmoor, its landscape, wildlife, and cultural heritage. It also looks to support Dartmoor's businesses and communities and economic growth, as we deliver National Park purposes, in accordance with our socio-economic duty which is to:

**Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities (within the National Park) by working closely with the agencies and local authorities responsible for these matters.**

The Authority is committed to listening to all stakeholders and providing services fairly to all sections of the community

The Authority currently has 19 Members:

- Five are appointed by Devon County Council
- Five by the District Councils
  - two from West Devon Borough Council
  - two from Teignbridge District Council
  - one from South Hams District Council
- The remaining nine Members are Government appointees:
  - Four are appointed to represent parish council interest and are nominated by the parish councils on Dartmoor. The nominations are then approved by the Secretary of State.
  - The other five Members are directly appointed by the Secretary of State to represent the national interest, and are persons, usually local, with specialist knowledge of, or a particular interest in, the national park.

All Members represent the whole of the National Park.

The full Authority normally meets on the first Friday of every month. There are three committees with delegated powers to make decisions on different aspects of the Authority's work: Development Management, Audit and Governance and Standards.

The Authority produces an annual Business Plan setting out its key priorities within the context of National Park purposes. Performance against the Business Plan is monitored throughout the year.

## What we do

The Authority aims to conserve and enhance Dartmoor as a vibrant living, working landscape and community. We work in partnership with a wide range of local and national stakeholders and look to support Dartmoor's businesses and communities as we deliver National Park purposes. The Authority is committed to listening to all stakeholders and providing services fairly to all sections of the community.

### Our principal areas of activity include:

- produce a National Park Management Plan (known as the partnership plan) containing land management policies, and a Local Plan setting out planning policies, which together provide the main policy framework for the management of the National Park;
- promote sustainable development and work closely with all authorities and agencies concerned with the social and economic wellbeing of National Park communities.
- provide advice on land management and work with the farming community through the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project.
- record, protect, maintain, and enhance natural habitats and areas of ecological significance and give advice on their protection and management.
- deal with all proposals which require planning permission, listed building consent, conservation area consent, advertisement consent or which have to be the subject of other formal submissions;
- manage public access to open country.
- maintain the footpath and bridleway network on behalf of Devon County Council.
- provide and support a network of National Park Visitor Centres, community-run information centres and information points.
- manage the effects of recreation and tourism pressures and influence the provision of appropriate tourist facilities and attractions in and around the National Park.
- Provide resources and support a guided walks and events programme to inform and to educate thereby enabling the better understanding and enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities.

- work closely with housing authorities to facilitate the provision of housing to meet identified local needs.
- record, protect, maintain and enhance sites, structures and areas of archaeological significance and give advice on their protection and management;
- give planning advice, including design guidance, prior to the submission of applications.
- provide a National Park-wide Ranger Service;
- enter into agreements to provide for public access and other recreational opportunities.
- help schools, colleges, and youth groups to gain as much benefit as possible from their visits to the National Park.
- manage key visitor infrastructure such as toilets and car parks owned or leased by the Authority.
- Delivering our Climate Change Action Plan.

## **The Role of an Authority Member**

The Authority can only achieve its aims effectively if the decisions it takes balance local and national needs, take full account of the statutory purposes of the Authority and lead to realistic actions. As a Member of the National Park Authority, you will be expected to tackle a wide range of demanding responsibilities, balancing national policies, services requirements, and local expectations.

### **Commitment to the Business of the Authority**

Members can expect to spend 2 – 4 days per month on National Park Authority business. This commitment will vary from time to time (and for a committee Chair of working group member is likely to be more) dependent upon the level of involvement with Authority work that is undertaken.

### **Main Purposes of the Role:**

The overall purpose of Members is to ensure the efficient, effective, and accountable governance of the Authority; to provide leadership and direction for the organisation as a whole; and act as an ‘ambassador/advocate’ for the National Park and the work of the Authority.

For full details, please refer to the Role Description for Members.

### **You will also be given the opportunity from time to time to:**

- serve on committees and working groups dealing with particular issues affecting the National Park.
- champion or lead a specific area of the Authority’s work.

- talk about the work of the Authority to local community groups.
- learn about the National Park and other protected landscape matters on field visits and fact-finding tours.
- meet other people responsible for National Park matters and give your views on how well the Authority functions as a body.

## Performance Management

The Authority is committed to continuous improvement and has a performance management framework linking the outcomes it seeks to achieve to the objectives and actions in the Business Plan for the Authority and the individual work programmes for staff. Progress is measured through a series of service dashboards, performance indicators and individual appraisals.

Members contribute to this framework through the monitoring of specific targets:

**Target:** at least 85% attendance at meetings of the Authority and its Committees

**Purpose:** to monitor participation, commitment, and accountability

**Target:** to (collectively) attend 30 Parish meetings per year

**Purpose:** to ensure an even distribution of workload, and to monitor the level of community engagement

## Self-Assessment (Appraisal)

All Members will have the opportunity to participate in an annual self-assessment (appraisal) process with a particular focus on roles and functions undertaken during the year and any training/development needs.

This process is focused on ensuring that all Members have the skills and support to fulfil their role as “ambassadors for the National Park”.