

DARTMOOR LAND USE MANAGEMENT GROUP (DLUMG)

Meeting Minutes: 29th April 2025

ATTENDANCE

Present: Phil Stocker (Chair), Jez Bretherton, Ann Willcocks, Helen Radmore, David Attwell, John Howell, Matthew Morris, John Dracup, Kevin Bishop, Kevin Cox, Helen Booker, Liz Nabb, Stephen Dennis, Mat Cole, Janet Dwyer, Andrea Ayres, Tracy May, Laura Cardenas, Tom Usher, Rob Hindle

Apologies: Nick Bruce White; Paul Hawkins; Dave Stone; Dave Smith;

1. UPDATES

- On 3rd April, Daniel Zeichner, Minister of State for DEFRA, visited Dartmoor at a meeting organised by Sir Geoffrey Cox MP. Both David Fursdon and the Minister expressed satisfaction with DLUMG progress.
- Head Secretariat has resigned from the DLUMG; RPA has not allocated funding to replace this position. Workload will need to be absorbed within existing budget.
- Tamsin Thomas has been seconded from the Foundation for Common Land, working two days/week until the end of June.
- Andrea Ayres will take the Natural England seat on the DLUMG from Simon Lee.

2. VISION AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Partnership Plan Framework

- The DNPA Partnership Plan will serve as the vision, reviewed every five years as part of a 30-year long-term vision. Visioning work done by Landscape Recovery bids will be taken into consideration.
- Current Partnership Plan developed 2019/2020 (hampered by COVID); now being reviewed to embed government drivers including 30X30 and Environment Act Targets.
- Review process considers SSSIs, public access, peatlands, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and Climate Change adaptation.
- The revised Plan scheduled for adoption in 2026/2027.
- DLUMG work must proceed in parallel with Partnership Plan development.
- DLUMG to coalesce around existing visions for Dartmoor, in particular the Partnership Plan.

Land Use Framework

- The national Land Use Framework, and the Dartmoor LUF, may significantly impact Dartmoor's management.
- Some concerns expressed amongst the farming community regarding potential loss of productive agricultural land to nature recovery.
- Opinions divided; consensus emerged that this need not represent a conflict if approached appropriately.
- Change is necessary but must be carefully mapped to balance agriculture with environmental objectives.

3. LANDSCAPE RECOVERY PROJECTS

Central Dartmoor Cluster (John Dracup)

- Extensive stakeholder engagement process: 25 events across Dartmoor's diverse landscape.
- Toby Diggins employed as independent landscape architect/facilitator (mostly Duchy-funded).
- Team created visual maps and comprehensive book documenting the vision process.
- Book launch: 12th May at 7pm.
- Document creates workstream proposals for Defra outlining 20-year vision.

East Dartmoor (Helen Booker/Devon Wildlife Trust)

- Covers Bovey Valley, Haytor and Blackhill areas.
- Focus: rare species, woodland management/expansion, connecting habitats.
- Strategy incorporates woodland creation, naturalistic grazing, and drought-resistant wetlands.

Walkhampton Scheme

- Round 2 project centred on Walkham catchment.
- Focus: water management and peatland restoration.
- Encompasses common land bordering urban areas; smaller commons present significant challenges.
- Region mostly not SSSI-designated, creating different opportunities.
- Emphasis on engaging the working community and next generation.

Common Themes and Integration

- Although appearing different, all LR projects share fundamental aims: connecting habitats, supporting species recovery, fostering stakeholder collaboration.
- Key challenge: identifying what can be learned from these three areas to create a "super LR" encompassing all of Dartmoor.
- Need to scale successful local approaches while maintaining coherence across varied ecosystems.

4. DLUMG WORKSTREAMS AND STRUCTURE

Workstream Organisation

- Five workstreams initially identified (28th January 2025), with proposals to add:
 - Group Functioning
 - Communication & Engagement
- Consideration to combine "Dartmoor Grazing Schemes" and "Defra Agri-Environment Schemes" workstreams.
- Agreement to rationalize working groups and keep membership dynamic.
- Need for both a designated project lead and simplified working group structure.

Governance Structure

- Workstreams to be organized under a common brief, presented back to full group.
- All decisions will return to the main group for consideration/approval.
- Management Board to be established.

5. AGRICULTURAL SCHEMES AND FARMING SYSTEMS

Agri-Environment Considerations

- Question raised: What would a Dartmoor-wide agri-environment scheme look like?
- Options discussed:
 - Build on existing frameworks with regional payment rates
 - Develop Dartmoor-specific schemes
 - Adapt existing schemes to suit Dartmoor's landscape/farming systems

Farming Systems Approach

- Appropriate for all stakeholders to develop better understanding of farming systems.
- Identified past failure: insufficient understanding of farming systems and practices.
- Full farming roadmap for Dartmoor might be excessive for current purposes.

6. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES

Project Management

- Emphasized as key to successful delivery.
- Need to appoint project manager soon.
- Encouraged bold approach rather than constraint by existing frameworks.

Resources and Planning

- Tamsin Thomas (two days/week until end-June) to create costed work plan upon return from holiday.
- Hornbeam consultancy available for support if necessary.
- Coordination needed with Foundation for Common Land (Tamsin's employer).
- Helen Booker to inquire with RSPB regarding project manager secondment candidates (response by Thursday).

7. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Youth Engagement

- Question raised about opportunities for younger generations.
- Central Dartmoor Cluster has established succession planning group.
- Fursdon Review recommended TIAH membership for Dartmoor farmers under 40.

Dartmoor Observatory

- Dedicated working group not needed immediately.
- Information will naturally develop as workstreams progress.
- Question raised about potential synergies with Landscape Recovery schemes.
- Opportunity for coordinated data collection and knowledge sharing.

8. NEXT STEPS

- Meeting scheduled before end of May.
- Future meetings may need extended duration for comprehensive discussions.
- Revised meeting dates to be circulated.
- Tamsin to develop costed work plan.
- Organizations to consider project lead secondment possibilities.