



Minutes of Meeting – 30 March 2026
Buckfast Abbey Conference Centre – 1pm

1. Apologies

Tracy May and Ann Willcocks

2. Welcome

The group welcomed **Tom Surrey**, new Chief Executive of Dartmoor National Park Authority.

Tom Stratton introduced Tom, who summarised his background, recognised the importance of DLUMG's work and emphasised his intention to learn from the group, meet members individually, and work collaboratively.

3. Minutes of 23 February 2026 and Matters Arising

3.1 Clarification of minute-taking approach

Some members requested clearer distinction between:

- **Group consensus**
- **Individual statements**

This was acknowledged and will be reflected in future minutes.

Some members also expressed a wish to make clear they have concerns over the licensing application for controlled burning on deep peat as part of one of the potential DLUMG trials. Other members were content on the basis that there is a formal Defra licensing and justification process.

3.2 Updates on previous actions

- **Flexibility on livestock units** – ongoing engagement with Defra and NE.
- **NE comments on nature opportunities mapping** – completed.

- **Monitoring project brief** – comments received and ready to tender unless members have further, final comments.
 - **Project overview / work-plan descriptor:** to be produced by project team and circulated
 - **Trials update paper** – nearly complete.
 - **Heather/bracken / gorse literature review** – group agreed literature reviews are not required; workshops and topic-specific sessions preferred.
 - **Trial objectives** – updated summary prepared; ongoing refinement ahead of launch to include NE engagement.
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4. Review of Costed Work Plan to March 2027

Tamsin presented the updated financial position.

4.1 2025–26 Expenditure

- Planned: £275k
- Spent: £98k
- **£177k carried forward**, all contractually committed.

4.2 2026–27 Forecast

- Approx. **£400k available** (including carry-forward).
- **Predicted overspend**, primarily due to trials and monitoring.
- **FiPL has pledged a potential £10k** and is open to further bids.

4.3 Key points raised

- Need to **prioritise workstreams** collectively.
 - Monitoring and opportunities mapping must not be squeezed.
 - Some elements (e.g., trials) could attract third party contributions – being explored.
 - Importance of aligning spend with Defra milestones (monitoring, LUF, trials).
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5. Land Use Framework (LUF)

5.1 National Framework

Defra's national LUF was published recently. Key themes:

- 30% for nature by 2030
- Food production recognised
- Multifunctionality emphasised
- Dartmoor seen nationally as a **testbed** for practical implementation
"We are leading the field in this."

5.2 Baseline Mapping (Exeter University)

John Howell presented the Stage 1 maps (habitats, soils, access, archaeology, woodland, flood risk).

Caveats emphasised:

- Remote-sensed data has **significant inaccuracies** at fine scale.
- Maps are **"good enough to inform the next step"**, not parcel-level decisions.
- Need for LNRS data integration (awaiting response from Devon County).

Maps will be circulated via SharePoint for comment with the schedule of data sources.

Actions: Project team to share link to draft maps

5.3 Opportunities Mapping (Stage 2)

The group discussed the proposed priority themes:

- Archaeology
- Peat
- Riparian zones
- Biodiversity
- Woodland
- Recreation/access

Key points:

- Climate change must be embedded.
- Avoid over-prescriptive or static mapping.
- Need to articulate systems, not just tools (grazing, peat, trees etc).
- Cultural heritage and agricultural viability should be recognised.

- We need to guard against a homogenised approach to treatment of land
- We need to ensure data captured and presented can be future proofed
- A facilitated workshop will be required to agree priorities and trade-offs.
- STRAVA data could be used to assess distances travelled to the National Park
- Archaeology maps need further work using additional data sets
- Being able to switch layers on and off would help users
- We should detail the course of all data. Woodlands for example have been compiled using a wide range of sources.
- Flood risk analysis maps need to pan further out to properly capture lower land risk
- Can we develop a system that, as far as possible, automatically updates?
- Climate modelling should be built in

It was agreed that a descriptor setting out the purpose of the LUF to users would be helpful – its aims and how it is designed to be used. Janet and Emma offered to draft some proposed wording.

In terms of progressing the opportunities mapping work, it had been agreed that a series of theme based workshop sessions should be arranged with an independent Facilitator. The current nature opportunities mapping brief will be adapted to accommodate this, with an updated copy shared with the DLUMG for comment.

Actions: Emma and Janet to draft LUF descriptor

Project team to adjust draft nature opportunities mapping brief and share with DLUMG

6. Observatory Development

Noted that the Observatory will host interactive map layers.

ArcGIS/StoryMaps likely platform; DNPA GIS team exploring options.

7. SFI and CS Higher Tier on Commons (2026–27)

The group noted Defra's announcement that **SFI and CS Higher Tier will not be available for commons making on-line applications in 2026 or 2027** due to RPA system limitations.

Concerns raised:

- Risk of agreements expiring without replacement.
- Need for rollover or paper-based application route.
- Foundation for Common Land is co-ordinating a campaign for a paper option.
- PA2s remain essential and can proceed.

Group agreed DLUMG may support the principle of enabling applications (e.g., paper route), but **must not appear to take policy positions** without explicit group agreement.

8. Native Breeds and Hill Pony Issues

DLUMG was approached by a pony management group regarding:

- Inclusion of ponies in CS and SFI stocking calendars (previously excluded)
- Native Breeds at Risk (NBAR) 50% threshold

The project team shared concerns with Defra's genetics team but **did not express a DLUMG position**.

Members stressed:

- DLUMG must avoid being seen as a lobbying body.
 - Any responses must clarify they are **not group positions** unless discussed and agreed by DLUMG
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9. Single Agri-Environment Framework Concept

The focus group shared a draft concept paper.

Key feedback:

- Must integrate learning from Landscape Recovery (LR).
- Should recognise public access, cultural value, and new entrants.
- A need to refer to SAC's and SSSI's
- Need clarity from Defra on whether they want "blue sky" or "integration of existing schemes".
- LR design principles (adaptive management, outcomes-based) are highly relevant and the group suggested the paper is adapted to build on the best

principles of LR, which is more likely to secure Defra support, as opposed to a totally new structure.

Action: With this feedback, focus group to adjust the draft paper for recirculation

10. Landscape Recovery Updates

10.1 Central Dartmoor LR

The Chair of Central LR outlined recent challenges:

- Strong lobbying from multiple stakeholders.
- Need for a **new way of working** to maintain trust.
- Commons **will be included**, but full management plans cannot be finalised by May.
- Pressure on winter sheep grazing
- Proposal:
 - Submit commons with a **two-year adaptive grazing plan**,
 - Use DLUMG trials and monitoring to inform year-3+ management
 - Ensure scientific robustness of data capture / monitoring

Group discussion:

- Importance of transparency and clear “stakes in the ground”.
- Risks around structural change to farm businesses.
- Need for robust monitoring to support adaptive management.
- Tenancy issues flagged as significant and unresolved.
- Outcomes should be put before actions / stocking numbers

10.2 East Dartmoor LR

Nick summarised the approach:

- Adaptive grazing – targeting both under and over grazing
- GPS tracking/no-fence collars where appropriate
- Annual review by independent grazing panel which includes a NE rep

- Shift towards more cattle and ponies where needed, particularly to tackle dominant species and improve livestock distribution
- Strong alignment with DLUMG systems-based thinking

Action: Project team to identify and connect with, areas of collaboration between trials and LR work

11. Trials Update and Consents

Tamsin presented the updated trials table.

Key points

- All pre-intervention works completed.
- Landscape-scale trials now entering grazing plan development with Digg and Co which can connect with LR thinking
- Communications plan being developed (short films, storytelling).
- Need to sharpen objectives and monitoring questions now we have more site level information and feedback from graziers / ecologists and NE
- Ensure academic rigour attached to monitoring framework and data capture

Actions: Project team to finesse detail of trial objectives to include NE. Once available project brief from Digg and Co to be shared.

Enquiries to be made to ensure academic oversight of monitoring framework and data capture.

12. Burning on Deep Peat

A strong divergence of views was recorded.

Some members argued small-scale experimental burns may be needed to understand *Molinia* control to achieve the better distribution of livestock across large landscapes and enable long-term aftermath grazing, having spent years trying alternative methods; others stated this may be incompatible with Defra policy, climate commitments, and scalability. There is a Defra licence system for the processing of applications for controlled burning on deep peat. The extent of legally defined deep peat has markedly increased with the application of a 30cm (from 40) threshold and concern was expressed by some in relation to how these areas, which are often *Molinia* dominated

and at risk of not successfully hydrologically being restored due to climate change, can be managed efficiently so that wild-fire risk is mitigated.

Some members felt the licence application should be withdrawn, while others felt the application should go ahead even if decisions to actually proceed were made later . No group agreement was reached.

The licence application is with Defra. Further time is to be allocated to discuss this important issue.

Action: The Chairman will make time for a discussion on controlled burning.

13. Swaling Workshop

A workshop will be held **11 May 2026**.

Potential contributors include:

- Prof. Claire Belcher (wildfire science)
 - Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue
 - New Forest operations team
 - A Dartmoor farmer's perspective
 - NE/ Defra
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14. Wild Justice v Dartmoor Commoners' Council – Summary

A brief overview of the key outcomes from this case was provided by the Project Manager.

15. Communications

Website updates ongoing.

The project team suggested that the launch of the trials work, particularly the landscape scale work are used as a platform to start some structured and positive communications about the DLUMG work.

Action: Project team to propose a series of communications engaging with Saltwood Studios who are partnering with Digg and Co for the landscape scale trials and wider trial work.

16. New Forest Visit

To be arranged by project team – 1st June proposed.

17. Next Meeting

27 April 2026 at Parke
