

# **MOOR THAN MEETS THE EYE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

13 July 2016, Room 1, HMBC Princetown, 10am

<b>Present:</b>	James Platts (Chair)	South West Lakes Trust	JP
	Ally Kohler	DNPA	AK
	Andrea Ayres	RSPB	AA
	Andy Crabb	Historic England	AC
	David Lloyd	DNPA	DL
	Jenny How	Visit Dartmoor	JH
	Phil Hutt	Dartmoor Preservation Association	PH
	Simon Lee	Natural England	SL
<b>Attending:</b>	Simon Avery	CSG Representative	SA
	John Clark	CSG Representative	JC
	Andy Bailey	Community & Events Officer, <i>MTMTE</i>	ABy
	Emma Stockley	Community Heritage Officer, <i>MTMTE</i>	ES
	Chrissy Mason	Community Ecologist, <i>MTMTE</i>	CM
	Ellie Fabiani-Laymond	Finance & Admin Officer, <i>MTMTE</i>	EL

## **1 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Two members of the newly formed Community Stakeholders Group (CSG) were in attendance and formerly introduced to the Board members present.

## **2 Apologies**

Apologies from Kevin Bishop (DNPA), Ian James (Devon County Council), David Rickwood (Woodland Trust), Tom Stratton (Duchy of Cornwall) and Mark Allott (*MTMTE* Scheme Manager) were noted.

## **3 Minutes of the last *MTMTE* LP Board Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2016 were agreed as a true record and have been approved.

**ACTION: EL to upload approved minutes to the *MTMTE* website**

## **4 Project Spotlight**

ABy and CM gave a short presentation on the theme of 'Wildlife' in the context of the *MTMTE* Scheme. In summary the following points were:

- There is an active ongoing programme of events, activities and survey work being undertaken by the various projects in the Scheme
- The Dartmoor Festival of Wildlife held at Yarner Wood in May attracted over 500 visitors and involved many different conservation groups, scheme partners and volunteers
- RSPB has organised 4 guided walks for the Scheme

- ABy has been working with local schools participating in the John Muir Awards as part of the Bovey Valley project. This has included 4 visits to the East Dartmoor Nature Reserve. Feedback from the schools and the children involved has been very positive
- The East Dartmoor Blog is available to view publicly and features conservation stories and input from the EcoSkills volunteers
- CM has organized 6 public haymeadow walks this summer. They have attracted a lot of public interest. The project (PA2 Haymeadows) will ultimately deliver 20 walks in total. As all haymeadows are on private land, access and frequency of visits is restricted by landowner permission. The Moorland Guides could be employed in continuing haymeadows public engagement beyond the completion of the Scheme
- The PA2 project will also establish a Hay Seed Marketing Co-Operative to bring partners together to enhance the conservation and perpetuation of haymeadows long after the *MTMTE* Scheme has finished
- Dartmoor Wildlife Trust (DWT) has acquired Bellever Meadow with the intention of restoring 40 hectares of haymeadows. The Dartmoor National park Authority has provided a letter of support for this initiative. The DWT has invaluable experience in restoring grassland and harvesting seed and this will be an asset to the Hay Seed Marketing Co-Operative in terms of advice and guidance
- CM would like to arrange a 'Haymeadow Week' to help establish a legacy for the future by bringing together the various agencies and partners involved in conservation initiatives
- Project PA3 (Natural Connections) relates to conservation of Rhos pastures in 2 wet valley systems within the Scheme area. The pastures are important habitat for wildlife species such as the Marsh Fritillary, Willow Tit and Bog Hoverfly. Management plans for these areas are progressing slowly
- A programme of work has been organised to tackle the problem of invasive species, specifically Skunk Cabbage and Himalaya Balsam, which are a threat to wildlife. BBC Countryfiles filmed a segment for their daytime programme capturing the work of the volunteer group involved
- The invasive species programme has been a learning process, the results of which will be reported in a technical worksheet to be produced by the EcoSkills trainees. The report will be made available on the website as it will be useful to other agencies embarking on their own treatment programmes. The South West regional forums may be a useful conduit for the dissemination of this information to other organisations who may find it useful.
- A 'Bat Walk' has been scheduled for September and CM will also be attending the Meldon Wildlife Festival. Other related events include the Festival of Dartmoor Through the Ages in July, the Brimpts Open day in August and the Walking Festival in August/September

## **5 Highlight Report Review**

In the absence of the Scheme Manager AK summarised the Highlight Report as follows:

- Overall Scheme expenditure is £1.143m behind forecasted spend. Page 5 Costs section describes the Scheme as being 50% behind against base

budget. Outputs are being delivered but at a much slower pace than expected. Although landscape partnership schemes often take longer than expected to gather momentum, the trend cannot continue indefinitely

- Positive indicators include the high level of volunteering hours achieved across the Scheme, the 'Have Your Say' programme of events and the recruitment of the Community Stakeholder Group
- AK summarised the issues and concerns surrounding the Quarterly Claims reports as raised by MA. More detailed reporting is required from the Partners.

A discussion ensued around the current reporting procedure with the general consensus of opinion from the Partners being as follows:

- Project leaders do not find the current report form user friendly
- The current report form is not an HLF concept so could be changed
- The one week deadline following the end of quarter can be too demanding on project leaders trying to turn around the required information in time
- The Scheme Manager should take a more proactive role in gathering information/data for the quarterly reports through face to face/one to one meetings with the project leaders. This will enhance communications and strengthen relationships whilst improving the quality of the information gathered. Due to time constraints, meetings may have to be worked on a rotating cycle to cover all project leaders over a period of time
- Although robust and detailed, the spreadsheets are not the most effective way to communicate critical information to the Board. The written commentary in the Highlight Report was felt to be most effective method of communicating essential facts and figures. The RAG summary is the most helpful appendices.
- The spreadsheets are valuable to the Scheme Manager in helping him track Scheme progress, however, the Board Members and Project Leads often don't have time to study and interpret them in detail.

**ACTION: AK will feedback the above points and discuss with MA. JP may also attend the meeting**

Page 3 and 4 of the Highlight Report refers to some projects causing concern at present. They are:

PA6 (Higher Uppacott): work has been undertaken to remove modern features from the longhouse which were detrimental to the fabric of the building. The process revealed some unexpected finds which has delayed progress. The programme of works has been revised to bring it back onto schedule, the outshut roof will be completed this summer. The project is still within scope and within budget.

PB1( Bellever and Postbridge Trails): there has been a recent meeting with the Forestry Commission who are a significant delivery partner for this project. The DNPA are aware that the project needs renewed impetus and the project is expected to be complete within the Scheme timeframe.

**Action: A detailed update report on project PB1 is to be submitted by the project leader to the next Board meeting. The project leader may be invited to**

**attend the meeting to answer questions raised by the report. AK to inform the relevant project leader**

PB3 (Moor Medieval): there has been a recent change in project leader which caused a temporary hiatus in project activity; however, the schedule will be taken up again in September.

PB5 (Welcome to Widecombe): ABy has been working with Reverend Geoffrey Fenton to get the village plans agreed and begin the procurement process. The project is expected to complete within the Scheme timetable but will be delivered one year later than expected.

PC8 (Postbridge Visitor Centre): the lead officer is looking at ways of delivering the outputs in a different way.

PD1 (Dartmoor Diploma): there has been little progress so far. Invitations to tender for the educational service provider need to be sent out as soon as possible. AK highlighted this as a high risk project.

**Action: MA to submit a detailed project update on project PD1 in the papers for the next Board meeting**

PA1 (Moorland Birds): AA met with MA to discuss the re-scoping of the project. Moorland bird surveys are currently underway and based on the findings AA will bring a project proposal to the next Board meeting. AA may invite Paul Buckley of the RSPB to attend to present the information.

**Action: AA to bring a project proposal for PA1 to the next Board meeting (also to be included in the meeting papers). EL to include Paul Buckley in the meeting invitations if required**

PA8 (Ancient Boundaries, Modern Farming): there has been several changes in project management since the project began, however, some additional hours have now been built into the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project (DHFP) budget to accommodate the required project leader support from within the existing team.

PB8 (Pony Herd Identification): ABy reported that the project leader has withdrawn the project from the Scheme as she felt she wanted to 'go in a different direction' with it. He contacted the Pony Action Group (PAG) to see if they would like to propose a replacement project but they already have an existing leaflet which makes one of the outputs redundant. AK highlighted the volunteering requirement, which was a large part of the original plan. This needs to be incorporated into any new proposal. ABy suggested a pony event to bring the various associations together to educate the public on their work and the heritage of the Dartmoor pony. JH gave some insight into Visit Dartmoor's association with various pony groups.

**Action: ABy to bring a recommendation to the next Board meeting on pony projects**

## **6 Project Queries**

The discussion returned to the issue of quarterly reporting and the Highlight Report appendices included in the Board papers.

AK explained that timely and accurate reporting was essential for all projects. As lead partner the DNPA carry a lot of the risk and pecuniary measures may have to be put in place for projects failing to give accurate updates. General consensus was that negative reinforcement would not be helpful. If the Scheme Manager adopted the proposals of more face to face meetings then it would be unnecessary to issue ultimatums.

The Highlight Report form and use of spreadsheets was in need of revision. It was seen as unfeasible to expect volunteer organisations to complete the report in its present form.

**Action: An improvement in reporting is to be evident by January 2017. MA to facilitate this and report back to Board**

In response to Section 3 of the Highlight Report 'Unplanned key Activities delivered in this Period', AK acknowledged the extra work put onto the *MTMTE* Community Officers by their contribution to the DNPA staff training day. She will look at the issue of unrelated additional jobs impacting on the team in this way.

Risk Register

PC5 (Wray valley Trail) will be back on track in the autumn.

## **7 Decisions**

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Constitution

Confirmation of acceptance of the revised documents is still outstanding from the Dartmoor Commoners Council and Dartmoor Farmers Association

**ACTION: AK to chase a response from the Dartmoor Commoners Council and from the Dartmoor Farmers Association**

## **8 Communications**

Concerning the communications bullet point listed in section 6b of the Highlight Report, PH gave a response on behalf of the DPA. Partners agreed they were all aware of, and observing, the HLF acknowledgement requirements for the Scheme.

The double-sided Summer Events leaflet will be distributed in the near future. Some significant events are:

- Heritage Festival: Dartmoor Through the Ages 23<sup>rd</sup> July
- DTRG Open Day at Brimpts Farm, 27<sup>th</sup> August
- Walking Festival, end of August/early September

The next *MTMTE* newsletter will be circulated next week. Email reminders were sent to all project leaders to submit their events and articles to help promote the Scheme. A volunteer has stepped forward to offer support with the ongoing social media demands of the Scheme.

The North Bovey Festival clashes with the Dartmoor through the Ages Festival. There is an opportunity to cross-promote the two events in both venues.

## 9 **AOB**

### North Hall Manor Dig

AC presented the following figures for the recent North Hall Manor archaeological dig at Widecombe in the Moor: the event involved the equivalent of 270 volunteer days, 6 undergraduates participated, 50 schoolchildren and 600 members of the public visited. The children of Widecombe School held a picture competition on the theme of medieval life at North Hall Manor. More excavations are planned for the summer.

**Action: the project spotlight for the next Board meeting will be the archaeological work at Hangingstone and Sittaford. The PA5 lead officers will present a 1 page paper for the next meeting**

### Community Stakeholder Group (CSG)

A new Community Stakeholder Group has now been recruited. 15 expressions of interest were sent out with 9 applications returned. All applicants have been successful and the first meeting will take place in August, most probably Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> August.

### Dates for future Board meetings

The original schedule of Board meetings has been moved back by one week to accommodate the CSG. A revised list of meeting dates has been put together and these will be circulated with the next set of draft minutes for information. It was agreed that it was sufficient to send meeting invitations out one year in advance (not more than that) to allow partners to put them onto their calendars. The dates for the meetings up to next July are: 12<sup>th</sup> October, 25<sup>th</sup> January, 26<sup>th</sup> April, 12<sup>th</sup> July.

**Action: EL to send meeting invitations out for the LP Board up to and including next July (2017)**

## 10 **Date of next meeting**

12 October 2016, Room 1 HMBC Princetown, Room 1 at 10am.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 11.40am.