

Dorset National Park Newsletter

February 2018

Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2018. This will be an important year as we look forward to Natural England's next evaluation of the proposal, submitted in 2013, covering the Dorset and East Devon AONBs and what remains of Thomas Hardy's Egdon Heath.

Please help spread the word about the great opportunities a national park offers our communities and businesses (including farmers, landowners and all those in the tourism sector) as well as conserving and enhancing our very special environment and heritage - Dorset's greatest economic asset.

We hope you enjoy the information as well as the new video and BBC News features on our website...

www.dorsetnationalpark.com



We Welcome the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan Commitment

The National Park Team welcomed the government's recognition of the value of National Parks, and their commitment to "Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of our landscapes by reviewing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) for the 21st century, including assessing whether more may be needed."

Our case for National Park designation is strong and amply demonstrated, as evidence and studies on our website show. We look forward to Natural England's further assessment of the proposal later this year, and to working with local councils and communities, as well as with Natural England and DEFRA, to bring the National Park opportunity to fruition as soon as possible.

As the Government's Plan notes, the creation of designated landscapes such as National Parks "has been among the outstanding environmental achievements of the past 100 years. They provide a patchwork of stunning, and protected, landscapes ... We will make sure they continue to be conserved and enhanced, while recognising that they are living landscapes that support rural communities."

The Plan states: "*As planning authorities, National Parks can shape the way development is used to contribute to their social, economic and environmental enhancement.*"

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan was published on 11th January.

See www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan



Support Continues to Grow

More and more communities, societies and businesses express their interest in and support for the National Park proposal, joining the many local councils and other organisations, national and local, which are mentioned on the website.

Among recent additions to interested organisations are the Weymouth and Portland Chamber of Commerce and the Woodland Trust. The Thomas Hardy Society is a firm supporter of the proposed Dorset National Park and its President, Lord Fellowes, has written eloquently on why he personally supports the proposal:

"Dorset is a very special county, not least because of its association with the life and times of Thomas Hardy, who took his inspiration from the towns and villages and open country around Dorchester and beyond, and whose story is still there to be seen by the interested visitor..."

Wild Egdon Heath was a particular favourite of his... Hardy would surely want us to conserve and enhance these very special places and the cultural heritage that is entwined in our landscapes and communities ... I believe the Dorset National Park offers a great opportunity to achieve these aims."

Read his full message of support on the website at:

www.dorsetnationalpark.com/team

Dorset National Park on TV and Radio

Late January saw extensive and positive media coverage of the National Park proposal, with TV news features shown across BBC South West and South and a BBC Radio news feature.

Take a look at our website to watch the coverage.



A National Park Would Complement Local Government Re-organisation

A Dorset National Park would be an asset and an efficient, close partner to the Unitary Authorities proposed by Dorset Councils. It would help deliver a shared agenda for a thriving and successful Dorset.

The environment is Dorset's greatest economic asset. To conserve, enhance and invest in this great asset would be a key role of a National Park. It also has the statutory duty to foster the economic and social well-being of its communities. As the planning authority for its area, it would develop and consult on a local plan that reflects what communities want and need. It could devolve planning case-work to the Unitary's planning team and pay the Unitary to perform this role. There would be no duplication, no additional layer and the AONB would disappear.

All of Dorset can benefit from the additional funding and expertise available. National Parks are not against development, and, through partnership working and consultation and with specialist staff, they have a long-term outlook and work constructively with landowners, farmers and businesses. 75% of the members of a National Park Authority are elected councillors, and since 1/3 of these are from towns and parishes, local democratic representation and accountability would be increased.

The independent report "The Economic Opportunities, Benefits and Wider Impacts" of the proposed National Park (available on our website) notes it could:

- Secure new and additional funding (the South Downs National Park has secured over £100 million to the benefit of its local economy and communities since 2011); this in turn frees up some Council funds for investment in what communities need;
- Help farmers and food producers to thrive in uncertain times;
- Offer the benefits of an internationally recognised National Park brand and the development of a coherent county-wide tourism strategy to support our largest business sector;
- Work for thriving, sustainable communities through plans that reflect local communities' needs and priorities.

A recent study by Bournemouth University reinforces these points. It notes the added economic value a National Park could bring, including through adding several millions of pounds annually to our rural economy and important tourism sector. It would put Dorset more on the international tourism map and help promote local products and businesses. It would attract additional external funding and investment which would benefit all of Dorset.



Thank you for your interest in the Dorset National Park. This is the year to spread the word about the great opportunities and benefits a National Park can offer our communities, economy, businesses (including farmers and food producers), and all who care about our wonderful county.

Please circulate this Newsletter to colleagues and friends and invite them to visit the website: www.dorsetnationalpark.com for much more information, including News, publications and FAQs, and to join the growing National Park Facebook group.

It's also easy to sign up for National Park News at:
<http://eepurl.com/c5dzj9>

A 21st Century National Park for Dorset

www.dorsetnationalpark.com

Contact us at: info@dorsetnationalpark.com

Dorset National Park: Safeguarding landscapes and heritage, Promoting tourism, Attracting investment and jobs, Truly affordable housing, Agri-environment funding

The National Park Team is a Community Interest Company [CIC] and you can support us with time, contacts, knowledge and funding.

