

Public Statements

Statement from Richard Brown

Thank you, Chairman. I am Richard Brown – a member of the Dorset National Park CIC team.

I would like to focus on three issues where I suggest we can together clarify and fully inform Councillors on the proposed Dorset National Park.

Firstly, let me reassure Councillors on the question of timing. A Dorset National Park will take some years to be in place and initially will develop with the Dorset Council and others a Partnership Management Plan. Only then would it jointly develop with the Dorset Council a shared Local Plan largely paid for by the National Park and delivered by an augmented joint planning team also largely paid for by the National Park from its £10 million a year central Government core grant. So, the Dorset Council can continue to focus on developing its Local Plan for 2023 and thereafter work in partnership with the National Park to agree a shared agenda on which the National Park with its substantial resources would support and help deliver the Council's programme, and work beyond its boundaries to benefit all of Dorset.

Secondly, the relevant National Park comparator for Dorset is widely recognised to be the South Downs National Park. This is a working farmed landscape like Dorset with towns and other settlements that include Petersfield, Midhurst and Lewes. I doubt anyone seriously considers Dartmoor to be an appropriate comparator, nor therefore such references in the supporting paper as, for example, to Dartmoor only providing for 65 new houses a year.

Thirdly, while the paper notes that in planning law AONBs and National Parks have equivalent status, the paper is less clear that as a result new housing numbers would in principle be similar in a Dorset National Park to those in the Dorset AONB. In planning law, therefore, a National Park would not push more development to neighbouring areas.

We are ready to work quickly and constructively with officers to help clarify the paper and fully inform Councillors on such points. You may wish to note previous relevant work, such as the County Council's conclusion that a National Park could bring economic and environmental benefits and support its corporate outcomes in relation to a healthy and prosperous Dorset.

We have given the Leader and officers a list of many organisations and key individuals nationally and locally who see the benefits a National Park can bring as part of a long-term vision which is highly relevant to the challenges we face. Securing a National Park for Dorset's long-term future wellbeing is fully compatible with your understandable focus on pressing shorter-term priorities.

We all have the same aim to secure what is in the best long-term interests of Dorset. Future generations would expect no less of us.

Thank you, Chairman and, if appropriate, we would be pleased to answer any questions.

Statement from Yvonne Gallimore – Artsreach Co-Director

Artsreach is a registered charity, which presents an accessible programme of professional performances and workshops for all ages across Dorset's rural communities.

We partner with more than 50 communities and more than 300 volunteers to deliver our countywide programme of more than 145 events every year.

With Artsreach celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2020, the organisation has a proven track record of a sustainable model that reinvests the grants it receives directly back in to the communities with which we work. A recent socio-economic impact study concluded that, for every pound of public funding Artsreach generates, 93 pence is reinvested back into the rural economy, directly benefitting community venues such as village halls.

The local economy benefits from Artsreach activity with rural businesses - village shops act as ticket outlets and show audiences often visit pubs before or after a performance

The majority of our audiences travel less than 4 miles to a show - this reduces the need for people to travel to urban centres for cultural activities, therefore reducing carbon footprint, helping Dorset Council deliver environmental impact targets.

Alongside its main programme, Artsreach has regularly been a significant project delivery partner, for example as part of the European and DEFRA LEADER programmes, and HLF Landscape Partnership projects led by the AONB, bringing significant investment to Dorset.

Arts Council England has expressed confidence in Artsreach from its inception, and we are currently funded as a National Portfolio Organisation across a four-year period. However securing this funding has always been dependent on being able to show similar support and investment by our local authorities.

Historically, our local authority grant has been a three-year agreement, which, alongside Arts Council's four-year investment period, has allowed our organisation to plan and deliver a more in-depth and diverse programme of national and international work. Changing the way in which grants are awarded could have serious implications for our organisation when applying for continued

funding in the next Arts Council round, autumn 2020. Therefore could I urge officers to seriously consider the implications of just offering 1 year agreements.

We recognise that the Council is under extreme pressure to make savings. However, through our countywide programme, Artsreach directly impacts areas where rural isolation is most severe, encourages social cohesion, volunteering and engagement, and developing strong and healthy communities – one of Dorset Council's key priorities. Any cut to our funding would have a direct impact on these communities.

Given all of this, and Dorset's rich cultural history, we would urge officers to ensure that the impact of arts and culture and the contribution it makes to the County is recognised within the Dorset Local Plan.

Statement from Sarah James – Chief Executive Arts Development Company

The Arts Development Company spun out of Dorset County Council in 2015 and has since successfully delivered on a 5 year service level agreement on behalf of the Council to increase inward investment into the arts and cultural sector in Dorset. For every £1 invested in the Arts Development Company by the Council, £4.80 of new money comes into Dorset. The leverage value of the Council's current investment into Dorset arts and culture is substantial – a recent figure set it as over £25m from Lottery alone in 2018/2019.

Dorset's arts and culture sector will deliver on the emerging priorities of the Council's Local Plan through helping people lead active, healthy and independent lives. There is clear evidence that the arts can improve wellbeing, drive recovery, support illness and disease management (particularly for those people living with dementia and mental health conditions). This arts led approach also saves the NHS money and provides a social return on investment of between £4 and £11 for every £1 invested in arts on prescription.

Arts and culture increases Cultural Tourism which is a big driver for economic growth and creation of jobs – it also the reason for many tourists coming back to Dorset year on year. An example of this is the 2019 [Dorset Moon](#) (a signature festival event presented in Bournemouth, Sherborne and Weymouth). A survey of Sherborne businesses evidenced that 60% said they were busier and profit had increased on the weekend of Dorset Moon compared to a normal July weekend and 100% of the businesses said arts festivals were vital for bringing in new visitors from outside of the county to a town.

Finally arts and culture brings people together in an inclusive way which helps break down social and rural isolation, often bringing communities together for the first time and reduces social tensions.

This representation is a plea for the Cabinet to properly consider the huge benefits a small investment into the arts and culture sector has for the whole geography of Dorset and in particular transforming the lives of some of the most marginalised and at risk communities in our county.

We ask the Cabinet to consider making savings over a longer period of time to allow organisations time to adjust and to consider 3 to 5 year funding agreements with arts organisations as 1 year project funding will erode the sector's ability to plan, destabilises an organisation and decreases the opportunities to lever in larger investments particularly from major stakeholders such as Arts Council England who currently invest nearly 2.5 million into Dorset. We also ask that arts and culture's contribution to Dorset and its social impact is recognised in the Dorset Local Plan.

Statement from Mark Tattersall – Arts Director Dorchester Arts

This submission is made by Dorchester Arts, an organisation that has been the focal point for arts performances and engagement in the county town for more than 35 years and which draws its audiences and participants from the whole county and beyond. Over and above the benefits to health, wellbeing and community cohesion which come from having a thriving cultural scene, it is increasingly clear that the cultural sector will be a key component of a successful local economy at a time when the retail sector is under enormous pressure. Evidence from across the UK - from Chester and Warrington to Folkestone and Margate - shows that investment in culture, heritage and the 'experience economy' is vital to the survival of the high street, with market towns ideally placed to take advantage of what both residents and visitors are looking for in increasing numbers. Dorset can take advantage of this trend as it is fortunate to have world-class natural assets, rich cultural heritage and a strong arts offer. Many of the county's towns, including Dorchester, can thrive in this new economic climate and provide an exceptionally good return on a modest investment, not least through bringing in significant funds from national and international funders as evidenced in other submissions. We would ask Cabinet to consider this in assessing the options for future funding, and in particular to allow sufficient time for organisations to adapt in order to protect and support a sector that has such potential as a driver of the wider Dorset economy.

Statement from Dougie Scarfe – Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

BSO fully appreciates the need for Dorset Council to review the structures and levels of support to the community and voluntary sectors following LGR and given the ongoing financial challenging landscape.

BSO will be an active and positive partner in the consultation and hopes very much

that the review will create an even greater understanding of the outstanding ROI provided to communities across the county by these sectors.

BSO hopes the consultation will enable the Council to appreciate that their long-term

investment in BSO:

- Ensures the BSO can continue to leverage significant and otherwise unavailable

resources and investment to the benefit of local communities;

- Enables the BSO to continue to work with young people across the county through music with the proven benefits to their cognitive and social development, enabling the young people to become more societally aware, focussed in their academic work and confident;

- Ensures the BSO can continue to provide transformational musical experiences for residents, on a local level, helping to tackle the key themes of social, societal and geographic isolation;

- Is an important recognition by Dorset Council that culture and the creative industries are key UK economic drivers and that Dorset can continue to play a full

part in that agenda;

- Ensures that BSO can continue to work in partnership with the NHS, leveraging funds into local hospitals and continue our ground-breaking work with people on acute care wards living with dementia;

- Helps BSO work with partners including the Dorset CCG to ensure Dorset is at the forefront in the development of the national social proscripting agenda.

BSO, along with the other investment recipients hopes it will be understood in the consultation that a long-term approach is required to achieve sustainable impact for

the people of Dorset, and we hope that Dorset Council will work with the sector to achieve this.

Statement from Professor Michael Dower CBE

I live in Beaminster, within the AONB. I have served as Director of the Peak National Park, and as Director General of the Countryside Commission. So, I am familiar with the issues at stake in this Review.

I am the son of John Dower, who wrote the seminal report “National Parks in England and Wales” of 1945. He included the Dorset Coast and Heaths among the candidates for National Park status. He then was a member of the Hobhouse Committee, which laid the groundwork for the National Parks. Dorset was in the leading list of candidates which it considered. At that time, refusal by the War Office to reduce its training grounds led the Committee to put Dorset in the reserve list.

The subsequent designation of the Dorset AONB recognised its high landscape quality. The Glover Review has now recommended that Ministers consider the outstanding environment, wildlife and cultural heritage of Dorset and East Devon, including the Jurassic Coast, for National Park status.

I salute the work which is done by the AONB Partnership. But they have acknowledged that their powers and resources are limited in the face of the major challenges of conservation posed by Dorset's remarkable and diverse heritage. Their new management plan states that some parts of the landscape are in a poor state. Many habitats are degraded. There has been heavy loss of wildlife. There is clear need for more effective management of tourism, particularly along the coast. Parts of the rural area are suffering from loss of services, shortage of truly affordable housing, and narrow rural economies.

The Glover Review proposes the strengthening of purposes, powers and resources of AONBs, which I warmly welcome. But I believe that the scale of the challenge of stewardship of this great area demands the more substantial resource of funding and expertise which can be marshalled by a National Park. I note that the two AONBs which have Conservation Boards – Chilterns and Cotswolds – are applying for National Park status because their enhanced AONB powers and resources do not suffice. I endorse the view of the Glover panel that Dorset and East Devon have as strong a case for National Park status as do those two areas.

Your cabinet paper advises that the Council should reserve its reaction to the Landscapes Review until the government publishes its own response. I note the phrase in the Conclusions that:

“Dorset Council would strongly resist any move to create additional bureaucracy or institutions which would be detrimental to the intentions of the Order creating the new unitary Dorset Council.”

I understand that point. But the National Park, as proposed, would not create additional bureaucracy or institutions. It would replace the AONB partnership, which under the Glover proposals would itself be more formalised. It could also help manage the Jurassic Coast. There would be no additional institution, and potentially a simplified bureaucracy. Crucially, the National Park would bring to the County substantial government funding, thus helping to secure the financial intentions behind the Order creating the new unitary Dorset Council.