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Agreement reached following wild camping discussions

Agreement has been reached that will enable people to continue wild camping in parts of Dartmoor National Park.

Landowners and the National Park Authority have worked together to agree a way forward following the High Court judgment published on Friday.

The Dartmoor Commons Owners' Association and the National Park Authority met yesterday (18 January 2023) to discuss how wild camping on the Dartmoor Commons might be facilitated going forward.

Agreement was reached in principle on the following:

- Landowners will grant permission to the Authority to allow the public to wild camp through a permissive agreement.
- This new system will provide clear guidance on what constitutes wild camping based on the principle of 'leave no trace'.
- Areas where the public can wild camp without seeking individual permission from landowners will be communicated via an interactive map on [Dartmoor National Park Authority's website](#) in the coming days.

Anyone planning to wild camp now or in the future must refer to the interactive map and follow all 'leave no trace' principles.

Whilst the agreement is completed, wild camping (including Ten Tors and The Duke of Edinburgh Award) is permitted with immediate effect.

John Howell, Chair of Dartmoor Commons Owners' Association, said: "We recognise the importance of people being able to enjoy the natural beauty of

Dartmoor, including through wild camping, and the benefits that this can bring."

Dr Kevin Bishop, Chief Executive of Dartmoor National Park Authority, said:

"We have all worked quickly and collectively to ensure clarity is provided. Our thanks go to those involved in the discussions who have engaged in this process so positively and proactively. We're committed to working together to continue all our good work that helps keep Dartmoor special for everyone."

All present at the meeting were clear that there is no place for illegal fly camping on Dartmoor. 'Fly camping', which often involves large groups with barbecues or open fires, should not be confused with true wild camping and will continue to be prohibited.

Notes to Editors:

- The Dartmoor Commons Owners' Association includes representation from The Duchy of Cornwall.

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High court ruling – Dartmoor National Park Authority

Sir Julian Flaux, the Chancellor of the High Court, has issued his judgment in the case of Darwall vs Dartmoor National Park Authority.¹

In his judgment, Sir Julian found that Section 10(1) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 does not confer on the public any right to pitch tents or otherwise make camp overnight on the Dartmoor Commons. Any camping requires the consent of the landowner.

Speaking today, Dr Kevin Bishop, Chief Executive/National Park Officer for Dartmoor National Park Authority, said:

“We are really disappointed with the outcome but obviously respect the judgment. We will now consider our position carefully before deciding on whether to appeal, and on what grounds.

“In the meantime, we will amend our website and other information we provide to people who are planning to wild camp on Dartmoor.

“We are keen to work with landowners and other stakeholders to see how we can sustain opportunities for people to wild camp on Dartmoor. We’re meeting with Dartmoor Common Owners’ Association in coming days and hope to ensure that, with the agreement of landowners, the opportunity to wild camp as it existed prior to this judgment is secured going forward.

“We maintain that wild camping is an important form of open-air recreation and is a way to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park – for example the dark night skies, sense of wilderness and the tranquillity that can be derived from the commons of Dartmoor. Done properly, and with respect, it has little impact on the environment but can have significant health and wellbeing benefits.”

¹ This case was focused on whether Section 10(1) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 confers on the public a right not only to walk or ride a horse on the commons of Dartmoor but also to wild camp.

Mr and Mrs Darwall (the owners of Blachford Manor near Cornwood in Dartmoor National Park and part of Stall Moor) claimed a declaration that Section 10(1) does not grant the public a right to camp on the commons and Dartmoor National Park Authority (the defendant) were arguing that it did.

