Report from Snow Meeting attended on Friday 27th at 10.00am

The meeting was attended by representatives from DNPA, Police, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Farming Community, Devon Highways and Civil Enforcement.

The meeting began by everyone present highlighting what they saw as the main problem experienced during heavy snowfall. It was clear that we all had different priorities and issues which needed to be addressed.

This ranged from Farmers being unable to access fields to tend to livestock due to inconsiderate parking, to confrontational abuse and threats. The inability to access Princetown with emergency vehicles was also highlighted. Also villagers not able to return to the village due to the high volume of traffic blocking the roads.

A number of measures were discussed including double yellow lines and establishing a clearway. Road closures on certain roads to prevent the traffic accessing the moors and additional signage. It was agreed that no one measure would solve the problem but a combination of measures may alleviate the situation somewhat.

Yellow Lines were not seen as the way forward due to the fact that these lines would be covered during snowfall.

Clearway – It was pointed out by Civil Enforcement that any parking restriction can be appealed successfully if it is suggested that the individual concerned was unable to move his vehicle due to the snow, i.e. he will claim he was stuck in the snow and unable to move.

Road Closures – Officially in order to close a road a traffic order has to be requested, advertised in advance etc. In the case of public safety, for instance a road has collapsed then the order can be obtained retrospectively. To close a road due to snow can be done but cannot be enforced so technically you can not stop someone going through. It was also pointed out that the Police do not have the resources anymore to man a road closure sign. It was however suggested that this could be done by DNPA and Devon Highways would be happy with that bearing in mind what has been said above.

Signage – Permanent signs placed on the approach to the moor, these can be yellow and black and would be advisory only but may suggest that due to snowfall it is not recommended you proceed beyond this point.

Highways were asked if they could clear the car parks to reduce the need for so many cars to park on the road. They responded by saying that in order to clear snow the vehicle has to maintain a certain momentum (speed) otherwise it will also become stuck. It could not maintain this speed within the car park area. A solution for this was suggested and accepted. This was that perhaps each car park could be allocated to a farmer to clear. It was also suggested that the Parish Council may be the organisation that could organise that. As DFPC was the only council represented at the meeting and most of the car parks are in other Parish Council areas they would need to be contacted and involved.

Media – It was pointed out that the Western Morning News had recently run a survey showing the top ten places to visit when it snows. Princetown was number one on that list. We need to approach the paper and point out the problems such an article can cause. It was decided that we need to make
more used of the media to inform people not to come up on the moors when the weather is so bad. It needs to be a joined up effort so we are all giving the same message. It needs to be pointed out how easy it is to get stuck and how expensive it can be to get your vehicle recovered.

The meeting was very good and the above action points are to be taken forward by DNPA.