

Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017



Working
together
for **Exmoor**



Working together for Exmoor

Exmoor provides a unique landscape of moorland, woodland, historic buildings and settlements, valleys, farmland and a spectacular coast. It is a living, working landscape shaped by people and nature over thousands of years. As well as providing a home and workplace for around 11,000 people and hosting around two million visitor days each year, Exmoor's landscapes provide a wide range of benefits for wider society as a whole.

These wider public benefits, often referred to as 'ecosystem services', include:

- Healthy food with a long tradition of livestock farming
- Increasingly important timber and wood fuel resources
- Landscape character celebrated by National Park designation
- 19,000 hectares of internationally important moorland
- Cultural heritage tracing human occupation for more than 8,000 years and with archaeological landscapes, scheduled monuments and historic buildings
- Public access to moorland and 1,000 km of public rights of way
- The source of drinking water to more than 0.5 million people
- Priority wildlife habitats and species
- Peat soils, farmland and woodlands that store millions of tonnes of carbon
- A major attraction for visitors with a direct contribution to the regional economy of more than £180 million per year

These benefits can only be sustained and improved with the support and engagement of the people who live and work in the National Park.



The Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan sets out a set of priorities and actions to help:

- Conserve and enhance Exmoor National Park's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
- Provide opportunities for greater understanding and enjoyment of Exmoor National Park's special qualities, and
- Foster the social and economic wellbeing of Exmoor's communities.

The Plan provides a framework for stimulating and co-ordinating action by local communities, public bodies, the private sector and voluntary organisations, 'Working Together for Exmoor'.



Exmoor's special qualities

The special qualities of the National Park are central to helping us decide what is most important about Exmoor that we should seek to conserve, enhance, understand and enjoy for the benefit of people today and future generations living in and visiting the National Park.



Exmoor National Park's special qualities are:

- Large areas of open moorland providing a sense of remoteness, wildness and tranquillity rare in southern Britain
- A distinct and diverse landscape of softly rounded hills and ridges, with heather and grass moors, spectacular coast, deeply incised wooded valleys, high sea cliffs, fast flowing streams, traditional upland farms and characteristic beech hedgebanks
- A timeless landscape mostly free from intrusive development, with striking views inside and out of the National Park, and where the natural beauty of Exmoor and its dark night skies can be appreciated
- A mosaic of habitats supporting a great diversity of wildlife including herds of wild red deer, rich lichen communities, rare fritillary butterflies, bats, and other species uncommon in southern Britain
- A complex and rich historic landscape that reflects how people have lived in, used and enjoyed Exmoor over the past 8000 years, including prehistoric landscapes and monuments such as burial mounds on ridges and discrete stone settings, ancient farmsteads, hamlets, picturesque villages and historic estates
- A deeply rural community closely linked to the land with strong local traditions and ways of life
- A farmed landscape with locally distinctive breeds such as Red Devon cattle; Devon Closewool, and Exmoor Horn sheep; and herds of free living Exmoor ponies
- An exceptional rights of way network, with paths that are often rugged and narrow in character, along with extensive areas of open country and permitted access, providing superb opportunities for walking, riding and cycling
- A landscape that provides inspiration and enjoyment to visitors and residents alike.



Priorities, programmes for action and achieving the vision for Exmoor National Park

When bringing together the Partnership Plan we have set out to ensure that - over the next five years, partners focus on those actions that will contribute most towards keeping Exmoor National Park special and meeting the needs and wellbeing of local communities. 12 priorities for action have been identified for the Plan period under three programmes:

- A Thriving, Living Landscape
- Connecting People and Place
- Towards a Sustainable Future



Connecting People and Places

Three priorities for action have been identified for Connecting People and Places.

Priority B1: Promote Exmoor National Park as a special destination and develop the Exmoor brand

Led by the Exmoor Tourism Partnership we will work together to:

- Strengthen the Exmoor National Park brand and its association with high quality experiences
- Work with the local community, tourism businesses and providers to provide a high quality experience
- Develop a programme of promotional and marketing activities using the Exmoor brand

Priority B2: Maintain high quality rights of way, services and facilities to enable people to explore and experience the special qualities of the National Park

Led by the Exmoor Local Access Forum we will work together to:

- Maintain a high quality rights of way and access network, services and facilities, undertake targeted improvements and make linkages
- Ensure recreation is well managed to maximise enjoyment and protect the National Park's special qualities from damage
- Promote and facilitate more sustainable modes of travel to Exmoor and leisure use within the National Park

Priority B3: Inform, inspire and engage people about Exmoor's special qualities

Led by the Learning & Engagement Panel we will work together to:

- Provide information on Exmoor's special qualities through a variety of media and outlets responsive to user needs
- Inspire and engage people about Exmoor's special qualities and encourage enjoyment and understanding amongst new audiences including families and younger people

We will know we have succeeded in connecting people and place when we have moved closer to achieving the vision for the National Park so that:

- There is increased public awareness and enjoyment of the National Park, a warm welcome and high quality experience for everyone seeking inspiration, tranquillity and active outdoor recreation, leading to greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life, and a wider appreciation of the contribution that National Parks make to quality of life.

A Thriving, Living Landscape

Five priorities for action have been identified to help achieve A Thriving, Living Landscape.

Priority A1: Protect and manage the special character of Exmoor's unique landscapes

Led by the Landscape Advisory Group we will work together to:

- Manage the impacts of development to protect Exmoor's special qualities by ensuring that development is sensitive to the location and conserves the scenic quality of the area
- Encourage land management that conserves and reinforces landscape character
- Engage with the public and communities to better understand and celebrate Exmoor's distinctive landscapes
- Monitor change and trends in landscape character to inform future policy and practice

Priority A2: Maintain the open character of moorland and the range of public benefits that moorland landscapes deliver

Led by the Exmoor Moorland Board we will work together to:

- Establish moorland management practices which maintain the open character of moorland and deliver a range of public benefits

Priority A3: Maintain in good condition, extend and connect Exmoor's important wildlife habitats and the species they support

Led by the Nature Conservation Advisory Panel we will work together to:

- Maintain Exmoor's important habitats and seek to improve their condition where appropriate
- Support habitat restoration through control of invasive species and diseases
- Extend and connect Exmoor's important wildlife habitats and the species they support
- Improve understanding of wildlife on Exmoor and monitor trends and changes in their populations
- Engage with the public and communities to better understand and celebrate Exmoor's important habitats and species

Priority A4: Engage people in understanding, protecting and managing Exmoor's cultural heritage and historic environment

Led by the Historic Environment Advisory Panel we will work together to:

- Engage the owners and managers of heritage assets in their conservation and protection
- Encourage participation and community engagement in learning about and conserving Exmoor's historic environment and cultural heritage
- Increase knowledge and understanding of Exmoor's historic environment

Priority A5: Maintain and improve the quality of Exmoor's natural resources

Led by the Farming & Land Management Forum we will work together to:

- Support land management practices that deliver integrated objectives for water quality, water resources, ecological status, flood alleviation and reduce soil compaction, erosion and run-off
- Maintain Exmoor's local sheep, cattle and pony breeds to retain important genetic diversity and local distinctiveness

We will know we have succeeded in achieving a thriving, living landscape when we have moved closer to achieving the vision for the National Park so that:

- Exmoor's distinct and diverse landscape is maintained and enhanced, with an increased awareness of its importance.
- There is an increased extent of wildlife habitats and linkages between them, more habitats are in good condition and populations of valued native plants and animals are thriving.
- There is an enhanced knowledge of the historic environment of Exmoor; increased awareness of the value of its cultural heritage, and the most important historical sites, settlements, buildings and features are conserved and their historical character retained.
- Exmoor's natural resources are used sustainably, and the full benefits of its ecosystems are understood and harnessed. Pollution is minimised, air and water are high quality, and soils are conserved and in good condition.

Towards a Sustainable Future

Four priorities for action have been identified for moving Towards a Sustainable Future.

Priority C1: Support community led initiatives that help to meet local needs

Led by Exmoor Association of Parish & Town Councils we will work together to:

- Support and work in partnership with Exmoor's communities to plan for and achieve their aspirations
- Encourage the delivery of local and affordable housing that is appropriate to and meets the needs of local communities
- Maintain and where possible improve accessibility and sustainable modes of travel

Priority C2: Help businesses to be more sustainable, support entrepreneurship and improve economic prospects for young people living and working on Exmoor

Led by the Exmoor Local Enterprise Forum we will work together to:

- Improve economic prospects for young people living and working on Exmoor
- Support entrepreneurship and help local businesses to become more sustainable
- Encourage businesses and entrepreneurs in activities that utilise and add value to Exmoor's sustainable local resources such as food, wood and wool

Priority C3: Helping farmers, foresters and land managers to produce food, timber and other produce while protecting and enhancing Exmoor's special qualities and delivering ecosystem services

Led by the Farming & Land Management Forum we will work together to:

- Explore different land management practices which produce food, timber and other produce whilst protecting and enhancing Exmoor's special qualities and delivering ecosystem services
- Undertake a series of actions to help improve the economic prospects of livestock farming in the National Park

Priority C4: Make progress towards becoming a carbon-neutral National Park

Led by the Carbon-neutral Exmoor Steering Group we will work together to:

- Support initiatives that help communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Encourage land management practices that help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon storage and build the resilience of the landscape to the impacts of climate change
- Develop the evidence base required to inform the approach to achieving carbon neutrality and climate change adaptation

We will know we have succeeded in moving towards a sustainable future when we are closer to achieving the vision for the National Park so that:

- Exmoor's communities retain a continuity of connection with the land, and communities are taking the lead in shaping future development to meet their needs and aspirations including access to services, housing, communications and infrastructure.
- There is a strong, diverse and resilient economy where farming, forestry, land management and rural enterprises are playing a lead role in conserving and enhancing Exmoor's special qualities, producing high quality food and other produce, and conserving local breeds. There is a sustainable tourism and recreation economy in harmony with local communities and the environment.
- We are closer to achieving a carbon-neutral National Park to help mitigate climate change, and have introduced measures to adapt to changes in climate that are already happening.

Partnerships for Action - Implementing the Partnership Plan

Delivery partners

Over 100 community, voluntary, public sector and business organisations have participated in the development of the Partnership Plan and committed to help deliver the priorities set out in the Plan. Exmoor National Park Authority has a key role in bringing the plan together and in coordinating and supporting partner organisations so that the maximum can be achieved from working together for the benefit of Exmoor.

Securing resources

The resources for all the action plans have not been secured at the time of writing of the Plan. Many of the most significant actions will require the pooling of resources by several organisations and success in attracting funding from a range of public, private and voluntary sector sources.

It is vital that we engage as many people as possible in helping to achieve the Plan targets. More emphasis will be placed on encouraging volunteers and community groups to get involved in helping make the vision for Exmoor a reality.



Monitoring implementation of the Partnership Plan

Exmoor National Park Authority has a key role in monitoring progress of the Plan as a whole and in continually monitoring the condition of the National Park so that we can be sure that the Plan is succeeding in achieving the vision and outcomes for Exmoor and in retaining Exmoor's special qualities. In order to fulfil this strategic role the Authority will:

- Publish an annual review of progress against the objectives and priorities for action set out in this Plan.
- Set in place mechanisms to monitor the state of the National Park environment and maintain an up to date 'State of the National Park' report - available through the Authority website.
- Convene an Exmoor Partnership Panel, comprising National Park Authority members and the Chairs of the partner forums who provide the strategic overview of each Priority for Action. The Board will review progress, agree any refinements to the Plan and contribute to public reports on Plan progress.
- Convene an annual meeting of delivery partners to report on achievements and update the action plans as required.

This plan is for everyone who cares about Exmoor, the place, its communities and the benefits the National Park provides to the nation.



Exmoor National Park Authority
Exmoor House, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9HL
Tel: 01398 323665
email: info@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk
www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk