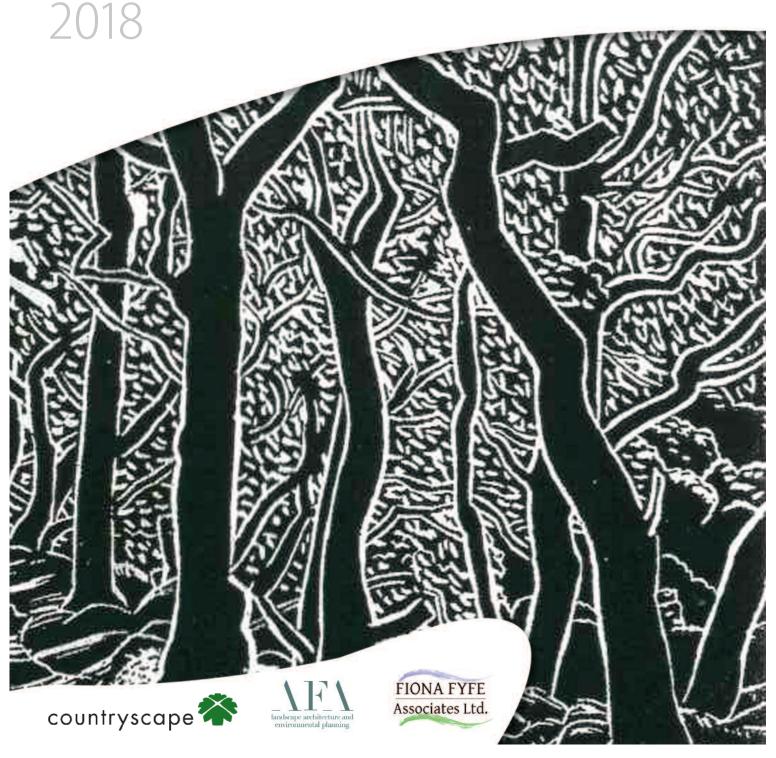


Exmoor National Park

Landscape Character Assessment



Exmoor National Park

Landscape Character Assessment 2018

The 2018 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment was commissioned by Exmoor National Park Authority in June 2016. It has been prepared by Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Countryscape, Alison Farmer Associates and Douglas Mitcham.

All photos by Fiona Fyfe and Exmoor National Park Authority staff unless credited otherwise.

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"Hangman Hills" by Kester Webb. Image © Estate of Kester Webb

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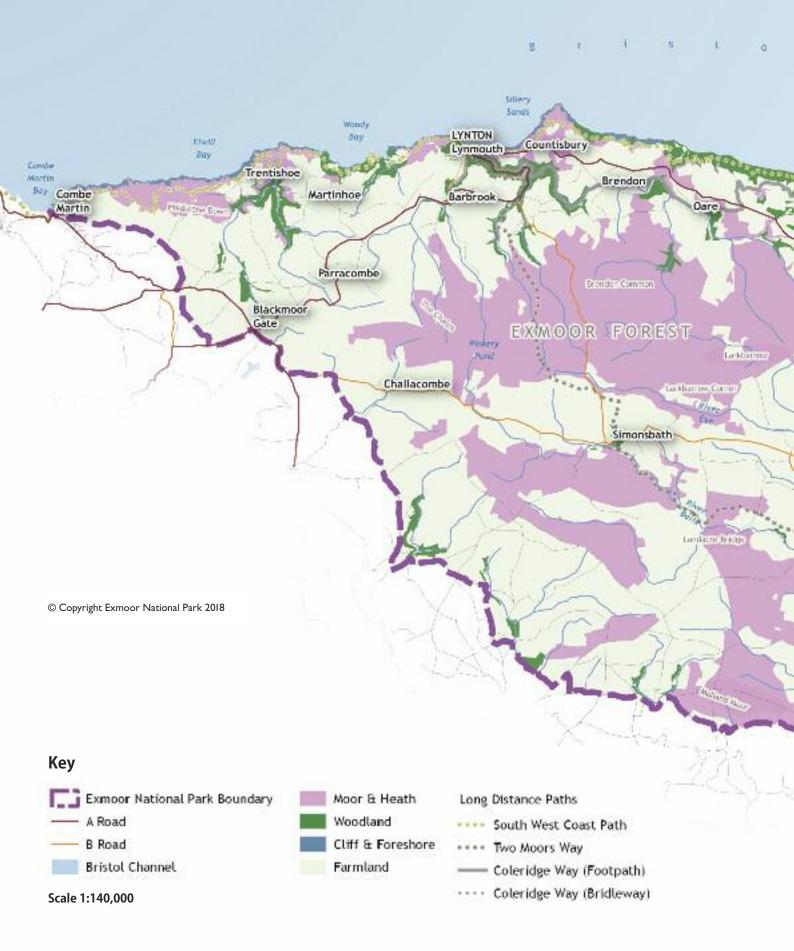


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Map 1: The Location and Boundary of Exmoor





Executive Summary

Exmoor National Park is one of the most varied and beautiful landscapes in Britain. Although it is one of the smallest of the UK's National Parks, covering just 267 square miles, it contains a unique combination of spectacular coastline, expansive moorland, steep wooded valleys, attractive settlements and distinctive farmland. The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment is both a celebration and an analysis of the Exmoor landscape. As a Supplementary Planning Document it is a planning and management tool to aid the continuation and enhancement of Exmoor's distinctive landscapes into the future, as well as shaping priorities for future land management schemes.

The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment 2018 is based on the 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment, but contains a wealth of additional information on the cultural, historic and perceptual qualities of the landscape to complement the descriptions of the landscape's physical characteristics. It also reflects the extensive research which has been undertaken in the past ten years, on a range of topics including moorland and woodland management, people's perceptions of the landscape, moorland archaeology, and the condition of the natural and built environment. New ways of thinking about landscape, such as the ecosystem services approach and the concept of natural capital, are explained and integrated within the document

The landscapes of Exmoor which we see today are the result of millions of years of geological and geomorphological processes, followed by millennia of human exploitation for farming, settlement, fuel, mineral resources, defence and recreation. All have helped make today's diverse and rich landscape. Exmoor's extraordinary value for nature conservation, cultural heritage and landscape quality is reflected not only in its designation as a National Park, but also in the wide range of designations which cover sites throughout Exmoor. These include moorlands and oak woodlands which are designated at an international level for the habitats and species which they support. The archaeology and cultural history of Exmoor is outstanding, with new sites and discoveries still being made. New information and evidence is being gathered to expand and further inform the designations. The designation of Exmoor as an International Dark Sky Reserve shows that skies are also a valued part of the landscape.

Many issues are currently affecting Exmoor's landscapes, and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. These forces for change may be natural or man-made, and relate (for example) to development, changing agricultural practices, recreation, energy generation, woodland and moorland management, climate change and coastal erosion. The forces for change acting on the landscape are described in the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment, along with recommendations to 'protect, manage and plan' to enhance Exmoor's landscapes in the future.



Exmoor is very diverse, with its rolling hills, steep valleys, species-rich rivers and streams, characterful settlements, historic sites, distinctive skyline and dramatic coastline all contributing to its scenic beauty, visual compositions and sense of place. Its landscapes continue to inspire a rich and distinctive tradition of art and literature.

The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment identifies nine Landscape Character Types within the National Park, namely: High Coastal Heaths; High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves; Low Farmed Coast and Marsh; Open Moorland; Farmed and Settled Vale; Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons; Incised Wooded River Valleys; Plantation (with Heathland) Hills and Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes. The nine Landscape Character Types are sub-divided into 27 Landscape Character Areas, reflecting their local character and distinctiveness.

The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment describes each of these nine Landscape Character Types in detail, using a combination of maps, text, photographs and illustrations. Each one has a summary description, followed by information on the key landscape characteristics; natural landscape features; historic landscape features and the built environment; landscape perceptions and cultural associations; natural assets and ecosystem services; Landscape Character Areas and (where relevant)

Seascape Character Areas; strength of landscape character and landscape condition; landscape issues and forces for change; landscape management recommendations and specific planning guidelines.

This 2018 update of the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment contains Landscape Planning Guidelines which are relevant across the National Park. They are intended for use by planners, developers, land agents, and members of the public submitting planning applications. The document will also be used by National Park Authority Committee Members in decision-making. The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide the tools to enable people to think about, and understand, the relationships between buildings/ structures and their landscape settings. They describe the key characteristics of Exmoor's landscapes which are particularly sensitive to development, and also provide general guidelines on the integration of development into the Exmoor landscape. This should promote sensitive design and location of new development, so it can fit comfortably into the landscape and make a positive contribution to landscape and settlement character.

