

**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION ON
LDF CORE STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT
MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

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Topic Paper No 1

Economy and Employment



Exmoor National Park Authority

Exmoor House
Dulverton
Somerset
TA22 9HL

Tel: (01398) 323665

Fax: (01398) 323150 310

Email: LDF@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Website: www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Your comments and views on this options paper are welcomed up to Friday 16th January 2009. Enquiries can be directed to Ruth McArthur/Jo Symons, Policy and Community Manager on 01398 323665.

This report is also accessible from our website located under:

www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/living-in-ldf-core-strategy.htm

We are happy to provide this information in alternative formats on request where reasonable.

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Issues

1. Understanding the implications of Exmoor's National Park status upon the potential for economic growth.
2. The creation of a policy framework that encourages appropriate economic activities which benefit from and help to promote the National Park's special qualities.
3. The need to establish a clear and deliverable economic vision for Exmoor National Park.
4. The need to respond to key challenges– including the current global economic crisis, climate change, social and demographic changes (an ageing population), low income levels, low skill levels, a high dependency upon traditional economic sectors and the need for technological enhancements.
5. The potential to ensure a more stable economic base and a greater diversity of economic activities – targeting potential growth sectors and identifying options for the attraction of higher value activities.
6. The need to provide for sufficient accommodation to meet the needs for employment space.
7. The importance of tourism and land based industries to the economy of Exmoor (Topic Papers 5 and 7 deal with these in more detail).

The Exmoor National Park Management Plan 2007-2012

Desired Outcome: By 2020 Exmoor's communities retain a continuity of connection with the land; people have access to affordable services and facilities, and there is a strong, diverse and sustainable economy that benefits from and contributes to the care and appreciation of Exmoor National Park.

Objective H3:

To develop the greater Exmoor economy in ways that will increase the range and scope of employment and training opportunities for local people, particularly those that benefit people with relative low household incomes and that relate to or further conservation and enhancement of Exmoor's special qualities.

Key Statistics

- Exmoor National Park resident population is 10,873, of which 8,000 people are of working age. The local population is characterised by a large proportion of people aged over 65 years and a low and decreasing number of people aged under 15.
- Of those that are of working age, there is a high level of economic inactivity – largely due to Exmoor's high quality and reputation as an attractive location for early retirement.
- At 2.85%, unemployment is below the national average. However, due to the nature of the key economic activities, unemployment levels are substantially higher in the winter than in the summer and there are limited opportunities for those that do become unemployed to find alternative work.
- Employment within the National Park is characterised by high levels of part time working.
- Average wage levels are low in the National Park because of the dominance of agriculture and tourism and low paid casual and seasonal work that is undertaken.
- The average levels of qualifications of those that live within the National Park are limited – 44.3% of people have no qualifications or level 1 qualifications whilst only 18.3% of the population has qualification levels 4 or 5.
- The economy is dominated by traditional sectors such as agriculture and tourism. These are vulnerable to external factors and an insufficient level of diversity within the local economy creates a further threat to the long term viability of Exmoor.
- The Exmoor economy is characterised by a high proportion of micro businesses which employ less than 5 people and is also dominated by high levels of self-employment. This reflects the general characteristics of the economy as being rooted in small scale, localised activities.
- The majority of business units are very small and a large proportion of businesses are run from home.
- As a consequence of its high quality environment and the nature of the local economy, there has been a limited level of development activity in Exmoor National Park in recent years. Between 2000 and 2008, 85 planning applications were approved, of which 20% were for B Class employment uses (business, light industry distribution and storage), compared to almost 40% for tourism related development. The developments were all of a small scale and 75% related to the conversion or change of use of existing buildings rather than new development.
- The total employment in Exmoor is likely to remain relatively stable – rising from 5,250 in 2006 to 5,350 in 2026. Agriculture and tourism are expected to remain the dominant sectors within the National Park.

Appendix

Policy and Strategy

National

Draft PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development

Draft PPS4 was published in December 2007. The final version of PPS4 is anticipated by the end of 2008.

The key aims of PPS4 are to:

1. Raise the productivity of the UK economy;
2. maximise job opportunities;
3. improve the economic performance of all the English regions and reduce the gap in economic growth rates between regions;
4. deliver sustainable development; and,
5. build prosperous communities.

The guidance recommends a presumption in favour of economic development, unless the economic, social or environmental costs of development are likely to outweigh the benefits associated with development: development should therefore be sustainable. The reuse of previously developed land is recognised as a priority in the achievement of this goal.

Both PPS4 and PPS 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) recognise that accessibility is a key issue in rural areas but sets out a number of key considerations for rural authorities in their consideration of growth:

1. Recognising the role of farm diversification;
2. Recognising that a site may be an acceptable development location even though it may not be readily accessible by public transport;
3. Supporting sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments; and
4. Supporting small-scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from and have poor transport links with local service centres.

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PPS7 seeks to deliver sustainable growth in rural areas. It encourages the majority of economic development in or near existing local service centres whilst also supporting small-scale development in more remote villages where it would make a positive and sustainable contribution to economic growth and well-being.

PPS7 encourages the re-use of redundant buildings for economic development purposes. In addition, it also recognises the important role of

farming within the rural economy and the potential for diversification to off-set the problems associated with decline within the farming industry. Tourism is also seen as being vital to the rural economy, in terms of facilities, attractions and accommodation.

Regional

SW Regional Spatial Strategy

The draft RSS supports the Regional Economic Strategy in seeking to enhance the economic prosperity of the region and the quality of employment opportunity. In so doing, it seeks to ensure that rural parts of the region can fulfil their economic potential, although it emphasises the importance of achieving greater levels of prosperity within the context of environmental limits. These ideas are particularly important and relevant to sensitive rural areas such as Exmoor National Park.

Draft Policy ES1 of the RSS supports sustainable economic prosperity and particularly recognises the need to support and diversify the rural economy and to promote sustainable communities. The RSS envisages that the delivery of this aspiration might include increased levels of home working, the creation of live / work units and the re-use of redundant farm buildings.

Regional Economic Strategy for South West England 2006-2015

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) examines the critical issues surrounding economic development in the Region. 5 key issues have been identified for the Region to address by 2015:

1. Population growth, ageing and distribution;
2. Business creation and retention;
3. Rapidly changing industrial and employment mix;
4. Technology and other knowledge dissemination; and,
5. Energy use, resources and climate change.

The RES states that flexibility in allowing support to be given to local solutions to meet the changing needs of rural communities represents the key to economic success. Economic prosperity and growth is also shown to be reliant upon the delivery and maintenance of access to jobs and services and the management of changes to the agricultural industry.

The economic vision for the Region has two strands:

1. Recognising the aspiration to provide a high quality life for everyone:
“South West England will have an economy where the aspirations and skills of our people combine with the quality of our physical and cultural environment to provide a high quality of life and sustainable prosperity for

everyone”.

2. Recognising the environmental limitations: *“South West England will demonstrate that economic growth can be secured within environmental limits to bring prosperity to the Region”.*

One of the key messages contained within the RES relates to the importance of productivity led growth in order to achieve higher efficiency. In achieving this aspiration, the RES emphasises that key economic drivers such as skills, innovation and the protection of the environment will be central to the delivery of its vision.

Local

Local Plan

The Local Plan does not allocate any sites for employment purposes but does adopt a flexible approach to appropriate forms of employment development. Policy E1 provides for small scale employment uses within and immediately adjacent to the defined local rural centres and villages and also allows for conversion or extension of existing buildings in these areas for employment and tourism purposes. However, Policy E4 prohibits the development of large scale, intrusive or environmentally damaging business or warehouse development within the National Park.

Whilst not permitting new build business premises in the open countryside, Policy E2 does provide for extensions to existing commercial premises and the conversion of existing buildings to business use where there are no adverse effects on important planning interests.

The Local Plan also seeks to promote the economic well-being of Exmoor National Park by restricting the loss of existing employment sites and premises to other uses Policy E3 states that existing employment sites are only to be reused or redeveloped where:

- ◆ Other employment generating uses will be created; and,
- ◆ The use of the site or building for employment purposes cannot be continued or made viable in the longer term.

Policy E5 provides for home working so long as it does not result in adverse impacts on the local area or neighbouring properties.

Is there further evidence that you wish to draw to our attention?

Do you have any further issues that you wish to raise?