



EXMOOR

NATIONAL PARK

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
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23 January 2025

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

To: All Members of the Exmoor National Park Authority

A meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority will be held in the **Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton** on **Tuesday, 4 February 2025 at 10.00am.**

The meeting will be open to the press and public subject to the passing of any resolution under s.100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

There is Public Speaking at this meeting, when the Chairperson will allow members of the public two minutes each to ask questions, make statements, or present a petition relating to any item relevant to the business of the Authority or relating to any item on the Agenda. Anyone wishing to ask questions should notify the Corporate Support Officer as soon as possible, or at the latest by 4pm on the working day before the meeting of the agenda item on which they wish to speak, indicating a brief summary of the matter or matters to be raised (contact Committees@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

The meeting will be **recorded**. By entering the Authority's Committee Room and speaking during Public Speaking you are consenting to being recorded. We will make the recording available via our website for members of the public to listen to and/or view, within 72 hours of the meeting taking place.

Members of the public may use forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting. Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairperson so that those present may be made aware.

(The agenda and papers for this meeting can be downloaded from the National Park Authority's website www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

Sarah Bryan
Chief Executive

As set out above, the Authority welcomes public engagement with its work and believes that everyone attending a meeting of Exmoor National Park Authority or one of its Committees has the right to be treated with respect and to feel safe at all times, including before, during and after the meeting they attend.

The Authority understands that some situations can be difficult and lead to frustration; however, the Authority is committed to promoting an environment where everyone feels listened to and respected and is not subjected to unacceptable behaviour. Further guidance is provided in our Customer Notice, available on our [website](#).

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in relation to items on the agenda for this meeting.

3. Chairperson's Announcements

- 4. Minutes**
- (1) To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 3 December 2024 (Item 4)
 - (2) To consider any Matters Arising from those Minutes.

- 5. Business of Urgency:** To introduce any business which by reason of special circumstances the Chairperson, after consultation with the Chief Executive, is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency and to resolve when such business should be ordered on the Agenda.

- 6. Public Speaking:** The Chairperson will allow members of the public to ask questions, make statements, or present a petition. Questions of a general nature relevant to the business of the Authority can be asked under this agenda item. Any questions specific to an agenda item can be posed when that item is considered subject to the discretion of the person presiding at the meeting.

- 7. Annual Estate Review:** To consider the report of the Head of Access, Engagement & Estates and the Estates Manager (Item 7).

- 8. Woodland Estate Update and Ash Die Back Report:** To consider the report of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities and the Senior Woodlands Officer (Item 8).

- 9. Standards Committee Work:** To consider the report of the Head of Enterprise and Operations (Item 9).

10. Personnel Update:

Leavers:

05/01/2025 – Charlotte Spiers – Planning Officer

24/01/2025 – Timothy Payne – Senior Facilities Officer

Starters:

06/01/2025 – Angela Hughes – Finance, Facilities and Carbon Reporting Manager (fixed term)

27/01/2025 – Emma Giffard – Planning Officer (permanent)

03/02/2025 – Kimberley Colman – Exmoor Pioneers Heritage Ranger (fixed term)

03/02/2025 – Philippa Hill – Exmoor Pioneers Programme Co-ordinator (fixed term)

Changes:

01/01/2025 – Izzy Burns – Exmoor Pioneers Assistant Engagement Ranger (fixed term)

03/02/2025 – Will Phipps – Exmoor Pioneers Wildlife Ranger (fixed term)

- 11. Members' Reports:** To receive any updates and reports on meetings or events attended by Members as representatives of Exmoor National Park Authority.

ITEM 4

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday, 3 December 2024 at 10.00am in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

Miss A V Davis (Chairperson)

Mr R Milton (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr A Bray

Mr Theo Butt Philip

Mrs M Chilcott

Mr M Ellicott

Mr D Elson

Mr W Geen

Mr J Holtom

Dr M Kelly

Mr M Kravis

Mrs C Lawrence

Mrs F Nicholson

Mr S J Pugsley

Mrs F Smith

Mr N Thwaites

Dr S Warren

Mr J Yabsley

Apologies for absence were received from Mr L Baker, Mr J Patrinos, Miss E Stacey and Miss L Williams.

141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

- In relation to Item 9 Risk Management, Miss A V Davis declared a personal interest as a member of her family was employed by Devon Assurance Partnership.
- In relation to Item 13, Exmoor White-Tailed Eagle Project, Mr R Milton declared a personal interest as a sheep farmer.

142. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS: The meeting received the following Chairperson's announcements:

- The relocation of the Dulverton National Park Centre to Exmoor House was complete.
- In 2025, the Standards Committee would be bringing forward a revised Member Training and Development programme which would include elements of mandatory training.
- The next meeting of the Exmoor National Park Forum would be taking place on Friday 6 December at 1.30pm in the Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross.

143. MINUTES

- Confirmation:** The **Minutes** of the Authority's meeting held on 1 October 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
- Matters arising:** It was requested that Members receive clarity regarding targets to increase woodland in Exmoor National Park, particularly in relation to targets referenced in the Small World Consulting report.

144. PUBLIC SPEAKING: See Minute 146 below for details of public speaking.

145. ORDER OF BUSINESS: In accordance with Standing Orders, it was agreed to vary the order of business so that Item 13 – Exmoor White-Tailed Eagle Project would be considered next.

146. EXMOOR WHITE-TAILED EAGLE PROJECT: The Authority considered the **report** of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities and a presentation from Zoe Smith of the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation (RDWF).

Public Speaking:

1. Mr P Delbridge, 6th generation Exmoor farmer and Chairman of the National Sheep Farmers Association.

The Authority's Consideration

Members thanked Zoe Smith for her presentation and noted the following:

- No conflict with livestock had been reported following the successful reintroduction of White-Tailed Eagles in the Isle of Wight and West Sussex.
- Existing projects both in the UK and internationally would provide scientific and monitoring data to inform the proposed Exmoor project.
- Exmoor provided ideal habitat for White-Tailed Eagles, including a relatively undisturbed landscape with deep wooded valleys and the longest stretch of coastal woodland in England and Wales.
- White-Tailed Eagles were generalist predators, taking seasonally abundant food. Data from 700 feeding observations indicated a diet of 34% birds, 30% fish and 23% mammals (such as rabbits and hares), together with molluscs and crustations. Observations of a breeding pair had found that 80% of food delivered to the nest in April and May was fish.
- Satellite monitoring tags would allow the proposed Exmoor project to track each Eagle, and to identify their preferred habitat and monitor their diet.
- To date, 7 White-Tailed Eagles had visited Exmoor from existing projects and since the first visiting bird in 2021, RDWF had been communicating with Exmoor farmers, landowners and shoots. Recent local events had been attended by nearly 300 people and the majority of over 600 responses to an online public perception survey indicated support for the reinforcement of the White-Tailed Eagle population in Southern England through a release on Exmoor.

It was confirmed that the next step would be to apply for a licence from Natural England, following which a steering group would be established including farming representatives, e.g. from the Exmoor Hill Farming Network, National Sheep Farmers Association and National Farmers Union. It was also confirmed that a clear procedure to address any concerns would be in place, including a dedicated project officer, site visits and the sharing of data from the satellite tracking system on each bird.

Members recognised that the project would support the Authority's Partnership Plan objectives and the targets of the Nature Recovery Vision and would be an opportunity to assist with the expansion of White-Tailed Eagles in southern England.

However, Members understood the concerns of the local farming community and emphasised the importance of ongoing, proactive communication by the project.

Mr T Butt-Philip and Mr J Yabsley arrived during this item and were therefore ineligible to vote.

RESOLVED:

1. To support the Exmoor White-Tailed Eagle Project which will be led by the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation with Exmoor National Park Authority act as lead local partner.
2. To allow the release of White-Tailed Eagles to take place on land owned by Exmoor National Park Authority (location to remain confidential).
3. To note that the project will monitor the White-Tailed Eagles once released, and that there will be a Project Officer in post who will liaise with landowners and farmers and be the first point of contact for the project.

147. COMPLETION OF AUDIT FOR 2023/24: The Authority considered the **report** of the Chief Finance Officer.

The Authority's Consideration

The Authority Committee welcomed the Audit Findings Report.

It was confirmed that the significant risks included and rebutted in the Report related to the fact that Exmoor National Park Authority's finance system was hosted by Somerset Council. However, the Authority would be implementing a new, discrete finance system in 2025, following which it was anticipated that these risks would be nullified.

RESOLVED:

1. To receive the final Audit Findings Report of the External Auditor at Annex 1 and Electronic Publication letter at Annex 2.
2. To note that the signed auditors' opinion on the financial statements including signed audit certificate has been received.
3. To note that the publication requirements in respect of an audit conclusion statement and publication of audited Statement of Accounts accompanied by final audit reports has been complied with.

148. REVISED BUDGET 2024/2025: The Authority considered the **report** of the Chief Finance Officer.

The Authority's Consideration

The continuing trend towards project-based funding was acknowledged, as was the need for resources to support project delivery, including staff capacity and appropriate systems, including the new finance system being introduced in 2025. The potential to increase investment in funding bid-writing was noted.

In relation to capital schemes, it was requested that future reporting include whether a scheme was on, under or over budget.

It was confirmed that the reduction in earmarked reserves was due to allocation to projects, and that recommendation 7 referred to a year-end balancing mechanism.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the financial performance for the first six months of 2024/25.
2. To approve the revised Budget for 2024/25 set out in Appendix 2.
3. To note the position on the Programme and Partnerships budget and Capital Programme set out in Appendices 3 and 4.
4. To note the position regarding reserves as set out in Appendix 5 and the projected balance on the General Fund (including General Fund Contingency Reserve) at 31 March 2025 of £550,000 and approve changes to reserves set out in section 5.
5. To note the revised Medium Term Financial Plan position 2024/25 to 2028/29 set out in Appendix 6.
6. To note the updated position of DEFRA one-off Revenue and Capital grant in Section 7, Appendix 7.
7. To authorise the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer to make such adjustments as are necessary to keep within the overall budget and with the objective of transferring underspends that arise to reserves.

- 149. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT:** The Authority considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer.

RESOLVED: To note the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for the first six months of 2024/25.

- 150. RISK MANAGEMENT:** The Authority considered the report of the Head of Enterprise & Operations.

The Authority's Consideration

The Authority Committee welcomed the report. It was confirmed that project managers had been involved in the Risk Management Review and that in the event of any accident or near miss occur, a Sharepoint tool was in place to capture the details immediately.

RESOLVED:

1. To note that the annual review of Risk Management has been conducted.
2. To approve the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy set out in Appendix 1.
3. To approve the Risk Management Policy and Strategy contained in Appendices 2 and 3.
4. To approve the Strategic Risk Register and Risk Map set out in Appendices 4 and 5.
5. To note that the Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Plan has been reviewed.

151. EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2025-30: The Authority considered the report of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities.

The Authority's Consideration

It was confirmed that the purpose of the report was to invite the Authority Committee to approve the draft Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2025-2030 for consultation.

Members noted the importance of the following:

- Uniting the draft Partnership Plan with the Nature Recovery Vision.
- Developing delivery plans to demonstrate how the visions, aims, objectives and targets would be achieved and identifying key delivery partners.
- Monitoring progress and recognising that target delivery may be impacted by changes in national policy.

Clarification was sought in relation to the target to increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of the total area of the National Park (2,080 ha) by 2030, and by 10% (6,920 ha) by 2050, in line national targets, to benefit nature and people, ensuring the right trees in the right place.

The meeting was advised that this brought together two targets, the target to increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 3% of total land area by 2030 as part of Exmoor's nature recovery vision, and the government's long-term environmental target to increase tree canopy and woodland cover from 14.5% to 17.5% (ie 3%) of the total land area in England by 2050.

The proposed target to achieve a 10% increase in tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 2050 set out in the draft Partnership Plan represented a contribution to the latter national target, and would also contribute to the climate change targets, following an evidence-based study by Small World Consulting which identified Exmoor as having a high capacity for more trees and woodland relative to the total area of landscape. It was confirmed that the Small World Consulting study and its findings had been discussed with Members at an informal workshop.

The meeting was advised that it would be undesirable to try to create a visual representation of achievement of this target, particularly as any increase in woodland would be dependent upon the actions of individual landowners and could take different forms, for example scattered trees, wooded valleys or woodland pasture. However, the target had been included as an ambition and as an opportunity for Exmoor National Park to be a part of the UK-wide effort to tackle climate change, particularly as increased woodland could result in additional benefits including enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and public enjoyment of the National Park.

Members were mindful that Exmoor's special qualities included large areas of open moorland, as well as a distinct and diverse landscape including deeply incised wooded valleys, and the importance of retaining each of Exmoor's valued landscape characteristics was acknowledged.

It was confirmed that the target of a 10% pa reduction in emissions from visitor travel to and from the National Park had been identified as a contribution to achieving a net zero Exmoor National Park by 2038. However, the wider ambition was to increase opportunities for green travel and active travel both to and from the National Park, as well as within the National Park area itself.

While welcoming the targets relating to accessibility and engagement with Exmoor's special qualities, it was the view of some Members that the ambitions linked to health and wellbeing could be enhanced.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2025-2030 for consultation.
2. To delegate to the Chief Executive to make final amendments to the consultation draft Plan including the supporting text, in consultation with the Chairperson.
3. To note that a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment is being carried out which will accompany the consultation on the draft Plan.

152. PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING THE CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2025: The Authority considered the report of the Chief Executive.

The Authority's Consideration

Members welcomed the report and noted the significant progress made in implementing the Corporate Plan 2024-2025, particularly against a backdrop of continuing resources constraints.

Mr M Ellicott and Mr N Thwaites left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the progress implementing the Authority's key commitments set out in the Corporate Plan 2024-2025 as detailed in Appendix 1.
2. To thank and congratulate all those involved in what had been achieved.
3. To delegate to the Finance and Performance Advisory Panel and Leadership Team further scrutiny of Authority performance across all the Corporate Plan actions for the next reporting period to 31 March 2025.

153. UPDATE ON PROGRESS AT DRIVER: The Authority considered the report of the Head of Access, Engagement & Estates.

The Authority's Consideration

Members congratulated Officers on the progress at Driver to date including refurbishment works, its use for educational activity via the Pinkery Outdoor Education Centre, guided walks, visits by the Exmoor Society and the Hill Farm Network, and meadow days as part of the Sow the Seeds project, as well as sustained website and social media coverage. It was also noted that a feasibility study on the use of the existing buildings was nearing completion.

Members were mindful that current activity had been steered by available funding; however, it was considered that future activities should not be led solely by access to funding streams and must contribute to long-term objectives. It was also agreed that the Authority should continue to challenge norms, be innovative in its treatment of Driver as a heritage asset and consider the community interest potential of the site.

While it was acknowledged that progress to date had been gradual, the importance of taking time to identify clear objectives, as well as a long-term sustainable vision

and operating model for Driver was recognised. However, it was noted that activity would increase during 2025 with delivery of nature and engagement projects following the Authority's successful bid to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the award of £1.25 million to fund the Exmoor Pioneers programme.

The meeting welcomed confirmation that a Countryside Stewardship Scheme was in place; Farming in Protected Landscapes funding had been secured for the renovation of the east barn; and that Driver had been included in a Defra Landscape Recovery Scheme Development phase; however, it was noted that it would be difficult to envisage a future partnership arrangement and financial model until the level of funding available through the Landscape Recovery Scheme was known.

The high-level ambition that Driver should be a place for nature and for people was reiterated and during 2025, the Committee looked forward to receiving financial projections and details of all potential options for the future of Driver. In the meantime, Members emphasised the importance of continuing communications, particularly in the absence of a set timeframe for future progress and bearing in mind the unique challenges of the site.

Mr S J Pugsley left the meeting during this item and did not vote.

RESOLVED: To note progress at Driver since December 2023 and to thank everyone involved.

154. CONSULTATION ON ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS: The Authority considered the report of the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED:

1. To support the broad principle of granting local authorities powers to allow remote attendance at formal meetings.
2. To oppose the introduction of proxy voting at formal meetings.
3. To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, submission of Exmoor National Park Authority's consultation response.

155. TEAM DEVON JOINT COMMITTEE: The Authority considered the report of the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED:

1. To agree the participation of Exmoor National Park Authority in the Team Devon Joint Committee.
2. To approve a departure from Standing Orders and to reaffirm the appointment of the Chairperson as the Authority's representative and the Deputy Chairperson as substitute on the Team Devon Joint Committee.

156. PERSONNEL UPDATE: The Authority Committee noted the recent staff changes set out on the agenda.

3 December 2024

157. MEMBERS' REPORTS: There were none.

158. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY: There was none.

The meeting closed at 2.35pm

(Chairperson)

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 February 2025

ANNUAL ESTATE REVIEW

Report of the Head of Access, Engagement & Estates and the Estates Manager

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

- (1) Provide update on the management of the Authority's estate for the period 2023/2024.
- (2) Look ahead to projects and works planned 2025/2026.

RECOMMENDATION: The Authority is asked to NOTE the content of the Estate Review.

Authority Priority:

- Broaden our income base to ensure sustainable delivery of National Park purposes.
- Manage Authority owned land in ways that will enhance the special qualities of Exmoor.

Legal Implications: The legal impact of the recommendation(s) of this report has been assessed as follows: None

Equality Implications: The equality impact of the recommendation(s) of this report has been assessed as follows:

- No disadvantage will be incurred as a result of belonging to a protected group as defined within the Equality Act 2010.
- The recommendations have no implications under the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Financial and Risk Implications: The financial and risk implications of the recommendation(s) of this report have been assessed as follows:

- Financial: None
- Risk: None

Climate Change Response: There are considered to be no impacts from this paper on climate change mitigation.

Exmoor National Park Authority

Annual Estate Review

1. Introduction

This paper provides Members with a review of our work across the ENPA estate during 2023/2024 and highlights some of the significant achievements and milestones. The paper then provides some insight into our ambition for 2025/2026 and sets out key components of our work plan for this period.

2. Strategic Purpose

Our Estate Strategy 2023-2043 was approved, by Members, in 2023. An extract from the Strategy (*Mission Statement – ENPA Estate*) follows and provides the context for this paper.

Our estate, consisting of large tracts of moorland and woodland, supports what we do and helps to deliver the purposes for which Exmoor National Park was designated. Much of the land we own, we hold in trust for the nation. Our estate also comprises buildings and other assets; these also provide public benefit as well as providing income and supporting the local economy.

Our strategy ensures that:

ENPA's estate will continue to provide public benefits for all. We will be both ambitious and aspirational in what our estate can achieve in the future. It will be an exemplar and a leader in the countryside. It will continue to be well managed, but in the years to come will be economically sustainable and more innovative. It will always be a place of inspiration, with a warm welcome for everyone.

Through ENPA's ownership, we will work harder to protect and nurture the environment, making it much more resilient in the future. We will care for the social, cultural, historical and economic attributes of the land and properties we own.

Through the estate we will continually provide inspiration, re-creation, wellbeing and understanding for generations now and into the future

3. Estate Summary

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) owns just under 7% of the surface area of the National Park. This comprises mostly open moorland, along with 553 hectares of woodland. The total area of the estate is 4671 hectares (11,542 acres). The estate also includes a complex collection of buildings, comprising its head office (Exmoor House), National Park Centres, a Depot at Exford, an outdoor education centre at Pinkery, a historic farmstead, a campsite and public toilets (set within public car parks), other historic assets and ruined buildings as well as several ancillary properties. The Estate currently produces an annual income of circa £400,000 which is a mixture of rent (the budget for 2025/26 is circa £200,000) together with grants (including agri-environment schemes) and further contributions. Additional income is also produced from the woodland estate and the ambitious work programme of our woodland estate is the subject of a separate paper.

4. Review of 2023/2024

There follows a review of 2023/2024 which we have divided into the following business areas:

1. Land Management
2. Commercial Tenancies
3. Additional Income
4. Capital Works and Large-Scale Repairs
5. Operational Assets

4.1 LAND MANAGEMENT

Nature recovery work across our estate has been a key priority for 2023/2024 and will remain a primary objective moving forward. Some highlights of key work areas follow.

4.1.1 North Hill

Following a decision to take our land at North Hill back in hand we were successful in securing a new Countryside Stewardship (CS) Agreement, which commenced in January 2024 and which we manage ourselves with a grazier. The new CS agreement has increased our income for the property whilst delivering improved nature recovery across the site. Our partnership with a new grazier has been successful and we were able to obtain additional grant aid for No-Fence cattle collars. The grazier's Belted Galloways utilise the collars for targeted grazing and enable the grazier to retain organic status. The CS funding supports educational visits, which we host, and North Hill is popular for our volunteer activities. We own and manage a herd of Exmoor Ponies at North Hill which play an important role in this nature recovery project.

The new CS agreement is evidence of our revitalised focus at North Hill which is also now included within the National Trust Holnicote Rivers Landscape Recovery Project Development phase (NT LRS). The NT LRS also includes our woodlands at Culbone, Hawkcombe and Colescombe which represent over 50% of our woodland estate included within this LRS project. The deadline for the Development Phase of the project is August 2025 and the successful award of a subsequent 20-year Landscape Recovery scheme will sustain our work and ambition for this important area of the estate.

4.1.2 Exmoor Heartlands Landscape Recovery Scheme

Members will be aware that the Authority and our partners successfully secured a Landscape Recovery Scheme Development phase award. Our estate has placed 3740 ha (9242 acres) of land into the Development Phase which includes both tenanted land (2998 ha) together with in-hand land (742 ha). We have been developing our nature recovery ambition for our land within the project area during 2024 including collating baseline survey data together with the delivery of nature recovery activity such as tree planting at Kings Wood and Halscombe. Work has also progressed with our grazier at The Chains with the use of No Fence collars and an agreed amendment to the existing Higher-level Scheme to facilitate an extended grazing period to increase grazing pressure across this site. A more detailed analysis of prescriptions and land use options will be developed with our tenants and other partners during 2025.

4.1.3 Driver

The Driver Project has been a significant focus for our resources during 2023/2024 and will continue to be a priority objective for the foreseeable future. An update on Driver was provided to Members in December 2024 but, in summary, the successful

delivery of the new ambitious CS agreement and a comprehensive capital improvement programme to the farmhouse and buildings are a high priority for the teams during 2025/2026. Driver will also host activities under the Exmoor Pioneers Programme during the review period together with Educational Visits funded by the new CS agreement.

4.1.4 Exmoor Ponies

Exmoor National Park Authority owns and manages 52 pedigree Exmoor Ponies which are deployed across the estate to deliver specific and targeted conservation grazing objectives. The sites where the ponies are deployed include Haddon Hill, Driver and Pinkery and North Hill. During 2025 we will be reviewing how we use Exmoor Ponies across the estate.

4.2 COMMERCIAL TENANCIES

The period 2023/2024 has seen a significant volume of activity within our commercial property. Notable transactions include:

4.2.1 The Sawmill

Following a trial licence period with our partners (Three Atop Woodland Services) at the Sawmill we agreed on terms for a 3-year business tenancy agreement which commenced in 2024. This successful arrangement has proven to be an appropriate use of an important historic building, supporting a local start-up business together with allocating liabilities for the maintenance of the building and its fixtures and fittings and providing a rental income to the estate. Moving forward, Three Atop Woodland Services will play an important role in the delivery of the Pioneers programme.

4.2.2 Exford School Playing Field

Following a decision to retain ownership of Exford School Playing Field, we have now successfully agreed terms with Somerset Council and a draft agreement has been prepared. This new arrangement has removed our liability for maintenance and provided security to Exford School.

4.2.3 7-9 Fore Street & The Warehouse

The recent relocation of the Dulverton National Park Centre to Exmoor House has created an opportunity to introduce a new tenant to 7-9 Fore Street. We have instructed external agents to market the ground floor space and help us find a new occupier. We are hopeful, given the town centre location, that a local retail business may be forthcoming.

Our decision to previously cease using The Warehouse as operational storage and offer the premises to the market proved successful during 2023 when we found a local business to take up a tenancy. That business has now decided to leave, and we will therefore be asking our external agents to market The Warehouse in tandem with 7-9 Fore Street.

4.2.4 North Hill Campsite

Our long-term tenants (The Camping and Caravan Club) at North Hill Camp Site have decided to leave and served Notice on us during 2024. We have now taken the premises back in hand. The premises were well maintained by the previous tenants, and we now have the unique opportunity to repurpose the site and seek a new partner. We have instructed specialist external agents to market the opportunity and help identify suitable applicants. Our ambition for the campsite is to broaden the previous offer and target new audiences which, we believe, sits within our Estate

Strategy objectives. The repurposing of this site is consistent with our strategic ambition to energise this area of our estate.

4.3 ADDITIONAL INCOME

We have an ongoing commitment to seek additional income from the estate. Examples of recent business areas include:

4.3.1 Licences

We regularly issued licences (with an agreed fee) throughout 2023/2024 for large outdoor activity events including mountain biking and endurance activities. We also advertised and issued Catering Concessions at several of our sites, with mobile pizza vans operating out of Blackmore Gate and Valley of the Rocks ENPA Car Parks. Catering Concessions will soon be advertised for the 2025/2026 season accompanied by social media support. More recently we agreed on terms with a local business that provides a wood-fired mobile sauna. The sauna will be operating from the Valley of the Rock ENPA Car park later this spring.

4.3.2 Filming and Photography Locations

During 2023/2024 we developed our offer, including pricing structure, for filming locations. We own many locations which regularly appeal to location managers. We also have the resources to be able to provide support services to actors and crew including site scouting and 4x4 transport. We have prepared a Filming Brochure which we send to potential customers. Notable recent filming activities during the 2023/2024 period included locations (North Hill and Culbone) for the feature film, The Salt Path.

4.3.3 Scoping for Bothy Accommodation

During the 2023/2024 period, we scoped out a business case and assessed the adaptive capability of The Pound (Simonsbath) and WWII Radar Station (North Hill) for conversion to entry-level overnight accommodation. The feasibility work will continue during the early part of 2025.

4.4 CAPITAL WORKS AND LARGE-SCALE REPAIRS

Given the complexities of our estate together with the uniqueness of several specific locations we have been faced with several significant capital outlays during the review period. Notable projects include the following:

4.4.1 Wheal Eliza

Members of the public have been illegally accessing Wheal Eliza mine, putting themselves at huge risk. Our insurers and legal advisers advised that additional safety measures were required. After a period of planning and preparation, we have now completed the wire capping of Wheal Eliza. The mesh covers a large area to ensure its stability and load-bearing ability.

4.4.2 Northmoor Road

We continue to carry out our bi-annual inspections on the cliff face below Weir Cleeve to safeguard the properties below in Northmoor Road. Works this year have included introducing steel bolts/anchors and rock mesh into areas of the cliff face together with the removal of trees and debris. The work is designed by a geotechnical engineer and carried out by high rope specialists.

4.4.3 Blackpitts Barn

Blackpitts Barn, which is part of the Land at Warren farm tenancy, is a former re-sited WW1 structure. The barn requires significant repairs which include re-roofing, and replacement of external cladding together with internal works. Works commenced during 2024 and will be completed during 2025.

4.5 OPERATIONAL

The Estates Department, in collaboration with other departments, has progressed various operational improvements during the review period. Notable projects include the following.

4.5.1 Exmoor House

Following feedback from a staff survey we have embarked on repurposing various areas of Exmoor House. The works have included redecorations, relocation of staff, the creation of additional communal areas and will also comprise the relocation of the staff Common Room/Kitchen. The reallocation of space has also provided the opportunity to review and rationalise archive paperwork and files to ensure the most efficient use of space.

With the recruitment of additional new staff, our repurposing has also extended to the 1st floor of Town Offices (7-9 Fore Street) which now accommodates our Estates Department and will also be the new base for the Pioneers Team. We now refer to 1st Floor Town Offices as 'The Hub' which is now considered an integral part of the Exmoor House suite of offices.

4.5.2 EV Charge points

Our first public EV charging point (Pod Point) was introduced at Blackmoor Gate in 2024. The installation was sponsored by BMW and further sponsored charging points are scheduled for 2025 which include four units for public use in Exford Car Park, and three in the ENPA Depot to support our electric fleet. The installations within the Exford public car park require an upgrade to the existing power supply provided by National Grid which has been funded by BMW. We will be purchasing an additional four chargers to be installed at Exmoor House to support our electric fleet.

5. PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2025/2026

The review period 2023/2024 has been an exciting and productive time for the Estates Department which, in collaboration with other teams and colleagues, has helped to progress and deliver significant work streams across our estate. Our next review period 2025/2026 is likely to be equally as challenging with early indications that the Estate Work plan will be comprehensive and far-reaching if we are to maintain momentum and achieve our ambitions. Initial priorities for the next review period include:

5.1 Land Management

Our land management work will continue to be our high priority during the next review period with a particular focus on the two Landscape Recovery Project areas and a review of sites that are currently within environmental schemes. We will complete baseline surveys across these areas and scope out ambitious nature recovery objectives in partnership with our tenants and graziers. Carbon Audits for Driver and North Hill were commissioned during the previous review period and the implications of the results together with mitigations will be explored in 2025.

During 2023/4, we developed a Management Statement proforma template which will be used to focus our strategic thinking for individual assets or groups of assets. This document will form the basis of initial in-house discussions and prioritisation during 2025/6.

We are in discussion with National Trust to become a partner in the Exmoor Coast Project. The project calls for a step change in nature recovery and we will endeavour to exploit the potential for our estate during the next review period.

5.2 Commercial Tenancies

The early part of the next review period will see the recruitment of important business tenants for two key assets across our estate. We will recruit suitable partners for North Hill Campsite (Moor Wood Campsite) and 7-9 Fore Street and The Warehouse.

5.3 Additional Income

We will continue to promote our filming location offer, and the Catering Concessions will be advertised during the early part of 2025. We will prepare business cases for the development of accommodation at Simonsbath Pound and the Radar Station in 2025.

A real opportunity for a step change in income lies in our ability to capitalise on agri-environment grant funding. We will therefore continue to horizon scan throughout the review period and seek to migrate existing schemes to more lucrative options where available, and appropriate. The development of appropriate payment rates for the two Landscape Project areas will be a key priority.

5.4 Capital Works and Large-Scale Repairs

Unplanned capital works during 2025/6 are likely to include the refurbishment of the Lime Kiln at Lynmouth (following recommendations provided in a recent condition survey) and repairs to Greenaleigh Access road, Blackpitts Barn and the forage store at Driver (located behind Pinkery) following damage caused by Storm Darragh.

Funding has been allocated for various capital improvements at Pinkery Centre for Outdoor Learning, including re-roofing, upgrades to the accommodation and classroom together with landscape work including repurposing the courtyard and much-needed refurbishment of the access road and treatments to the external boundary and curtilage. The Estates Department will lead these works.

The capital works at Driver (as previously agreed with Members) will be delivered during 2025/6 with an initial focus on the refurbishment of the farmhouse.

During the early part of 2025/6 we will be working with our colleagues in the Finance Department to adequately plan for significant capital work and large-scale long-term cyclical repairs across the estate. Assets of initial focus will include Exmoor House (re-roofing and external repairs) The Warehouse (external joinery and roof repairs) and Pinkey Centre for Outdoor Learning (External Redecorations and external joinery repairs)

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Exmoor National Park Authority, unlike many other National Park Authorities benefits from significant land and property ownership, established over a long period and for different reasons. Whilst the portfolio has its challenges, our estate, if well managed and resourced, is a key component in our ability to further National Park purposes.

Andrew Lawes
Estates Manager
January 2025

ITEM 8

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 February 2025

WOODLAND ESTATE UPDATE AND ASH DIE BACK REPORT

Report of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities and Senior Woodlands Officer

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

1. To provide an update on the management of the Authority's woodland estate.
2. To summarise progress with the management of Ash Die Back on the Authority's estate.

RECOMMENDATION: To note the content of the report.

Authority Priority: A Highly Performing Estate Delivering National Park Purposes.

Legal Implications: The legal impact of the recommendation(s) of this report has been assessed as follows: None

Equality Implications: The equality impact of the recommendation(s) of this report has been assessed as follows:

No disadvantage will be incurred as a result of belonging to a protected group as defined within the Equality Act 2010.

The recommendations have no implications under the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Financial and Risk Implications: The financial and risk implications of the recommendation(s) of this report have been assessed as follows:

Financial: None

Risk: None

Climate Change Response: There are considered to be no impacts from this paper on climate change mitigation.

Woodland Estate Update and Ash Die Back Report

1. General

The Authority owns or leases 553 ha of woodland shown in table 1.

Table 1 – ENPA Woodland Estate

Site	Area ha	Type
Burridge, Paddons*, Weir Cleave	34.27	Upland oakwood
Tarr Steps	42.21	Upland oakwood
Culbone	183.74	Upland/coast oakwood, PAWS
Hawkcombe	102.17	Upland oakwood
Simonsbath	32.98	Broadleaf/mixed plantation
Kings Wood	4.5	New mixed plantation
North Hill	99.2	Upland/coast oakwood, PAWS, Broadleaf/conifer pltn
Haddon Hill	19.29	Upland Oakwood, conifer plantation
Timberscombe	3.1	PAWS
The Incline	4.9	Plantation, mixed woodland
Ashton Cleave	2.8	Upland oakwood
Pinkery	0.26	Conifer plantation
Larcombe	3.5	Broadleaf plantation
Blackmoor Gate	0.33	Broadleaf plantation
Bye Wood	19.8	New broadleaf plantation
	553.05	

*lease

2. Strategy, Plans and Countryside Stewardship

In 2017 Members approved a 25 Year Vision and Strategy for the Woodland Estate.

“Woodland is integral to the many Special Qualities which help define the character of the National Park which in turn help develop the priorities for current and future Partnership Plans. This Strategy takes its lead from those Priorities and refines them into visions and actions for our own woodland estate. Other policy drivers will emerge and will inevitably influence our approach but shouldn’t materially change our goals. Natural Capital for example is a way of defining the wide range of benefits that we derive from nature and is emerging as a key driver. Significant environmental and economic benefits can be secured through effective and efficient management of our natural capital and will be central to our approach to woodland management over the decades.”

Our Goals are built around the following themes:

- Woodland in the Landscape
- Woodland for Wildlife
- Working Woodland
- Resilient Woods and Resource Protection
- Woods for People

We operate to individual site plans and an overarching Forestry Commission Approved 10-year Woodland Plan which provides all the felling and other regulatory approvals. This remains compliant until November 2026.

432 ha of the 553ha estate is entered into Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship Agreement which remains in place until December 2026. This agreement provides annual payments of £43,200 or £216,000 over the 5 years of the agreement.

Some of the woodland compartments on North Hill were included in separate grazing arrangement. These are now back in-hand and are now included in a separate Higher Tier Agreement.

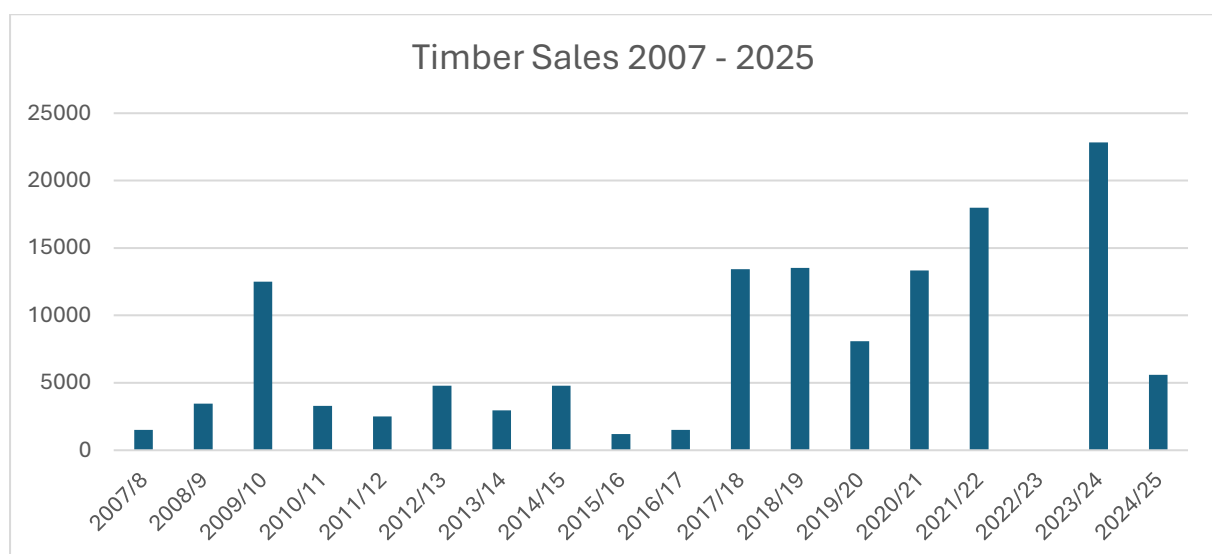
We are working with the National Trust to potentially include Hawkcombe, Culbone and the North Hill woodland (collectively almost 400 ha – 70% of the woodland estate) in a 20-year Landscape Recovery Scheme which will greatly assist longer term planning.

As we take a broader view of our entire estate and understand better the outcomes we seek, further areas will become woodland, temperate rainforest, wood-pasture or include other forms of increased tree cover. We have previously completed woodland creation projects at Bye Wood, Kings Wood, Flexbarrow and Mount Pleasant. This season works will be completed at Little Halsecombe, Long Holcombe and Driver.

Our track record on delivery helps secure capital grants from the Forestry Commission and develop partnerships with others including Plantlife, Butterfly Conservation, Forest Research and the Woodland Trust but also builds confidence with donors such as BMW, Amex, Sykes Cottages, large private donations and potentially highly significant donations in the pipeline from larger corporate sponsors. Projects from all of these sources have been completed in the past 12 months.

3. Timber Use and Sales

In 2017 we commissioned “Timber Strategies” to complete an assessment of the potential from timber sales from the ENPA woodland estate. We have been implementing these recommendations and realising some of the potential. The uplift in sales from 2017 reflects this. We are actively investigating how we can further increase sales.



We continue to direct around 50m/3 p.a. of our own hardwood and softwood timber to the sawmill and workshop for our own use. This is equivalent to around £5000 roundwood value on the open market. The value of processed timber on the open market could be 10 times this value.

The story is priceless.

4. Ash Die Back on ENPA Estate

4.1 Background

Ash dieback is fungal disease affecting the common ash tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and other ash species. It is caused by a fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, which is native to eastern Asia. The disease was first identified in England in 2012, although research has shown that it is likely to have been present since at least 2005.

There are estimated to be around 800,000 ash trees on Exmoor (National Forest Inventory) of all ages from seedlings to mature trees making it one of our most abundant and distinctive species. It is estimated that up to 80% of ash trees across the UK could be lost although genetic variance and resistance will result in localised differences.

A small proportion show good inheritable resistance, but few are completely immune. The “Living Ash Project” facilitated by the Forestry Commission, Future Trees Trust and other research projects including the John Innes Institute have identified resistant trees and have initiated an accelerated breeding programme. They now have around 700 trees showing good resistance raising the prospect of establishing a resistant population.

4.2 Ash Die Back on ENPA Estate

In 2015 we completed a rapid survey to identify ash trees in high-risk zones on the ENPA Estate. We estimated that around 2500 - 3000 trees presented a theoretical risk should the disease progress to a point making the tree prone to failure. These trees are located along well used footpaths, roadsides, around permanently occupied properties and car parks. There are many thousands of trees beyond these risk zones which were not included in the assessment. The disease will progress through this population and any natural resistance will be expressed – or not.

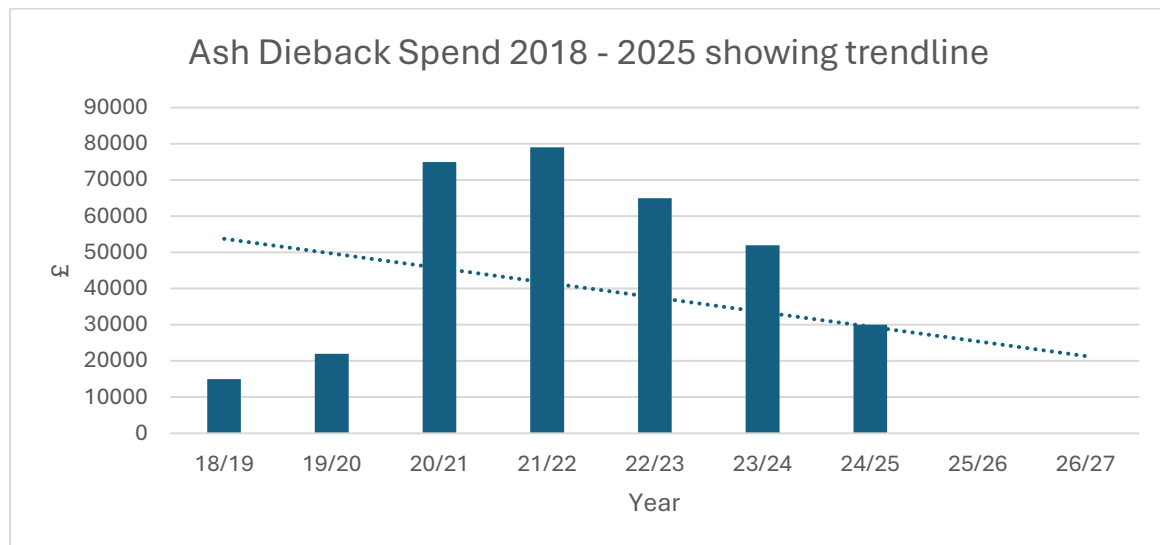
We aim to completely avoid any pre-emptive felling of trees showing no evidence of disease.

In July 2020 following a thorough procurement exercise we appointed Devon Tree Services as our main Contractor on a 3 + 1 year contract and we have extended their appointment for a further 2 years through to 2026.

Many trees display features or form habitats associated with protected species. We have a Duty of Care under the Occupiers Liability Act which we discharge to our utmost ability but we must also comply with protected species legislation which all adds to cost and effort.

The total cost of the Ash Die Back programme to date is almost £350,000. This is reflected in costs incurred by public bodies. The total cost to the UK is estimated to be **£15 billion**.

Post 2026 we estimate tree numbers (and cost) will be reduced to level where they can be assessed as part of routine tree risk management.



Devon Tree Services survey and categorise trees based on disease progression and factors such as risk of failure and operator safety. They adopt a “Risk and Evidence” approach when evaluating trees for removal. This simply means that if there is no quantifiable risk, the tree won’t be removed.

4.3 Future disease and climate risk.

Forest Research identify 25 exotic diseases and 24 pests which present some degree of risk to UK trees and forests. Some are already present and having an impact. Others are under surveillance.

Extreme weather conditions, storms, drought and flooding are exerting huge stress on trees and forests. Milder winters, warmer temperatures, changes in seasonal timing and phenology, in combination with other climate impacts, will increase the susceptibility of trees to damage and mortality from pests and diseases. The behaviour of native pests and diseases is changing with the changing climate.

Acute Oak Decline and the Oak Processionary moth are both present in England and are expanding their range. Several fungal pathogens of the *Phytophthora* genus are present and having a major impact. The 8-tooth spruce bark beetle – *Ips typographus* has recently been found in the UK resulting in restrictions in timber movement and planting. Bark-beetles globally are having a devastating impact on forests.

The potential ecological and economic impact of the disease-climate mix is severe and one which we must be alert to.

Ash Die Back may just be a rehearsal.

4.4 Devon Tree Services Presentation

Simon Putt one of the Directors of Devon Tree Services will give a presentation to Members about the work they are doing for Exmoor National Park Authority Estate.

Graeme McVittie
Senior Woodlands Officer
January 2025

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 February 2025

STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK

Report of the Head of Enterprise and Operations

Purpose of Report: To update Authority Members on the work of the Standards Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Authority is recommended to:

- (1) To receive and note the draft Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 5 November 2024 at Appendix 1 to this report.
- (2) To adopt the Member Role Profile at Appendix 2 to this report.
- (3) To adopt the Member Training and Development Programme at Appendix 3 to this report.
- (4) To approve the Annual Member Training and Development Review process at Appendix 4 to this report.

Authority Priority: To meet the requirements of legislation where applicable to National Parks and conduct Authority business in line with good practice and the 7 principles of the public life. To achieve by providing core services; getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.

Legal and Equality Implications:

The Localism Act 2011 requires the Authority to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

The equality impact of the recommendation of this report has been assessed as having no adverse effects regarding equality impact.

Consideration has been given to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1988 and an assessment of the implications of the recommendation of this report is that there are no adverse impacts on human rights.

Financial and Risk Implications: Potential reputational risks if Members of the Authority do not receive adequate support and training.

Climate Response: None identified.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Standards Committee met on 5 November 2024 and the draft Minutes of the meeting are appended to this report for the Authority to receive and note.

2. MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 In relation to Member Learning and Development, Members will see that the draft Minutes record the following recommendations:

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the Member Role Profile subject to amendment to set out the Nolan Principles in full and to recommend it be adopted by all Members of the Authority.
2. To delegate to Officers amendment of the Member Learning and Development Programme and to recommend that the amended version be adopted by all Members of the Authority.
3. To approve the arrangements for the Annual Member Training and Development Review and to recommend that it be adopted by the Authority.

- 2.2 The Member Role Profile has been amended to set out the Nolan principles in full and is attached to this report at Appendix 2.
- 2.3 The Member Learning and Development Programme has been updated in accordance with the Standards Committee's consideration and is attached to this report at Appendix 3.
- 2.4 The arrangements for the Annual Member Training and Development Review are attached to this report at Appendix 4.

3. PLANNING COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

- 3.1 In relation to the nomination of Planning Committee substitutes, Members will see that the recommendation of the Standards Committee is that if the trialled Planning Committee arrangements are confirmed, Standing Orders in relation to planning substitutes should be revised to reduce the notice period for identifying a substitute Member from 10 working days to 3 working days

4. ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH STANDARDS ALLEGATIONS UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

- 4.1 Following the publication of the government's consultation on strengthening the standards regime, Members are advised that the proposed work to review the Authority's arrangements for dealing with standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011 has been paused pending any legislative changes that result.

Ben Barrett
Head of Enterprise and Operations
November 2024

DRAFT**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the meeting of the Standards Committee held at 3.00pm on Tuesday, 5 November 2024 in the Committee Room at Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

Mr J Patrinos (Chairperson)
Mr M Ellicott
Mr S J Pugsley
Miss E Stacey

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON:** Mr J Patrinos was reappointed Chairperson of the Standards Committee until the first meeting of the Standards Committee convened after the Annual Meeting.
2. **APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON:** Mr S J Pugsley was reappointed Deputy Chairperson of the Standards Committee until the first meeting of the Standards Committee convened after the Annual Meeting.
3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** An apology for absence was received from Mr B Geen.
4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none.
5. **ORDER OF BUSINESS:** In accordance with Standing Orders, it was proposed by the Chairperson to vary the order of business so that Items 6 and 7 on the agenda would be dealt with after Item 11.
6. **MINUTES:**
 - i. **Confirmation:** The **Minutes** of the Standards Committee's meeting held on 14 November 2023 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
 - ii. **Matters arising:** There were no matters arising from those Minutes.
7. **PUBLIC SPEAKING:** There were no public speakers.
8. **MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME:** The Committee considered the report of the Head of Enterprise & Operations and the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer.

The Committee's Consideration

Members supported the Member Role Profile as appended to the report subject to the Nolan principles being set out in full and recommended that it be adopted by all Authority Members and that a training session on the role of Members be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

The draft Annual Member Learning and Development Programme was welcomed. It was recommended that this be reviewed annually by the Committee and be considered an agile programme that could respond to changes in legislation or governance.

In terms of the current draft, it was proposed that this be amended to include training on the Member Role Profile and on finance including interpretation of statements of accounts. It was also proposed that a mentor system be put in place so that new Members of the Authority could receive support and guidance from an existing Member.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the Member Role Profile subject to amendment to set out the Nolan Principles in full and to recommend it be adopted by all Members of the Authority.
2. To delegate to Officers amendment of the Member Learning and Development Programme and to recommend that the amended version be adopted by all Members of the Authority.
3. To approve the arrangements for the Annual Member Training and Development Review and to recommend that it be adopted by the Authority.

9. **PLANNING COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES:** The Committee considered the report of the Head of Enterprise & Operations and the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer.

The Committee's Consideration

It was confirmed that the Authority's Standing Orders provided that in relation to Committees and Sub-Committees, the division of the membership between Local Authority Members and Members appointed by the Secretary of State shall as nearly as possible be in the same proportions as the composition of the Authority itself.

Therefore, if the Authority Committee were to confirm the Planning Committee arrangements currently being trialled, it was considered desirable that the ability to nominate Planning Committee substitutes should also be confirmed.

It was noted that Standing Orders were silent in relation to the particular Member group from which an appointed Member should nominate a substitute Member. However, it was acknowledged that the preferred practice was that a substitute be nominated from the same Member group to maintain the balance of the Committee, and that to date this had worked well. It was also noted that in the unlikely event of a Member from the same group being unavailable, Standing Orders did not preclude the nomination of a substitute Member from another group, eg a Member appointed by North Devon Council could nominate a Member appointed by Devon County Council.

In relation to Standing Order 4.4 and the requirement that the appointed Member be "required to identify the substitute Member and provide notice to the Chief Executive at least 10 working days before the Committee meeting save for exceptional circumstances (due to an emergency or sudden illness)...", it was agreed that the length of this notice period was problematic.

It was therefore proposed that if the trialled Planning Committee arrangements were confirmed by the Authority Committee, Standing Orders be revised to provide that the notice period for identifying a substitute Member be reduced to at least 3 working days' notice, ie that notice should be provided to the Chief Executive by 5pm on the Wednesday before the Planning Committee meeting on the following Tuesday.

It was also proposed that a list of Members eligible for nomination as a substitute be made available (ie those Members who have attended the requisite planning training sessions).

RESOLVED:

1. To recommend to the Authority Committee that if the trialled Planning Committee arrangements are confirmed, Standing Orders in relation to planning substitutes be revised to reduce the notice period for identifying a substitute Member from 10 working days to 3 working days.

10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH STANDARDS ALLEGATIONS UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011: The Committee considered the report of the Head of Enterprise & Operations and the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer.

The Committee's Consideration

Members agreed to meet as an informal working group with the Independent People and the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer to undertake a full review of the Authority's arrangements for dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011 before submitting a revised version to a meeting of the Authority Committee for adoption.

RESOLVED: The Standards Committee to meet as an informal working group with the Independent People and the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer to review the Authority's arrangements for dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011.

Miss E Stacey left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

11. ROLE OF INDEPENDENT PERSON: The Committee considered the report of the Head of Enterprise & Operations and the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer.

The Committee's Consideration

It was agreed that rather than introducing a regular reporting regime, it may be helpful to hear from the Independent People by way of an informal report on an ad hoc basis, and to seek their assistance with any specific questions or concerns if they arise.

In this way, it was considered that the Independent People could assist with any issues in a timely manner, while retaining their objectivity and remaining within their legislative role.

RESOLVED: To confirm the role of the Independent People as set out legislation and the Authority's existing processes, to include ad hoc informal reporting and assistance as relevant questions or concerns arise.

12. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2023-2024

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer and the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer.

The Committee's Consideration

The Committee welcomed the Annual Governance Review 2023-2024 and noted that Section 9 of the report fulfilled the recommendation made by the Authority's external auditors that the Standards Committee formally publish its self-assessment of good practice.

It was noted that the Annual Governance Review for 2024-2025 would be presented to the Standards Committee in March 2025.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the Annual Governance Review 2023-2024.
2. To note the results of the Governance self-assessment in Section 9.
3. To approve the Annual Governance Statement for inclusion with the Annual Accounts for 2023/24.

13. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Enterprise & Operations.

The Committee's Consideration

Members were pleased to note the low number of complaints received in the six months from April to September 2024 and that of the four reported, only three had been upheld.

It was acknowledged that two of the upheld complaints related to the planning service and in particular the failure to determine an application within statutory timeframes. The importance and public facing nature of the Authority's role as the local planning authority was recognised.

RESOLVED: To note the overview report of general complaints and compliments received by the Authority.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY: There was none

(The meeting closed at 3.55pm)

Chairperson

Exmoor National Park Authority

Member Role Profile

1. As a member of a National Park Authority, those appointed agree to represent the Authority and its wider interests.
2. Members are appointed to represent Exmoor National Park as a whole, irrespective of appointing or nominating body. Specifically, Members do not represent appointing or nominating bodies.
3. All Members, irrespective of appointing or nominating body, have equal value and responsibilities.
4. Each member is responsible for following good governance in the public interest and must familiarise themselves and conduct themselves in line with the Nolan principles of public office appointments.

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

5. All Members are collectively and corporately responsible for the overall performance of the Authority through implementation of a Statutory Management (Partnership) Plan, a Local Plan and an Annual Corporate Plan. Members play an important role in contributing to, approving and implementing these plans. Day to day management lies with Executive Officers and staff.
6. To achieve National Park purposes, all Members have the following responsibilities:
 1. Provide strategic direction for the Authority.
 2. Scrutinise and monitor the Authority's performance including providing constructive challenge.
 3. Agree appropriate policies to enable the Authority to fulfil its statutory duties and participate in collective decision making.
 4. Represent the Authority with external stakeholders and, where appropriate, with the media, acting as an advocate.
 5. Seek to balance the interests of local communities with visitors' and park users' aspirations, taking account of local and national agendas.
 6. Take opportunities locally to act as a channel of communication, promoting and explaining the work of the Authority and providing feedback from local communities.



7. Agree strategy that ensures the National Park is available to everyone, is relevant and is valued as a national asset for its special qualities
8. Support the exploration of additional income generation whether through private or public funding opportunities.
9. Actively participate in training, share expertise and learn from the expertise of other Members/Officers.
10. Encourage a creative, experimental and innovative culture, where risks are appropriately managed.
11. Agree and adopt an Authority-wide set of values.
12. Ensure there is effective and efficient governance and management in place, and on occasion participate in the appointment of senior staff.

Annual Member Learning and Development Programme

Learning or Development Activity	Who	Date	Authority Priorities and Objectives	Measures and outcomes
Exmoor National Park Authority New Member Induction	All new Members	As appropriate	Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.	<p>New Members of the Authority have a good understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purposes of National Parks and the legislative background; • the work of Exmoor National Park Authority; • the role of Members and Member Role Profile; • the Member role on Planning Committee; • the Standards Regime and the Member Code of Conduct, including declarations of interest.
Member Mentoring	All new Members	As appropriate	<p>Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.</p> <p>A great organisation to work for.</p>	<p>An experienced Member will act as a mentor for a newly appointed Member, to share their knowledge and to support the development of the new Member during the first 12 months of their appointment.</p>
National Parks UK New Member Induction	All new Members	As advised.	Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.	<p>New Members gain an appreciation of wider issues relating to National Parks through attendance at a residential induction course in another National Park setting. The course provides a balance of structured sessions and informal opportunities through group work, field trips and discussion sessions.</p>

Learning or Development Activity	Who	Date	Authority Priorities and Objectives	Measures and outcomes
Obligatory Planning/ Development Management training ¹ (see footnote)	All Members of the Planning Committee and all Members who wish to be eligible to sit on the Planning Committee as a substitute Member.	Exmoor Tuesdays	<p>Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.</p> <p>A place with flourishing, vibrant, communities and businesses.</p>	<p>Members have a good understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role of Members of the Planning Committee; • planning legislation as it relates to National Parks; • relevant planning considerations; • the interaction between National Park purposes and the application of the policies of the Local Plan; • the Authority's procedures in relation to Member involvement in planning applications; predetermination and predisposition; lobbying; pre-application discussions. • changes to national planning policy/legislation and any implications for the work of the Planning Committee.
Obligatory review training on the Member Role Profile, the Standards Regime and the Member Code of Conduct.	All members	Annually (September Exmoor Tuesday)	<p>Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.</p> <p>A great organisation to work for.</p>	<p>With the Solicitor & Monitoring Officer and the Independent Persons, Members have an opportunity to review their understanding of the Member Role Profile, the Standards Regime, the Member Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest.</p>
Obligatory Annual Member Development Review Process	All Members	Annually (February/ March)	<p>Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.</p> <p>A great organisation to work for.</p>	<p>Members have an opportunity individually for discussion with the Chairperson and/or Deputy Chairperson (and Chief Executive) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider their personal experience as an Authority Member • evaluate their contribution to the work of the Authority • raise any issues or concerns • identify individual training or development requirements • suggest topics for future all-Member briefing sessions

¹ Under Standing Orders all Members are required to attend a minimum of two obligatory Planning/Development Management Training sessions in a 24-month period. Failure to do so will mean that a Member is ineligible to sit on the Planning Committee until such time as they have attended such a training session. This provision also applies to any Member who is nominated by a member of the Planning Committee to sit as a substitute in their place.

Learning or Development Activity	Who	Date	Authority Priorities and Objectives	Measures and outcomes
Finance training including interpretation of statements of accounts	All Members	Annually (May)	Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.	Members have a good understanding of accounts reporting cycles and audit processes and have a working knowledge of how to interpret a set of accounts.
Legislative training requirements	All Members	As required	Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.	Members will be up to date with any training requirements that may be introduced from time to time by new legislation or by changes to existing legislation.
Members' Forum	All Members	Exmoor Tuesdays	<p>Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.</p> <p>A great organisation to work for.</p>	Members have opportunity for informal discussion with Leadership Team Officers and to share knowledge and information about current topics and projects.
Member Briefing sessions / site visit opportunities	All Members	Exmoor Tuesdays and additional opportunities if required.	<p>Getting best value from our resource and improving our performance.</p> <p>Members' knowledge and understanding of Exmoor's special qualities is increased to inform future decision making and the delivery of our Ambitions.</p>	<p>The Authority can schedule briefings in response to developments nationally or locally with implications for the National Park.</p> <p>Members have an in-depth understanding of current and ongoing work and an opportunity to hear about future projects.</p> <p>Members take a holistic view of the integrated strands of the Authority's work by learning about the links between identified projects and priorities.</p> <p>Members have opportunity to engage with Authority officers with different areas of interest and expertise.</p> <p>Members can contribute effectively to forward business planning.</p>

Learning or Development Activity	Who	Date	Authority Priorities and Objectives	Measures and outcomes
Individual Member training requirements	As required	As required.	Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance.	As part of the annual Member development review system, Members can identify individual training or development requirements. Training opportunities will be provided as appropriate.
National Parks UK Conference and Workshop events	Open to all Members (small group to attend each event)	As advised.	To achieve best value from our resources and improve our performance.	Members can join with Members and Officers of other UK National Park Authorities and to share best practice, learning and experience, as well as to achieve a greater understanding of the conference/workshop theme.
Shared learning and development with other regional National Park Authorities	Open to all Members (small group to attend events)	As opportunities arise.	To achieve best value from our resources and improve our performance.	The proximity of Exmoor, Dartmoor and New Forest National Parks enables opportunities to share learning and development experiences and to gain understanding of differing or comparable challenges, procedures and activities.

Annual Member Training and Development Review

1. Annually, Members will be required to complete a self-assessment questionnaire which will include objective data such as the Member's term to date and attendance at meetings and training opportunities.
2. The completed self-assessment data will be submitted to the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive.
3. All self-assessment data will remain confidential to the Member, Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and Chief Executive (and Corporate Support Officer for administration purposes).
4. A discussion between individual Members and the Chairman and/or Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive will be arranged.
5. If requested, opportunity to hold all or part of the meeting in the absence of the Chief Executive will be facilitated.
6. The meeting may be held at Exmoor House or an alternative venue if more convenient, or via Teams or telephone.
7. Identified individual training requirements will be implemented and extended to all Members as appropriate as part of the annual Member Training and Development Programme.
8. The training and development review process for all Members will be completed between February-March each year.