



EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
EXMOOR HOUSE, DULVERTON
SOMERSET TA22 9HL
TEL: (01398) 323665
FAX: (01398) 323150
E-mail: info@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk
www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

20 February 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 March 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 4 February 2025 (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. Medium Term Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2029-30 and Budgets 2025-26:** To consider the report of the Chief Finance Officer (Item 7).

- 8. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025-26:** To consider the report of the Chief Finance Officer (Item 8).

- 9. Communications Strategy:** To consider the report of the Head of Enterprise and Operations (Item 9).

- 10. Local Development Scheme:** To consider the report of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities (Item 10).

- 11. Scheme of Member Allowances 2025-26:** To consider the report of the Head of Enterprise and Operations (Item 11).

12. Personnel Update:

Seasonal Information Advisors – 29/03/2025:

Shelley Trace (Dulverton)

Tracy Brock (Dulverton)

Lisa Clarke (Dulverton)

Lee Clarke (Dunster)

Leavers:

23/01/2025 - Rebecca Ali – Planning Enforcement Officer

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

Further information on any of the reports can be obtained by contacting the National Park Authority at the address and telephone numbers at the top of the agenda. Details of the decisions taken at this meeting will be set out in the formal Minutes which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. In the meantime, details of the decisions can be obtained the Corporate Support Officer, at Exmoor House.

ITEM 4

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday, 4 February 2025 at 10.00am in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

Miss A V Davis (Chairperson)

Mr R Milton (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr L Baker

Mr A Bray

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

Miss L Williams

Mr J Yabsley

Apologies for absence were received from M T Butt Philip, Mr J Patrinos and Miss E Stacey.

159. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

In relation to Item 7 Annual Estate Review:

- Mr S J Pugsley declared a personal interest as a Governor of the Moorland Federation of Cutcombe, Dunster, Exford, Porlock, Timberscombe, Dulverton Junior, All Saints Infants and Langford Budville Schools.
- Mrs F Nicholson declared a personal interest as the Chair of Governors of the Moorland Federation of Cutcombe, Dunster, Exford, Porlock, Timberscombe, Dulverton Junior, All Saints Infants and Langford Budville Schools.
- Mr J Holtom declared a personal interest as a member of the Landscape Recovery Steering Group.
- Mr R Milton declared a personal interest as the owner of an Exmoor pony herd.

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

- Committee Members joined the Chairperson in sending condolences to Miss Evelyn Stacey following a recent bereavement.

161. MINUTES

- i. **Confirmation:** The **Minutes** of the Authority's meeting held on 3 December 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

- ii. **Matters arising:** In relation to Minute 151 and the statement that “...increased woodland could result in additional benefits including enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and public enjoyment of the National Park”, Mr A Bray expressed concern about the accuracy of this statement and suggested there could be conditions in which increased woodland may not achieve the benefits described. Mr Bray welcomed future debate on the subject when alternative views may be expressed. The Chairman noted the use of the “could” which it was considered to cover Mr Bray’s point.

162. BUSINESS OF URGENCY: There was none.

163. PUBLIC SPEAKING: There were no public speakers.

164. ANNUAL ESTATE REVIEW: The Authority considered the **report** of the Head of Access, Engagement & Estates and the Estates Manager.

The Authority’s Consideration

Members thanked the Estates Manager for a comprehensive presentation and noted the following:

- The difficulty of highway access for caravans to the North Hill campsite had been a factor in the Camping and Caravan Club’s decision to cease operation of the site. With the premises back in hand, it was intended to work with specialist agents to identify a new tenant, and to broaden the offer and target new audiences, including visitors using campervans and those wishing to camp in tents. There was understood to be high demand for campervan and tented camping services, and the difficulty of caravan access to the site was unlikely to compromise the ability to attract a new tenant.
- Included in the work to repurpose the North Hill site would be the identification of a suitable operating model for the conversion of the WWII Radar Station to Bothy accommodation, which could be annexed to the campsite. A similar exercise would be undertaken in relation to The Pound at Simonsbath and opportunities to work with strategic partners regarding the operation of both sites would be explored.
- The FiPL funded Graze the Moor project had considered grazing strategies, including the use of No Fence cattle collars. The collars operated using a pulse which was less than the shock from electric fences and offered the benefits of helping to keep livestock away from ditches/rivers, achieving targeted grazing and supporting landscape enhancement.
- Each asset disposal was considered on a case-by-case basis, and where feasible and appropriate restrictive covenants may be used as protective measures.
- Through long-term financial planning and the use of earmarked reserves, the estates and finance teams would work together to identify how capital works and large-scale repairs could be phased to achieve the financially sustainable protection of asset values.
- Expectations of further Landscape Recovery funding were cautious and there was uncertainty about the availability of private finance to contribute to the Schemes; however, the potential for a third round of Landscape Recovery remained, subject to government confirmation.

- There was continued opportunity to promote Exmoor National Park as a photography and film location site, and it may be useful to document previous examples of Exmoor's use as a film or television setting.
- The agreement with Somerset Council in relation to the Exford School Playing Field was welcomed.
- The importance of working with partners for mutual benefit and to further National Park purposes was emphasised.

RESOLVED: To note the content of the Annual Estate Review.

- 165. WOODLAND ESTATE UPDATE AND ASH DIE BACK REPORT:** The Authority considered the **report** of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities and the Senior Woodlands Officer and a presentation from Simon Putt of Devon Tree Services.

The Authority's Consideration

The meeting welcomed the report and the strategic vision for the Authority's woodland estate.

In relation to timber sales, Members noted the work to realise potential income levels and supported the development of a business model for the sale of processed wood, potentially including the purchase of timber feedstock.

The meeting also noted that while the majority of Ash trees with Ash Die Back disease would not survive, the Living Ash Project had identified a number of resilient individual trees, and it was therefore hoped that a resilient population could be established.

The risks of new diseases and events associated with climate change were recognised, and it was acknowledged that over time this may result in landscape change.

The meeting expressed thanks to all those in the Access, Engagement and Estates team involved in maintaining the rights of way network following recent storm damage.

RESOLVED: To note the content of the report.

- 166. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK:** The Authority considered the **report** of the Head of Finance & Operations.

The Authority's Consideration

The Committee noted the content of the report and appendices.

Members also noted the recommendation of the Standards Committee that if the trialed Planning Committee arrangements were 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.

RESOLVED:

1. To receive and note the draft Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 5 November 2024.
2. To adopt the Member Role Profile at Appendix 2 to the report.

3. To adopt the Member Training and Development Programme at Appendix 3 to the report.
4. To approve the Annual Member Training and Development Review process at Appendix 4 to the report.

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

168. MEMBERS' REPORTS:

Mr D Elson reported on attendance at a meeting of the North Devon National Landscape, with which it was agreed to share details of the Authority's updated Design Guide when available.

The meeting closed at 11.50am

(Chairperson)

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 March 2025

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2029/30 AND BUDGETS 2025/26

Report of the Chief Finance Officer

Purpose of Report: To consider and approve a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2029/30 and to adopt the revenue budget for 2025/26 within the level of funding being provided by way of National Park Grant (NPG) from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and self-generated income.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Authority is recommended to:

1. NOTE the month 9 budget monitoring position for 2024/25;
2. APPROVE the Core, Capital and Programmes, Partnerships and Contributions to Reserves Budgets for 2025/26 as summarised in Appendices 2, 3 and 4;
3. NOTE the position on reserves as detailed in Appendix 5; and
4. ADOPT the attached Medium Term Financial Plan at Appendix 6.

Authority Priority: Getting best value from our resources and improving our performance – Finance and Performance - Financial Management.

Legal and Equality Implications: Local Government Act 2003, Parts 1-3 (Capital Finance, Financial Administration and Grants), and Sections 1-39

Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, Part 2 (Financial Management and Internal Control).

The equality and human rights impact of the recommendations of this report have been assessed as having no adverse impact on any particular group or individual.

Financial and Risk Implications: The setting of a budget, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy are the key elements in the management of financial risk. Section 9 details in more detail the risks surrounding the current budget and our future financial health.

Budgetary control and financial management arrangements are in place to minimise any risk of overspending and to ensure that spending is kept in line with the approved budget. The budget will be reviewed at the half year stage and a progress report made to the November 2025 meeting of the Authority. Both DEFRA grant and assumed cost of living pay awards are assumed prudently in the budget, but material changes to these cannot be ruled out, and therefore the budget may have to be revisited before this point if significant adjustments need to be made.

Climate Change Response: This report does not have an adverse impact on our ability to respond to Climate Change. Funds have previously been allocated and will be spent in 2025/26 from the Environmental Resilience Reserve.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 There is currently uncertainty over the level of National Park Grant settlement for 2025/26 with best case scenario being considered as flat cash, and the risk of a cut to core revenue funding not excluded at this stage. 2024/25 was the final year of a three-year grant settlement from DEFRA, that settlement continued to provide a National Park Grant figure of £3,211,500. This Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan continues to assume a flat-cash basis of National Park Grant will be applied which will mean the seventh year that the NPG has been at this level, previously funding to the Authority was as high as £4,177,453 back in 2010/11.
- 1.2 This budget informs the 2025/26 Corporate Plan which will be presented to this April Authority. That report is based upon the same financial assumptions as this and if the assumptions prove to be inaccurate then targets within the Corporate Plan may also have to be revisited.
- 1.3 This budget report provides additional statements and declarations from previous years. In particular, we are now showing an additional section on in-year budget monitoring, a capital budget and a formal declaration on the 'Adequacy of Estimates'.
- 1.4 The Business Process Review was successfully implemented in April 2024. Members will be aware that the budget setting process has been different this year from others. Members have been updated as the assumptions contained in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budget were updated and the savings target grew. There have been regular discussions around the Business Review process and Corporate Plan priority settings to ensure the best means of meeting the 2024/25-2027/28 budget gap.

2. BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25

- 2.1 The Authority's External Auditors have recently suggested that in year budget monitoring be increased to three times a year. Members now receive statements on the new year when the previous year's accounts are closed, in November, at revised estimates stage and on month 9 when the forward year budget is presented.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 shows the month 9 income and expenditure figures for 2024/25 for the Authority. The information in the statement provides the opportunity to highlight any issues that have arisen since the month 6 figures were provided with the Revised Budget in December 2024. In particular:
 - Costs in the long running planning dispute continue to rise. The Legal Contingency will be applied to meet these and there is assumed to be an additional take from the General Contingency.
 - The Woodlands budget is indicating a moderate overspend due to significant spend on hazardous tree works both before and after the impact of Storm Darragh. Some of this overspend will decrease when Forestry Commission contribution income is received.
 - Conservation Advice and Support is expected to overspend at year-end following additional project spend which has exceeded the funding available.
 - Land, Property Services and Estates cost centres are projecting a large overspend. Primarily due to surveys and urgent work required on elements of the Authority's estate (Driver, Wheal Eliza, Weir Cleave and Blackpitts),

however also due to timing differences in the receipt of CS and other contributions.

- Interest received will be greater than that assumed within the Revised Budget.
- In early April 2024, DEFRA gave notification of a one-off, in-year, additional grant of £500,000 for each National Park Authority. The £500,000 had to be split equally between capital and revenue spend. £375,000 is accounted for as income received in Appendix 1 with the full amount of schemes allocated as per Appendix 7 of item 7 from the December 2024 Authority papers.

2.3 The financial impact of these is reflected in the assumed take from reserves shown in Appendix 5. The month 9 Management Accounts indicate a favourable variance of £39,000 which equates to approximately 0.6% of the total income budget for 2024/25.

3. CORE BUDGET FOR 2025/26

3.1 The Core budget for the Authority reflects the anticipated income and expenditure for ongoing services in 2025/26. This is shown in Appendix 2 with figures shown categorised under the DEFRA headings and relevant business units.

3.2 The Authority is statutorily required to set a balanced budget in furtherance of the purposes of its National Park designation. As described in 1.4, the budget setting process this year has been especially challenging, though members have been fully supportive throughout.

3.3 Significant changes were made to the build of the revised budget in 2024/25, these brought in all project funding and associated expenditure. Historically, project funding and associated expenditure had been excluded from the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan as the position on these items was generally netted to zero. However, for the 2024/25 revised budget and the 2025/26 budget presented in this paper, these have all been estimated and factored in.

3.4 A business review process was implemented at 1 April 2024. This was essential in ensuring mitigation of the 2023/24-2027/28 budget gap of just under £450,000. The process involved regular discussions around the Business Review process and Corporate Plan priority settings. The Business Review had two key drivers: the need to make savings, and the need to refocus our work.

3.5 Since the publication of the Landscapes Review in 2019 and the Environmental Improvement Plan in 2023, DEFRA has asked National Parks to increase our emphasis on nature recovery, climate, diversity, and health and wellbeing. However, at the same time, we have also had to work with a static grant from DEFRA and significant inflationary challenges, particularly in respect of staff expenditure. The business review was this organisations response to these challenges, to prepare the organisation for the future and to ensure the Authority remained focused on delivering National Park Purposes.

3.6 We continue to emphasise opportunities for income including through sponsorship, introducing charges at some of our car parks, letting mobile catering concessions at our car parks, and making best use of our assets such as letting the Simonsbath Sawmill.

3.7 We have offset some of our core staff costs with external funding for those staff whose roles deliver against the requirements of a funded project or

programme. We have incorporated this into our savings but will need to review the situation as funding comes to an end and/or when other funding opportunities are confirmed. Of particular note in the 2025/26 Budget is the Exmoor Pioneers Project, a four-year Heritage Lottery Funded scheme which has led to the establishment of five posts. This HLF project will bring in £1.6m over its course.

We will continue to find other savings such as service agreements, ensuring we get best value for money.

- 3.8 Section 8 of this report details Medium Term Financial Plan Income and Expenditure in more detail and review the most significant assumptions which underpin both the budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- 3.9 The other changes to budgets can be explained by the assumptions that underpin it. The main assumption is that staff pay will increase by 3%. This is a key assumption as staff costs are such a high proportion of the Authority's overall costs.
- 3.10 2025/26 is the third year when the most recent Local Government Pension Scheme pension fund revaluation affects budgets. This sees a halving in our pensions deficit funding (down to £82,000pa) and an increase in the employer contribution rate from 18.5% to 21.3%. The net effect of these changes is broadly cash neutral. The budget also contains increases for utility bills and further reductions in travel budgets.
- 3.11 The table below indicates that the budget being set is balanced as required by legislation. Increases between the 2024/25 original and revised budget are due to the inclusion of project expenditure and their associated funding streams for the first time. The reduction in the 2025/26 budget when compared to 2024/25 is due to the ending of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, although recently there has been confirmation that the grant scheme will continue into 2025/26. No indication of grant levels for 2025/26 has been communicated (other than administration and advice expenditure), however a modest level of grant has been included within the budget figures.

	24/25 Original Budget £000	24/25 Revised Budget £000	25/26 Draft Budget £000
Income	-4,522	-6,395	-5,902
Expenditure	4,522	6,395	5,902

4. PROGRAMMES, PARTNERSHIPS & CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESERVES

- 4.1 The Programmes and Partnerships element of the budget is an important element in achieving National Park purposes and priorities through the engagement and influencing of partners and funding for initiatives aimed at achieving Partnership Plan priorities. We contribute to reserves on an ongoing basis to meet one-off costs that do not arise in a consistent or predictable manner or to put money aside to meet pressures that arise in-year.
- 4.2 Attached at Appendix 3 is the proposed Programmes, Partnerships & Contributions to Reserves Budget for 2025/26. This shows £151,000 contributed to reserves and £50,000 top-sliced for fixed term programmes.

4.3 Detail on the additions to reserves are listed below.

- Woodlands. This draft budget recommends £25,000 added to the reserve to meet the costs related to ash dieback. This takes the total amount of funding on ADB to £325,000. Further tranches of funding will possibly be required before the work is complete.
- Estates Reserve. £50,000 is requested to contribute towards our projects at Driver, roofing repairs at Exford and Exmoor House, and to support external redecorations across the estate.
- Research & Development Reserve £50,000. £11,000 is required to add to the reserve to meet the costs of the Partnership Plan review, taking forward the Nature Recovery Vision and Monitoring, and the Climate Adaptation Strategy. A further £25,000 allocated to support the emerging Local Plan process.
- Internships and apprentices £15,000 is sought to continue the internship and staff development programmes.
- A reduced annual contribution of £25,000 (Previously £50,000) to the Corporate Vehicle & Equipment reserve is planned.

4.4 Detail on the fixed term discretionary programmes included in this budget that are shown below. Both Tourism and the Hill Farming Network received a reduced level of support from 2024/25.

- Tourism (£10,000). This allocation provides support in relation to our 2nd purpose and includes support to the tourism sector to help promote Exmoor National Park as a special destination and to develop the Exmoor brand, providing advice and support to tourism businesses and those who provide services to visitors to improve their experience, in addition to seeking to grow the capacity of the industry. Work will be led by ENPA with support from other partners
- Exmoor Hill Farming Network (£5,000). ENPA has provided financial contributions to the Exmoor Hill Farming Network since its genesis.
- Further top-sliced elements proposed for 2025/26 include £5,000 towards website development, £5,000 for SERC and DBRC bio records, and £5,000 for STEAM in respect of sustainable tourism information provision.

5. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26

5.1 An intrinsic part of the Medium-Term Financial Programme is the Capital Programme/Capital Budget. This details planned spend on assets over the next twelve months and, importantly, how they are due to be financed. Previously this was not shown as a separate statement, but as capital spend increases in scale and complexity it is now thought necessary. It brings greater attention to spend on assets and highlights the liabilities that come alongside property ownership.

5.2 Appendix 4 shows the existing capital approvals and budget for 2025/26. The existing capital approvals table highlights the extent of ongoing investment in assets we are undertaking. The 2025/26 budget details two schemes, one funded from the programmes and partnerships budget and the other internally

funded through existing reserves. The items that require funding this year are described below.

- Corporate Equipment Reserve. An allocation of £25,000 to support the purchase of vehicles, plant and equipment. In 2024/25, this set-aside amount, supported by reserves, enabled the purchase of 3 electric vehicles, 1 plug-in hybrid, 1 replacement Ranger 4x4 and 1 tracked excavator.
- Blackpitts Site Enhancements. Landlord's expenditure is required to remove an unsafe barn structure and to replace with a suitable replacement structure. Anticipated expenditure in the region of £50,000. These works are to be funded through the Estates Reserve.

5.3 The capital budget contains assumptions over the future accounting treatment of the schemes described. However, when the accounts are closed there may be other schemes not included that will be treated as capital and schemes shown as capital in Appendix 4 that are not actually capitalisable. Funding decisions may also change at the year-end depending on the availability of capital receipts. Members will have full transparency on the final accounting and funding decisions regarding capital spend.

6. CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

- 6.1 The obligation to provide a Capital Investment Strategy has arisen as some local authorities nationally have become increasingly willing to borrow to invest significant amounts in commercial developments to generate returns to provide additional resources. The Capital Investment Strategy ensures that decision makers are fully briefed on the Authority's approach to managing assets and making investment decisions.
- 6.2 This is the third year where the Authority is presented a Capital Programme as part of the MTFP. This has become necessary to improve visibility to members as our use of capital resources and investment in assets has increased in complexity. Previously, pretty much all capital spend was funded from revenue and was small scale or was a distinct scheme that had its own Authority paper.
- 6.3 Where capital schemes are recommended as part of the budget setting process, we will ensure that the financial implications of the scheme are fully laid out in that paper and that members have sufficient detail. This will include how the scheme will be funded, why the scheme is necessary and any other financial consequence of the investment decision.
- 6.4 The Authority historically has a low-risk attitude towards capital investment and much lower need for capital investment than many other public authorities. Our capital schemes often involve maintaining or replacing existing assets rather than new ones. It has never internally or externally borrowed to fund capital schemes, nor has it entered into other long-term liabilities such as Private Finance Initiatives and does not invest for commercial purposes. Capital investment decisions are made to support National Park purposes.
- 6.5 We seek external contributions towards supporting our capital spend wherever possible. Where capital receipts are available these may be used to finance spend. In the absence of both of these then revenue is applied.
- 6.6 Stewardship of our assets is delivered by a small Land and Property team with a qualified Chartered Surveyor post within the structure. The portfolio is

large and diverse, and staff are drafting a new Estates Strategy and Lettings policy at the time of writing. The Authority's Acquisitions and Disposals policy was updated a few years ago. In February 2023, the Rural Surveyor identified assets in our possession that do not contribute towards park purposes and members have agreed to their disposal. One asset has since been sold (Land at East Anstey) the proceeds have been set aside in reserve and will assist spend on the Driver project as per the March 2024 Authority decision. All other property listed as surplus to requirements in February 2023 has been temporarily withheld from market following a review in 2024/25.

- 6.7 Built assets are subject to regular condition assessment, with the majority on a 5-year cycle of external repair and redecoration. Rental income is optimised through regular rent reviews and other opportunities to generate income from property are maximised. The Leadership team are currently considering how best to manage the estate to achieve park purposes and generate increased income.
- 6.8 Please note our existing risks attached to property liabilities in the table in section 9.

7. RESERVES (level of)

- 7.1 Appendix 5 shows the anticipated level of reserves as at the start of the 2025/26 financial year and reflects the additions to reserves described in section 4 that are recommended as a part of this budget. The reserves position as at the end of 2024/25 includes £450k of funds received as legacies.
- 7.2 The following assumptions have been maintained as part of the review:
- The General Fund Reserves have been maintained at a level of approximately £550,000 as per the Medium-Term Financial Plan. It is the view of the Chief Finance Officer that this is sufficient to manage in-year fluctuations, pressures that can arise suddenly and need urgent funding. This is considered to be an adequate level of reserves in accordance with section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.
 - The Legal Support Reserve forecast to continue into 2025/26. This is due to the long running planning case and other pressures described in 2.2. This pot should return to its prudent level when legal processes have completed in 2025/26.
- 7.3 In recent years there has been a gentle fall in the overall level of reserves and in 2025/26 there is a moderate reduction in the planned level of reserves. For the most part this is due to programmed spend in areas such the Modernisation Reserve, NPC Spend to Save Reserve, Corporate Vehicle and Equipment Replacement, Environmental Resilience, IT and the Estates Reserve.
- 7.4 Though there is an assumed take from reserves in 2025/26 it is important to note two key things. Firstly, that the overall level of reserves is still very good for a public body of the Authority's size and secondly that a budget for 2025/26 is being recommended that doesn't take from reserves but adds to them. It is for these reasons that I am content to state that the level of reserves is adequate to meet future challenges.
- 7.5 It is a challenge to maintain the Authority's financial resilience in the context of high inflation, a National Park Grant that hasn't increased since 2019/20 and exceptional one-off pressures. We will continue to seek new areas of funding

such as capital receipts, external grants or income streams to improve resilience.

8. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

8.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is a key feature of the Authority's forward planning process, and it is reviewed annually on a rolling five year basis. Figures shown for 2025/26 and 2026/27 are budgets that determine income and expenditure levels whereas numbers from 2027/28 and beyond are projections that will be revisited before they formally become budgets. The MTFP is a key document for:

- outlining future resources, funding opportunities and cost pressures;
- highlighting key assumptions; and
- providing an overview of the future financial position of the Authority.

Appendix 6 details the overarching income and expenditure categories for the Authority for the next five financial years.

MTFP - Income

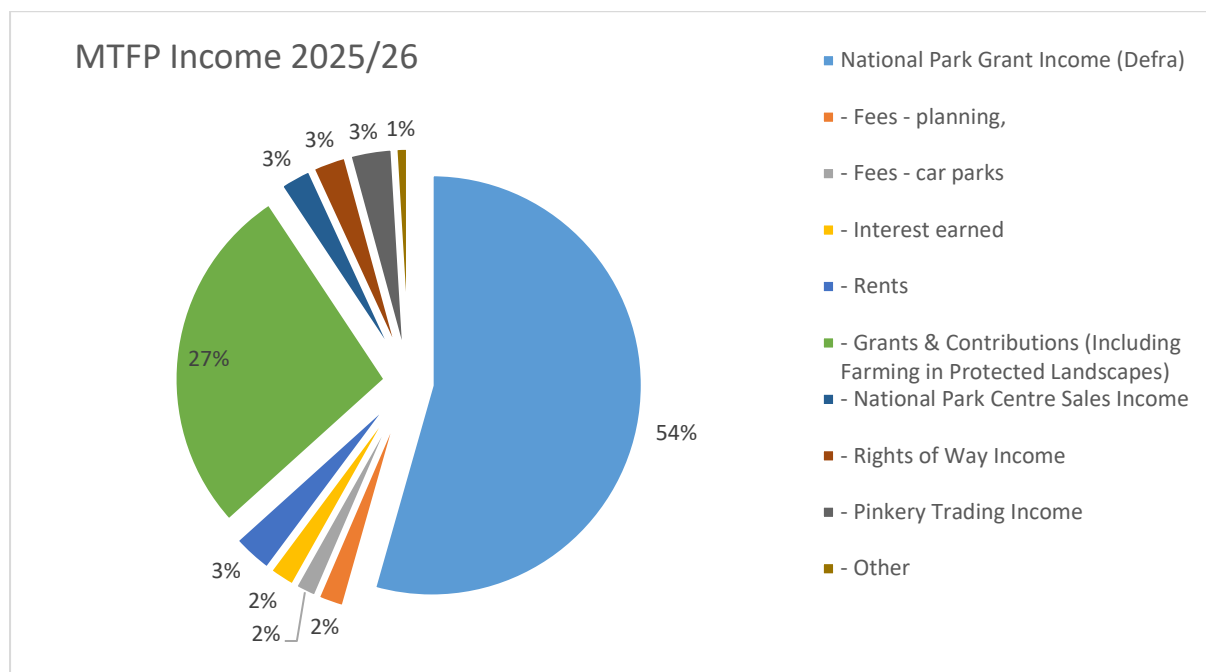
8.2 Total income for the Authority in 2025/26 is budgeted at £5.902m. This is broken down according to DEFRA subjective headings in Appendix 2. There is currently uncertainty over the level of National Park Grant settlement for 2025/26 with best case scenario being considered as flat cash, and the risk of a cut to core revenue funding not excluded at this stage. 2024/25 was the final year of a three-year grant settlement from DEFRA. This settlement continues to provide a National Park Grant figure of £3,211,500. This is the seventh year that the NPG has been at this level and previous funding to the Authority was as high as £4,177,453 back in 2010/11.

8.3 For 2026/27 we are continuing to assume a cash neutral NPG level. This is considered to be the more prudent assumption though it is quite possible that we will get small uplifts. 2025/26 is a single year settlement and DEFRA and Treasury have stated that there will be a 3-year settlement from 2026/27 onwards. The cash neutral grant position of National Park Grant after the current settlement period is the main reason why savings targets continue to increase over the period of the MTFP. These are significant assumptions as this grant provides approximately 55% of our total income. Analysis of the impact of more pessimistic and optimistic scenarios of NPG changes and other variables upon savings targets are shown in the table in 8.21.

8.4 In addition to NPG the Authority receives:

- income generated from fees, charges, rents, grants for joint works and from interest earned on the investment of funds held in reserves etc;
- contributions from the County Councils towards the maintenance of the rights of way network; and
- external funding for specific projects that either the Authority delivers in its own right or in partnership with others. This will be a key theme in accessing additional resources in the medium term. The key variance between 2024/25 relates to the reduction in grant income in relation to the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) project, see paragraph 3.11.

- 8.5 The income figures in Appendix 6 show slight increases over the period of the MTFP. As part of the 2025/26 Corporate Planning process, we are refining our Corporate Income Generation Strategy to ensure maximise our non-NPG income and aid in mitigating future savings-gaps. Trading income from Parking, Planning and the Pinkery Outdoor Education centre is forecast to continue to increase gradually. The investment in our car parks is intended to improve the visitor experience and bring in additional funds.
- 8.6 The figures in Appendix 6 reflect the increased and now budgeted revenue and capital contribution from the County Councils towards the management of Public Rights of Way. From Somerset we have contributions indicated for the next year and for Devon, these are still being confirmed. The MTFP assumes that the level of support continues however both authorities are also under significant financial pressure.
- 8.7 Rent from the estate has for many years been highlighted as potentially impacted by the UK's exit from the EU. Information on future Environmental Land Management Schemes and in particular Countryside Stewardship schemes is starting to become available but is not yet so clear that we can assess the financial impact. The MTFP reflects the known changes to Estates income for 2025/26 and rolls this forward, but the actual picture will be more volatile and less stable than that appears.
- 8.8 So far over the course of 2024/25, base rates have reduced from 5.25% to 4.5%. This had led to large increases in anticipated returns on cash balances and very much helped to balance the budget in 2024/25 and 2025/26. It is very hard to reliably estimate interest on cash for the years after this, but it could possibly provide returns in excess of that currently shown in the MTFP. We have prudently estimated £100,000 per annum from year 2 and onwards which equates to an invested balance of £3m at 3.3%.
- 8.9 The graph below indicates the key sources of income contained within the 2025/26 Budget.

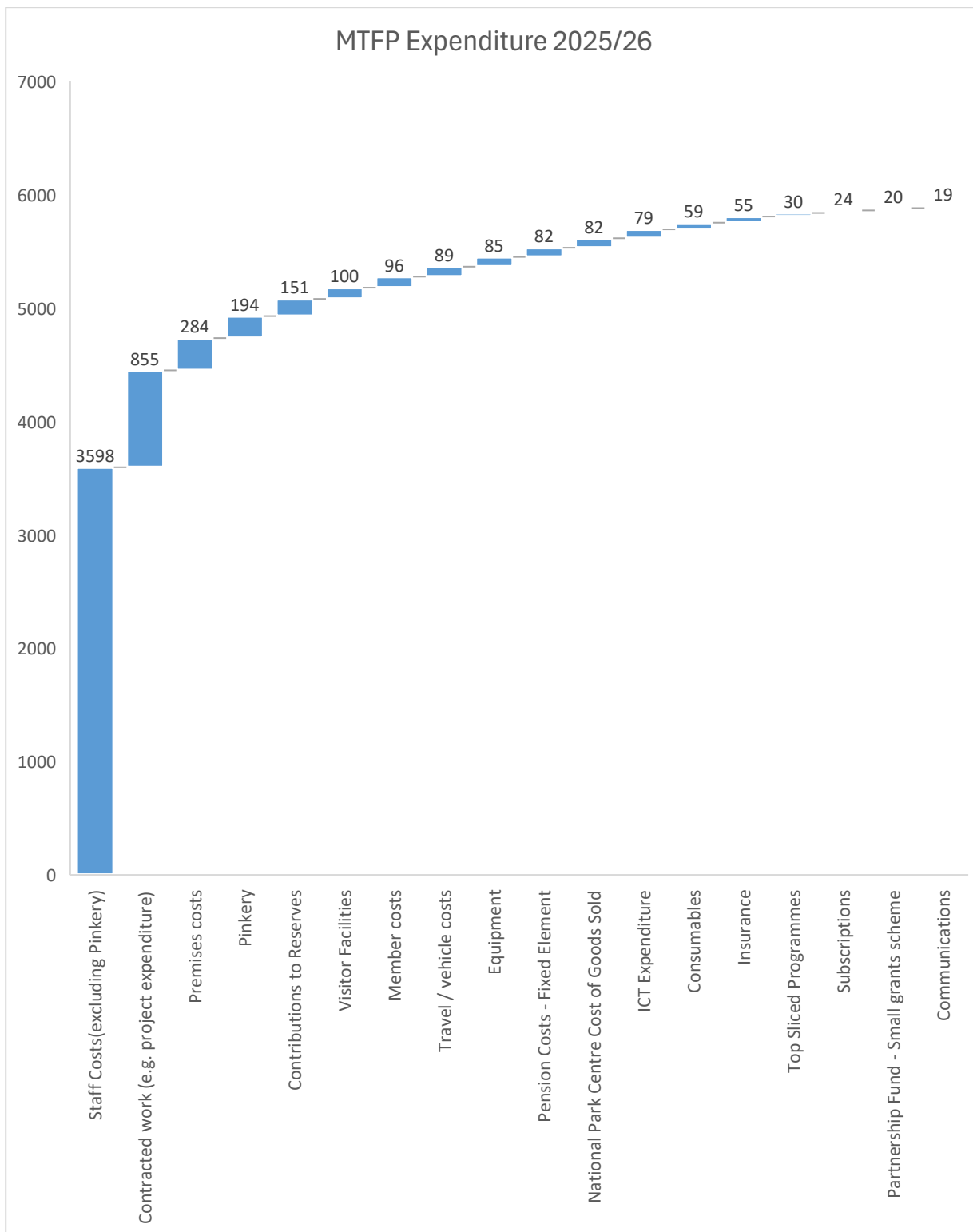


MTFP - Expenditure

- 8.10 Total expenditure for the authority in 2025/26 is budgeted at £5.902m. This is broken down by DEFRA subjective headings and business units in Appendix 2 as well as Appendix 6. Appendix 6 also anticipates future expenditure over the MTFP period.
- 8.11 Staffing costs are just over £3.6m which includes all roles funded from external sources as well as core funded posts. In recent years, high levels of inflation have translated to higher pay awards whilst the core grant remains frozen. This year there is currently no indication of what the NJC pay award offer will be but with the award last year averaging at around 3.9% for the Authority, inflation coming down and a public sector offer of 2.8% being tabled, the assumption in the 2025/26 budget of 3% does not seem unreasonable at this point. However, without any indication of the offer, this represents a major area of risk in the budget with any variation to the offer needing to be dealt with in year. Each 1% increase equates to a £35k core grant funding gap which would need to be found in both 2025/26 and future years.
- 8.12 In the autumn budget statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an increase to employer's National Insurance contributions. The change to the thresholds has the most impact, with the Authority pay bill increasing by £80k as a result. Despite indications of potential public sector support for this increase, it is now clear that this will be additional cost that will need to be mitigated in budget.
- 8.13 Inflation is having the biggest impact on budgets. Inflation is now applied to all relevant overhead budgets. Inflation assumptions in 2024/25 were a little higher than expected, so despite inflation sitting at a little higher than the 2% mark, this level seems appropriate for increasing of overhead budgets. Inflation rates applied are included in the table below.

	Inflation Rate	Comment
Pay	3%	Estimated at 3% - just above current inflation rates and close to the 2.8% public sector pay offer.
Non-pay	2%	2% applied which is below current inflation levels but reflective of OBR forecasts.

- 8.14 For other categories of cost to the Authority a small provision has been found for future years increases. Where increases are known, i.e. that related to the External Audit Fee which has increased by £6,000, then provision is made for that. If this proves insufficient, then additional resources will have to be found in future years. The MTFP assumes that the organisation undertakes the same activities in the future as it does now. The reality may be very different.
- 8.15 The graph below is a waterfall graph which gives an indication of the most significant cost areas for the authority and how each contributes together to arrive at the total expenditure budget of £5.902M. Establishment expenditure at 61% and contracted work at 14% (Project Expenditure, SLA services, Audit) are the most significant elements of spend.



MTFP – Programmes, Partnerships & Contributions to Reserves

- 8.16 The plan in Appendix 6 summarises not only the income and expenditure projections across the period of the plan but also the proportions proposed for Core (the recurring costs and unavoidable commitments for essential services) and Programmes, Partnerships and Contributions to Reserves Budgets. Section 4 details the objectives of the Programmes & Partnerships budget area and planned use in 2025/26.
- 8.17 2025/26 Includes an amount of £20,000 set aside to support partner implementation of the Partnership Plan. This Partnership Fund will resume a small grants scheme whereby bids will be invited, reviewed and awarded.

MTFP – Overview

- 8.18 The MTFP presented shows a balanced budget for 2025/26 and 2026/27 but then further savings targets required to be achieved in the final years of the plan. This is the key trend that has been highlighted as part of the process of developing this MTFP. Additionally, there is significant risk around the NPG settlement for 2025/26 with the settlement not yet having been provided to Protected Landscapes.
- 8.19 The Authority has historically monitored the proportion of National Park Grant that is needed to meet the costs of employing permanent staff. This is a proxy for the ability of the Authority to manage short term fluctuations in funding. Staff costs as a percentage of NPG are projected at 92% in 2025/26 (2024/25 90%) and are anticipated to continue to increase further to 98% over the period of the MTFP.
- 8.20 The historic budgetary aspiration of staff costs being only 70% of NPG and having £200,000 of uncommitted funds to meet one-off pressures (or a steep grant cut) is very much out of reach. However, our current level of General Fund and contingencies exceed this. These indicators are still mentioned as they provide some context to our current financial challenges.
- 8.21 Our future financial health will be determined by the accuracy of the assumptions supporting the MTFP and our ability to deliver savings. Overall, I am content that the budget presented provides robust estimates and assumptions. However, it is important to show how the savings gap in the final section of Appendix 6 from year 2 onwards could be affected by movements in the key financial assumptions. This is provided for illustrative purposes.

No increase in NPG	Budget Gap/(Surplus) £
2025/26	0
2026/27	0
2027/28	44,000
2028/29	89,000
2029/30	101,000

Variable	Impact £
National Park Grant 1%	32,100
Staff Pay Award 1% change (3% assumption in MTFP)	36,800
Interest Received 1% change (c/f 3.3% Assumption in MTFP)	30,000
Traded Income 1% change	5,000

- 8.22 The scenario table shows the financial impact to the Medium-Term Financial Plan balances for a 1% change in core variables; National Park Grant, Staff Pay Award, Investment Interest and/or Traded Income (Planning & Parking

Fees, National Park Centre and Pinkery Outdoor Education Centre income). We may also receive one-off capital funding from DEFRA for ad hoc asset spend, this has not been estimated in this report and on confirmation of funding a set-of schemes will be considered and actioned. All the scenarios shown in the table above are entirely plausible. This table attempts to illustrate the effects of small changes in assumptions on the savings gap.

- 8.23 Whilst the Business Review implemented in April 2024 has delivered savings and maintained our financial health, there are still projected future savings gaps to meet in the later years of the MTFP (appendix 6). One of the priority actions from the 2024/25 Corporate Plan was to develop an overall strategy for income generation. These are all ongoing savings, but we cannot assume that we can simply apply the same level of savings options to future years.
- 8.24 There are other savings options which cannot be precisely quantified but may still generate significant savings. This includes reducing the number of buildings that we maintain or sharing buildings with other public bodies. It is difficult to see charging bringing in a further large increase in income beyond that already projected in the MTFP. Perhaps the greatest opportunity for the Authority to improve its financial position comes from looking more closely at how the Estate can generate income including through the option of bringing land back in hand, continued engagement with Countryside Stewardship schemes and the potential for Landscape Recovery projects to benefit our financial situation.

9. RISK ANALYSIS

- 9.1 The budget and MTFP recommended, contain within them assumptions that may or may not prove accurate. In addition, events may occur that have the potential affect the Authority’s underlying finances. The risk analysis is as follows:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Factors
National Park Grant is reduced.	Medium	High	Level of Reserves held. Annual Review. Some notice will be provided of future funding reductions sufficient to enable a timely response.
Pay awards and other inflationary pressures may be higher than anticipated.	Medium	High	Annual review of MTFP Small percentages differences maintainable by use of reserves. Significant changes will require a revised Business Process Review.
Liabilities related to the Property or Woodlands Estate arise.	Medium	Medium	A Contingency fund has been established to meet one off costs that arise. Opportunities for developing a pot of capital receipts is being explored.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Factors
Contributions from County Councils and Public Rights of Way may reduce.	Medium	Medium	This is subject to an annual review. Reduction in income will be projected in the MTFP.
Economic situation could deteriorate and impact on self-generated income and costs. Areas of income generation in the budget prove unrealistic.	Medium	Medium	MTFP constructed on a five-year time span with a review each year. Budgetary Control arrangements in place to monitor income and expenditure on a monthly basis.
An increased reliance on one-off funding sources. This could be a capital receipt, the proceeds from legal action or an external grant.	Medium	Medium	We need to ensure that the Authority's financial stability is independent of any individual one-off event or process.

- 9.2 A continued key risk in 2025/26 remains managing the consequences of inflationary pressures in the context of a cash neutral NPG and limited opportunities for additional traded income.

10.0 CONCLUSION AND FINANCIAL STANDING

- 10.1 It is the job of the budget setting process to ensure that resources are kept in balance while maintaining financial resilience. This report describes the process to achieve a balanced budget, the challenges in the medium term, the level of financial capacity and options available to us in future.
- 10.2 Within the Annual review of Risk Management it was stated that the extent of the financial challenge would be a major test of the leadership and governance of the Authority. So far, the test has been passed, and the Authority has done very well to get to the point where we are able to recommend a balanced budget for 2025/26. However major challenges remain, and indications are that balanced budgets will be increasingly hard to set. In such circumstance, those external funding pots such as the Farming in Protected Landscape scheme, the proceeds of a Heritage Lottery Fund bid, or other schemes yet to be released become increasingly important to deliver key priorities. Whilst confirmation on the settlement is awaited, figures for 2026/27 onwards should be viewed with a high degree of uncertainty. Work will be undertaken during 2025/26 to identify further savings and income generation opportunities and bought back to members in due course. The impact of any change (positive or negative) will need careful consideration to make sure our expenditure is sustainable.
- 10.3 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) to report to Authority on the robustness of estimates made for the purposes of calculation of budget, and the adequacy of proposed reserves. This report confirms a balanced budget to be set for 2025/26, which is based on robust and realistic estimates and assumptions. Additionally, the

level of reserves including forward year projection, has been assessed as being adequate. This Authority has an excellent record of managing its financial affairs within the resources that are made available and that it is able to generate. The Medium-Term Financial Plan and 2025/26 Budget continue this effective stewardship.

- 10.4 The proposed MTFP, Capital Programme, Core Budget and Programmes and Partnerships Budgets, and Reserves for 2025/26 are contained in Appendices 2-6 which the Authority is requested to approve.

Ben Barrett

Chief Finance Officer

February 2025

Section	Budget Heading	2024/25 Revised Budget £	2024/25 YTD Budget (Month 9) £	2024/25 Reserves Transfers £	2024/25 Month 9 Actual	Variance between 24/25 Revised Budget and Actual & Reserves TFRs	Notes
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	Archaeology & Historic Environment	103,100	65,425	60,400	124,956	869	
	Exmoor Pioneers (Project)	0	0	7,600	31,795	-24,195	Q4 will see Matching of Project funds to Expenditure incurred.
	SWPP MIREs (PROJECT)	0	0		10,095	-10,095	Quarterly Recharge income for October-December due
Conservation of Cultural Heritage Total		103,100	65,425	68,000	166,846	-33,421	
Conservation of Natural Environment	Woodlands	69,300	51,975		186,745	-134,770	Awaiting year end reserves transfers and CS income. Moderate year-end overspend projected due to unforeseen hazardous tree works.
	Landscape Recovery (Project)	0	0	32,400	-7,625	40,025	Q4 will see Matching of Project funds to Expenditure incurred.
	ENNIS (Project)	0	0		50,489	-50,489	Awaiting year end match funding from FiPL Project
	Moorland Bird Survey (Project)	0	0		37,984	-37,984	Awaiting year end match funding.
	Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Project	0	0	-511,300	-510,768	-532	
	Conservation Advice	129,700	97,275	16,800	196,291	-82,216	Awaiting year-end transfers from FiPL iro Sowing the Seeds project and Defra one-off revenue support towards ecology advice.
Conservation of Natural Environment Total		199,000	149,250	-462,100	-46,884	-265,966	
Forward Planning & Communities	Planning & Community	99,500	74,625	-12,192	60,746	1,687	
	CareMoor (Project)	0	0		-20,292	20,292	Donations received to date net of project expenditure
	Rural Enterprise	123,200	92,400		89,850	2,550	
Forward Planning & Communities Total		222,700	167,025	-12,192	130,304	24,529	
Development Management	Development Management	312,500	214,675	78,800	293,812	-337	Reduced establishment expenditure
Development Management Total		312,500	214,675	78,800	293,812	-337	
Promoting Understanding	National Park Centres	184,400	155,025			12,984	Several varied reasons for underspend, income to date received compared to equal 12ths profile.
	Grants and Contributions	3,700	2,775	71,261	213,302	-848	
	Pinkery	0	-8,375	28,625	6,503	13,747	Timing difference on income compared to 12ths profiled budget
	Media & Communication	101,400	74,700	7,000	74,941	6,759	Increased establishment expenditure supported by DEFRA 1-Offs
	Education & Interpretation	94,600	89,400	21,200	114,452	-3,852	
Promoting Understanding Total		384,100	313,525	128,086	412,821	28,790	
Rangers, Estates & Volunteers	Rangers	127,000	134,250	44,900	182,371	-3,221	Increased recharge income to support extended Ranger staff team
	Field Services	221,500	276,375	83,242	348,581	11,036	Awaiting Q3 vehicle recharges
	FST Workshop	9,300	6,975		22,897	-15,922	New cost centre following TUPE of service in-house. Residual costs after recharging vehicle and equipment maintenance charges across services
	Estates	-178,900	-129,175	-357,700	-449,003	-37,872	Includes sales proceeds from sale of East Anstey. Contribution income significantly lower than profile at Month 9.
	Driver (Project)	0	0	39,413	68,769	-29,356	East Barn Project ongoing, additional costs ongoing in respect of grazing and Council Tax (added empty dwelling charges)
	Get Involved Programme (Project)	0	0	0	1,230	-1,230	
	Volunteer Engagement	67,300	50,475	31,591	86,875	-4,809	Revised includes contribution from Exmoor Pioneers project towards an establishment expenditure
Rangers, Estates & Volunteers Total		246,200	338,900	-158,554	261,720	-81,374	
Recreation Management & Transport	Access & Recreation	87,000	79,750	149,517	230,500	-1,233	Increased establishment expenditure in respect of support post
	Visitor Facilities	400	850		-11,129	11,979	Income above targets, good demand for parkwide permits
Recreation Management & Transport Total		87,400	80,600	149,517	219,371	10,746	
Support Services	Finance	62,300	-4,075	38,500	17,087	17,338	Significant increase in bank interest offsetting increased in finance system running costs and fixed-term establishment support
	Human Resources & Performance	159,800	122,850		125,918	-3,068	Increased charges for procurement arrangements (SLA with Devon CC and use of ProActis procurement framework).
	ICT & GIS Services	250,700	183,000		186,114	-3,114	
	Legal Services	70,000	35,000		71,705	-36,705	Additional expenditure in respect of long running legal case
	Facilities	215,100	161,325	48,000	207,417	1,908	
Support Services Total		757,900	498,100	86,500	608,241	-23,641	
Corporate & Democratic Core	Corporate Management	405,500	279,125		279,698	-573	
	Historic Pensions Contributions	78,400	58,800		58,800	0	
	Corporate Subscriptions	18,500	13,875		11,020	2,855	
	Members	96,200	72,150		71,631	519	
Corporate & Democratic Core Total		598,600	423,950	0	421,149	2,801	
Core Funding & Partnership Fund	National Park Grant	-3,211,500	-2,569,200		-2,944,200	375,000	Additional One off funds provided by Defra (Full year of £250,000 Revenue, £250 Capital)
	Reserves Transactions	270,000	0		0	0	Appendix 3
	Partnership Fund Top-Sliced	30,000	22,500		20,381	2,119	Appendix 3
Core Funding & Partnership Fund Total		-2,911,500	-2,546,700	0	-2,923,819	377,119	
Total Core Budget		0	-295,250	-121,943	-456,439	39,246	

Section	Budget Heading	2024/25 Revised Budget £	2025/26 Expenditure £	2025/26 Income £	2025/26 Original Budget £	Variance between 24/25 Revised and 25/26 Original Budgets	Notes
Conservation of Cultural Heritage	Archaeology & Historic Environment	103,100	104,800	-1,200	103,600	500	
	Exmoor Pioneers (Project)	0	202,900	-202,900	0	0	
Conservation of Cultural Heritage Total		103,100	307,700	-204,100	103,600	500	
Conservation of Natural Environment	Woodlands	69,300	141,600	-77,400	64,200	-5,100	Treescaping Project ends in July 2025
	Landscape Recovery (Project)	0	51,100	-51,100	0	0	
	ENNIS (Project)	0	42,800	-42,800	0	0	
	Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Project	0	620,500	-620,500	0	0	
	Conservation Advice	129,700	331,300	-177,000	154,300	24,600	Increased Ecology Support and impact of National Insurance changes
Conservation of Natural Environment Total		199,000	1,187,300	-968,800	218,500	19,500	
Forward Planning & Communities	Planning & Community	99,500	103,800	0	103,800	4,300	
	CareMoor (Project)	0	30,000	-30,000	0	0	
	Rural Enterprise	123,200	140,400	-10,000	130,400	7,200	One day per week increase for rural enterprise support
Forward Planning & Communities Total		222,700	274,200	-40,000	234,200	11,500	
Development Management	Development Management	312,500	443,500	-121,000	322,500	10,000	Combination of cost of living assumptions and increased National Insurance burden.
Development Management Total		312,500	443,500	-121,000	322,500	10,000	
Promoting Understanding	National Park Centres	184,400	315,000	-163,500	151,500	-32,900	Impact of Business Review changes to centres
	Grants and Contributions	3,700	200	200	200	-3,500	Impact of Business Review changes
	Pinkery	0	194,400	-194,400	0	0	
	Media & Communication	101,400	121,300	-24,000	97,300	-4,100	Increased establishment expenditure supported by DEFRA 1-Offs
	Education & Interpretation	94,600	131,000	-9,700	121,300	26,700	Increased establishment expenditure
Promoting Understanding Total		384,100	761,900	-391,600	370,300	-13,800	
Rangers, Estates & Volunteers	Rangers	127,000	208,700	-83,000	125,700	-1,300	
	Field Services	221,500	391,100	-133,500	257,600	36,100	Impact of assumed pay award and National Insurance changes £14.5k. Reduction in internally generated income target of £20k.
	FST Workshop	9,300	27,300	0	27,300	18,000	New cost centre following TUPE of service in-house. Residual costs after recharging vehicle and equipment maintenance charges across services
	Estates	-178,900	236,300	-432,900	-196,600	-17,700	Increased Countryside Stewardship income offset by increased estates maintenance expenditure.
	Volunteer Engagement	67,300	62,200	0	62,200	-5,100	Temporarily reduced establishment expenditure due to post holders working on Exmoor Pioneers project.
Rangers, Estates & Volunteers Total		246,200	925,600	-649,400	276,200	30,000	
Recreation Management & Transport	Access & Recreation	87,000	172,200	-61,000	111,200	24,200	Increased project expenditure forecast
	Visitor Facilities	400	100,000	-100,000	0	-400	
Recreation Management & Transport Total		87,400	272,200	-161,000	111,200	23,800	
Support Services	Finance	62,300	223,100	-155,000	68,100	5,800	Fixed-term manager establishment support (met by contribution from reserves) and increased subscription costs for new finance system.
	Human Resources & Performance	159,800	167,000	0	167,000	7,200	Increased Procurement Support charges
	ICT & GIS Services	250,700	255,800	0	255,800	5,100	Increase in Microsoft licencing
	Legal Services	70,000	70,000	0	70,000	0	
	Facilities	215,100	195,600	0	195,600	-19,500	Amended establishment structure following a resignation £10k, reduction in maintenance expenditure from an increased budget at revised estimate 2024/25.
Support Services Total		757,900	911,500	-155,000	756,500	-1,400	
Corporate & Democratic Core	Corporate Management	405,500	420,100	0	420,100	14,600	Includes Leadership Team posts (previously within services). National Insurance changes account for £8k of increase.
	Historic Pensions Contributions	78,400	82,000	0	82,000	3,600	
	Corporate Subscriptions	18,500	19,200	0	19,200	700	
	Members	96,200	96,200	0	96,200	0	
Corporate & Democratic Core Total		598,600	617,500	0	617,500	18,900	
Core Funding & Partnership Fund	National Park Grant	-3,211,500	0	-3,211,500	-3,211,500	0	
	Reserves Transactions	270,000	151,000	0	151,000	-119,000	Appendix 3
	Partnership Fund Top-Sliced	30,000	50,000	0	50,000	20,000	Appendix 3
Core Funding & Partnership Fund Total		-2,911,500	201,000	-3,211,500	-3,010,500	-99,000	
Total Core Budget		0	5,902,400	-5,902,400	0	0	

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMMES, PARTNERSHIPS AND
CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESERVES**

2025/26

ORIGINAL BUDGET	201,000
 LESS: Contributions to Reserves	
Woodlands - ADB	25,000
Corporate Equipment & Vehicle Replacement	25,000
Estates Capital Projects	50,000
Internship & Trainee Fund	15,000
Partnership Plan & State of the Park Development & Surveys	11,000
Local Plan	25,000
	151,000
 LESS: Top sliced Programmes	
Tourism	10,000
Hill Farm Network	5,000
Website Development	5,000
SERC/DBRC Bio-records	5,000
STEAM	5,000
Partnership Fund Small Grants Scheme	20,000
	50,000
 2024/25 Programmes & Partnership Fund	201,000

Exmoor National Park Authority 2024/25 Capital Programme

Pre existing approvals

Scheme	Amount	Method of funding	Name of funding source	Status
Valley of rocks car park improvements	12,000	revenue	estates reserve	Completed
Electric Minibus	25,000	revenue	Corp Equipment reserve	Completed
Accessibility Grant	42,000	external grant	Defra	Ongoing
Rights of Way Maintenance	80,000	external grant	County Councils	Ongoing
Display Trailer	7,000	external grant	Visitor Economy Support Programme	
Secondary double glazing Exmoor House	28,000	revenue	Environmental Resilience Reserve	Completed
Pinkery decarbonisation	30,000	revenue	estates reserve	Completed
Pinkery decarbonisation	115,000	external grant	Salix - Treasury	Completed
Pinkery decarbonisation	31,000	revenue	Environmental Resilience Reserve	Completed
Pinkery Roof	62,000	revenue	estates reserve	Not yet commenced
Lynmouth NPC external work	15,000	revenue	estates reserve	Completed
Driver Farm	50,000	revenue	estates reserve	Ongoing
Dulverton NPC Roof/ Offices	15,000	revenue	estates reserve	
Adits and mines	40,000	revenue	estates reserve	Ongoing
Bye Wood	50,000	external grant	Forestry Commission	Completed
Photocopiers	12,000	revenue	Corp Equipment reserve	Completed
Rights of way - cap maint	80,000	external grant	row reserve	Ongoing
Weir Cleave	20,000	revenue	part capital	Ongoing
Tarr Steps bore hole	20,000	receipts	estates reserve	Completed
Pinkery water system	40,000	receipts	estates reserve	Completed
Corp equipment reserve	75,000	revenue	Corp equipment reserve	Ongoing
Car park improvements	30,000	receipts	estates reserve	Ongoing
Driver	740,000	receipts/reserve/FiPL	Mixed	Ongoing
	1,619,000			

Capital schemes to be approved as part of 2025/26 MTFP

Blackpitts site enhancements	50,000	Revenue	Mixed
Corp equipment reserve	25,000	Revenue	Corp equipment reserve
	75,000		

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ANALYSIS OF RESERVES**

Appendix 5

	Balance 31/03/24	2024/25 Budget Allocations	Transfers to/(from) Reserves 2024/25	Anticipated Balance 31/03/25	2024/25 Budget Allocations	Projected Balance 01/04/25
	£	£	£	£		£
REVENUE EARMARKED RESERVES						
<u>Conservation of Cultural Heritage</u>						
Ashcombe Gardens	9,743		-9,743	0		0
Archaeology	39,670		-8,000	31,670		31,670
Exmoor Pioneers	73,787		-65,000	8,787		8,787
Heritage Projects	27,397		-5,000	22,397		22,397
<u>Conservation of Natural Environment</u>						
Deer Monitoring Study	13,424			13,424		13,424
Woodland Mgt Reserve	63,762	25,000	-65,000	23,762	25,000	48,762
Ennis	14,292			14,292		14,292
<u>Forward Planning & Communities</u>						
Planning Policy (Local Plan)	135,035	25,000	95,000	255,035	25,000	280,035
Section 106 Agreements	86,400		10,000	96,400		96,400
Caremoor For Exmoor	456,644		-175,000	281,644		281,644
Conserv Area Appraisals & Neighbourhd Plan	12,283			12,283		12,283
Rural Enterprise	78,518		-10,000	68,518		68,518
<u>Development Management</u>						
Development of Planning Service	53,259		-35,000	18,259		18,259
Planning Skills Delivery Fund	78,255		-78,255	0		0
<u>Promoting Understanding</u>						
National Park Centres spend to save	31,236		-5,000	26,236		26,236
Engagement & Outreach	21,306		-15,000	6,306		6,306
<u>Rangers, Estates and Volunteers</u>						
Authority Estate	308,277	50,000	370,000	728,277	50,000	778,277
<u>Recreation Management</u>						
Rights of Way	192,452		-38,000	154,452		154,452
Active Travel Grant	100,000		-25,000	75,000		75,000
<u>Support Services</u>						
IT and Web Development	86,975		-20,000	66,975		66,975
ERP Replacement	50,000		-50,000	0		0
Interest Reinvestment Reserve	0		35,000	35,000		35,000
Corporate Equipment & Vehicle Replacement	147,250	25,000	-134,000	38,250	25,000	63,250
Modernisation	162,621	100,000	-230,000	32,621		32,621
Internship and Trainee Fund	0	20,000	-20,000	0	15,000	15,000
<u>Corporate & Democratic Core</u>						
Environmental Resilience	20,381		-381	20,000		20,000
Partnership Plan (Research & Development)	46,901	25,000	-5,000	66,901	11,000	77,901
Corporate Subscriptions	10,000		-10,000	0		0
Capital Development Reserve	100,000			100,000		100,000
	2,419,868	270,000	-493,379	2,196,490	151,000	2,347,490
PROGRAMMES & PARTNERSHIPS						
Programmes - fixed term	39,126		-25,000	14,126		14,126
Partnership Fund/ small grants scheme	30,748		-10,000	20,748		20,748
	69,875	0	-35,000	34,875	0	34,875
GENERAL FUND AND CONTINGENCIES						
General Fund	227,094		22,906	250,000		250,000
Contingency Fund - General	349,966		-49,966	300,000		300,000
Contingency Fund - Legal	426,620		25,000	451,620		451,620
	1,003,679	0	-2,060	1,001,619	0	1,001,619
TOTAL RESERVES	3,493,422	270,000	-530,439	3,232,984	151,000	3,383,984

Exmoor National Park Authority
 Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 - 2029/30

	Previous 2024/25 £'000	Original 2025/26 £'000	Projected 2026/27 £'000	Projected 2027/28 £'000	Projected 2028/29 £'000	Projected 2029/30 £'000
Income						
National Park Grant Income (Defra)	3,211	3,211	3,211	3,211	3,211	3,211
- Fees - planning,	116	121	124	127	130	130
- Fees - car parks	95	100	105	110	115	115
- Interest earned	150	120	100	100	100	100
- Rents	197	185	189	192	196	196
- Grants & Contributions (Including Farming in Protected Landscapes)	2,078	1,615	1,647	1,680	1,714	1,714
- National Park Centre Sales Income	152	145	148	151	154	154
- Rights of Way Income	155	155	155	155	155	155
- Pinkery Trading Income	187	194	199	199	203	204
- Other	54	56	56	56	56	56
Total:	3,184	2,691	2,723	2,771	2,823	2,824
Total Income	6,395	5,902	5,934	5,982	6,034	6,035
Expenditure						
Pay						
Current Establishment (excluding Pinkery)	3,456	3,598	3,671	3,743	3,817	3,817
Pension Costs - Fixed Element	78	82	85	88	91	91
Target Pay Budget	3,534	3,680	3,756	3,831	3,908	3,908
Non-Pay						
Member costs	96	96	97	98	99	99
Premises costs	262	284	287	290	293	293
Insurance	57	55	56	57	58	58
Travel / vehicle costs	109	89	91	93	95	95
Equipment	110	85	86	87	88	88
Contracted work (e.g. project expenditure, audit fees, legal services)	1,361	855	858	861	864	864
Grants and contributions	4	-	-	-	-	-
Subscriptions	24	24	24	24	24	24
National Park Centre Cost of Goods Sold	94	82	89	91	92	92
Consumables	57	59	60	61	62	62
ICT Expenditure	81	79	80	81	82	82
Communications	24	19	20	21	22	22
Toilet & car park costs	95	100	101	102	103	103
Pinkery	187	194	199	199	203	204
Total non-pay budget	2,561	2,021	2,048	2,065	2,085	2,086
Total Budget	6,095	5,701	5,804	5,896	5,994	5,995
Programmes, Partnerships & Contributions to Reserves						
Contributions to Reserves	270	151	100	100	100	115
Top Sliced Programmes	30	30	30	30	30	30
Partnership Fund - small grants scheme/ Contingency		20				
Total available Programmes & Partnerships Budget	300	201	130	130	130	145
Total expenditure	6,395	5,902	5,934	6,026	6,124	6,140
Savings yet to be identified	0	0	0	-44	-89	-104

CAPITAL ITEMS

Project	Section	Justification	Benefits	Risks	Other Resource Available	Revenue/Capital	Estimated Cost	Progress at 30 September 2024
Pinkery Drive repair/reinstatement	Access, Engagement Estates	Impacting on customer access to Pinkery. Potential liability for vehicle repair claims. Potential to install cattle grid - link to future management at Driver Farm.	Improved access to Pinkery, reduction in potential claims from users	Conservation impact, procurement process	No (although RoW reserve potential?)	Capital	50,000	Project Planning initiated. Likely spend in early 2025/26
Driver Farm contribution to capital works	Access, Engagement Estates	Corporate cross-cutting project. Sale of East Anstey progressing slowly	Corporate Priority	Conservation impact, procurement process	No (hand-in-hand with East Anstey sale)	Capital	100,000	Committed, spend will occur in 2025/26
Planning Agile System Replacement (£53k in Planning Development Reserve at year-end 23/24)	Climate Nature Communities	Support costs for Agile system replacement which is due early 2025.	Support credible Planning System replacement		Yes (Development of Planning Service Reserve)	Capital	25,000	Project agreed - procurement commencing. Spend in Q4 2024/25
Pinkery Energy Efficiency and Accessibility People Flow Arrangements (Courtyard, corridor, reception arrangements) Also potential for further solar-thermal and additional PV.	Access, Engagement Estates	The full list of required decarbonisation works fell partially outside the Salix loan funding. It was also felt that a reorganisation of the inner courtyard space would greatly benefit accessibility and the visual aspects of the site.	Accessibility, use of other Access, diversity and inclusion. Carbon savings along with enhanced educational offering.	Need to properly scope out required works	Yes (Some Estates reserve pots, Environmental Resilience Reserve)	Capital	50,000	Project Planning initiated. Likely spend in early 2025/26
Lynmouth Centre Toilet Refurbishment	Enterprise Operations	Toilets are now becoming dated and requiring frequent repair	Improved visitor experience, reduced spend on maintenance	Timing of works is critical as centre is open year round	No (Not really within centre Spend to Save Reserve - fund within other resources)	Capital	20,000	Vired budget to meet cost of failed heating system. Spend likely in Q4 2024/25
Exmoor House Roof - condition survey	Enterprise Operations	Need to have an understanding of future repairs required and timescale to be able to phase major capital works	Better understanding of repair requirements, being able to phase works and allocate spend across the medium term	Bats may impact on this timing	Minor estates reserves	Capital	5,000	Spend programmed for Q4 2024/25
Total							250,000	

REVENUE ITEMS

Air Quality Study	Climate Nature Communities	Natural England will not fund this, essential for support planning policy	Will give clear data on a significant planning and conservation issue.	Timing of works	No (Possible match funding from other bodies)	Revenue	50,000	Spend programmed in Q3 2024/25	
Additional Communications Support 1day per week. Could include fundraising /crowdfunding campaign element.	Enterprise Operations	1 day per week additional of Senior Comms Officer to support Comms/ fundraising and crowd-funding element of team/CareMoor legacies and wills	Possibility of supporting Income Generation	Currently reliant on one member of staff	Yes (Modernisation reserve and core budget)	Revenue	15,000	Spend occurring. Budget will cover post for 2024/25 and part 2025/26	
Additional Project Management Resource. Remanufacturing Project pages on SharePoint, bid-writing, linking to Project Pipeline and DT members to develop projects.	Enterprise Operations	Co-ordinating role will provide support and latency across teams and supports Corporate Plan cross-cutting strategic aims	Co-ordinating role will provide support and latency across teams and supports Corporate Plan cross-cutting strategic aims	Dependant on cross-team working.	Yes (possible use of Modernisation Reserve)	Revenue	15,000	Spend programmed in. Will be required Q1 2025/26 onwards	
Contribution to extra Ecology Resource (AF/CR). Grade F FT for 2 years to cover Landscape Development Work. SSSI monitoring. Paper inbound)	Climate Nature Communities	Support ecology. Some match funding from other sources (e.g.BNG)	Some budget elsewhere	What happens at end of 2 year period (redundancy costs to be built in). Need ecologist for estate (e.g. bat surveys etc)	Yes (some match funding towards this)	Revenue	48,000	Funding covers two years of post. Started in Q2 2024/25	
Local Plan Support (£135k in reserve at year end 23/24 but that includes BNG).	Climate Nature Communities	Extra resource in team to support this required.	Support Local Plan process. Needs to review occupancy criteria, windows (upvc etc)	Needs to be formally costed with pay scales, grades and length of project.	Yes (Local Plan Reserve)	Revenue	100,000	Funding added to Local Plan reserve. Majority of spend will occur in 2025/26 and 2026/27	
Historic Environment - SLA with Cornwall Council to cover until end of June. Hoping to get capacity funding from Historic England for heritage at risk and to cover archaeology advice into planning Historic England advice stalled on this. No progress or provision for archaeology advice after June.	Access, Engagement Estates	25% match funding - a day per week from HER post. If Historic England doesn't go forward then we will be very short on arch support. Possibility of using Modernisation Reserve towards this.	At risk monitoring and repair programme delivery	Will need to find funding for a larger package if HE Capacity Funding is not forthcoming.	Yes (some match funding available)	Revenue	2,000	Majority of allocation spent in Q1 and Q2 2024/25	
Complete Design Guide - potentially to include highway / public realm guidance	Climate Nature Communities	Provides a tool-kit of design principles	Helps to maintain the distinctive natural beauty of the National Park area. Provides a framework to ensure that any new development within the park aligns with its unique environmental, historical, and aesthetic values.	May require additional resource. Timing of agreement of the design guide may impact on decisions.	Part (Local Plan reserve exists)	Revenue	15,000	On hold - to be progressed in Q4 2024/25.	
Tree Nursery	Access, Engagement Estates	Expecting Pioneers contribution however that project will not have started prior to required spend on Nursery	Ability to complete Tree Nursery on-time and re-assign projected Pioneers contribution to other activities	Delay may impact on the nursery to be set-up within project timescales.	Yes (Timing of resource availability may be the issue)	Revenue	5,000	Allocation spent in Q2 2024/25	
DEFRA One-Off Grants 2024/25							Total	250,000	

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 March 2025

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2025/26

Report of the Chief Finance Officer

Purpose of Report: To remind Members of the requirements of the CIPFA Prudential and Treasury Management Codes, and the Local Government Act 2003 Guidance on Investments, and to adopt the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2025-26.

RECOMMENDATION: The Authority is RECOMMENDED to:

- (1) NOTE the report of the Chief Finance Officer.
- (2) APPROVE the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2025-26 as set out in sections 2 and 3 of this report.
- (3) NOTE the Prudential Indicators for 2025-26 to 2027-28 as set out in section 4 of this report (although some are currently set at zero, all Treasury Management indicators are included for completeness of information and others may well be used in the future).

Authority Priority: Achieve Best Value from our resources and improve our performance. A highly performing Estate, delivering National Park Purposes.

Legal and Equality Implications: The Local Government Act 2003 (LGA 2003), specifically Guidance under Section 15(1)(a) 3rd Edition, effective from 1st April 2018.

The CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes: Revised 2021 Edition (CIPFA TM Code).

The CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities: Revised 2021 Edition (CIPFA Prudential Code).

Financial and Risk Implications: Interest from investments forms part of the revenue income of the Authority. This income is impacted by the market fluctuations in interest rates. As from 1st April 2023 the Authority's cash was aggregated with that of the newly formed Somerset Council. Somerset Council invest sizeable sums into the London Money Market in its name only. ENPA will receive the interest rate that is achieved by Somerset Council on its cash investments, minus 5 basis points. For this, Somerset Council will assume the risk to capital of counterparty default, but any loss of interest would reduce the overall return of the cash balances.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Treasury management is the management of the Authority's cash flows, borrowing and treasury investments, and the associated risks. The Authority has no debt but has investments that averaged over £3.6m for the year to date and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risks are therefore central to the Authority's prudent financial management.
- 1.2 Treasury risk management at the Authority is conducted within the framework of the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Authority's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code.
- 1.3 Under Section 3 of the LGA 2003 (duty to determine affordable borrowing limit), a Local Authority must have regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code. This code requires the setting of a number of Prudential Indicators, benchmarks within which Treasury and Investment Management, and Capital Financing are managed. The setting of Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management requires Authorities to recognise key implications of their borrowing and investment strategies. These relate to the affordability of overall borrowing limits, the maturity structure of borrowing, and longer-term investments.
- 1.4 In formulating the Treasury Management Strategy, and the setting of Prudential Indicators, Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) adopts the Treasury Management Framework and Policy recommended by CIPFA. These can be found in Appendix A.

2. External Context

- 2.1 The impact on the UK from the government's Autumn Budget, slower expected interest rate cuts, a short-term boost to but modestly weaker economic growth over the medium term, together with the impact from President-elect Trump's second term in office and uncertainties around US domestic and foreign policy, will be major influences on the economic landscape, but little direct influence on the treasury management strategy for 2025-26.
- 2.2 The Bank of England's (BoE) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) held Bank Rate at 4.75% at its December 2024 meeting, having reduced it to that level in November and following a previous 25bp cut from the 5.25% peak at the August MPC meeting. At the December meeting, six Committee members voted to maintain Bank Rate at 4.75% while three members preferred to reduce it to 4.50%.
- 2.3 The November quarterly Monetary Policy Report (MPR) is forecasting Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to pick up to an annual figure of around 1.75% in the early period of the BoE's forecast horizon before falling back. The impact from the Budget pushes GDP higher in 2025 than was expected in the previous MPR, before becoming weaker. Current GDP growth was shown to be zero (0.0%) between July and September 2024 and 0.4% between April and June 2024, a further downward revision from the 0.5% rate previously reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

- 2.4 ONS figures reported the annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate at 2.6% in November 2024, up from 2.3% in the previous month and in line with expectations. Core CPI also rose, but by more than expected, to 3.6% against a forecast of 3.5% and 3.3% in the previous month. The outlook for CPI inflation in the November MPR showed it rising above the MPC's 2% target from 2024 into 2025 and reaching around 2.75% by the middle of calendar 2025. Over the medium-term, inflation is expected to stabilise around the 2% target.
- 2.5 The labour market appears to be easing slowly. The latest figures reported the unemployment rate rose to 4.3% in the three months to October 2024 and economic inactivity fell to 21.7%. Looking ahead, the BoE MPR showed the unemployment rate is expected to increase modestly, rising to around 4.5% by the end of the forecast horizon.
- 2.6 The US Federal Reserve has continued cutting interest rates, bringing down the Fed Funds Rate by 0.25% at its December 2024 monetary policy meeting to a range of 4.25%-4.50%, marking the third consecutive reduction. Further interest rate cuts are expected but inflation remains elevated, suggesting that monetary policy may need to remain more restrictive in the coming months than had previously been anticipated.
- 2.7 The ECB continued its rate cutting cycle and reduced its three key policy rates by 0.25% in December. Inflation is expected to rise further in the short term, but then fall back towards the 2% target during 2025, with the ECB remaining committed to maintaining rates at levels consistent with bringing inflation to target, but without suggesting a specific path.
- 2.8 The Council's treasury team forecast that the BoE's MPC will continue to steadily reduce rates through 2025, taking Bank Rate to around 3.75% by the end of the 2025-26 financial year. The effect from the Autumn Budget on economic growth and inflation has reduced previous expectations in terms of the pace of rate cuts as well as pushing up the rate at the end of the loosening cycle.

3. Internal Context

- 3.1 As at 31 December 2024 ENPA had no external debt. The investments of ENPA as at 31 December 2024 stood at just over £3.67m

	Balance on 31/03/2024 £000	Rate as at 31/03 %	Balance on 31/12/2024 £000	Rate as at 31/12 %	Average Balance YTD £000
Balances / Rates	2,543	6.26	3,679	5.04	3,606

- 3.2 In receiving funding for its functions and through its income generation activities, the National Park Authority effectively turns over approximately £6.5m a year. This represents significant cash movements, and it is important that the Authority has strategies and policies in place to manage such turnover effectively.
- 3.3 The Authority currently manages its investments and cash flow via service arrangements with the Finance and Treasury Management Sections Somerset Council. In so doing it needs to adopt policies consistent with the Council's. The Authority is, however, formally separated with its own bank accounts, and it is

therefore important that it adopts a Strategy of its own, albeit following very closely that of Somerset Council.

4. Borrowing Strategy

- 4.1 The Authority is currently debt free. Any potential borrowing would be driven by the capital plan. There are no plans that would necessitate borrowing during 2025-26. As stated in previous strategy statements, when future borrowing is agreed, and Prudential Indicators set, the Chief Finance Officer will make specific decisions with regard to the timing of any borrowing and the length of maturities. Borrowing would be undertaken to minimise borrowing costs and would be consistent with the Authorities' Prudential Indicators.
- 4.2 The Chief Finance Officer has the delegated power to raise capital finance from such sources as is deemed appropriate within the statutory limitations that apply to the Authority. These are termed 'borrowing instruments' and include: -
- PWLB loans – Fixed or Variable
 - Local bonds
 - Other (e.g. commercial loan)
 - Bank overdraft
- 4.3 **Sources of borrowing:** For such long-term funding as may be required, the most likely source would be the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). Short-term borrowing will be sought via Somerset Council from the money market direct from lenders or from the Authority's bankers in the form of overdraft or otherwise. Internal resources may be used in lieu of external borrowing, and leasing or soft loans will form an alternative to borrowing where appropriate. No new borrowing will be in the form of LOBOs.
- 4.4 **Debt rescheduling:** The Authority is currently debt free.

5. Investment Strategy

- 5.1 In 2018, the MHCLG issued revised Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd Edition). It states "Investments made by local authorities can be classified into one of two main categories:
- Investments held for treasury management purposes; and
 - Other investments.
- 5.2 Where local authorities hold treasury management investments, they should apply the principles set out in the Treasury Management Code. They should disclose that the contribution that these investments make to the objectives of the local authority is to support effective treasury management activities. The only other element of this Guidance that applies to treasury management investments is the requirement to prioritise Security, Liquidity and Yield in that order of importance.
- 5.3 This strategy applies only to investments held for treasury purposes. Any non-treasury investments would be dealt with in a separate Investment Strategy.
- 5.4 The Authority's current arrangement with Somerset Council for the provision of treasury management services includes investment management. All the Authority's cash has been aggregated with that of Somerset Council. Somerset Council invests sizeable sums into the London Money Market, and to other Local Authorities, in its name only. ENPA will receive the interest rate that is achieved

by Somerset Council on its cash investments, minus 5 basis points. For this, Somerset Council assumes the risk to capital of counterparty default, but any loss of interest would reduce the overall return of the cash balances.

Strategy: With the arrangements in place with Somerset Council, there will be no need to identify separate pots of cash. All funds will be invested within the Somerset Council portfolio and will receive the rate achieved minus 5 basis points.

Credit rating: As Somerset Council will be the only counterparty to the Authority there is no need for specific policies or procedures regarding counterparty creditworthiness, to be set out in this strategy. Full details of the Somerset Council counterparty policy and procedures will be available on their website when approved by Full Council. For information the current 2024-25 Somerset Council counterparty criteria is included at Appendix B.

- 5.5 Somerset Council has constructed and will maintain a counterparty list based on the criteria set out in Appendix B. The minimum credit quality is proposed to be set at A- or equivalent. The credit standing of institutions (and issues if used) will be monitored and updated on a regular basis.
- 5.6 Somerset Council will continuously monitor counterparties creditworthiness. All three credit rating agencies' websites will be visited frequently, and all ratings of proposed counterparties will be subject to verification on the day of investment. (MHCLG guidance states that a credit rating agency is one of Standard & Poor's, Moody's Investor Services Ltd, and Fitch Ratings Ltd). All ratings of currently used counterparties will be reported to senior finance officers of Somerset Council monthly.
- 5.7 New counterparties must be approved by the Somerset Council (SC) Section 151 Officer before they are used. Any changes to ratings that put the counterparty below the minimum acceptable credit quality whilst SC have a deposit, or a marketable instrument will be brought to the attention of the SC Section 151 Officer immediately, and an appropriate response decided on a case-by-case basis. Sovereign credit ratings will be monitored and acted on as for financial institution ratings. Investment limits are set by reference to the lowest published long-term credit rating from the three rating agencies mentioned above. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used.
- 5.8 **Other information on the security of investments:** SC understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect predictors of investment default. Full regard is therefore given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including those outlined below.
 - Credit Default Swap prices.
 - Financial Statements.
 - Information on potential government support.
 - Banking resolution mechanisms for the restructure of failing financial institutions, i.e. bail-in.
 - Market information on corporate developments and market sentiment towards the counterparties and sovereigns.
 - Analysis and advice from the Council's treasury management advisor.
 - Other macroeconomic factors

6. Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators

6.1 The Authority measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

6.2 **Authorised limit and Operational Boundary:** The Authority is required to set an authorised limit for total external debt, gross of investments, separately identifying borrowing from other long-term liabilities. The Authority is also required to set an operational limit separately identifying borrowing from other long-term liabilities. This prudential indicator is referred to as the operational boundary. They are both set for the forthcoming, and the following two years. The authorised limit will, in addition, need to provide headroom over and above the operational boundary sufficient for example to accommodate unusual cash movements. A contingency limit of £100,000 has been set for each.

	2025-26 £000	2026-27 £000	2027-28 £000
Authorised limit Borrowing	100	100	100
Operational boundary Borrowing	100	100	100

6.3 **Maturity Structure of Borrowing:** The Authority has set for the forthcoming year, both the upper and lower limits with respect to the maturity structure of its borrowing.

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 months	100%	0%
>12 months and within 24 months	100%	0%
>24 months and within 5 years	100%	0%
>5 years and within 10 years	100%	0%
>10 years	100%	0%

6.4 **Principal sums invested for periods longer than a year:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. As all investments are with SC and ENPA have immediate access to all funds, an indicator of zero is appropriate.

	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m
Prudential Limit for principal sums invested for periods longer than 1 year	0	0	0

6.5 **Credit Risk Indicator:** All of the Authority's investments are placed with SC, as a result the Authority do not believe that adopting a credit risk indicator would be appropriate.

6.6 **Liability Benchmark:** A new prudential indicator, the liability benchmark has been introduced, but as ENPA has no debt and all investments are in effect instant access, this indicator is irrelevant for ENPA.

7. Other Matters

- 7.1 The CIPFA Code requires the Authority to include the following in its treasury management strategy.
- 7.2 **Derivative Instruments:** The code requires that the Authority must explicitly state whether it plans to use derivative instruments to manage risks. The general power of competence in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 removes much of the uncertainty over local authorities' use of standalone financial derivatives (i.e. those that are not embedded into a loan or investment). However, the Authority does not intend to use derivatives.
- 7.3 Should this position change, the Authority may seek to develop a detailed and robust risk management framework governing the use of derivatives, but this change in strategy will require Full Authority approval.
- 7.4 **External Service Providers:** The code states that external service providers should be reviewed regularly and that services provided are clearly documented, and that the quality of that service is controlled and understood.
- 7.5 Officers from the Somerset Council Treasury Management team report investment positions and performance via a monthly statement. As required by the CIPFA TM Code, the Chief Finance Officer reports to the Authority on its treasury activities in the form of a mid-year review and an Annual Treasury Management Report.
- 7.6 **Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II (MiFID II):** As a result of the second Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID II), from 3rd January 2018 local authorities were automatically treated as retail clients but could "opt up" to professional client status, providing certain criteria was met. This included having an investment balance of at least £10 million and the person(s) authorised to make investment decisions on behalf of the Authority have at least a year's relevant professional experience. In addition, the regulated financial services firms to whom this directive applies have had to assess that that person(s) have the expertise, experience and knowledge to make investment decisions and understand the risks involved.
- 7.7 Somerset Council has met the conditions to opt up to professional status and has done so in order to maintain its erstwhile MiFID II status prior to January 2018. As a result, SC, and thereby ENPA, will continue to have access to products including money market funds, pooled funds, treasury bills, bonds, shares and to financial advice.

Ben Barrett
Chief Finance Officer
February 2025

Background papers

Local Government Act 2003 – Guidance under section 15(1)(a) 3rd Edition, effective from 1 April 2018.

The CIPFA 'Treasury Management in the Public Services' Code of Practice: Edition 2021.

The CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities: Edition 2021.

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.

Treasury Management Policy Statement

Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) adopts the key recommendations of CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the code), as described in Section 5 of the Code
- 1.2 Accordingly, ENPA will create and maintain, as the cornerstones for effective treasury management:
- A treasury management policy statement, stating the policies, objectives and approach to risk management of its treasury management activities.
 - Suitable treasury management practices (TMPs), setting out the manner in which the organisation will seek to achieve those policies and objectives, and prescribing how it will manage and control those activities.
 - Investment management practices (IMPs) for investments that are not for treasury management purposes.
- The content of the policy statement, TMPs and IMPs will follow the recommendations contained in Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the TM Code, subject only to amendment where necessary to reflect the particular circumstances of this organisation. Such amendments will not result in the organisation materially deviating from the TM Code's key principles.
- 1.3 ENPA will receive reports on its treasury management policies, practices and activities, including, as a minimum, an annual strategy and plan in advance of the year, a mid-year review, and an annual report after its close, in the form prescribed in its TMPs.
- 1.4 ENPA delegates responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of its treasury management policies and practices, and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Chief Finance Officer as Section 151 Officer, who will act in accordance with the organisation's policy statement and TMPs and, if he/she is a CIPFA member, CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.
- 1.5 ENPA nominates the full Authority to be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies.

Policies and Objectives of Treasury Management Activities

- 2.1 ENPA defines its treasury management activities as: -

“The management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

- 2.2 ENPA regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.
- 2.3 ENPA acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.
- 2.4 ENPA's borrowing will be affordable, sustainable and prudent and consideration will be given to the management of interest rate risk and refinancing risk. The source from which the borrowing is taken, and the type of borrowing should allow ENPA transparency and control over its debt.
- 2.5 ENPA's primary objective in relation to investments remains the security of capital. The liquidity or accessibility of ENPA's investments followed by the yield earned on investments remain important but are secondary considerations.

Appendix B

Somerset Council Lending Counterparty Criteria 2024-25

The following criteria will be used to manage counterparty risks to Somerset Council investments for new deposits / investments from 1st April 2024.

Please note that the limits in this appendix apply only to Treasury Management Investments, not to those detailed in the separate Investment Strategy.

Where deposits held were made under previous criteria, there will be no compulsion to terminate those deposits to meet new criteria, where a penalty would be incurred.

Deposits

Any Financial Institution that is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority to accept deposits in the UK or is a UK Building Society can be lent to, subject to the rating criteria below at the time of the deposit.

Unrated Building Societies

Unrated Building Societies as identified by Treasury Advisors can be used, with a maximum of £1m per Society and a maximum maturity of 1 year.

Marketable Instruments – Any bank, other organisation, or security whose credit ratings satisfy the criteria below: -

Rating of Counterparty or Security

Deposits or instruments of less than 13 months duration (refer to long-term ratings)

Fitch A- or above

S&P A- or above

Moody's A3 or above

The maximum deposit / investment amount for any authorised counterparty or security that has as a minimum at least two ratings of the three above will be £15m (Reduced by £5m from 2023-24). This is approximately 5.4% of average investment balances, or 9.4% of average cash balances up to 30th November. The % may be significantly less if borrowing up to the CFR is taken early in the year.

The allowed deposit amounts above are the single maximum per counterparty at any one time, and that counterparty or security must be rated as above or better by at least two of the three agencies. Short-term ratings will be monitored and considered in relative rather than absolute terms.

It remains the Council's policy to suspend or remove institutions that still meet criteria, but where any of the other factors below give rise to concern. Also, when it is deemed prudent, the duration of deposits placed is shortened or lengthened, depending on counterparty specific metrics, or general investment factors. Where deposits held were made under previous criteria, there will be no compulsion to terminate those deposits to meet new criteria, where a penalty would be incurred.

Operational Bank Accounts

As the Council's current bankers, Nat West are currently within the minimum criteria. If they should fall below criteria, the instant access Call Account facility may still be used for short-term liquidity requirements and business continuity arrangements. This will generally be for smaller balances where it is not viable to send to other counterparties or in the event of unexpected receipts after the daily investment process is complete. Money will be placed in the instant access Nat West call account overnight.

Public Sector Bodies

Any UK Local Authority or Public Body will have a limit of £10m (Reduced by £5m from 2023-24) and a maximum maturity of 2 years.

The UK Government, including Gilts, T-Bills, and the Debt Management Office (DMADF) will be unlimited in amount and duration.

The table below gives a definition and approximate comparison of various ratings by the three main agencies: -

Definitions of Rating Agency Ratings

	Fitch		Moody's		S&P	
Short-Term	F1+	Exceptionally strong	P-1	Superior	A-1+	Extremely strong
	F1	Highest quality			A-1	Strong
	F2	Good quality	P-2	Strong	A-2	Satisfactory
	F3	Fair quality	P-3	Acceptable	A-3	Adequate
	B	Speculative	NP	Questionable	B and below	Significant speculative characteristics
	C	High default risk				
	(+) or (-)		(1,2, or 3)		(+) or (-)	
Long-Term	AAA	Highest quality	Aaa	Exceptional	AAA	Extremely strong
	AA	V High quality	Aa	Excellent	AA	Very strong
	A	High quality	A	Good	A	Strong
	BBB	Good quality	Baa	Adequate	BBB	Adequate capacity
	BB	Speculative	Ba	Questionable	BB and below	Significant speculative characteristics
	B	Highly Speculative	B	Poor		
	CCC	High default risk	Caa	Extremely poor		

Financial Groups

For Financial Groups (where two or more separate counterparties are owned by the same eventual parent company) investments can be split between entities, but an overall limit equal to the highest rated constituent counterparty within the group will be used.

Country Limits

Excluding the UK, there will be a limit of £20m collectively to all organisations domiciled in one Sovereign Country (Reduced by £10m from 2023-24). This is approximately 7.2% of average investment balances, or 12.6% of average cash balances up to 30th November. The % may be significantly less if borrowing up to the CFR is taken early in the year.

Money Market Funds

Any LVNAV Money Market Fund used must be rated by at least two of the main three ratings agencies and must have the following ratings.

Fitch AAmmf

Moody's Aaa-mf

Standard & Poor's AAAM

Subject to the above, deposits can be made with the following limits: -
The lower of £15m or 0.5% of the total value for individual Funds.

VNAV and other Pooled Funds

As a result of the review of strategic pooled funds, there will be disinvestment from this portfolio. The scale, timing, and identification of individual funds to be sold will depend on market conditions, potential gains or losses, and diversification.

It may be decided that a percentage of pooled funds are retained to provide diversification should cash interest rates fall significantly again. Whilst it is difficult to state absolute or percentage limits at present, amounts would be in relation to core balances and reserves and will be significantly below levels currently held.

Other Indicators

The Council will continue to use a range of indicators, not just credit ratings. Among other indicators to be taken into account will be:

- Credit Default Swap prices.
- Financial Statements.
- Information on potential government support.
- Banking resolution mechanisms for the restructure of failing financial institutions, i.e. bail-in.
- Market information on corporate developments and market sentiment towards the counterparties and sovereigns.
- Analysis and advice from the Council's treasury management advisor.
- Other macroeconomic factors

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 March 2025

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Report of the Head of Enterprise and Operations

Purpose of Report: To present to Members the final draft Exmoor National Park Authority Communications Strategy 2025-2030 for consideration and adoption.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Authority is recommended to:

- (1) ADOPT the Exmoor National Park Authority Communications Strategy 2025-2023.
- (2) DELEGATE to Officers the correction of any typographical or factual errors in production of the final document prior to design and publication.

Authority Priority: The Corporate Plan 2024-25 includes an action to prepare a Communications Strategy.

Legal and Equality Implications: Section 65(4) Environment Act 1995 – provides powers to the National Park Authority to “*do anything which in the opinion of the Authority, is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to:-*

- (a) *the accomplishment of the purposes mentioned in s. 65 (1) [National Park purposes]*
- (b) *the carrying out of any functions conferred on it by virtue of any other enactment.”*

The equality impact of the recommendations of this report has been assessed as follows: There are no foreseen adverse impacts on any protected group(s).

Consideration has been given to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and an assessment of the implications of the recommendations of this report is as follows: There are no implications for the Human Rights Act.

Financial and Risk implications: No financial or risk implications have been identified.

Climate Response: The adoption of the Communications Strategy is not considered to affect the Authority’s response to the climate emergency.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Communication is a key tool in the effective delivery of the Authority’s statutory purposes. It is a role that everyone involved with the Authority contributes to in some shape or form, including Members, Officers and Volunteers.
- 1.2 The Communications Strategy is intended to cover the wider work of the Authority, not just the work of our dedicated communications staff.
- 1.2 The 2024-25 Corporate Plan identified the need to develop an overarching Communications Strategy for the Authority. The strategy is intended to:
 - Help us work more effectively and efficiently
 - Present our desired objectives and outcomes

- Identity and consider our core audiences and communication channels
- Ensure consistency and buy-in across the organisation
- Give focus and clear direction
- Develop key messages to reach our core audiences and fulfill our objectives

1.3 The strategy has been developed by our Enterprise and Communications Team with input from others playing key roles in our communications work, and consultation with our Leadership and Delivery teams. Members were briefed at the start of the process and have also had a chance to consider the emerging draft. We have benefitted from the support and input of two nominated Authority Members (Evelyn Stacey and Laura Williams).

2. Communications Overview

2.1 The Authority has a relatively small, dedicated communications capacity within the Enterprise and Communications Team, but many others across the Authority are pro-actively involved in communications work.

2.2 While we have not to date had a specific communications strategy the Authority works hard to communicate in a variety of ways, to different audiences. Some recent highlights include:

- The launch last year of our new ParkLife e-newsletter. Initially published every other month, in 2025 we have increased this to monthly and are growing our subscribers (currently at over 3,500)
- Your Exmoor – Our annual newspaper distributed widely across Exmoor and surrounding areas aimed at local communities and visitors alike with an estimated readership in excess of 180,000.
- Our National Park Centres welcome over 175,000 visitors a year informing, inspiring and equipping people to explore and care for Exmoor and acting as a shop window for the work of the Authority.
- Our main website was re-launched last year and attracts over 200,000 unique users.
- We have a growing social media audience with good engagement rates. Between just two of our core channels (Facebook and Instagram) we have an annual reach of 1.7m.
- We earn significant press and media coverage ranging from local publications through to national TV and radio. 83% of press articles are positive, 12% neutral and just 5% negative.

3. Communications Strategy Overview

3.1 The final draft strategy is presented in Annexe 1 of this report.

3.2 It sets out a series of **objectives** and **outcomes** which can be summed up as more people being inspired and engaged to help look after and celebrate Exmoor. It primarily focuses on our corporate communications work, recognising that there is much more specific engagement work embedded into the work of teams across the Authority.

3.3 The Strategy doesn't sit in isolation, but is framed by other core documents such as our Partnership Plan, Corporate Strategy and Plan, Organisational Values and thematic plans.

3.4 **Corporate Identity Guidelines** have been developed alongside this to consider the visual approach to our communication work, and a series of Communication Advice Notes are being developed to support the implementation of the strategy by Officers (and others where appropriate).

3.5 The strategy identifies our:

Key audiences. These go beyond those who live, work or visit, to include for example policy makers, our critics, remote supporters and those that haven't yet discovered Exmoor.

key messages developed to reflect our core statutory purposes, and our priorities as identified in our corporate strategy and emerging new Partnership Plan. The messages will rarely be used verbatim but should act as a guide and an aide-memoir to consider if additional relevant messages can be weaved in alongside the primary focus of a particular story.

Our 3-tiered **approach** considering our proactive, reactive and crisis communication work.

Principles to guide our communications, regardless of the audience, message or channel.

Our channels - Appendix 1 of the strategy contains a detailed overview of some of our key channels and identifies key actions over the next 12-18 months. The relevance and value of different channels is rapidly evolving, and we can expect our key channels to change over time.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The proposed strategy aims to build on our existing communications work, to more effectively engage with our identified audiences.

4.2 With a continued squeeze on our core funding we need to continue to work hard on our communication, accepting we cannot be all things to all people. The strategy seeks to guide us in making best use of finite resources for maximum impact against our purposes and priorities.

4.3 While the strategy covers the period 2025-2030 it is acknowledged that communication tools and trends rapidly evolve. At the same time the context in which we are working is moving at pace too. The strategy will be reviewed by Officers annually and any significant changes brought back to Members.

Dan James, Enterprise and Communications Manager

February 2025

Annexe 1: Exmoor National Park Authority Communications Strategy 2025-2030 – Final Draft for adoption

FINAL DRAFT Exmoor National Park Communications Strategy 2025-2030

Plan on a page

[To be added in designed version following formal adoption]

1) Introduction

Exmoor is one of 15 National Parks in the UK, designated in 1954 and renowned for its diverse landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and recreational opportunities.

For over 70 years we have worked with partners and stakeholders to deliver the ‘purposes’ of the National Park. In this time there has been a desire to raise awareness of the role and work of the Authority as well as raising awareness and understanding of the National Park as a place and a designation.

Our work requires balance and compromise to deliver against our purposes. We are a small organisation, and a partnership approach is central to all we do. Communication is therefore key.

We have a challenge and an opportunity to develop a robust approach to communications to enhance visibility, understanding and support for Exmoor as a National Park and, the work of the National Park Authority.

National Park Purposes

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

In achieving the above purposes, the Authority has a duty to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities.

Our Mission Statement

Working Together for Exmoor

Our Values:

- We **Champion** – *We care about Exmoor National Park and are advocates for the people and place.*
- We are **Ambitious** – *We are forward-thinking with the courage to challenge and make bold decisions*
- We are **Collaborative** – *We work across teams and with our partners to deliver as ‘one team’*
- We are **Welcoming** – *We are friendly and approachable and ensure a fair outcome where everyone matters*
- We will **Make a difference** – *We are determined to ensure the National Park is a better place*

Communication Objectives

- Increase awareness of Exmoor National Park and its [special qualities](#).
- inspire people to connect with, engage with, and care about Exmoor.
- Increase understanding of the purposes of Exmoor National Park Authority and engagement in the work of the National Park Authority to grow appreciation and support for strategy and decisions.
- Increase awareness and understanding of key Exmoor National Park Authority themes and priorities within ‘Team Exmoor’

In fulfilling these objectives, we will better deliver against our statutory purposes and increase our influence amongst partners and stakeholders.

Outcomes

- Effective, timely, multi-channel communication outputs that support the delivery of National Park purposes and Partnership Plan objectives.
- Stakeholders, residents, visitors, opinion formers and policy makers are more aware of Exmoor and opportunities to benefit from its designation as a National Park.
- People are inspired to take action to conserve and enhance Exmoor

Our Strategy

This Strategy is for every one of us who works with or for the Authority. Members, volunteers, and staff all have a role in promoting the National Park and our organisation. The vision for the National Park, and how we work with local partners to deliver our statutory purposes and our shared objectives, laid out in the Partnership Plan, sits at the heart of all our communications.

The communications strategy sets out our direction over the next 5 years in how we aim to fulfil our communication objectives.

Communications are a means to an end and so our Communications Strategy sits beneath other corporate plans and policies, while a series of Communication Advice Notes (CANs) are available to support implementation. Accompanying this strategy are our Corporate Identity Guidelines that help ensure our visual communication is consistent and well executed.



Communication is essential to achieving our desired outcomes and deepening engagement with the National Park.



2) Our Audiences

As a National Park we are a national asset and have a responsibility to the nation. To achieve our objectives, we need to identify specific audiences and means of communicating with them. There'll be many people that fall into two or more these segmented audiences. All communications should be tailored to the relevant audience and use the appropriate channel to reach them, bearing in mind we are competing with many others to attract people's time and attention.

a) National Park Users

Residents and visitors to the area benefit from the recreational opportunities offered by Exmoor. There are an estimated 2.67m visitor days a year to the National Park (Exmoor National Park STEAM data 2023), made up of both day and staying visits. Visitors are drawn from all over the world to Exmoor, but around half visit from within the South West of England and a further 20 per cent from the South East. Over 60 per cent are aged over 45. Satisfaction is high with over 99 per cent rating their visit as good or very good and 96 per cent agreeing that the National Park seems well managed and cared for.

b) Farmers and Land managers

Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounts for 14 per cent of all businesses on Exmoor and 9 per cent of employment. There is an intrinsic link between farming practices and the landscape of Exmoor which has evolved over the last 8,000 years. Land management is key to delivering many of the objectives in the Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan.

c) Communities & Residents

Exmoor is home to c. 10,000 residents with almost twice the proportion of over 65's and almost half the proportion of under 18's as the UK average. While many can trace their roots on Exmoor back over several generations, others have relocated to the area, often in retirement or to pursue a business opportunity.

Over 60 Parish Councils (including those that straddle the boundary) cover the National Park as the most local form of government, acting as voices for their communities.

There is also a substantial population living within Greater Exmoor (all parishes within 10 miles of the NP). While not residents, they are an important sub-group of National Park users, that encompass both national and local considerations in messaging.

d) Businesses

There are around 1,300 businesses operating within the National Park. They are mostly micro in size with less than 4 paid workers per business on average, and over 25 per cent of people are self-employed. Approximately two thirds of businesses and employment are in tourism, retail, hospitality and leisure.

e) Partner organisations

Partnership work is central to all we do. Partners include:

- **Central Government** – We are accountable to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs but have links to other departments (e.g. the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on planning and Department for Culture, Media and Sport on tourism).
- **Statutory organisations** such as Natural England and the Environment Agency.
- **The National Park Family** including 14 other UK National Park Authorities, UK National Parks Communications team, National Park Partnerships and National Parks England. We also partner with other protected landscapes such as neighbouring National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- **Local Authorities** including Somerset Council and its Local Community Networks, North Devon Council and Devon County Council.
- **National charities and voluntary organisations** such as the Campaign for National Parks, National Trust, RSPB, National Farmers Union etc.
- **Local and regional organisations** such as thematic sector groups (e.g. Exmoor Hill Farming Network and Visit Exmoor), conservation charities (e.g. Exmoor Society and Wildlife Trusts), community groups and local campaigns (e.g. climate action groups, Plastic Free etc) as well as education partners such as schools and colleges.

f) Team Exmoor

ENPA staff, Members, and volunteers all need to be informed and engaged at all levels with the strategic work of the Authority. The National Park Authority employs approx. 70 full time equivalent staff (made up of a combination of roles including core staff, seasonal and project-based roles), governed by 22 Members and supported by up to 200 active volunteers.

g) Exmoor supporters

These may be visitors, residents or non-visitors who proactively support the work of the National Park Authority, whether through sharing our messages, donating to CareMoor for Exmoor or advocating for our work.

h) Under-served audiences and potential-visitors

This includes those who have not visited Exmoor, as well as those that face particular barriers / challenges in accessing the National Park (including socio economically underprivileged groups, ethnic minority groups (also known as global majority), those who are isolated or with limited mobility and young people).

i) Thought leaders and influencers

This includes the press / media, academics, individual politicians, and advocates / campaigners as well as social media influencers.

j) Critics

We recognise that not everyone will be happy or even ambivalent about our work. Some of our work touches upon sensitive issues, where there are some strong viewpoints. Critics can be found in many of the above audiences.

3) Our key messages

These are our core messages as an organisation. They will rarely be used verbatim or as a whole collection, but our communication outputs should help us to convey one or more of these key messages and we should be considering whether there are appropriate opportunities to weave any of these messages in.

Theme	Primary message	Secondary message
A National Asset	Exmoor is one of 15 UK National Parks - special places for nature and for all to access and experience.	Exmoor is nationally significant, and it takes a collective effort to care for this precious landscape.
Connecting People and Nature, Heritage and Landscapes	Exmoor is a place for people to connect with nature, heritage and landscapes.	Not everyone is able to connect with nature in Exmoor, and we are working together to remove barriers and support more people to do so.
Natural Health Service	Exmoor is a breathing space for the nation, providing a natural health service.	Our landscape supports people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.
Sustainable communities and local economies	We're a living landscape, home to people and businesses.	We support our communities to benefit from our designation, overcoming challenges together.
Responding to Climate Change	We're tackling the challenge of Climate Change.	We are taking positive action to limit climate change and ensure Exmoor is resilient and thriving now and in the future.
Nature Recovery	We're working together for a more nature-rich Exmoor.	Nature on Exmoor, as everywhere, is facing immense challenges. We're working with partners to make positive changes for Exmoor's wildlife and habitats.
Landscape and heritage	Exmoor is an inspiring and rich landscape. It has changed over the centuries - and will continue to change into the future.	We want to care for and share Exmoor's unique landscape and history, telling the story of how people have lived and worked here over time.
Recreational opportunities	Exmoor is a place full of opportunities for exploration and discovery.	We are committed to maintaining and enhancing the infrastructure and the opportunities for everyone to enjoy Exmoor.
Encouraging involvement	Exmoor is a place for us all to cherish and care for.	Whether you live, work or visit here, there are opportunities to help keep Exmoor special, from

		volunteering to learning, sharing or donating.
Exmoor National Park Authority	We are champions of Exmoor. Exmoor National Park Authority Members, volunteers and staff are all part of Team Exmoor.	We listen to our communities and partners, and we bring people together and find solutions. Our Partnership Plan is for the area.

4) Our Approach

Our approach is designed to foster positive, ongoing engagement with our stakeholders while also responding to emerging issues. We will build on what works, while trying new approaches on a 'test and learn' basis.

We seek to balance **proactive** and **reactive** communications to deliver our objectives, acknowledging the dynamic nature of public engagement. While proactive communications help set us to the narrative, reactive communications ensure that we remain responsive to emerging challenges and/or opportunities.

In delivery we aim to integrate these two aspects with consistent messaging to ensure we are both forward looking and as prepared as possible for the unknowns.

a) Pro-active

In the first instance we aim to be pro-active using a story led approach to share key messages to deliver our objectives or key campaigns (e.g. CareMoor).

This is a whole team effort to identify relevant stories and issues, and to determine the best means of communication to reach the appropriate audience(s).

This approach allows us to shape perceptions, build our brand identity (guided by our corporate identity guidelines), and promote our work.

- **Story gathering:** Seeking out stories and content that illustrate our key messages in an engaging way for target audiences.
- **Content Creation:** Developing content in different formats for different channels such as videos, web stories / blogs, social media posts, press releases and publications. This will include ongoing communication themes, as well as those aligned to key campaigns or projects. We will take a 'sense of day' approach to our messaging, aligning with national conversations on key topics such as climate change, nature recovery, and enhancing inclusion and diversity, and linking in with significant partner initiatives and national themed days / weeks.
- **PR and Media:** Building relationships with key media and press channels, as well as influencers, within the area / sector to secure coverage and promote relevant stories.
- **Public engagement:** Ensuring all those with an interest in Exmoor can contribute to our work, shaping our approach to key issues and taking a sense of pride and ownership in the future of Exmoor. This could include consultations, surveys, forums and workshops amongst others.
- **User Information:** Helping those using the National Park, or the services of the National Park Authority (whether as a resident, visitor or business) to access key information.

b) Reactive

We also need to be able to anticipate and react to breaking news stories, external events, and emerging issues and perceptions around the work of the Authority. Through this we aim to manage risks, address concerns, and provide clarity when unexpected situations arise.

- **Engagement and Feedback:** Monitoring social media, forums, and other feedback channels to respond to questions, concerns, or misinformation in a timely manner
- **Reputation Management:** Addressing negative media coverage, online criticism, or public concerns through timely, factual, and empathetic responses to maintain our credibility and reputation. We will respond to criticism positively and objectively
- **Media Monitoring and Analytics:** Keeping track of ongoing media trends and mentions of Exmoor to stay ahead of emerging narratives and respond proactively if necessary.

c) Crisis communications

The Authority may face challenges when dealing with sudden and unforeseen major incidents or issues that could lead to significant reputational damage, it will need a robust approach to crisis communications in order to manage these and limit negative impacts.

In a crisis or emergency people will be seeking reassurance, information, advice and may be wanting to get involved to help. Poor communication can lead to misinformation, fear, and potentially danger. At times people may look to the National Park Authority as a trusted and authoritative voice. We will need to be able to rapidly prepare key messages, designate spokespersons, and develop/deliver a clear and co-ordinated response.

5) Our principles of communication

a) Digital first

Our approach is 'digital first' to maximise flexibility, audience reach, cost efficiency, and sustainability (71% of UK adults consume news online and more than half of UK adults use social media for news – OFCOM, Annual Study, Sept 2024). There is a need to connect with our audiences regularly, as people's expectations to be informed and involved in the decisions that affect them has never been higher.

However, we are not digital only. We recognise there is not only a need, but also a value, in maintaining hard copy communications that might be to reach more people, target different audiences or to enable deeper engagement.

b) United in our message

We are all communicators and must play a part in presenting a consistent, professional face for the Authority, especially when speaking on behalf of the Authority. All our communications from ENPA should portray a united message. We want to increase the contribution that Members, Staff and Volunteers make to our communications, via both our own and external channels.

Communicating on behalf of the Authority and managing the Authority's reputation is the responsibility of us all. Every day we are in contact with residents, visitors, key stakeholders and influencers, employers, opinion formers and policy makers – our audience. Our actions are likely to have a far greater influence on perceptions than just what we say.

While there will be differences of views, discussion and debate amongst Members, staff, volunteers and those we partner with, when we communicate externally, we should be speaking together with the same message. If communicating in a personal capacity this should be made clear.

Visual elements should follow our Corporate Identity Guidelines and written work should follow our 'Tone of Voice' guide.

c) No assumed knowledge

Many delivering this strategy live and breathe Exmoor and the work of the Authority. But when communicating with others we should ensure that we provide relevant context and helpful explanations. We should also not assume that we know more than our audience - many of those we're communicating with will have expertise above and beyond our own in their fields of interest.

d) Lead the story

Our communications should be timely, and where appropriate allow us to lead our own stories. Information regarding the work of the Authority should come from us first, and we should be the first port of call for those seeking information. Key stakeholders (both internally and externally) should hear from us first, rather than through the media and timely communication to the media will help ensure the context of a news story from us is provided in full. There will however be times when it is best to say nothing.

e) A listening organisation

Communications is a two-way process. We want to engage, and not just broadcast. Several of our channels are set up to enable this and we incorporate first-person story telling where possible and appropriate.

We are committed to listening, learning and working together to deliver our National Park purposes and Partnership Plan objectives. We welcome input from all those with a passion for Exmoor. It is important to acknowledge those who have differing views to the Authority and we have practices in place to help us communicate with such audiences. Whilst acknowledging differing opinions, we apply proportionate officer time to address issues of misinformation.

f) Collaboration

Partnership delivery is key to achieving National Park purposes. Collaboration and co-creation are also central to our communications. There will be opportunities to support partners in amplifying their messages, as well as engaging partners to share our own. So far as possible we will make our communications assets, from copy to imagery and videos, available for partners to utilise.

g) Embed our values and cross cutting themes

While we are a small organisation we work across a broad agenda. We should seek to maximise opportunities to share our core messaging in all communications work while

embedding our organisational values and cross cutting themes such as responding to climate change and ensuring equity and inclusion.

h) Focused and creative

While we are funded to look after Exmoor on behalf of the nation, we cannot be all things to all people. We need to focus on our core remit, corporate priorities and our Partnership Plan objectives to communicate effectively, without spreading finite resources too thinly.

We recognise we are competing with many other organisations and channels, so to be effective we will need to be creative, finding new ways of sharing our messages, cutting through and engaging our audiences. Advances in technology open many more opportunities and we will seek to maximise this potential. Our method of and style of communication should adapt to different audiences to ensure we are as inclusive as possible.

i) Leading by example

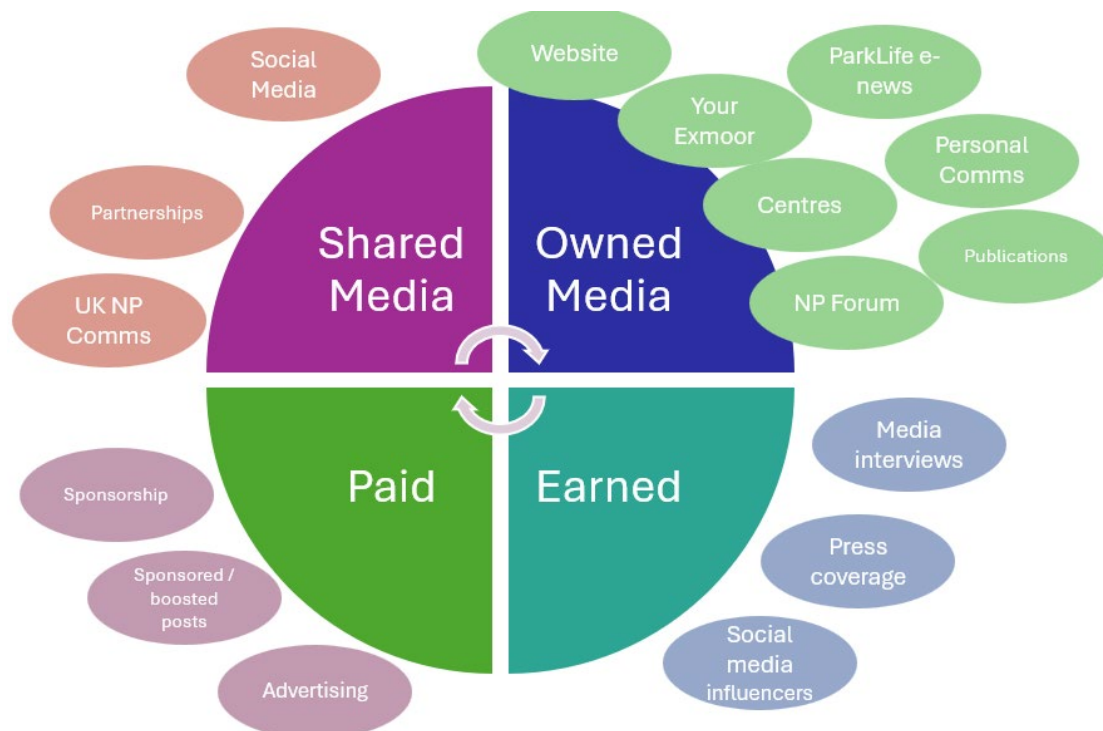
Where we are creating content that helps audiences follow rules and avoid risky situations, we will always highlight the behaviour we want people to adopt, not just the behaviour we want people to avoid.

6) Our Channels

Several different channels, using differing media and approaches, are used to target different audiences. Many of these channels use third-party platforms and as such our channels change from time to time as new opportunities arise and other channels fade away.

While some channels (such as our corporate website) will be broad, targeting a range of audiences, others will focus on specific audiences with more targeted messaging.

Channel analysis is ongoing and dynamic and, as capacity and resources allow, we would like to eventually develop personas, to target key messages to different audiences.



Appendix 1 provides a summary of our core current channels

7) Monitoring and evaluation

The fast pace of change in communications, particularly in relation to digital media, means that our approach will evolve over the life of this Strategy. We will use feedback gained during the life of this Strategy to adjust and further develop our approach.

We will measure our performance by:

- Total social media audience (followers across all channels)
 - Number of media articles / interviews across international, national, regional and local outlets
 - Percentage of positive, neutral, negative coverage
 - Total website page views and unique users
 - Total e-news subscribers
 - Usefulness and quality of publications (from Visitor Surveys completed every 2-3 years)
-

Appendix 1 – Communication Channels

ENPA Website

Purpose: *Communication of core messages, and a repository for information and resources.*

Our corporate website is a key communication tool, allowing us to reach broad audiences, and segment content relevant to different interests from residents seeking planning advice to visitors planning a trip. In the last year we received 652k page views, from 211k unique visitors. During the last year the site was redesigned, and relaunched in 2024, with enhanced functionality allowing us to better communicate into the future.

Actions:

- Continue to provide relevant and timely information
- Monitor long term trends and identify key actions to boost performance following recent redesign
- Update imagery to keep the site looking fresh, and to ensure all feel connected and welcomed to Exmoor.

Social Media Channels

Purpose: *To reach, and engage with, a broad audience including local communities, visitors, supporters and potential-visitors.*

Social media is one of the main ways we communicate with the public. We use it to reach more people, target our messaging and complement our other communication channels such as print, face to face, seminars and workshops.

Authentic and striking imagery drives high levels of engagement on our social media. We have an extensive media library of images which we make available to other organisations (on our ENPA Flickr and 'Exmoor Commons'), but also source photographs/video footage to keep imagery fresh and relatable.

We currently have a social media following of over 46k across our 6 primary channels. On most channels our audiences are skewed towards females (approx. 2/3 female to 1/3 male). Channels are evolving and we will keep abreast of changes and regularly review our use of specific channels. We have limited control over systemic changes to these channels, (e.g. changes to algorithms, or other external factors that shift patterns of use).

- **Facebook** – Our largest audience in terms of engagement and following is on Facebook and this is our overall priority for local and visitor messaging due to our demographic. We have 21.4k followers and annual reach of 2.5m with content interactions of 41.1k. Almost two-thirds of our audience are aged over 45. In addition to our main corporate account there are smaller accounts for specific areas of the organisations such as National Park Centres and some projects.
- **Instagram** – This is also a high priority channel, particularly for growing our under 45 audience and sharing video/quality photographic content. Current following is 8.5k and 16.6K reach, with 43.8 per cent of our audience under 45.
- **YouTube** Corporate videos are shared within our YouTube channel with just under 1k followers and almost 300,000 views. While it's a channel in its own right, we primarily use this as a tool for hosting and sharing video content, including within our website. We have just under 1k followers but in the last year 97 per cent of our watch time was from non-followers. A separate standalone account is used for sharing official recordings of

Authority meetings. There is potential (resource allowing) to utilise YouTube shorts to reach younger audiences with dynamic content.

- **LinkedIn** is a new channel for us and priority to grow, with less than 1k followers currently. It is particularly relevant for communicating with partners within our sector, thought leadership and recruitment promotion.
- **X** (formerly twitter) - This was one of our original social media channels with a following of 12.8k, but it's becoming less popular as a platform (our following has reduced by c. 400 l nth last few months) and has relatively low engagement rates. It still has a value for connecting with media, local government and partnership channels (for example information during live events such as extreme weather incidents), but to manage the risks around the future of X we will ensure that we grow other social channels and use this channel more sparingly.
- **Emerging platforms**
 - **Blue sky** - Our following is currently low but slowly growing. This is seen by many as the new 'Twitter' since it was created by the original founders of the platform and some people are moving more towards it.
 - **Threads** is the 'Meta' answer to X/Twitter. Analysis on popularity is limited as still in early stages, but it has a similar reputation to Bluesky albeit with a more visual slant. We are including it as a channel and our following is at almost 1.9k followers currently. Typically, 75 per cent of views are from followers with a further 25 per cent from non-followers.
 - Other emerging platforms include 'Mastodon' and 'Substacks'. Where new channels emerge, we will reserve the @ExmoorNP handle while assessing their use to us long term. While TikTok is a globally growing platform and especially relevant to younger audiences it is not recommended for local government communications and is not permitted on government mobile devices due to the potential vulnerability of data. We therefore do not utilise this as a channel.

Actions:

- Focus on our priority channels of Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn while maintaining a presence on other channels
- Continue to grow our channels to increase our reach with a focus on positive engagement.
- Maximise opportunities to convert social media followers to website visitors, whilst also balancing the content with link-free posts to satisfy algorithm preferences
- Develop more and richer video content to deepen engagement.

National Park Centres

Purpose: *To inform, inspire and equip visitors, businesses and residents to find their Exmoor and engage them in the work of the Authority and opportunities to explore and care for Exmoor.*

We operate 3 National Park centres welcoming 170k users a year at Dulverton, Dunster and Lynmouth. They are our primary 'shop windows' for the work of the Authority. As well as providing recreational information they provide a key opportunity to promote the work of the Authority, attracting new volunteers and raising vital funds.

Actions:

- Establish the relocated Dulverton National Park centre within Exmoor House
- Maximise use of the Centres for events and hosted activities, in addition to drop ins.
- Make better use of digital displays to continually evolve the interpretation offer of the Centres.

Your Exmoor

Purpose: *To engage National Park users and residents in opportunities to discover more of Exmoor and the work of the Authority.*

Your Exmoor (previously known as Exmoor 20XX), is our flagship publication, published annually. 60,000 copies have an estimated readership in excess of 180,000. A loyal advertising base covers print production costs.

Actions:

- Evolve the publication each year to keep abreast of new opportunities and work streams.
- Review print run and distribution to ensure best possible reach.
- Maintain advertising revenue to offset production costs

Press and Media

Purpose: *To reach a broader audience than those already engaged with us.*

We seek to maintain open and positive working relationship with the press and media at a local regional and national level. Regular press releases are sent out at optimal distribution points (for example before key editor/newsroom ideas meetings, to avoid/chime with release of major national/international stories) and we seek to respond in a timely manner to queries and enquiries from the press relating to our work.

Responding to local media quickly is important, considering its visibility in the Exmoor community. Priority is given to enquiries on issues relating to or linked to Exmoor's designation as a National Park and pertaining to our purposes.

Specific responses are developed in consultation with senior staff and specialists as appropriate. We develop standard responses and 'Frequently asked questions' (FAQs) to maximise capacity for dealing with large numbers of enquiries on a similar issue.

We work collaboratively with partners and NPUK comms on any common messaging (see 'Partners' and 'National Park Family'), but also liaise directly with journalists to explain/demonstrate projects in more depth.

Press and media enquires can be broadly grouped under the following themes in order of importance / priority to the Authority

1. Journalism based on the work of the NPA or the designation of the National Park
2. Potential promotion of the area and opportunities within, but not directly linked to the work of the Authority.
3. Journalism based on issues in the area not directly linked to our work or the designation of the National Park
4. Commercial – with no direct link or reference to the work of the National Park Authority. Designation of the National Park or the place of Exmoor.

ParkLife & E-news

Purpose: *Providing targeted and timely updates on the work of the Authority throughout the year.*

We have over 6k live subscribers to our suite of e-newsletters. ParkLife is our primary e-news published every other month to share news and updates on the work of the Authority with all those interested in the work of the Authority. We regularly publish a range of thematic newsletters targeted at specific audiences (such as tourism business or online shop

customers) or themes (e.g. historic environment or wildlife news). Our open rate is above the industry average (49% vs 34%) while our click rate is a third higher than the national average.

Actions:

- Pro-actively promote sign-ups to ParkLife and increase publication to monthly.
- Consider greater use of our Customer Relation Management system to fully utilise our customer database in the most effective way
- Review the range of regular e-news publication to maximise reach and eliminate duplication, removing those not regularly used.

Printed publications

Purpose: *Engaging National Park users in the special qualities of the National Park.*

We publish a range of free Pocket Guides interpreting the special qualities of the National Park.

Actions:

- Review the range of title to ensure we're targeted and focused on key priorities and areas of impact with a decreasing budget.

Learning and Engagement activity

Purpose: *Increasing awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the National Park.*

Our learning and engagement team working with others including the Ranger team, deliver a broad programme of events and activities to a range of audiences which provides an opportunity to communicate our key messages. This includes

- Attendance at key **local events and shows**
- Working with **schools** to offer formal and informal learning opportunities at our Pinkery Centre for Outdoor learning, on location in the National Park, and within schools.
- Delivering, and supporting others to deliver a range of **events** such as guided walks, rock pooling safaris, and other such activities.
- Managing a volunteering programme (**Get Involved**)
- Provision of **interpretation** at specific locations within the National Park.

Partnerships and Forums

Purpose: *Interacting with our partners - learning and listening, sharing and amplifying.*

We host the Exmoor National Park Forum twice a year for discussion of matters pertaining to Exmoor National Park Authority and our relationship with local communities/other bodies having an interest in the National Park. Other ENPA led forums include an annual Rural Enterprise Exmoor day for businesses, a volunteer conference and other thematic or project based events.

As part of our approach to working together for Exmoor we also facilitate the development and monitoring of the National Park Partnership Plan - a statutory management plan for the area. A steering group brings together key delivery partners, while thematic partnership groups bring a broader range of partners together under different thematic areas meeting 2-4 times a year.

In addition, we collectively attend numerous meetings, forums and workshops led by others which further give a chance to receive feedback, hear from others and share our own messages.

Finally, we have an opportunity to work with partners, seeing their support in amplifying our messages where appropriate via their own channels. Examples of this would include the UK

National Parks Communications Team, while more locally it could be project partners or local tourism groups.

Internal Communications

Purpose: *Ensuring all involved in Team Exmoor are kept informed and briefed on key information*

Internally there are several communication channels used, including, but not limited to:

- Authority Intranet used to communicate with staff – news items and updates can also be emailed to Members and volunteers.
- Authority meetings – these are public meetings and are also video recorded allowing people to view discussions and decision making.
- Monthly staff update meetings which all staff are invited to (recorded for those unable to join at the time).
- Member Forums and Briefings
- Staff What's App group to share photos and informal updates. Individual sections and teams have regular team meetings in addition to 1-2-1s between staff and their managers.

National Park Family

Purpose: *To benefit from the combined resources of the National Park family to develop and promote the collective 'brand' and reputation of National Parks*

As part of the family of UK National Parks we are a part of National Parks Partnerships and contribute financially to their work, alongside the of the central UK National Parks Communications unit. By raising awareness and understanding of National Parks nationally we benefit at a local level.

The UK National Parks Comms Unit maintain the UK National Parks website and social media channels and liaise with the press and other partners working nationally. They can help to amplify our own stories and messages. While National Park Partnerships primarily work to draw in corporate funding to support National Parks there is often a spin off marketing / comms opportunity from the partnerships they develop.

Appendix 2 - Our communications Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Parks are a strong international brand • Exmoor is a well-established brand and national awareness is mid-table compared to other (mostly larger) National Parks • A well-established network of partners working with us • Strong support from loyal visitors • Passionate, motivated team • Experienced comms professionals within the Authority • Strong community links within some areas • A partnership approach to managing the area 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential confusion with roles and responsibilities with other organisations (e.g. National Trust and Local Authorities) • Limited capacity for all staff to contribute to communications. • Conflicting views on priorities and approaches (internally and externally) • Lack of diversity within governance and leadership • Some limitations in use of IT as public sector organisation • Limited understanding of the unique way in which UK National Parks are managed vs state owned landscapes in some other countries
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing interest and awareness of nature and climate emergencies • Significant drive to open the outdoors to all • New Partnership Plan • Utilisation of digital technology 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further reduction in resources further limiting capacity to deliver and / or communicate. • Potential changes to external communication channels outside of our control • Increased divergence of public views on key agendas relevant to our work such as climate, nature recovery and diversity/inclusion.

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 March 2025

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Report of the Chief Executive and Head of Climate, Nature and Communities

Purpose of Report: To present to Members the updated Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Authority is recommended to:

- (1) APPROVE the Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme 2025
- (2) DELEGATE to the Chief Executive / Head of Climate, Nature and Communities to correct typographical or factual errors in production of the final document for publication on the Authority's website following Member discussion.

Authority Priority: The Corporate Plan outlines the priorities for the Authority for the period to end of March 2025 and includes an action to prepare for the review of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan.

Legal and Equality Implications: Section 65(4) Environment Act 1995 – provides powers to the National Park Authority to “do anything which in the opinion of the Authority, is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to:-

- (a) the accomplishment of the purposes mentioned in s. 65 (1) [National Park purposes]
- (b) the carrying out of any functions conferred on it by virtue of any other enactment.”

The equality impact of the recommendations of this report has been assessed as follows: There are no foreseen adverse impacts on any protected group(s).

Consideration has been given to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and an assessment of the implications of the recommendations of this report is as follows: There are no implications for the Human Rights Act.

Financial and Risk implications: No financial or risk implications have been identified.

Climate Response: The production of the Local Development Scheme is not considered to affect the Authority's response to the climate emergency.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All local planning authorities are required to prepare a Local Development Scheme which is a publicly available timetable for the key stages in producing a new or revised Local Plan for the area. The current Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme was adopted in 2019.¹ The Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-31 was adopted in 2017.

¹ [Local Development Scheme | Exmoor](#)

- 1.2 The Government has made clear its intention that there should be rapid progress towards universal local plan coverage. The Chief Planner wrote to all local planning authorities on [13 December 2024](#). The letter requested, in light of the changes to the NPPF, that all local planning authorities produce an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS):
- within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF, i.e. by no later than 6 March 2025.
 - The updated LDS should include clear, realistic, and specific dates for consultation and submission of the local plan.
 - Once updated, the LDS should be made publicly available, and a copy sent to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 1.2 National Planning Practice Guidance on ‘Plan-Making’ says, ‘A Local Development Scheme is required under Section 15 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). This must specify (among other matters) the development plan documents (i.e. local plans) which, when prepared, will comprise part of the development plan for the area. The Local Development Scheme must be made available publicly and kept up-to-date. It is important that local communities and interested parties can keep track of progress. Local planning authorities should publish their Local Development Scheme on their website.’²
- 1.3 In light of the Government’s request to publish a LDS by 6 March, it has been necessary to review and seek agreement for a revised LDS now. A meeting was held with the Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) in February 2025 to update members about the need to prepare a revised LDS and for an initial discussion on a review of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-31. Further discussion on the Plan review with members of PPAG is planned during Spring 2025.

2. Neighbouring planning authorities’ plan preparation

- 2.1 In preparing the Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme (Annex 1) officers have had regard to discussions with neighbouring planning authorities on:
- local plan review timescales; and
 - the benefits of joint work with partners where appropriate, reflecting the Authority’s legal duty to cooperate with neighbouring planning authorities in Somerset and Devon on cross-boundary planning matters. For example, jointly commissioning evidence studies to inform respective Local Plan reviews.

3. Changes to plan making

- 3.1 It is important to acknowledge that there is current uncertainty affecting plan-making at a national level. The Government has signalled its intention to introduce new legislation through a Planning and Infrastructure Bill, a revised plan making system and to consult on new National Development Management policies during

² MHCLG Planning Practice Guidance ‘[Plan-Making](#)’ Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 61-003-20190315
Revision date: 15 03 2019

2025. A new plan-making system is likely to seek to make Local Plans subject to a 30-month timeframe, with the examination of plans to take no longer than 6 months. The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 aims to focus the content of Local Plans onto locally-specific matters, with National Development Management Policies which would take precedence over local planning policy.

4. Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme 2025

4.1 Annex 1 to this report sets out the revised Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme with the timetable and key milestones in the Local Plan review process for agreement and publication.

4.2 The LDS set out in Annex 1 represents the best estimate of a likely timescale for an Exmoor National Park Local Plan review under the current plan-making system. It proposes:

- To undertake necessary preparatory work, including evidence gathering and scoping, during 2025.
- To ‘trigger’ a Local Plan review in early 2026. This enables necessary evidence studies to be progressed during 2025 and, given current uncertainties outlined above, for immediate national changes to have been published and the consequences considered before formally commencing the Local Plan review.
- A two-stage process at the Regulation 18 consultation stage enabling the Authority to seek views on the main planning policy options to address identified themes before a (non-statutory) draft Local Plan is published. Once the draft Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination the detailed timetable is not in the control of the National Park Authority and the timetable from submission to adoption can only be indicative.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The proposed Local Development Scheme (Annex 1) sets out the key milestones in the review process. However the evolving national framework for the review of Local Plans means there is uncertainty at a national level in the plan-making process and it is difficult, at this stage, to provide certainty on a Local Plan review timetable.

5.2 It is therefore likely that further iterations of the Authority’s Local Development Scheme will be required in due course. Where changes are needed, a revised Local Development Scheme will be presented to members for consideration.

Clare Reid Head of Climate, Nature and Communities / Ruth McArthur Policy & Community Manager

February 2025


Annex 1: Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme

Annex 1


Exmoor National Park Local Development Scheme Fourth Revision

March 2025

If you have any queries or questions relating to this document, please get in touch with the Policy & Community Team using the contact details below:

 Exmoor National Park Authority
Exmoor House
Dulverton
Somerset
TA22 9HL

 localplan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

 01398 323665

1. Introduction

1.1 Local planning authorities must produce, publish and keep up to date a Local Development Scheme.³ This Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a public statement of Exmoor National Park Authority's programme for the preparation and review of local plan documents.

2. Context

2.1 Exmoor was designated as a National Park in 1954. The National Park covers 267 square miles and includes parts of Somerset, and North Devon Council areas. Exmoor National Park Authority's role is to ensure that the two statutory purposes of National Park designation are achieved:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public.

2.2 The National Park Authority is required, in pursuing these purposes, to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.

2.3 National policy and national planning practice guidance (PPG) are clear that the scale and extent of development in National Parks should be limited. Landscape and scenic beauty have the highest status of protection and, together with wildlife and cultural heritage, should be given great weight.⁴ Specific national policy for National Parks is set out in the National Parks Vision and Circular.⁵

2.4 National Park Authorities are responsible for preparing National Park Management Plans.⁶ The Exmoor National Park Management Plan (the 'Partnership Plan') while not part of the development plan, establishes the long-term vision, aims and strategic policy framework for Exmoor National Park and guides the work of the National Park Authority and other

³ MHCLG Planning Practice Guidance '[Plan-Making](#)' Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 61-003-20190315
Revision date: 15 03 2019

⁴ MHCLG NPPF (December 2024) Paragraph 189

⁵ DEFRA (March 2010) English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular provides further guidance and information about National Park statutory purposes, management and other matters. Footnoted in MHCLG NPPF (December 2024). Footnote 66

⁶ HMSO Environment Act 1995, Section 66 (1)

organisations that contribute to the delivery of National Park purposes.⁷ The Local Plan shares its vision with the Partnership Plan.⁸

- 2.5 National Park Authorities (NPAs) are the sole planning authorities for their areas.⁹ As the local planning authority (LPA), Exmoor NPA is responsible for: spatial and land-use planning, including planning policies; minerals and waste planning; development management; planning enforcement, and other related regulatory functions within the National Park

3. Current Plans in Exmoor National Park

- 3.1 The statutory 'development plan' for Exmoor National Park comprises the Exmoor National Park Local Plan DPD (2017) and those policies of the Lyn Plan 2013-28 (the neighbourhood plan for Lynton and Lynmouth parish) which were not superseded by the adopted Local Plan.

Local Plan 5 Year Review

- 3.2 Legislation requires a review of the Local Plan to be completed within five years of adoption to establish whether the plan and policies remain effective. The review was completed in June 2022 - within 5 years of adoption. It included a review and update of evidence and implementation, legislation and changes to national policy and guidance, assessment of monitoring and appeals, a review of housing need and delivery, including of the adopted Local Plan indicative affordable housing figure, discussions with Duty to Co-operate partners and consultation with stakeholders. The review is summarised in the Local Plan 5-Year Review Summary Report and Topic Papers.¹⁰

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 3.3 There is no requirement for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to be included in the LDS. Details of development plan documents and adopted SPDs are set out in Appendix 1. They can be viewed on the planning policy pages of the National Park Authority's website.¹¹

⁷ ENP Partnership Plan (2018). A new Partnership Plan is due to be adopted in 2025. [Key Documents | Exmoor](#)

⁸ https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1192437/Partnership-Plan-2018-2023-spreads.pdf

⁹ Section 4A Town and Country Planning Act 1990

¹⁰ [Exmoor Local Plan 2011 - 2031 | Exmoor](#)

¹¹ [Supplementary Planning Guidance | Exmoor](#)

4. Local Plan Review timetable

- 4.1 The timetable in this LDS sets out key milestones in the Local Plan review process. There is current uncertainty in the plan-making system at a national level due to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and indications by the Government of forthcoming changes to the planning system. It is therefore likely that further iterations of this LDS will be required in due course. Table 1, below, sets out the programme for review of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan.
- 4.2 The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) will include an update on the progress of the documents in the LDS, as well as assessing the relevance and effectiveness of the planning policies in the adopted Local Plan.

Table 1 Programme for review of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan

Year	2025/26	2026/27				2027/28				2028/29		
Quarter		Q1 (Apr- June)	Q2	Q3	Q4 (Jan- Mar)	Q1	Q2 (Jul- Sep)	Q3	Q4 (Jan- Mar)	Q1 (Apr- June)	Q2 (Jul- Sep)	Q3 (Oct- Dec)
	Local Plan review preparation - evidence gathering /scoping	18A			18B		Reg 19		S	E	M	A

Key			
	Plan making stage		Plan making stage
18A	Issues & options consultation	E	Independent Local Plan examination
18B	Draft plan non-statutory consultation	M	Proposed modifications consultation
19	Regulation 19 plan consultation	A	Adoption
S	Submission to the Secretary of State for examination		Regulations: Town & Country Planning (Local Plan) (England) Regulations 2012

Title	Exmoor National Park Local Plan Review
Role and content	Sets out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for planning in the National Park within the context of the statutory purposes and National Park Authority Duty. The revised Local Plan will set out the policies against which planning applications for development will be considered.
Status	Development Plan Document (DPD)
Conformity	The revised Local Plan will meet the / requirements of primary legislation covering National Parks and take account of national policy including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Government’s planning practice guidance
Geographic coverage	The whole of the Exmoor National Park

Timetable		
Milestones	Publication of Submission Draft Local Plan for consultation (Regulation 19)	July-September 2027
	Consideration of responses	October-December 2027
	Submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State (Regulation 22)	March 2028
	Local Plan Examination (Regulation 24)	April-June 2028
	Adoption of Local Plan and Policies Map (Regulation 26)	December 2028

Preparation and Review Arrangements	
Lead	Exmoor National Park Authority policy team. Input from NPA specialist officers and partner organisations
Management and agreement	Full approval required by National Park Authority Committee at key preparation stages.
Resources	Exmoor National Park Authority Planning Policy team with support from NPA specialist teams/officers, partner and external organisations and specialist consultants as required.
Community involvement and consultation	Statutory consultation in accordance with the adopted Exmoor National Park Authority Statement of Community Involvement (2022). It is proposed to review the SCI as part of preparations for the forthcoming Local Plan review.
Monitoring and review	Authority Monitoring Report

Appendix 1

Document Name	Current Status	Adoption
<p>Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-31 (Development Plan Document)</p> <p>Sets out the vision, objectives and strategic priorities for spatial development in the National Park. Contains both strategic policies which take forward the vision, objectives and strategic priorities and set out the overarching approach to development in the National Park and development management policies which provide more detailed criteria to guide planning decisions. The Plan includes waste and minerals policies.</p>	Adopted	2017
<p>The Lyn Plan: Lynton & Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2028 (Development Plan Document- policies not superseded by the adopted Local Plan).</p>	Adopted	2013
<p>Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (Supplementary Planning Document)</p> <p>Provides detailed guidance on the policies relating to landscape character in the adopted Local Plan 2011-2031.</p>	Adopted	2018
<p>Rural Worker and Succession Farm Dwellings Guidance (Draft Supplementary Planning Document)</p> <p>Guidance to assist those seeking to provide a rural worker or succession farm worker's dwelling.</p>	Adopted	2020
<p>Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)</p> <p>Sets out how Exmoor National Park Authority will consult, inform and engage with the public and other interested parties on local development documents and planning applications.</p>	Adopted (Revised December 2022)	2022
<p>Local Development Scheme</p> <p>The timetable for local plan preparation</p>	Current Draft (Revised 2025)	Due 2025

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

4 March 2025

SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2025/26

Report of the Head of Enterprise and Operations

Purpose of the report: To consider and adopt a Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATION: To ADOPT the Scheme of Members' Allowances 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1, subject to future adjustments to Members' Allowances as linked to staff cost of living pay awards.

Authority Priority: Achieve best value from our resources and improve our performance.

Legal and Equality Implications: The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require the Authority to adopt a scheme of allowances before the start of each financial year. The equality and human rights impact of the recommendation of this report has been assessed as having no adverse impact on any particular group or individual.

Financial and Risk Implications: Provision was made within the Core Budget for a 3% increase in the Scheme of Allowances for 2024/25 and for 3% in 2025/26. If the actual increase differs to this then there will be the opportunity when the Revised Budget is set in November 2025 to make the necessary adjustments.

Climate Change Response: It has been assessed that this report does not have an adverse impact on our ability to respond to climate change.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Authority is required to publish a Scheme of Members' Allowances every 12 months and the Scheme for 2025/26 should be published before the start of the 2025/26 financial year on 1 April 2025.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY AND THE BASIC ALLOWANCE

2.1 Under the Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances, adjustments to the Basic Allowance are linked to staff cost of living pay awards. As of February 2025, the staff pay award for 2025/26 has yet to be announced. When this has been agreed, Members' Allowances will be uplifted and backdated to reflect this change.

2.2 The Basic Allowance is payable in recognition of time devoted by Members, including; dealing with correspondence; attendance at meetings; training; conferences and workshops and incidental costs such as the use of their private telephone and postage.

3. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES

- 3.1 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) are payable to Members who have been given significant responsibilities on the basis of the multipliers set out below.

	SRA Multiplier	Special Responsibility Allowance	Combined Allowance
Chairperson of the Authority	2 x basic allowance	£6,346	£9,519
Deputy Chairperson of the Authority	1.5 x basic allowance	£4,760	£7,933
Chairperson of the Planning Committee	1.5 x basic allowance	£4,760	£7,933
Chairperson of the Standards Committee	.25 x basic allowance	£793	£3,966
Chairperson of the Exmoor Forum	.5 x basic allowance	£1,587	£4,760

4. DEPENDENTS' CARERS' ALLOWANCE

- 4.1 The Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances includes a Dependents' Carers' Allowance. As its name suggests, this type of allowance is intended to reimburse some of the expenses of arranging child or adult dependent care incurred by a Member when carrying out specified duties, such as attending meetings. Provision for this allowance is a small step in our wider activities to encourage greater diversity of Membership of the Authority.
- 4.2 Members should note that the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 gave County and District Councils an express power to pay a dependents' carers' allowance. The regulations do **not** give this express power to English National Park Authorities (nor do they prohibit payment). The General competency power provided to English National Park Authorities (section 65A of the Environment Act 1995), provides the requisite legal power to provide such allowance.
- 4.3 All three constituent local authorities (Somerset Council, Devon County Council and North Devon Council) include a dependents' carers' allowance in their schemes.

5. MILEAGE AND SUBSISTENCE CLAIMS

- 5.1 Mileage allowance rates are paid to Members and staff in accordance with the Authority's Green Travel Plan.
- 5.2 Levels of subsistence allowances for Members and staff are broadly based on the movement of indices provided by others, such as the Consumer Price Index, and the scheme provides flexibility for allowances to be updated as necessary. The current levels of subsistence allowances are set out in the attached draft Scheme of Allowances.

6. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

- 6.1 In the March 2024 Authority report on Members' Allowances, it was resolved to delegate to the Chief Executive arrangements to refer the Members' Scheme of Allowances to an Independent Remuneration Panel. This action will be progressed during 2025/26.

Ben Barrett
Head of Enterprise and Operations
February 2025

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2025/26****1. INTRODUCTION**

Exmoor National Park Authority's scheme provides for payment of:-

- A **Basic Allowance** which is a flat rate payable to each Member;
- A **Special Responsibility Allowance** for Members undertaking additional roles as defined by the Authority.

2. GENERAL POINTS

The term "Member" in these notes means a Member of the Exmoor National Park Authority.

Members have the option of not claiming all or part of any allowance. The Head of Enterprise and Operations must be notified in writing if a Member chooses this option.

All enquiries relating to Members allowances should be made to our Member Services Team (tel 01398 323665) or e-mail membersupport@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk.

3. BASIC ALLOWANCE:-

- Is payable to all Members.
- Is £3,172.68 per annum from 1 April 2025, payable in arrears in monthly instalments. This is paid automatically (unless a Member has opted not to receive it in whole or in part) and Members do not need to claim it.
- Recompenses Members for time devoted to their work as a Member and is intended to cover
 - preparation for and attendance at Authority, committee, sub-committee, panel and working group meetings (including travel time to and from meetings)
 - preparation for and attendance at seminars, conferences and training sessions
 - representing the Authority on "outside organisations"
 - dealing with correspondence
 - single Member duties
 - other incidental costs for which no other specific provision is made, including use of Member's home
- Adjustments to the annual Basic Allowance will be linked to staff cost of living pay awards.
- Where the Member's term of office begins or ends at any time other than the start of the financial year, they are entitled to the appropriate proportion of the annual allowance.

4. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE:-

- Is payable in addition to the Basic Allowance.
- Is payable to Members who have been given significant responsibilities e.g. Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Chairperson of the Planning Committee.
- Is allocated on the degree of responsibility and upon the perceived call on the Member's time, as agreed by the Authority, with no Member receiving more than one Special Responsibility Allowance at any one time.
- Is paid in arrears in 12 equal instalments automatically (with no need for the Member to claim) and where applicable is apportioned for part year entitlements.
- Is intended to cover:-
 - significant additional work preparing for meetings
 - meetings with officers
 - meetings with fellow chairmen
 - acting as the spokesperson for their area of special responsibility
 - dealing with correspondence
 - visits directly connected to the performance of a Special Responsibility Allowance, e.g. official openings, fact finding visits
- Does not include any element for travel expenses, which are claimable in the normal way for any Special Responsibility Allowance duty.
- Is banded on multiples of the basic allowance to reflect the work and responsibilities that have to be undertaken and will be paid as follows:-

Chairperson of the Authority	2 x basic allowance
Deputy Chairperson of the Authority	1.5 x basic allowance
Chairperson of the Planning Committee	1.5 x basic allowance
Chairperson of the Standards Committee	.25 x basic allowance
Chairperson of the Exmoor National Park Forum	.5 x basic allowance

- To cater for changes in circumstances that can occur during the year and to ensure that no individual cases of exceptional hardship are experienced, the Chief Executive and the Head of Enterprise & Operations in consultation with the Chairperson of the Authority can agree Special Responsibility Allowances temporarily for individual Members as considered necessary.

5. DEPENDENTS' CARERS' ALLOWANCE

5.1 Subject to paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3, Dependents' Carers' Allowance may be claimed where a Member arranges paid care in respect a spouse/partner, child or parent, or a person living with you in the same household (but not as an employee, tenant, lodger or border), or someone who is involved in an emergency where you are the only person who can help.

5.2 Payment of DCA is:-

- claimable for any **approved duty**, and for attending meetings or events covered by a **special responsibility payment** ;
- payable for the duration of the meeting or event attended, plus travelling time to and from the meeting;

- paid on the basis of the actual expenditure incurred, subject to a maximum hourly rate and a maximum annual allowance, as specified in Appendix 2;
- not payable where a Member already receives a carer's allowance from the Department for Works and Pensions;
- not payable where the care provided is by a parent of the dependent, a person who is part of the Member's household or someone under 16;
- claimed monthly on the Members' claim form.

5.3 All claims for DCA must be supported by receipts.

6. TRAVEL ALLOWANCE

- Current rates are shown in Appendix 2.
- Can only be claimed for an approved duty (which is set out in Appendix 3) or one covered by a Special Responsibility Allowance.
- Should be claimed promptly at the end of each month on the Members' claim form.
- For official journeys outside Somerset and Devon see policy as set out in Appendix 2.
- Train fares are normally reimbursed at the standard class rate. Members eligible for a Railcard who regularly use the train for Authority business may reclaim the cost of the railcard.

NB The Member Services Team can obtain pre-booked tickets for Members; such advance bookings attract cheaper fares and reserved seats.

- Wherever possible, Members should share transport.
- Taxi fares will be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances on production of receipts.
- Expenditure on tolls, parking fees, etc may be claimed for re-imburement on production of receipts.
- Members are advised to check the position with their insurer to ensure they have adequate vehicle insurance cover in place to include use of their vehicle for Authority business.

7. SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE

- Is claimable for the actual cost of the meal or overnight expenses (excluding alcoholic drinks) up to the same maximum set out for staff which is updated annually. Current rates are shown in the attached Appendix 2.
- Subsistence claims should not include receipts for the purchase of alcoholic drinks.
- Is claimable for any approved duty or Special Responsibility Attendance exceeding 4 hours which spans the agreed mealtime periods where additional expenditure is incurred.
- Should be claimed promptly at the end of each month on the Members' claim form and receipts must be attached to support the claim. Claims made without proof of expenditure will only be paid in special circumstances and will be referred for the

approval of the Head of Enterprise and Operations in consultation with the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of the Authority.

- Is not claimable if a meal is provided free of charge.
- For special circumstances the Head of Enterprise and Operations can agree allowances in excess of the maximum where this is considered necessary and appropriate.

8. **NON CLAIMABLE DUTIES**

- For the avoidance of doubt, the following duties are **not** approved for the purpose of claiming travel or subsistence allowances:-
 - Single Member duties
 - Attendance at Parish Council meetings
 - Attendance at any committee, panel or working group meetings to which a Member has not been appointed, unless as a previously named substitute

9. **PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCES**

- Basic Allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances are paid automatically monthly after completion of:-
 - Written undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members
 - Declaration of interests
 - Tax, National Insurance and Bank detail pro-formas

These allowances are treated as imbursements and subject to Tax and National Insurance Contributions under PAYE regulations.

- Travel and subsistence must be claimed monthly on the Members' Claim Form. Mileage Allowances are taxed according to the profit element which is calculated by comparing the amounts paid per mile with the Inland Revenue's Authorised Mileage Rates. Reimbursement of subsistence and other expenses incurred (car park fees, tolls, taxis etc) should not give rise to a tax or national insurance contribution liability as there is no profit element involved.
- Fuel receipts which predate the dates of travel should be attached to the monthly mileage claim form in order that VAT can be reclaimed on the expenses paid.
- Claims must be submitted monthly. Claims not received by the Member Services Team by the 5th day of the following month will not be paid that month.
- A supply of claim forms can be obtained from the Member Services Team.
- Allowances must not be claimed where the Member is entitled to receive payment from another body for the same duty/activity.
- Payments are made through Somerset Council which provides a payroll bureau service to Exmoor National Park Authority.
- Payment has to be made directly into a Bank or Building Society account.
- Members can request a PAYE code from the Inland Revenue for the taxable payments, otherwise payments will be taxed at the basic rate of tax. Some Members may be able to obtain an exemption card for national insurance. Some female Members may be able to obtain a reduced rate certificate (married women

or widows). Members seeking advice on the national insurance calculation matters should contact their tax office or the Head of Enterprise and Operations.

- The Authority regularly reviews expenditure on Members Allowances to ensure the budget is not overspent. In order to assist with the monitoring of the budget Members are asked to submit claims monthly, no matter how small.
- Claims older than 2 months will be referred for the approval of the Head of Enterprise and Operations in consultation with the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of the Authority and therefore payment may be delayed or refused.

10. **UNEMPLOYMENT PAY and STATUTORY SICK PAY**

- Members who are unemployed normally do not lose entitlements to unemployment benefit as a result of receiving a Basic Allowance or Special Responsibility Allowance, even though the earnings rule may be exceeded. Members entitled to Disability Benefits may find this entitlement is affected. In such cases Members should clarify the situation with their Tax Office.
- Members are regarded as “employees” under the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982 and are entitled to receive sick pay for the first 28 weeks of sickness a year. If Members wish to pursue claims for sickness benefit, the period of sickness should be in excess of 3 consecutive days and the Member Services Team must be given prompt notification of sickness.

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE**

1. **MILEAGE RATES** (up to 8500 miles per annum after which reduced rates apply) for journeys within Somerset and Devon, and between Members' homes and Dulverton:-
 A flat rate allowance: **45p**, Passenger supplement: **5p** per passenger per mile
 The rate for use of a motor cycle is 24p per mile.

2. **JOURNEYS OUTSIDE DEVON AND SOMERSET** For journeys outside Devon and Somerset Members should use public transport whenever possible and appropriate. Recognising that there are situations when it would be more appropriate to travel by private vehicle the rate of **35p** per mile is payable unless a case can be made for payment of the full mileage rate and this is subject to PRIOR approval by the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of the Authority. Travel by car can be either by the use of a hire car or by the payment of the normal mileage rates for the journey. Situations where such prior approval is appropriate are on the grounds of:-
 - sustainability where two or more people are sharing a vehicle
 - inadequacy where public transport is not available or the journey is too time consuming involving changes of trains and taxis
 - economy where the costs of using public transport are significantly greater, overnight stays would be avoided, etc.
 - efficiency where savings in staff and Members time could justify the payment of the full rate

NB Members must ensure that they have adequate insurance cover for journeys made by them in respect of Exmoor National Park Authority business.

3. SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES

Breakfast	£9.00	Claimable if away from normal place of residence for more than 4 hours before 11.00am.
Lunch	£12.40	Claimable if away from normal place of residence for more than 4 hours including the lunch time period of 11.30am and 2.30pm.
Tea	£4.90	Claimable if away from normal place of residence for more than 4 hours including the period 3pm to 6pm and cannot be claimed if Evening Meal Allowance is also claimed.
Dinner	£15.90	Claimable if away from the normal place of residence more than 4 hours, ending after 7pm and cannot be claimed if tea is also claimed.
Overnight	£145.00	Claimable if away overnight from normal place of residence for overnight accommodation including breakfast.
Out of Pocket	£5.80 per nt £23.25 per wk	Claimable for residential courses and conferences.
Receipts must be submitted to obtain subsistence allowances up to maximum allowances above.		
Dependents' Carers' Allowance Hourly rate paid up to the national living wage Maximum annual allowance (equivalent to 100 hours per Member per year)		Up to £12.21/hr from 1/4/25 £1,221

Notes: Members will be taxed at their marginal rate for the cost of travelling between home and Exmoor House. Reimbursement of all other receipted subsistence and other expenses should not give rise to a tax or national insurance liability.

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
LIST OF APPROVED DUTIES FOR THE PAYMENT OF
TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES**

Each of the following duties shall be regarded as authorised by the ENPA:-

- Attendance at any
 - Exmoor National Park Authority meeting
 - Meeting of any Authority Committee or Sub Committee to which the Member is formally appointed by the Authority or specifically invited by the Chairperson
 - Meeting of the Planning Committee where the Member is not formally appointed but where the Member wishes to address the Committee on an item of business being considered at that meeting
 - Working group or panel meetings to which the Member has been appointed by the Authority
 - “ad hoc” meetings and site visits set up by the ENPA or its committees when attending as an appointed Member.
 - Association of National Park Authorities meetings as agreed by the Authority.
- The undertaking of any duty associated with the ENPA or its committees and sub-committees, including briefing sessions, site visits, meetings with outside bodies or individuals, by
 - the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Authority
 - the Chairperson of the Planning Committee
 - the Chairperson of the Standards Committee
 - the Chairperson of the Exmoor National Park Forum
- Attendance on Authority, committee and sub-committee tours of inspection and at Members' conferences or seminars where formally appointed by the ENPA
- Attendance as the ENPA's nominee or representative at meetings associated with approved bodies
- Attendance at Open Days, official ceremonies where the Member is performing a specific function
- Attendance at any approved conference where appointed by the ENPA or a committee or sub-committee.
- Any other attendance for which prior approval has been given by the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the ENPA

NB A duty cannot be approved, in retrospect, for the purpose of paying allowances.