

ITEM 10

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

19 April 2011

REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012-2017

Report of the Chief Executive

<p>Purpose of Report: To advise Members of the forthcoming review of the Exmoor National Park Management Plan.</p>

Business Plan action: The 2011/12 Business Plan includes an action to: “Review the National Park Management Plan and establish a **‘Partnership Plan for Exmoor National Park’** with support and engagement from local communities; businesses; landowners and managers; parish and town councils, key public agencies and other interested parties.”

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 Environment Act 1995, section 66(1) places a duty on the National Park Authority to publish a National Park Management Plan which formulates its policy for the management of the National Park and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to the National Park, and section 66(4) requires a National Park Authority to review the National Park Management Plan at intervals of not more than five years.

Financial and Risk Implications: The National Park Management Plan review is set as a priority for the current year and has a budget. While the majority of the review work will be undertaken by Authority staff, a modest level of external support is envisaged costing no more than £5,000. The main expenditure will be the publication and printing of the final Plan when it is adopted (programmed for April 2012).

RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that the Authority:

1. APPROVES the proposed process and timetable for the review of the Exmoor National Park Management Plan 2012-17.
2. DELEGATES further decisions on the structure and content of the Plan to the National Park Management Plan Implementation Board.
3. AUTHORISES the Chief Executive to enter into discussions with partners and other organisations in order to achieve commitment to the objectives and actions set out in the Plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Authority adopted the 2007-2012 Management Plan in 2007, following a fundamental review of the format of the Plan including a wide range of discussions and local consultations to define the 'special qualities' of Exmoor National Park and a vision to be achieved by 2020.
- 1.2 The main body of the 2007-12 Plan is organised under 8 themes. For each theme, the Plan sets out aspects where Exmoor has national and regional significance and an analysis of the trends and issues affecting the condition and future prospects for the aspect under consideration. There follows a statement of the desired outcome being sought (i.e. future vision); a series of objectives, and a number of detailed targets. A lead organisation is identified for each target and progress has been monitored over the past five years.
- 1.3 The 2007-12 Plan has been an effective way to engage a wide range of partner organisations in a series of practical actions to achieve National Park purposes and social and economic well-being of National Park communities. The Plan has been central to the work of the National Park Authority over the past four years and was the central consideration in a review of staff complement and reorganisation in 2007.
- 1.4 At the same time, lessons have been learned that will feed into the review for the new Plan from 2012 to 2017. For example:
 - The large number of targets set out in the 2007-12 Plan, while helpful in driving forward action, has reduced flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and opportunities.
 - The Plan is often perceived as being for the National Park Authority rather than a community plan for Exmoor National Park. This is despite the clear engagement of a wide range of partners in its development and the identification of a lead organisation for each target.
 - The Plan sought to prioritise particular targets by the relative contribution that they would make towards tackling the key challenges and priorities facing the environment, community and economy of the National Park over the Plan period. In practice, however, the prioritisation has only been partially effective in directing effort and resources.

2. FORMAT FOR THE NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012-17

- 2.1 For the forthcoming review, it is proposed that the 2012-17 Plan is based around the key challenges and priorities over the next five years with flexible action plans rather than fixed targets. Challenges and priorities will be identified by updating the background provided in the current plan under the 8 themes, analysis of the information collated through the Local Development Framework review, and through public consultation and engagement.
- 2.2 Following the initial phase to identify the challenges and priorities, the next phase will be to engage key partners in looking at how these challenges can be met and the role they can play in the action plans.
- 2.3 The title of the Plan is important in communicating its purpose. The formal title of 'National Park Management Plan' used in previous years does imply 'top down' management rather than its true purpose as the basis for coordinated action to tackle aspects of common concern. It is proposed, therefore, to use

the working title of '*Partnership Plan for Exmoor National Park*' with the intention that the Plan will feel more inclusive and encourage a wider ownership of the eventual actions. The title of the Plan will be a consideration in the consultation discussions.

- 2.5 The Partnership Plan also needs to be seen alongside the Local Development Framework for the National Park. It is proposed, therefore, that consultations should take place under the banner of '*Your Future Exmoor*' that has been used for the LDF consultations.
- 2.6 In preparing the Partnership Plan we will be drawing on the large amount of data and consultation responses that have already been compiled through the LDF work to date. The two documents should be seen as complementary and aimed in the same direction. The timetable for the LDF and the Partnership Plan review means that consultation can take place at the same time on both documents further reinforcing their complementarity.

3. REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMETABLE

- 3.1 The following process and timetable is proposed for the review of the Plan:

April – June 2011 – identification of challenges and priorities through:

- public consultation and engagement including Members, staff, partners, Consultative & Parish Forum, web survey, Park Life survey etc
- updating of the analysis set out in the 2007-12 Plan
- analysis of information collated through the 'Your Future Exmoor' LDF consultations

July – September 2011 – Set out the challenges and priorities and liaise with key partners to put together a series of draft action plans. Prepare the draft Plan

October – November 2011 – Consult on the draft Partnership Plan at the same time as consulting on the draft LDF core strategy

December 2011 – January 2012 – revise the Partnership Plan based on consultation responses

February 2012 – Final Plan to be presented to Authority meeting for adoption

Nigel Stone
Chief Executive
7 April 2011