

## Exmoor National Park investment opportunities

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	<b>Creating the conditions for growth –</b> Improving our infrastructure and services to underpin growth	<b>Maximising productivity and employment opportunities –</b> stimulating jobs and growth across the whole economy	<b>Capitalising on our Distinctiveness Assets –</b> utilising our distinctive assets to create opportunities for business growth and better jobs
Place	<p><b>Infrastructure for growth</b></p> <p><b>Transport and accessibility</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A358 improvements and Taunton bypass</li> <li>2. Key access corridors ( improvements and signage)</li> <li>3. West Somerset Railway link to Taunton</li> <li>4. Coastal and cross channel ferry infrastructure.</li> </ol> <p><b>Digital Infrastructure</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Superfast broadband coverage extension</li> <li>6. Improved mobile coverage delivering 4g connectivity to all settlements</li> </ol> <p><b>Sustainable Solutions for flood management</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Development of the Holnicote Flood Management and Upstream Thinking projects</li> </ol> <p><b>Energy Infrastructure</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Hydro, tidal range and tidal flow schemes.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Infrastructure and facilities to support more and better employment</b></p> <p><b>Enterprise Infrastructure</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Lynton &amp; Barnstaple Railway extension</li> </ol> <p><b>Strategic Employment Sites</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Grants to support appropriate building conversions (e.g. redundant farm buildings) for business use</li> <li>11. Provision of small scale work units</li> </ol> <p><b>Unlocking housing growth</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Stimulating housing provision (e.g. mixed developments).</li> </ol>	<p><b>Infrastructure and facilities needed to support higher value growth</b></p> <p><b>Maximising our environmental assets</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Place based enhancements to encourage increased visitation and dwell times.</li> <li>14. Access infrastructure</li> <li>15. Outdoor recreation development</li> <li>16. Landscape Management</li> </ol>
Business	<p><b>Creating a favourable business environment</b></p> <p>A simpler, more accessible, business support system tailored to our needs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creation of Exmoor Business Hub(s) – focus for training, advice and business support and provision of start up business units.</li> <li>2. Continuation and development of the Exmoor Hill Farm Network</li> <li>3. Exmoor Tourism capacity building</li> </ol>	<p><b>Achieving more sustainable and broadly based business growth.</b></p> <p><b>Reaching new markets</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Food and drink brand development and support for cluster markets</li> <li>5. New product development added value processing and links to markets.</li> <li>6. Support for tourism collaboration</li> </ol>	<p><b>Supporting higher value growth</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Business development grants to support and attract new high tech industry</li> </ol>
People	<p><b>Creating a responsive environment, where businesses and individuals can reach their potential</b></p> <p>Accessibility to education / employment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Extension of Pupil Employment Engagement Project (PEEP) across Exmoor</li> <li>2. Access to work placed learning for young people</li> </ol>	<p><b>Increasing employment, progression and workplace skills</b></p> <p>Improving workforce skills</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Traditional and rural skills development</li> <li>4. IT skills development</li> </ol>	<p><b>Creating a world class workforce to support higher value growth</b></p> <p>Enterprise and business skills</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Events and Activities business skills development</li> <li>Technical and higher level skills</li> <li>6. Small business skills</li> </ol>

## Place

1. **A358 improvements and Taunton bypass** Upgrading of the A358 to Taunton (linking to A303), Taunton bypass and improvements to A358 to Minehead to reduce journey times to Exmoor and increase accessibility.
2. **Key access corridors (improvements and signage)** Small scale improvements (e.g. junction improvements) and signage to Exmoor National Park along key strategic transport corridors including M5 (signage only), A358 (Taunton – Minehead), A396 (Tiverton – Dulverton), A361 / A399 (Tiverton – Blackmoor Gate).
3. **West Somerset Railway link to Taunton** The West Somerset Railway (heritage line) provides a leisurely access route to Minehead as a gateway to Exmoor National Park but can not be fully realised as such due to the limited connectivity between the mainline at Taunton and the heritage line starting at Bishops Lydeard. Options include running a passenger service between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard or improving bus connectivity and integration at Taunton.
4. **Coastal and cross channel ferry infrastructure** Exmoor's coastal access is currently under utilised. Floating jetties at key harbours (Minehead, Porlock Weir, Lynmouth and Combe Martin) would provide an infrastructure to allow greater leisure use of the coast with passenger cruises along the Exmoor coast. There are also opportunities to realise ambitions for a south Wales ferry link across the Bristol Channel.
5. **Superfast broadband coverage extension** The current Connecting Devon and Somerset project with additional support from the Rural Communities Broadband fund is scheduled to provide superfast coverage to 68% of the National Park by 2016. The Superfast Extension Programme will extend superfast (speeds above 24 MB/s) reach to 78% of the area. Following this our ambition is to provide a minimum coverage of 10MB/s across the National Park (circa 700 premises).
6. **Improved mobile coverage** To build on the initial work of the Mobile Infrastructure Project to provide 4g mobile coverage to all settlements on Exmoor.
7. **Development and expansion of the Holnicote Flood Management and Upstream Thinking projects** The Holnicote Flood Project and Upstream Thinking (Mires) Project are both examples of landscape scale projects to reduce flooding both within the area and further downstream whilst delivering further environmental benefits to communities. There is scope to further extend the work of both projects to new locations safeguarding communities and businesses and also creating employment opportunities during implementation.
8. **Hydro, tidal range and tidal flow schemes.** Hydro, tidal range and tidal flow schemes The geography of Exmoor makes it an ideal place to both test and deliver small scale water based renewable energy projects including hydro on fast flowing tram and rivers and tidal projects using both the follow (tidal turbines) and range (tidal lagoons) to harness energy from the sea. The North Devon Demonstration Zone off the Exmoor coast at Lynmouth will provide a site to support trials of tidal flow products, and other locations such as off of Hurlstone Point could also host schemes. In terms of tidal flow there is currently an initial proposal for a Minehead Lagoon which could also be an investment opportunity. There are numerous hydro sites which could be utilised with various means of support.
9. **Lynton & Barnstaple Railway extension** The Lynton and Barnstaple Railway was closed in 1935. Since then a 1 mile stretch has been restored operating as a heritage line between Woody Bay and Killington Lane. The next phase of the restoration will bring the line to the edge of the National Park at Blackmoor Gate before extending further to the east into Lynton. This will create a significant heritage attraction, as well as a viable alternative means to access the National Park, attracting a 100% growth in visitor numbers and projected local spend of an additional £2.9m annually.
10. **Support for appropriate building conversions (e.g. redundant farm buildings)** There are many redundant agricultural buildings across Exmoor that could be utilised as business premises for a variety of uses such as creative industries, home working and internet based businesses. A grant scheme would help to develop some of these buildings, providing additional employment opportunities both in the restoration / conversion and through attracting high worth individuals and support staff and new business opportunities.
11. **Provision of small scale work units** New business unit developments in recent years on and around Exmoor (e.g. Barle Enterprise Centre near Dulverton and adjacent to the new livestock market at Wheddon Cross) have provided a greater range of business units in the area. There is an opportunity to provide additional small scale units,

with flexible uses ranging from a lock up for small sole traders to incubation units for start up companies. Potential sites could include Porlock, Lynton, Exford and Wheddon Cross amongst others.

12. **Stimulating housing provision** (e.g. mixed developments). Development of a specific programme to target affordable housing development in remote rural areas, here standard models are less cost effective.
13. **Place based enhancements to encourage increased visitation and dwell times** there are investment opportunities to utilise heritage assets in a bid to develop further honey pot attractions – these will act as an attractor to new visitors and extend visitor dwell times in the area supporting a thriving visitor economy. An initial project on Exmoor would focus on Simonsbath, heart of the former Royal Forest, to present Simonsbath as a destination with a unique history and the ideal place to discover the heritage of Exmoor and the landscape of the central Royal forest.
14. **Access infrastructure** – Active recreation underpins much of the visitor economy of Exmoor, which is renowned for its well maintained Rights of Way network. Interventions could include funding for new infrastructure such as circular village walks, easy access trails, long distant routes for walking, riding and cycling etc as well as promotional work and business engagement to sustain interest (e.g. recent work to reinvigorate the Coleridge Way could be replicated for the Two Moors Way between Dartmoor and Exmoor).
15. **Outdoor recreation development** – In relation to the above development of outdoor recreation products such as managed mountain bike trails, family cycles trails etc. Examples opportunities include the development of a Forest Park within the Crown Estate’s Dunster Estate, further recreational enhancements at Wimbleball Country Park and development of the proposed Steam Coast Trail cycle route.
16. **Landscape Management** The landscape of Exmoor has been created and managed through traditional land management practices and this forms the landscape that inspires over 2m visitor days a year. A capital grants scheme to support traditional landscape management would not only maintain and enhance the landscape but also safeguard and grow employment opportunities for contractors and land management professionals.

## Business

1. **Creation of Exmoor Business Hubs** Business hubs would be small developments at key accessible sites providing a single point of focus for training, advice, business support, start up support etc. Hubs could provide space for satellite surgeries from support networks (e.g. tourism, farming and business associations, and business support services such as financial and legal firms in addition to training space and access to resources.
2. **Continuation and development of the Exmoor Hill Farm Network** The Exmoor Hill Farm Network has been developed following the initial RDPE funded hill farm project. Further support is required to build the capacity of the network to deliver tangible, effective and targeted bespoke advice and support for hill farmers on Exmoor including training, business support networking etc.
3. **Capacity building support for Exmoor Tourism** Tourism is the single largest component of the Exmoor economy. It is a complex industry given its dominance / size being made up of several small businesses. With Local Authority support for tourism decreasing funding is required to further build the capacity of the industry to collaborate and lead on marketing, promotion, and sustainable tourism development. Support could be in the form of support for a fixed term development worker or seed funding to make structural changes to the way tourism is supported in the area.
4. **Food and drink brand development and support for cluster markets** Exmoor has a relatively strong brand which can be better utilised to add value and reach new markets with Exmoor produce. Investment is required to support local producers in adopting and fully utilising the Exmoor brand. Further support could be targeted at developing a spoke and hub approach to local produce with a central point for ordering and collating local produce allowing smaller producers to combine their efforts to provide viable supplies and economies of scale to link with larger markets around Exmoor (e.g. Bridgwater, Taunton, Tiverton, and Barnstaple).

5. **New product development added value processing and links to markets.** Small scale initiatives have proven markets for new products ranging from Exmoor Caviar to trialling shell fish harvesting off the Exmoor coast. Other initiatives include marketing both wool and meat from Exmoor Horn sheep as a premium product. Investment (both capital and revenue) would allow for new products to be explored and brought to market and or additional local processing to be completed adding value to niche products.
6. **Support for tourism collaboration** (links to 3 above). Business tourism and overseas tourism are two significant growth markets. The small domestic nature of much of Exmoor's tourism means it can not easily meet the demands of these markets. Initial revenue support to bring together businesses, co-ordinating the offer and creating distinctive packages would be a cost effective means of meeting these markets. For example there are few large hotels in the area to offer conference facilities, but there are several well equipped village halls surrounded by a multitude of smaller accommodation providers which could be packaged together for business tourism. Likewise we have distinctive offers for the overseas market but some support is required to package these into single saleable product packages. Funding could build on work initiated with Visit England and Visit Britain in National Parks through initiatives such as Countryside is GREAT and take a joint approach with Dartmoor.
7. **Business development grants** Exmoor is already home to thriving enterprises specialising in hi tech productions such as scientific instruments and animal electronic Identification Devices which are exported worldwide. Business support grant to attract new investment and expand existing operations would help to realise the potential offered through such companies.

## People

1. **Extension of Pupil Employment Engagement Project** This project has been run successfully in North Devon and Torridge to provide early contact between secondary school pupils and employers developing employability and transferable skills, giving a real world context for learning, improving links between employers and schools and showcasing the variety of job opportunities. Extending this across Exmoor would help to provide added confidence to those wishing to gain local employment after education.
2. **Access to work placed learning for young people** The rural nature of Exmoor presents particular challenges in providing work placed learning such as apprenticeships owing to transport difficulties and the seasonal nature of many roles which don't fit with the standard model. There are opportunities to create bespoke packages and opportunities with increased capacity through a funded project officer.
3. **Traditional Skills Development** There is a need to provide bespoke training in traditional rural skills such as traditional building techniques and land management practices. There is a growing gap between the availability of skilled trade's people with traditional skills and the need for such trades people to maintain traditional properties etc.
4. **IT Skills Development** Whilst many people actively engage with the digital era there is a sizeable proportion of people lacking basic IT skills which are becoming more and more essential for even very small home based businesses. Interventions could include the capital costs of creating an IT hub for Exmoor with training suite etc as well as revenue costs to deliver training courses and resources.
5. **Events and activities business skills** There are unique opportunities on Exmoor to provide higher value experiences through outdoor activities and events / festivals. A revenue project could deliver not only the core skills required for either event management or outdoor activity (including instructors / guiding qualifications) but also business development skills to help people develop sustainable business models.
6. **Small business skills** Exmoor is dominated by micro businesses include a high proportion of self employment and sole traders. Such micro businesses are often in need of support in core business skills to sustain and develop their businesses in areas such as accountancy, employment law, finance and business planning. This needs to be delivered locally so as to be relevant and accessible and can be linked with the business hubs outlined in "Business 1".