

## **Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2018-22**

### **Final Draft post-Consultation**

**December 2017**

*Changes to the draft Plan resulting from the consultation are shown as tracked changes, with references to the consultation comments they respond to in comment boxes. These are detailed in the accompanying consultation response schedule. Where there are no references given, these are editorial changes by officers.*

*This Final Draft Plan will go to the Exmoor National Park Authority meeting 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 for adoption.*

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#### Where People, Place and Prosperity come together:

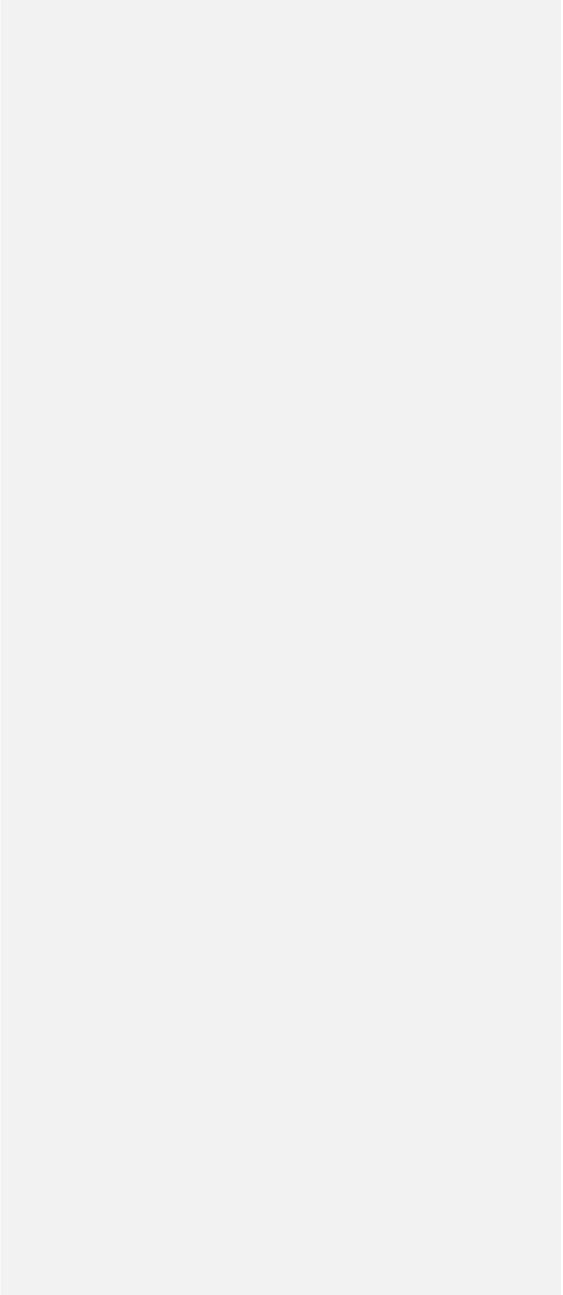
- Moorland
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**Foreword from ENPA Chairman & Chief Executive**

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## Our Vision for Exmoor National Park

- Exmoor's distinct and diverse **landscape** is maintained and enhanced, with an increased awareness of its importance.
- There is an increased extent of **wildlife habitats** and linkages between them, more habitats are in good condition and populations of valued native plants and animals are thriving.
- There is an enhanced knowledge of the **historic environment** of Exmoor; increased awareness of the value of its **cultural heritage**, and the most important historical sites, settlements, buildings and features are conserved and their historical character retained.
- Exmoor's **natural resources** are used sustainably, and the full benefits of its ecosystems are understood and harnessed. Pollution is minimised, air and water are high quality, and soils are conserved and in good condition.
- We are closer to achieving a **carbon-neutral National Park** to help mitigate climate change, and have introduced measures to adapt to changes in climate that are already happening
- There is increased **public awareness and enjoyment** of the National Park; a warm welcome and **high quality experience** for everyone seeking inspiration, tranquillity and active outdoor recreation, leading to greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life, and a wider appreciation of the contribution that National Parks make to quality of life ~~and an increased sense of health and wellbeing~~.
- Exmoor's **communities** retain a continuity of connection with the land; and communities are taking the lead in shaping future development to meet their needs and aspirations including access to services, housing, communications and infrastructure.
- There is a **strong, diverse and resilient economy** where farming, forestry, land management and rural enterprises are playing a lead role in conserving and enhancing Exmoor's special qualities; producing high quality food and other produce, and conserving local breeds. There is a sustainable tourism and recreation economy in harmony with local communities and the environment

**Commented [CR1]:** No changes to the Vision to be consistent with adopted Local Plan

**The qualities that make Exmoor special are:**

- Large areas of open moorland providing a sense of remoteness, wildness and tranquillity rare in southern Britain
- A distinct and diverse landscape of softly rounded hills and ridges, with heather and grass moors, spectacular coast, deeply incised wooded valleys, high sea cliffs, fast flowing streams, traditional upland farms and characteristic beech hedgebanks
- A timeless landscape mostly free from intrusive development, with striking views inside and out of the National Park, and where the natural beauty of Exmoor and its dark skies can be appreciated
- A mosaic of habitats supporting a great diversity of wildlife including herds of wild red deer, *nationally important bird populations*, rich lichen communities, rare fritillary butterflies, bats, and other species uncommon in southern Britain
- A complex and rich historic landscape that reflects how people have lived in, exploited and enjoyed Exmoor over the past 8000 years, including burial mounds on ridges, discrete stone settings, ancient farmsteads and settlements, picturesque villages and historic estates
- A deeply rural community closely linked to the land with strong local traditions and ways of life
- A farmed landscape with locally distinctive breeds such as Red Devon cattle; Devon Closewool, and Exmoor Horn sheep, and herds of free living Exmoor ponies
- An exceptional rights of way network, with paths that are often rugged and narrow in character, along with extensive areas of open country and permitted access, providing superb opportunities for walking, riding, cycling *and other recreational activities*
- A landscape that provides inspiration and enjoyment to visitors and residents alike

**Commented [CR2]:** No changes to the special qualities to be consistent with adopted Local Plan

## Our Ambitions

<b>PEOPLE</b> <b>Exmoor for All: where everyone feels welcome</b>	<b>PLACE</b> <b>Inspiring Landscapes: diverse and beautiful, rich in wildlife and history</b>	<b>PROSPERITY</b> <b>Working landscapes: thriving communities and a vibrant local economy</b>
<p>More people enjoy Exmoor, are inspired, get involved, and learn about its special qualities</p> <p>Exmoor has a first class rights of way network. The paths, open access and recreational facilities are enhanced to offer more and better experiences for people who want to explore and enjoy the National Park</p> <p>The tourism economy is vibrant, <u>innovative</u> and growing, and celebrates Exmoor's distinctive character</p>	<p>The natural beauty, distinct character and diversity of Exmoor's landscapes are celebrated, conserved and enhanced</p> <p>Exmoor is somewhere you can experience tranquility, <u>openness</u>, wildness and dark night skies. Development is sensitive to the National Park's special qualities and conserves its scenic quality and setting</p> <p>Exmoor's historic environment is better understood, cared for and protected. Its cultural heritage and rural traditions are valued for their place in telling <del>our</del> <u>Exmoor's</u> story and shaping <del>our</del> <u>its</u> future</p> <p>Exmoor is <u>richer</u> in wildlife. Habitats are in good condition, <u>expanded</u>, <u>connected</u>, and support a greater abundance of species</p>	<p>Exmoor's land-based communities and businesses are supported to provide healthy food and good quality timber, and ensure that Exmoor's landscapes continue to be well managed and cared for</p> <p>The local economy is more sustainable with increased innovation, entrepreneurship and improved economic prospects</p> <p>Exmoor's local communities are thriving, with strong connections to the National Park</p> <p>Exmoor is celebrated for the value it brings to the region and nationally</p>

### Where People, Place and Prosperity come together:

Moorland	Farmland	Woodland	Rivers and streams	Coast	Settlements & the built environment
<p><u>The extent of Exmoor's open moorland is retained and restored. The</u></p>	<p>Exmoor's distinctive farmed landscapes continue to be conserved and enhanced as part of an active farming system</p>	<p>Exmoor's woodlands are diverse, well-managed, productive and enhance the natural</p>	<p>Exmoor's rivers, streams <u>and their associated valleys and water resources</u> are in good</p>	<p>Exmoor's stunning coast is better understood,</p>	<p>The local distinctiveness and historic character of Exmoor's settlements and built environment</p>

**Commented [CR4]:** Exmoor Society (28)

**Commented [CR5]:** Individual (74)

**Commented [CR3]:** Economic Development Officers meeting - Is there something to add around tourism innovation as an ambition here in its own right tying in with digital utilisation, etc.

**Commented [CR6]:** RSPB (29)

**Commented [CR9]:** Exmoor Society

**Commented [CR7]:** ENPA Members agreed to change the wording to 'restored' rather than 'expanded'

habitats within it are enhanced and the area and quality of heather is increased. Overall levels of open moorland are retained. The loss of heather is halted and reversed	delivering a healthy natural and cultural environment	beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park	condition. Their native flora and fauna thriving, and flood risk is reduced	enjoyed and conserved	are conserved and enhanced
<b>Monitoring and research:</b> Our knowledge and understanding of Exmoor's special qualities is increased through monitoring and research to inform future decision making and delivery of our Ambitions					

**Commented [CR10]:** Exmoor Rivers and streams group (37)

**Commented [CR8]:** Nature Conservation Advisory Panel (31), Moorland Board, Joint SOG meeting

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## Purpose of the Partnership Plan

Exmoor is many things to many people. To some a home and to others a livelihood, an adventure playground or a place to escape. It is also an area full of resources and opportunities to provide benefits beyond its boundary.

For everyone, though, it is a special place, protected for the nation as a National Park. This five-year Partnership Plan establishes the Ambitions and strategies required to maintain the special qualities of the area. The Plan does not seek to preserve the area in aspic but balance the needs of different interests now and in the future. It's a true Partnership Plan, developed in consultation with partner organisations, communities, visitors and businesses. And while the National Park Authority facilitates the Plan, we rely on our partners to help bring it to life.

## What is it?

- It's a statutory plan that the National Park Authority is required to prepare every five years
- The fundamental basis for the Plan, and for the work of the National Park Authority, are the National Park statutory purposes and duty
- It describes the special qualities of the National Park, and sets out a long-term Vision for what we want to achieve

- It identifies the opportunities and challenges facing Exmoor that we need to respond to
- It sets out the Ambitions that we will focus on over the five-year timeframe of the Plan
- It reflects the Government's vision and priorities for all National Parks and demonstrates how Exmoor can help deliver these<sup>1</sup>

## Who is it for?

- It's for the whole National Park, not just the National Park Authority
- It's for our partners. The Plan can only be achieved if we work together to deliver it. This involves a wide range of partners who all have an important role to play
- It's for Exmoor's land and property owners and managers, without whose support and co-operation the special qualities of the National Park would not be maintained and enhanced
- It's for the people who live and work here: Exmoor's local communities and businesses
- It's for the wider public. The Plan sets out what is important about Exmoor and what is being done to conserve and enhance the National Park
- The sections that follow are for everyone who has an interest in the National Park, the National Park Authority, partner organisations, local communities and businesses, and the wider public: it's our Plan

Commented [CR11]: Exmoor Rivers and Streams Group (40,56)

<sup>1</sup> Government Vision for English National Parks and the Broads; Government's 8 Point Plan for England's National Parks

This Plan is for everyone who cares about Exmoor, the place, its communities and the benefits the National Park provides to the nation

### How has it been prepared?

- It's based on evidence from the State of the Park Report
- It's informed by our public opinion survey
- It's been developed with our partnership groups
- It will has been consulted on with the public

### How is the Plan used?

- As the basis for the National Park Authority Business Plan, guiding our work priorities and resource allocation
- To develop National Park Authority policies and decision making
- To bring together a wide range of people and organisations around a set of common goals
- To co-ordinate action amongst partners and develop projects where we can work together on issues of shared interest
- To draw in funding to deliver the outcomes identified
- To monitor progress against our Vision and Ambitions



**How the Plan fits together (Figure 1)**

**Commented [CR12]:** NFU - Add arrow to feedback monitoring into Delivery Programme and actions so that activities can be constantly improved and refined (39)

### How does it fit with other plans and strategies?

- It's the single most important document for the National Park
- It sits within the context of international and national legislation, policy and strategy and does not override any other specific legislative requirements or consent processes
- It is accompanied by the State of the Park Report which examines the issues and trends affecting the National Park's special qualities, and provides the evidence base for the Partnership Plan
- It provides the framework for other plans and strategies such as the Local Plan which sets out the policies for determining planning applications
- It gives effect to National Park purposes
- It reflects public views and opinions following consultation
- It is implemented through a separate Delivery Programme



*How the Plan links to other plans and strategies (Figure 2)*

## Exmoor National Park: Our Story

The story of Exmoor begins millions of years ago with the movement of tectonic plates. From that erupted the genesis of the landscape we see today: raw material that was shaped and reshaped by geological and geomorphological processes, as well as human intervention.

It's easy to forget that Exmoor is in no small part an environment made by people. But millennia of farming, mining, fuel-making, settlement, defence and recreation have left their mark, forming the unique landscape that is now Exmoor National Park.

At just 693 square kilometres, the National Park is one of the UK's smallest. But what it lacks in size it more than makes up for in beauty and variety, thanks to spectacular coastline, expansive moorland, steep wooded valleys with fast flowing rivers and streams and rolling farmland.

The value of Exmoor is not only aesthetic. From a conservation point of view, the moorlands and oak woodlands are designated internationally for the habitats and species they support. And our archaeological and cultural heritage is remarkable: new sites and discoveries are frequent in the National Park, and we enjoy a rich tradition of local art, literature, music and food.

Then there are the night skies, which really are out of this world. We're officially an International Dark Sky Reserve, thanks to the wondrous starry roof that's visible when the sun goes down.

These special qualities go a long way to explaining why Exmoor inspires more than two million visits every year. Once people are here, our fantastic rights of way network and open access land ensure they have every opportunity to get up close and personal with a landscape that is without rival.

That's what makes Exmoor so special: the people, the place, and their shared prosperity.

### Some of Exmoor's highlights

- Wild, windswept open moorland, one of only three upland areas in southern Britain
- Europe's very first International Dark Sky Reserve
- The tallest tree in England
- The highest cliffs in England
- 55km of stunning coastline, part of the Bristol Channel with the second highest and lowest tides in the world
- Almost 250 species of bird and over 1,000 different flowering plants and grasses
- The highest number One of the best places to see ~~of~~ wild red deer in England
- Free-living native Exmoor ponies, perfectly adapted to the upland conditions of Exmoor
- Nearly 10,000 records on Exmoor's Historic Environment Record, representing human activity stretching back 8,000 years
- One of the first National Parks in England to gain the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism
- The longest stretch of coastal woodland in England and Wales with rare whitebeam trees unique to Exmoor

Commented [CR14]: RSPB (41)

Commented [CR13]: Exmoor Rivers and Streams Group (42)

- Over 1,600 veteran trees throughout the National Park, and the highest beech plantation in England
- Over 1,300 km of paths and bridleways and around 17,600 hectares of open access land to enjoy
- ~~A place for adventure or quiet relaxation~~ One of the most tranquil places in England

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### National Park designation and statutory purposes

Exmoor National Park was designated in 1954, in recognition of its significance and value at a national level, and is one of a family of 15 National Parks in the UK. The National Park designation reflected its *'spectacular coastline, fine heather, bracken and grass moorland, beautiful wooded valleys, antiquities in great profusion... including stone circles, barrows, hut circles as well as earthworks, notable wildlife and is first rate country for motoring, and for walking and riding'* (the 1947 Hobhouse Report).

Exmoor National Park Authority has the following statutory purposes:

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

Where there is conflict between these two purposes that cannot be reconciled, the first purpose takes precedence (known as 'the Sandford Principle').

The National Park Authority leads action to achieve these purposes, and, while doing so, must ***seek to foster social and economic well-being of the National Park's communities.***

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<sup>2</sup> Section 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Section 62(2) of the Environment Act (1995).

<sup>3</sup> DEFRA (2005) Guidance Note: *Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the*

### Responsibilities of public bodies regarding National Parks

'Relevant Authorities' should have regard to National Park purposes when making decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within the National Park. Authorities and public bodies must show they have fulfilled this duty.<sup>2</sup> Where their activities outside National Parks might have an impact inside them, the Government says they should have regard to National Park purposes.<sup>3</sup>

*Norfolk and Suffolk Broads* DEFRA, London (Paras 4-8) and Natural England (2011) *England's statutory landscape designations: a practical guide to your duty of regard*

## Changing landscapes: the challenges and opportunities facing Exmoor

The UK faces a period of unprecedented change as it leaves the European Union. This Plan is written in the year after Brexit and so the future direction of national policy and funding is still to be determined. While this brings uncertainty, it also provides great opportunities. As a consequence, we have deliberately kept this Partnership Plan broad in scope, setting out what we want to achieve, but leaving flexibility for how it will be delivered. This allows us to respond to the changes and opportunities to come.

There are many forces for change affecting Exmoor's landscapes, some of them global, others very localised in effect. While we may not have control over all of these impacts, we need to understand and be aware of these changes so that we can respond and adapt to them for the future. Details of the trends and changes affecting Exmoor's special qualities are set out in the State of the Park Report that accompanies this Partnership Plan and the Landscape Character Assessment. A summary is given below.

*Natural processes and climate change:* changing weather patterns affecting wildlife and habitats, increasing erosion and flood risk, and bringing new pests, diseases and possibly favouring invasive non-native species.

*Farming, Forestry and Land Management:* changes to farm practice on Exmoor including the numbers and breeds of grazing stock, levels of swaling (burning) on the moors, under-managed woodlands, and changes to how conservation funding has been

targeted increased targeting of conservation efforts on the most important wildlife sites, driven primarily by European and national agricultural and environmental policy. As we leave the EU there is an opportunity to develop more locally tailored agri-environment schemes.

*Development-led change:* this includes new agricultural barns required to take stock off the moors in winter to comply with agri-environment funding rules; infrastructure such as masts and antennae to deliver broadband and mobile phone coverage; the capacity for new housing new housing to meet the housing needs of local communities.

*Tourism and recreation-led change:* while there are great opportunities to promote enjoyment of the National Park although and the number of visitors to Exmoor can generally be accommodated without significant impact, there are some particular pressures at popular countryside visitor locations and settlements where pressures need to be carefully managed. There are great opportunities to promote enjoyment of the National Park and its special qualities.

*Changes outside the National Park:* growth and development in areas surrounding Exmoor affect its setting and views, particularly prominent structures such as communication masts and large-scale wind turbines that are located some distance away but can still be seen from the high moors. Light pollution from surrounding areas (including the lights along the South Wales coast) also reduces the outstanding quality of dark night skies.

Commented [CR15]: NFU (50)

*Incremental and cumulative change:* some of the changes are quite subtle and happen over a long time period, and therefore are not immediately obvious, such as the loss of heather as bracken, gorse and scrub take over. Small-scale changes to buildings in settlements (which are often not controlled by planning) such as use of uPVC windows, highways signage and street furniture can also have an incremental impact on the built environment and street scene. Other changes can be 'hidden' in the landscape, such as the increase in forestry tracks. ~~A particular issue highlighted through the pPublic opinion survey consultation particularly highlighted was the cumulative effect impact of game shoots infrastructure and management, where game crop cover, feeders, holding pens, numbers of birds and numbers of shooting days were seen as having a cumulative effect.~~

*Valuing our Exmoor's natural and cultural capital:* Exmoor is a working landscape. The natural and cultural environments provide many public benefits including supporting livelihoods, food and timber production, and clean water and air. They also provide a basis for recreation and leisure, enhancing our health and wellbeing and rooting us in place and history. Understanding the different services and benefits that the environment provides will help us to value these better, and make the case for investment to maintain and enhance them for the future.

**Commented [CR16]:** GESA (49)

**Commented [CR17]:** Not picked up previously when amended references to 'our' following member steering group

## PEOPLE

### Exmoor for All: where everyone feels welcome

We have a simple ambition for Exmoor National Park: that everyone enjoys and nurtures it, whether visitors or residents, and benefits from its special qualities. Whether they come from near or far, and whatever they do while they're here, we want the area to enhance their wellbeing, encourage their sense of identity and adventure, and facilitate their enjoyment of all that Exmoor has to offer.

At the moment, Exmoor welcomes more than 1.34 million visitors each year, equating to more than around 2.15 million visitor days. These are figures of which we're justifiably proud, and we're even more delighted that 99% of visitors surveyed rate their experience here as "good" or "very good".

The majority of local people who responded to the public opinion survey felt that the special qualities capture what is important about Exmoor to them.

This is what we're building on over the five years ahead: continuing to care for a place that is loved, cherished and celebrated by the people who live here, and who visit. A place that can shape lives, and society. A place for people, whatever their age or background, and wherever they come from.

**Commented [CR18]:** Exmoor Rivers and Streams Group  
(56)

### *The Exmoor experience*

**Ambition: More people enjoy Exmoor, are inspired, get involved, and learn about its special qualities**

Exmoor's unique environment nourishes mind and body. Whether it is through physical activity, cultural exploration, or simply enjoying the peace and tranquillity, this place has so much to offer.

We want as many people as possible to benefit from the National Park. But we know there are sectors of society that we don't currently reach. Nationally, 12% of children never visit the countryside, and there are fewer visitors to Exmoor aged 25 to 44: a 'missing generation'. What's more, we long to share this amazing landscape with people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

National Parks are national assets, but there are real barriers for some people to access them. These include practical issues such as lack of transport, and societal ones such as lack of experience or confidence to explore the countryside.

Our task is simple: enable as many people as possible to feel connected to Exmoor's landscape, whether they come from near or far. That way, they can learn more about the National Park, perhaps get involved through volunteering, acquire new skills, have fun, and help to maintain Exmoor's special qualities.

### **Our Strategy:**

- **Be inspired:** people have a range of high-quality opportunities to learn about and understand Exmoor from digital and printed information and interpretation, formal and informal education, attending events or visiting National Park Centres and other information centres
- **Get involved:** more people volunteer, enabling deeper experiences and connections with Exmoor and supporting National Park purposes
- **Be connected:** more people are enabled to experience, enjoy and understand Exmoor, particularly young people and people from diverse backgrounds. Individual health and wellbeing is enhanced as a result of engaging with the National Park

*Caption: Exmoor – a place to dream, discover and explore*

### ***Well-managed recreation and access***

**Ambition: Exmoor has a first class rights of way network. Our paths, open access and recreational facilities are enhanced to offer more and better experiences for people who want to explore and enjoy the National Park**

Exmoor has a fantastic network of paths for people to explore, with 1,300km of public rights of way and permitted paths, many of them wild and rugged, along with 17,595 hectares of open access land. This provides unrivalled opportunities for walking, riding, cycling, or just enjoying the view. With the highest cliffs in mainland Britain, Exmoor's dramatic coastline also makes it an ideal spot for watersports including coasteering, kayaking or surfing.

Put simply, in one small area you've got all the ingredients for a great adventure.

All this is possible thanks to the hard work and investment that goes into maintaining our very high-quality network of paths and recreational facilities. Exmoor leads the way in the proportion of rights of way that are open and considered easy to use, but it is no easy task. Keeping them in top condition requires significant levels of resource each year. Moreover, the effects of a changing climate, with longer growing periods for vegetation and increasing erosion from heavier, more intense rainfall, means that keeping the network in good condition is more challenging than ever.

#### **Our strategy:**

- **Easy-to-use paths:** footpaths and other rights of way are maintained in very good condition
- **More opportunities to enjoy Exmoor:** new and enhanced routes and other recreational facilities are created
- **Well-managed popular sites, big events and activities:** public enjoyment is enhanced while minimising negative impacts

Caption: Exmoor's first class rights of way network includes wild & rugged paths for adventurous exploration and accessible routes for quiet enjoyment. Long distant walking routes include the iconic South West Coast Path, walking in the footsteps of the Romantic Poets along the Coleridge Way or crossing two moors in one along the Two Moors Way

Caption: 96% of rights of way are open and considered easy to use, the highest of all National Parks

### Thriving tourism built on sustainability

**Ambition: The tourism economy is vibrant, innovative and growing, and celebrates Exmoor's distinctive character**

Tourism is of fundamental importance to Exmoor. It contributes to the economic and social vibrancy of our communities.

With that in mind, we seek to sustainably extend the value that tourism brings to the local economy, making sensitive use of the National Park's special qualities and retaining high levels of visitor satisfaction.

Currently 99% of visitors to Exmoor rate the overall quality of the experience as high or very high. This is a fantastic achievement for everyone involved, and something of which we are justifiably proud. Visitor numbers have remained steady over the last few years, but the number of visitor days is increasing, with more people staying for a holiday or short break, bringing added value to the local economy. There has also been a welcome increase in visitors coming out of season in late autumn and early spring.

Now, we want to build on our success, enabling local businesses to benefit from Exmoor's National Park status. This includes continuing to build the Exmoor brand, to celebrate its special qualities and establish it as a premium destination that people come to year after year. One particular focus is marketing premium goods and services like delectable Exmoor food and drink, which further boosts the local economy. And thanks to the CareMoor for

Exmoor scheme this yields a direct benefit to the conservation of the National Park's special qualities.

#### Our Strategy:

- **Destination Exmoor:** the Exmoor brand is used to raise awareness of the National Park, drive a high quality of provision. This helps lengthen the season and build the capacity and resilience of the tourism industry
- **Exmoor Food and Drink:** Exmoor's reputation as a great food destination grows even greater, with an increase in added value from local food and other produce
- **CareMoor for Exmoor:** businesses and visitors contribute to keeping Exmoor special, helping to conserve and enhance the National Park's special qualities

Caption: The tourism industry brings around £115 million into the local economy and is one of the main sources of employment

**Commented [CR19]:** Economic Development Officers meeting - Is there something to add around tourism innovation as an ambition here in its own right tying in with digital utilisation, etc.

**Commented [CR20]:** Economic Development Officers meeting - Requires definition – e.g. building resilience of industry not necessarily more bed spaces. Also should refer to raising quality.

## **PLACE**

### **Inspiring Landscapes: diverse and beautiful, rich in wildlife and history**

National Parks are national treasures, the jewels in the crown of our beautiful countryside, cherished at home and admired overseas.

We want Exmoor National Park to continue as a living, vibrant landscape of compelling natural beauty, diverse wildlife, and rich cultural heritage.

That way, we can help the government fulfil its ambition for the UK to have the best natural environment in the world, and for us to leave the planet in a better condition for future generations.

We'll help Exmoor play its part in achieving this aim. By celebrating it as a unique place, we will encourage stewardship of it, ensuring it is nurtured and its value recognised.

### ***Celebrated landscapes***

**Ambition: The natural beauty, distinct character and diversity of Exmoor's landscapes are celebrated, conserved and enhanced**

Exmoor is remarkable, even among other National Parks, for the very diversity of its landscapes. It is justly famous not only for windswept, open, heather moors, but also dramatic high coastal cliffs, seascapes, intimate wooded valleys and attractive enclosed farmland.

Exmoor is one of the few upland areas in southern Britain, offering far-reaching views across the National Park and to surrounding areas including the seascape of the Bristol Channel. The mix of geology, landform, climate and human interaction create distinct habitats rich in wildlife, and full of clues in the landscape as to how people lived and worked here over generations. The wild herds of red deer and free-roaming Exmoor ponies are iconic parts of the Exmoor experience: they are what every visitor wants to see.

Interspersed through the landscape are the towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads which are themselves a part of Exmoor's charm. The presence of several large estates has had a significant effect on the landscape. Some continue to this day, but others can only be glimpsed through relics of designed landscapes or model farms, providing a window to the past. The many traditional farms on Exmoor that have been in the same family for generations create the characteristic patchwork of fields separated by hedgebanks. Increasingly Recent trends show that these farms are expanding, or

being sold off as smallholdings or for equestrian use, which changes their character.

It is the natural beauty of these landscapes that justifies Exmoor's status as a National Park, and is the primary draw for visitors. Exmoor's magnificent landscapes have changed over time and will continue to change. We want to ensure these beautiful places continue to be looked after, celebrated and understood.

#### **Our Strategy:**

- **Conserve character:** Exmoor's diverse landscapes and seascapes are maintained, with local enhancements to their character
- **Celebrate natural beauty:** people experience and understand Exmoor's beautiful landscapes
- **Be inspired:** we tell the stories of Exmoor's natural and cultural heritage and how they have evolved and changed over time

Caption: 85% of visitors to Exmoor are motivated to visit by the landscape

Commented [CR21]: Exmoor Society

**Wilderness and tranquillity with dark night skies, and sensitive development**

**Ambition:** Exmoor is somewhere you can experience tranquillity, openness, wildness and dark night skies. Development is sensitive to the National Park's special qualities and conserves its scenic quality and setting

National Parks are our breathing spaces, and in Exmoor you can take a break from the bustle of busy modern lives to refresh your spirit and recharge your batteries. Exmoor is one of the few places in southern Britain where you can enjoy remoteness, wildness and tranquillity. The expansive, open moors are wild and exhilarating, and create a sense of unrestrained freedom.

Exmoor has an unrivalled diversity of landscape by day and a stellar sky-scape by night. We are proud that Exmoor was designated as the first Dark Sky Reserve in Europe. The National Park is remarkably free from light pollution, providing unrivalled views of our spectacular starry skies.

~~Exmoor's magnificent landscapes have changed over time and will continue to change.~~ Within the National Park, planning policies help to ensure that necessary development can be accommodated, while protecting the essential character of this very special place. However, Exmoor is not an island, and growth and development in surrounding areas can affect the setting of the National Park or even long-distant views from Exmoor. Land management practices, and some recreational activities, if not managed sympathetically,

can detract from the scenic quality and tranquillity of the National Park. We want to ensure that development, land management, and recreation are sensitive to Exmoor's special qualities.

**Our Strategy:**

- **Protect wildness:** Exmoor's wild character is preserved
- **Celebrate natural beauty:** the tranquil nature of Exmoor is protected, facilitating the simple, quiet enjoyment of the National Park
- **Discover dark skies:** more people are encouraged to discover the magic of Exmoor's dark night skies, and it is protected from light pollution
- **Sympathetic development:** development within and affecting the National Park enhances landscape and seascape character and the built environment, utilising high-quality design

Caption: Exmoor is one of the best places in the country to enjoy star-gazing, with 92% pristine dark skies and minimal light pollution

Commented [CR24]: Exmoor society

Commented [CR22]: Exmoor Society

Commented [CR23]: Moved to previous Ambition - Exmoor Society

## Valued historic environment and cultural heritage

**Ambition: Exmoor's historic environment is better understood, cared for and protected. Its cultural heritage and rural traditions are valued for their place in telling ~~our~~ Exmoor's story and shaping ~~our~~ its future**

There is something undeniably compelling about our connection with the past. Whether it's visiting an ancient burial site, exploring the rooms of a historic building, witnessing a local custom, or understanding the rhythm of a traditional rural way of life, it gives us a sense of where we've come from and of our own place in time.

With the seemingly ever-increasing pace of change, it feels more important than ever to preserve a link between the past and present. Knowledge of our history encourages us to take a longer view, even as we look forward.

Exmoor's historic landscapes provide a record of how people have lived here for thousands of years. Exmoor is particularly important because there are so many undisturbed archaeological sites and monuments and probably more to be discovered. We need to ensure that the whole of our historic environment is understood, well-managed, and better protected. We also want to ensure that Exmoor's cultural landscapes, customs and traditions are more widely known and valued. Further research will contribute greatly to our understanding of the past.

## Our Strategy:

- **Increase understanding:** the whole of our historic environment is better understood and Exmoor's cultural landscapes, customs and traditions are more widely known and valued
- **Nurture heritage:** our historic environment is well-managed and better protected
- **Get involved:** more people are involved in learning about and conserving Exmoor's historic environment and cultural heritage
- **Build heritage skills:** the skills, knowledge and traditions that have shaped Exmoor's landscapes are kept alive. Innovation ensures they are sustained in ways that are relevant to the contemporary world

Caption: Exmoor has 200 scheduled monuments, 740 listed buildings, 16 conservation areas, 2 registered parks and gardens and over 11,000 entries on the Historic Environment Record

Commented [CR25]: Individual (74)

## Rich in wildlife

**Ambition: Exmoor is richer in wildlife. Habitats are in good condition, expanded, connected, and support a greater abundance of species**

Exmoor's spectacular moorland, rich oak woodland, rolling farmland, clear streams and dramatic coastline form a mosaic of habitats including heath, blanket bog, ancient woodlands, species-rich grassland, and high quality freshwater and marine habitats. This is one of the key attractions for people visiting the National Park, and is also highly valued by people living and working here.

Notable species include 16 of the 17 breeding British bat species found in the UK, otters, dormice, and some of the UK's rarest butterflies including the heath and high brown fritillary. A wide range of birds can also be seen on Exmoor, both common and rare species, many of which are national conservation priorities including moorland, woodland and farmland specialists, a wide range of birds of prey, and seabirds ~~off~~ along Exmoor's coast. The networks of ancient sessile oak woodlands contain rare lichens and one of the densest collections of veteran trees in Europe, illustrating the long history of tree and woodland management on Exmoor. The beautiful rivers that rise on Exmoor are important and sensitive habitats that support a wide range of wildlife including the internationally vulnerable Atlantic salmon.

Thanks to careful management by farmers and land managers, much of Exmoor's wildlife is faring well compared with other parts

of the country. But changes in ~~in climate and~~ land management favour some habitats and species rather than over others, leading inevitably to 'winners and losers' and climate change is adding to the challenges faced by many species. There are also ongoing threats to Exmoor's wildlife from disease and invasive non-native species, and also disturbance from recreational activities.

We need to ensure that Exmoor's wildlife is in good condition, well connected, and resilient so that we can pass on the richness and diversity of habitats and species to future generations. Fortunately, there are many partners and volunteers willing to get involved in helping to achieve this.

### Our strategy:

- **Conserve and enhance wildlife:** Exmoor's rich mosaic of wildlife habitats and their associated diversity of species are maintained, ~~improved~~ enhanced, expanded, and therefore made more connected and resilient
- **Control invasive species:** the spread of non-native invasive plant and animal species is being controlled and populations are reducing, such that native species can re-establish
- **Increase understanding:** habitats and species on Exmoor are better understood and trends and changes in their condition and distribution are monitored so that conservation efforts can be effectively targeted
- **Get involved:** People living in and visiting the National Park understand and are inspired by Exmoor's special wildlife and can become engaged with its conservation

Commented [CR26]: RSPB (29)

Commented [CR29]: RSPB (77)

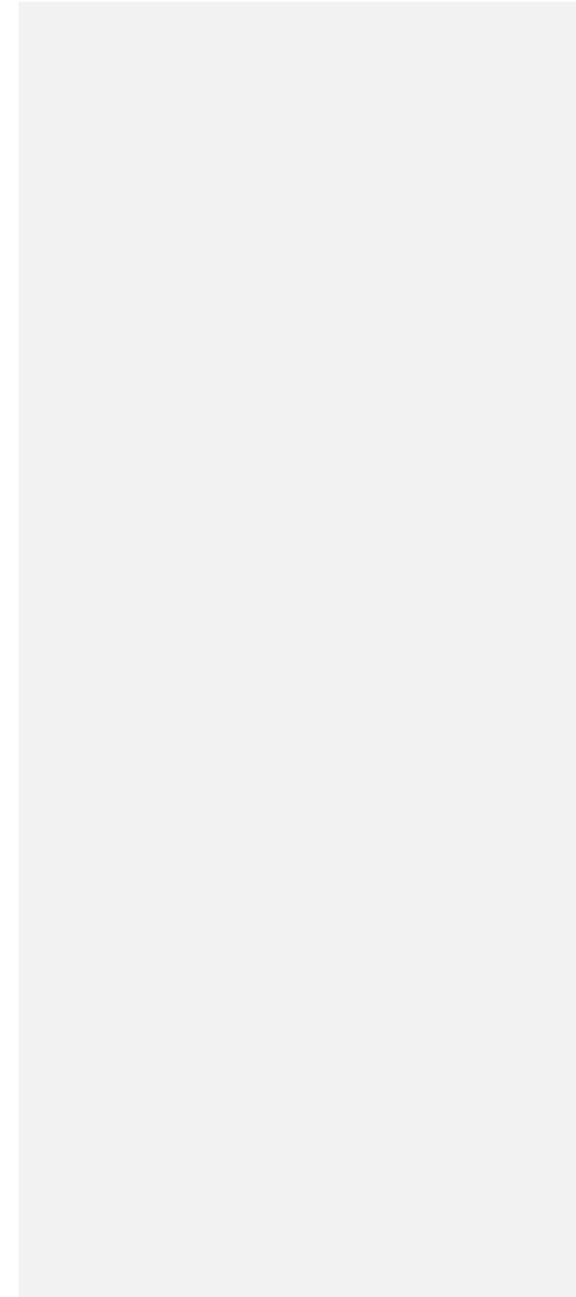
Commented [CR30]: Devon Wildlife Trust (81)

Commented [CR27]: RSPB (76)

Commented [CR28]: Exmoor Rivers and Streams Group (82)

Caption: Some of Exmoor's moorland birds are not faring so well here such as curlew, merlin, kestrel and Dartford warbler, or are no longer found at all: lapwing, ring ouzel and red grouse. Other species typically associated with lowland areas are increasing on Exmoor including linnet, reed bunting and yellowhammer

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## **PROSPERITY**

### **Working landscapes: thriving communities and a vibrant local economy**

To live on Exmoor is to understand the value of community. There are just over 10,000 people living in the National Park, and none of them live in a settlement of more than 1,500. We want to celebrate these close-knit rural communities, and help them to flourish both socially and economically.

Exmoor's unique landscapes and special qualities are inextricably linked to the key industries of tourism, farming and food. They are the drivers of economic wellbeing.

So, as the government encourages National Parks to increase rural productivity, improve skills, and help young people find routes to employment, Exmoor has a contribution to make to society in general, as well as the local area.

We'll do all we can with our partners to encourage prosperity in Exmoor. We're already proud of our progress in improving broadband connectivity to a level many other places would envy. Now, our task is to continue along that trajectory of success, ensuring Exmoor's communities have every chance to thrive.

## Working landscapes

**Ambition: Exmoor's land-based communities and businesses are supported to provide healthy food and good quality timber, and ensure that Exmoor's landscapes continue to be well managed and cared for**

Exmoor's landscapes have been created through the interaction of people and nature. For example, without the grazing of traditional breeds of cattle and sheep, Exmoor ponies, and red deer Exmoor would be a very different place. The ongoing management of these landscapes is crucial to maintaining Exmoor's special qualities.

The extensive grassland farming systems that predominate on Exmoor can also protect other elements of natural capital such as healthy soils and peatbogs that lock up carbon, hold back water to reduce flood risk, and provide clean water for around half a million people.

But there are many challenges ahead, particularly the uncertainty over future agricultural, forestry and environmental policy and funding as we leave the European Union. Many upland farm businesses struggle to be viable due to the volatility of market values for products such as beef, sheep and timber, and fluctuations in input costs, and subsidies provide an important part of farm income. Farmers will need help to diversify or increase their farming income. Like many rural areas, Exmoor has an ageing population and so farm succession and supporting young farmers

and new entrants is important to ensure that skills and experience are retained.

Against this backdrop, we will strive to achieve our Ambitions for the National Park.

### Our strategy:

- **Prepare for the future:** collaborative working that influences ~~future~~ agricultural, forestry and environmental policy and funding to support the future of hill farming and forestry on Exmoor
- **Innovate:** new approaches to rural development and environmental management are trialled
- **Grown on Exmoor:** the market for local produce such as healthy food and good-quality timber continues to grow
- **Local breeds:** Exmoor Horn and Devon Closewool sheep, Red Ruby Devon cattle and other traditional upland breeds continue to be an essential part of Exmoor's land management
- **Iconic Exmoor species:** healthy populations of wild red deer and Exmoor ponies are maintained
- **Game shoots:** game shooting continues to provide a balanced contribution to Exmoor's special qualities and local economy

Commented [CR32]: NFU (51), FWAG SW (92)

Commented [CR31]: FWAG SW (111)

Commented [CR33]: Devon Cattle Breeders Soc

Caption: Traditional breeds such as Exmoor ponies, Devon Ruby Red cattle and Exmoor Horn sheep are specialist grazers, keeping grass and scrub under control and allowing a wider range of plants to flourish

Commented [BD34]: Red Ruby Devon

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## Strong local economy

**Ambition: The local economy is more sustainable with increased innovation, entrepreneurship and improved economic prospects**

Exmoor National Park is a world-class environment, enjoyed by millions of people, and generating millions of pounds through the value of the businesses based here. These businesses are proud to be associated with Exmoor and make the most of the unique opportunities and experiences that being located in the National Park provides.

We are keen to encourage economic activity in the National Park, especially if it benefits from and enhances the local environment. Exmoor has always been home to entrepreneurs and innovators, and it is important that this continues, where consistent with National Park purposes. That way, we will support new ideas and investment that help to make life in the National Park more sustainable and resilient.

### Our Strategy:

- **Prepare for the future:** innovation and increased productivity are encouraged. Capacity increases in key sectors such as farming, tourism and business, particularly micro businesses, are more resilient, and strong links are made between them
- **Sustainable growth:** economic development is compatible with Exmoor's special qualities
- **Rural pathways to employment:** young people are supported to enter the job market, including through a range of apprenticeships
- **Exmoor's environmental economy:** traditional and new skills are retained, attracted and developed based on Exmoor's natural and cultural capital

Caption: More than 50% of businesses in National Parks believe their performance is improved by being in a National Park

**Commented [CR36]:** Individual (comment no. 93)

**Commented [CR37]:** Economic development Officers meeting - Should be considering across all ages – not just young (e.g. better utilisation of skills in those moving into the area in later life).

**Commented [CR38]:** Economic development Officers meeting - Would Natural Capital be a more common place term now and more likely to chime with policy makers etc?

**Commented [CR35]:** Sustainable needs to be better defined – possibly refer instead to growing resilience in this context?

## Thriving communities

**Ambition: Exmoor's local communities are thriving with strong connections to the National Park**

One of Exmoor's great strengths is its deeply rural nature. This enhances the strong sense of identity and community, and fosters a spirit of self-sufficiency. But it also raises challenges: Exmoor's population is declining, and ageing. Exmoor is geographically quite isolated with no major centres of population, and no major transport through routes. This has implications, particularly in terms of the provision of services, and lack of public transport.

Despite the physical challenges of remoteness and scattered populations, Exmoor is well-connected digitally, and we are proud of the progress we have made in improving broadband and mobile communications.

A more intractable issue is the cost of housing on Exmoor, yet the future vitality and sustainability of our communities and businesses are inextricably linked to people being able to live and work here. Planning policy and initiatives such as the Exmoor Rural Housing Network are intended to help local people and rural workers access affordable housing.

We want to support more balanced age profiles across Exmoor's communities and reverse the pressures that are leading to a decline in population. We also want positive planning to support high-quality development in the National Park that contributes to

its character and where possible promotes sustainable construction.

### Our Strategy:

- **Vibrant communities:** local communities are socially, economically and culturally active, and rural services and facilities are sustained in the National Park's settlements and surrounding towns
- **Prepare for the future:** Exmoor's communities strongly identify with the National Park and are fully engaged in shaping its future
- **Be connected:** an effective transport network and efficient telecommunications infrastructure which are well used and support local communities and businesses
- **A place to call home:** there are more affordable homes for local people enabling them to live and work on Exmoor
- **Sympathetic development:** development is well designed and meets the needs of local communities and businesses as well as National Park purposes
- **Climate change:** low carbon communities are supported and encouraged

Caption: 19% of Exmoor's housing stock is second homes, holiday lets or vacant. The Local Plan has policies to support new homes being occupied as someone's 'principal residence'.

**Commented [CR39]:** Economic Development Officers meeting - Important to focus on uptake / utilisation in addition to provision

**Commented [CR40]:** Economy discussions emphasised importance of this but left for Rural Housing Network to consider. NDC suggest where they are taking on additional allocations for the NP this could be referred to as an action given devt sought in adjoining areas.  
*Reference in delivery programme*

### A valued asset

**Ambition: Exmoor is celebrated for the value it brings to the region and nationally**

National Parks are national assets, and we want to ensure that the value Exmoor brings to the wider region and nationally is recognised and enhanced. We strive to be outward-looking, learning from and contributing to wider initiatives, and working with our neighbours to pursue shared goals.

As a working landscape, Exmoor's distinctive natural and cultural assets provide key public benefits. Our focus is on understanding and valuing the different services and benefits that the environment provides, and seeking investment to maintain and enhance them for the future.

### Our strategy:

- **Value our assets:** the natural and cultural capital assets of the National Park are identified and their value understood. Investment helps to maintain and enhance these assets and the public benefits they deliver
- **Build our brand:** use of the iconic Exmoor brand is increased and has an international appeal. Exmoor is effectively promoted in key gateway locations across the South West
- ~~**Be inspired:** Exmoor is effectively promoted in key gateway locations across the South West~~
- **Play our part:** Exmoor contributes to the wider economy of the Heart of the South West

Caption: Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks have 3,145 businesses with a turnover of £770 million, making an important contribution to wider regional growth

**Commented [CR41]:** ENPA officers

**Commented [CR42]:** Economic Development Officers meeting - Suggestion given 5 year life span we don't tie ourselves to a political geography but instead simply refer to the South west and / or adjoining counties.

## **Where People, Place and Prosperity Come Together**

The Ambitions above set out what we want to achieve across the National Park. This is Exmoor's big picture. But it is made up of individual parts, which come together in a rich tapestry.

To understand how our Plan will be achieved, we need to focus on each of these parts, and the impact it will have upon them. That way, we will appreciate the distinct elements of the National Park, as well as how they come together to create the whole.

In the sections that follow, we look in more detail at:

- Moorland
- Farmland
- Woodland
- Rivers and streams
- Coast
- Settlements

By focusing on these well-loved aspects of Exmoor, we can see more clearly how People, Place and Prosperity come together.

## Moorland

**Ambition:** ~~The extent of Exmoor's open moorland is retained and restored. The habitats within it are enhanced and the area and quality of heather is increased. Overall levels of open moorland are retained. The loss of heather is halted and reversed~~

Exmoor is renowned for its purple heather moors, which have inspired people for generations. The dramatic moors and heaths dominate the landscape, with big, expansive skies and far-reaching views across the National Park and to surrounding areas. The open, exposed landscape of Exmoor's inland heather and grass moors extend in an uninterrupted sweep from Dunkery Beacon in the east to Challacombe Common in the west. Other areas of more fragmented moorland provide the backdrop to the National Park to the south and west, with the high coastal heaths fringing the northern boundary.

These moors and commons were traditionally grazed with local breeds of sheep and cattle which were well suited to the harsh conditions. Regular 'swaling' or burning helped to manage the vegetation, favouring heather re-growth and keeping the more invasive bracken, gorse and scrub in check. Exmoor is also synonymous with the herds of wild red deer and Exmoor ponies which freely roam the moors. The long association with hunting and grazing stem from the origins of the central moors as a royal

hunting forest, and continue to form an integral part of the fabric of local communities today.

The moors are a rich mosaic of habitats including blanket bog, acid grasslands and heath, of which gorse, scrub, scattered trees and bracken are important components. Collectively these moorland habitats and grassland which are internationally important and provide homes to many species including specialist moorland plants, birds and animals. The moorlands have a deep sense of history, with the landscapes, historic sites and features reflecting the long interaction with man from early prehistoric times to the present day.

The way we value these moorlands has changed over history. In the nineteenth century Exmoor Forest was drained by the entrepreneurial Knight family, and there was a period following the Second World War when improving and ploughing up the moor was encouraged, resulting in nearly a third of moorland being lost. The deliberate loss of moorland has long been a thing of the past, and significant effort is being put into restoration of Exmoor's mires and peatbogs. However, more subtle and incremental changes are now taking place. These are largely due to a complex combination of changes to management practices over the last few decades (in particular less grazing and 'swaling'), increased nitrogen deposition and attacks of heather beetle, which have leading to the loss and fragmentation of heather, and an increase in purple moor grass, bracken and gorse.

**Commented [CR43]:** ENPA Members agreed to change the wording to 'restored' rather than 'expanded'

**Commented [CR44]:** Nature Conservation Advisory Panel (31), Moorland Board, Joint SOG meeting

**Commented [CR45]:** RSPB (101), Devon Wildlife Trust (103)

**Commented [CR46]:** RSPB

Once an integral part of farming on Exmoor, moorland has increasingly become separated from the core farming activity. There are now fewer people with the skills, knowledge and incentive to manage it. We want to reverse this trend, so that Exmoor's moorlands continue to inspire future generations.

#### Our strategy:

- **Moorland farming:** viable, modern moorland farming systems are supported, helping moorland farmers innovate and adapt to future changes
- **Moorland conservation:** the causes of change are understood. Management practices maintain open moorland landscapes, conserve wildlife and the historic environment, and build resilience to climate change
- **Be inspired:** people understand and value moorland, leading to greater investment in moorland management

Caption: 27% of the National Park is moorland (18,711.2 ha). 94% of this is access land giving people a right of access on foot. 83% of moorland is designated as nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are 37 moorland Principal Archaeological Landscapes (4,434ha) covering 24% of moorland.

Caption: 29% of moorland has been lost since 1940, primarily in the 1960s. Nearly 2,000ha of peatbogs has been restored so far through the Exmoor Mires project.

Commented [E47]: Add in stats on heather loss and maps

## Farmland

**Ambition: Exmoor's distinctive farmed landscapes continue to be conserved and enhanced as part of an active farming system delivering a healthy natural and cultural environment**

Exmoor's climate, soils and elevation favour extensive livestock farming, primarily sheep and cattle. The more fertile, rolling hills form a gentle, enclosed and settled landscape with an irregular patchwork of hedged fields, woods and villages. On higher land, where farmland has been carved out of the surrounding moorland, the fields are more geometrically shaped, bounded by beech hedge banks or fences. To the east, in the Brendon hills and [rich soils of Porlock Vale](#), farming is more intensive.

[Traditional mixed farming provides a range of habitats, including unimproved grassland, hedgerows and areas of scrub, which are important for wildlife as they support a wide variety of species.](#) Exmoor's [hedgebanks](#) are one of the elements that make [up](#) the [distinctive character of the landscape](#) [unique](#). They are rich habitats for wildlife and act as corridors through the landscape. The traditional way of keeping them in good shape is to cut most of the way through stems and "lay" horizontally where they will continue to grow while providing a wildlife-friendly and stock-proof barrier. Unimproved grasslands are also important habitats, supporting for example, ant hills of the yellow meadow ant, butterflies and rare

waxcap fungi, although they are less well-recognised, and consequently under greater threat of being lost.

This is also a rich historic landscape, with medieval farms, bridges, churches, lanes and paths still in use today. Distinctive farmsteads were created as the hub of farming activity while hamlets and villages grew up to meet the requirements of the farms, providing homes for farm workers, markets, services, shops, and places for worship and socialising. Historic estates (such as Dunster and Holnicote) continue to have a strong influence on the landscape through their distinctive buildings, landscaped parkland and woodland. In the central moors around Simonsbath are the farms enclosed by the Knight family, who played a key role in creating the landscapes we see today, with the symmetrical often whitewashed farmhouses standing high on the open hillsides surrounded by shelterbelts providing distinctive features. The industrial heritage of Exmoor is also apparent, with surviving features such as old railway lines, engine houses and abandoned houses.

By pursuing our Ambitions for People, Place and Prosperity, we believe Exmoor's distinctive farmed landscapes will continue to be enriched.

### Our Strategy:

- **Distinctive farmed landscapes:** land management and funding is supported to enhance landscape character and

Commented [CR48]: RSPB (107)

maintain characteristic features such as hedgebanks, [hay meadows](#), stone walls, trees, traditional farm buildings, orchards, ~~and ponds~~, [leats and gutter systems](#)

- **Conserve character:** the hidden stories of Exmoor's farmland are uncovered and shared. We celebrate the history of farming and the historic features that can still be seen in the local landscape, cultures and traditions
- **High nature value farming:** [Exmoor's nature and farming find an equal home in the farmed landscape](#) ~~farmland provides a home for nature alongside food production~~

John Knight was a Georgian entrepreneur who bought the royal forest of Exmoor in 1820. In just a few years he built a 47 km boundary around the old Forest, reclaimed 6,500 ha of molinia, built 20 km of roads, two farms, two canals, a network of cottages and began a mansion with designed gardens

Commented [CR49]: Devon Wildlife Trust (109)

## Woodland

**Ambition: Exmoor's woodlands are diverse, well-managed, productive and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park**

Exmoor's diverse woodland resource is truly special: deeply incised wooded valleys, unique coastal woodlands, designed landscapes of trees and woods, ~~and old estate woodlands~~, with many ancient woodlands, rare and ~~ancient veteran~~ trees, as well as old estate woodlands and more recent conifer plantations. Many ancient trees are reaching maturity, however, and a long term view is needed to plant, restore and manage the 'ancients of the future'.

These woodlands provide many benefits for people, wildlife and the economy. Woodlands have always been an important part of the Exmoor economy, providing woodfuel, timber, and cover for game birds. The remote and unpolluted environment creates the conditions for lichens and bryophytes to thrive, including some rare species. Traditional management practices such as coppicing creates temporary gaps which in some woods favours distinctive plants, in others the dense thicket regrowth supports nesting birds and dormice. In addition, the warm and sheltered open spaces support specialist species such as the heath fritillary butterfly (the woodsman's follower), and birds such as pied flycatchers, redstarts and wood warblers.

Due to their longevity, ancient woodlands are more species rich, and therefore need to be well protected and managed.  
Restoration of planted ancient woodland sites will also help the survival of native plants, fungi and animals.

An extensive network of rights of way and permissive paths means that much of this woodland resource can be enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. We are now more aware of the important role that woodlands also play in helping to mitigate climate change through absorbing carbon dioxide, and reducing flood risk through slowing the flow of water. Changes in climate create opportunities in terms of the types of tree that can be grown on Exmoor, and the management practices we employ such as continuous cover forestry, but also bring additional threats for our woodlands in terms of changes to landscape character, pests and diseases and potential risks to native wildlife.

At present, around two thirds of Exmoor's woodlands are managed. We'd like to increase this figure, in particular focussing on those smaller, steeper or isolated woods often overlooked in the past but with great potential. That way, Exmoor's woodlands will continue to generate additional benefits for people, the environment and the economy.

### Our strategy:

- **Woodlands for people:** more people have more opportunities to understand and enjoy woodlands and benefit from them

**Commented [CR50]:** Woodland Trust (117), Devon Wildlife Trust (115), Forum 21 (35)

**Commented [CR51]:** Exmoor Society

**Commented [CR52]:** RSPB (113)

- **Woodlands for Landscape, Wildlife and History:** woodland management conserves and reinforces landscape character, protects and enhances cultural heritage, and provides the conditions for Exmoor’s distinctive and special wildlife habitats and species to thrive
- **Productive Woodlands:** woodland owners are encouraged and enabled to increase the proportion of woodland that is actively and sustainably managed. The volume and quality of timber and wood harvested from Exmoor’s woodlands increases and more value is added locally
- **Resilient Woodlands:** public benefits of woodlands are realised (including carbon storage, flood alleviation and water resources) and resilience to climate change, pests and diseases is enhanced

Caption: Over 13% of the National Park is wooded

## Rivers and streams

**Ambition: Exmoor's rivers, streams, and their associated valleys and water resources are in good condition. Their native flora and fauna thriving, and flood risk is reduced**

On Exmoor you are never far from the sound of water. The rivers and streams that flow from the high, rain-soaked moorlands to the sea are one of the essential ingredients of Exmoor's unique and special landscape. Along with Wimbleball reservoir, Exmoor's rivers are the source of drinking water for half a million people.

The clear, oxygen-rich waters are home to some of our most important wildlife including the elusive otter, salmon, brown trout, dipper and kingfisher, as well as mayflies, dragonflies and damselflies that provide a vital link in the food chain. But non-native invasive species are a major threat to these sensitive habitats.

Most of our rivers are privately-owned and managed, but luckily there are plenty of opportunities for people to enjoy them from footpaths along the rivers, canoeing down permitted sections, or spending a day fishing, respecting their value as sensitive habitats.

There is now an increased appreciation of the role that land management in the upper catchment of rivers can play in storing water and regulating river flows. For example, the Exmoor Mires Project has been restoring these areas and undertaking research on how healthy bogs can help to support healthy, clean and safer

rivers. Meanwhile, the Headwaters of the Exe project is working with riparian owners and land managers to reduce run-off and pollution.

Activities like these are crucial to the achievement of our Ambitions, by enhancing the natural environment, providing opportunities for recreation, and contributing to thriving communities.

### Our Strategy:

- **Enhanced habitats:** the ecological status of Exmoor's rivers and streams is improved ~~as a habitat, and the wide range of flora and fauna they support is publicly valued and effectively monitored~~
- **Riverine Fauna and Flora:** ~~are better publicly understood and valued and their condition effectively monitored~~
- **Clean water:** water quality is maintained to continue providing an important source of clean drinking water for the region
- **Responsible access:** people are able to access and enjoy Exmoor's rivers and streams, in ways that respect their value as sensitive habitats which are largely privately owned and managed
- **Reduced flood risk:** appropriate land use and management techniques help reduce the flood risk. This focuses on soils, erosion and run-off, as well as catchment-sensitive farming

Commented [CR53]: Exmoor Society

Commented [CR54]: Exmoor Rivers and streams group

Commented [CR55]: Exmoor Rivers and Streams Group (121)

Caption: River jelly lichen: This strange and rare amphibious lichen only grows in clean, fast flowing, acidic rivers like the Barle on Exmoor

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## Coast

**Ambition: Exmoor's stunning coast is better understood, enjoyed and conserved**

Exmoor has a beautiful and dramatic coastline, stretching from Minehead in the east to Combe Martin in the west. This spectacular coast boasts the highest sea cliffs in England.

The steep and often precipitous terrain means that Exmoor's coastline remains among the most unspoilt and best-protected stretches in the country, designated as Heritage Coast. Those who brave the rugged paths are rewarded with panoramic views. The South West Coast Path and large areas of open access land continue to provide opportunities for people to be exhilarated by a truly stunning coast.

The impressive cliffs reveal the varied colours of the landscape's underlying geology. Coastal heaths adorn the cliff tops, and this is one of the few places in England where heather moorland meets the sea. The Atlantic oakwoods which cloak much of the coastline form the longest stretch of coastal woodland in England supporting rare endemic whitebeam trees. In the sweep of Porlock Bay, saltmarsh is establishing following the storm twenty years ago which breached the shingle ridge, creating a unique and dynamically changing habitat. These coastal habitats are home to a variety of wildlife including significant breeding seabird colonies.

Exmoor's coastline also has a rich cultural heritage. It inspired Romantic Poets including Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth.

There are also relics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion for picturesque landscapes such as the Italianate terraced gardens at Ashley Combe designed for Ada Lovelace.

Exmoor's coastline is punctuated by historic coastal harbours, once busy with coastal trade and the hidden caches of smugglers. Now sailing and fishing for pleasure are their mainstay. The towns of Lynton and Lynmouth grew rapidly in the Victorian period to meet the demand for seaside holidays, with the architecture and features creating a 'Little Switzerland' character which is still popular among holidaymakers today.

At the foot of the cliffs are wave-cut platforms, sea caves and rocky bays with hidden, often inaccessible, beaches. We know less about these inter-tidal and marine areas, although more research is being undertaken to help us better understand and care for our coastal and marine environments. With the second largest tidal range in the world in the Bristol Channel, there is great interest in the opportunities that could arise from renewable energy. We seek to ensure that Exmoor plays its part in these considerations in a way that is compatible with National Park purposes.

By enhancing the understanding, enjoyment and conservation of Exmoor's coast and seascapes, we hope to emphasise the contribution it makes to People, Place and Prosperity.

### Our Strategy:

- **Be inspired:** the stories of our coastal communities, landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage are uncovered and shared. This includes interpretation, education, and events

- **Easy access:** it is easier than ever to access and enjoy the coast, thanks to the continuation of initiatives such as the England Coast Path
- **Increase understanding:** research and monitoring enhance our knowledge of the impact of interventions on Exmoor's coast
- **Prepare for the future:** changes in the coastline are responded to, and new opportunities secured. Particular issues to be addressed include renewable energy, coastal change and flood risk
- **Be connected:** connections are furthered between Exmoor National Park and strategic partners, including the Severn Estuary Partnership

Caption: At 244m (800ft), Great Hangman, is the highest sea cliff in England and Wales

### **Settlements & the built environment**

**Ambition: The local distinctiveness and historic character of Exmoor's settlements and built environment are conserved and enhanced**

Exmoor National Park is a living, working landscape. Unlike the uninhabited wilderness of National Parks in other countries, Exmoor has many settlements, from small towns and picturesque villages to tiny hamlets and isolated farmsteads. These have grown (and in a few cases, declined) over centuries, and reflect the changing fortunes of the communities who lived here.

Each settlement has its own character. Diverse vernacular building styles and materials reflect local geology and traditions, as well as periods of significance in each settlement's history. Buildings can also be important for wildlife supporting species such as bats, breeding birds and rare plants such as thatch moss. This leaves a valuable legacy that we must curate with care, while recognising that our activities create a heritage for future generations.

In pursuing our Ambitions we will continue to care for Exmoor's unique built environment and tell the fascinating stories of its distinctive settlements and communities.

#### **Our Strategy:**

- **Positive planning:** the use of local materials and traditional skills in building construction and maintenance is encouraged, to preserve the local vernacular and built tradition

- **Conserve character:** historic buildings are better known, recorded and protected. Redundant buildings are brought back into positive use which conserves their character
- **Be inspired:** local history and heritage is valued and celebrated, in the built environment and social interactions

Caption: As well as physical features, the names of villages, farms, fields, gateways and crossroads also help to tell the story of the landscape such as 'Exford' and 'Winsford', or 'Porlock' taken from the Saxon "portlocan", meaning an enclosed harbour.

## Monitoring and Research

**Ambition: Our knowledge and understanding of Exmoor's special qualities is increased through monitoring and research to inform future decision making and delivery of our Ambitions**

We can only achieve the National Park purposes of *conserving and enhancing Exmoor's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promoting understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities* if we understand what makes Exmoor special, the issues and challenges facing these special qualities, and the opportunities for conserving and enhancing them, celebrating and telling their stories.

In light of potential future changes to funding we also need to ensure that decisions are made on the basis of the best available evidence so that we can make the most of what funding and resources are available.

There is a huge amount of monitoring and research that is undertaken on Exmoor. We want to ensure that we make best use of this, identify and address gaps in our knowledge and uncover new stories to tell.

The Exmoor National Park State of the Park Report sits alongside the Partnership Plan and provides much of the supporting evidence. The National Park Authority is required to produce the Report and to review it every five years. It collates information and data relating to Exmoor's special qualities and identifies the issues and trends affecting them. It also includes a framework setting out how the special qualities will be monitored. This will provide the basis for future monitoring and will help to identify where further monitoring and research is required.

There is a wide range of monitoring and research carried out, including:

- Historic Environment Research Framework
- Wildlife Monitoring and Research Framework
- Landscape change monitoring
- Vegetation change monitoring
- Authority Monitoring Report (Local Plan)
- Visitor Survey
- Annual Tourism Monitoring (STEAM)
- Protected Landscapes Monitoring
- National Park Family Indicators
- ENPA Business Plan Key Performance Indicators
- Statutory bodies monitoring
- Academic research
- Partner organisations studies

## Delivery

This Plan can only be delivered in partnership. We recognise the work of many individuals, organisations and groups in helping to achieve the Vision and Ambitions. Land managers, local communities, businesses, and volunteers all have a vital role to play. There are also many partner organisations in the public, private, community and voluntary sectors that will be instrumental in delivering the Plan.

The National Park Authority will also play its part. The Authority has a key role in leading action to achieve National Park purposes, and while doing so, to foster the social and economic wellbeing of Exmoor's communities. The Authority will oversee and co-ordinate delivery of the Plan, working with our partnership groups. The involvement of so many partners demonstrates the strong commitment to achieving our Vision.

This Plan does not try to identify all the activities and people involved in its delivery. It provides the framework for action, and a separate **Delivery Programme** will be developed with the partnership groups, setting out the actions required. This reflects the uncertainties regarding future policy and funding, and enables us to be flexible in how we respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead. The Delivery Programme will be kept updated and used to assess progress on the achievement of the Ambitions.

A vital component of delivering the Plan will be securing the necessary resources to carry out the actions identified. In prioritising its commitment to the Plan, the Authority has

considered the financial and staff resources at its disposal and the projections over the next few years. Implementation of the Plan will also require partners to align elements of their resources and activities to reflect the Vision and Ambitions set out here. Not all of what needs to happen can be done within existing resources and we will need to work together to attract new investment and funding. We will also continue to recognise and support the huge amount that is achieved through volunteers and local groups, and will encourage as many people as possible to get involved in helping to make the Vision and Ambitions for Exmoor a reality.

*Further details of the partnership groups and delivery partners [are available on our website www.exmoor-national-park.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-national-park.gov.uk)*