

# Public Opinion Survey

# Survey Responses

- 909 responses were received, including online and hard copies, although not everyone responded to each question
- Of those who responded:
  - 36% live within ENP
  - 43% live outside ENP but within Devon & Somerset
  - 8% live outside Devon & Somerset
  - the remaining did not specify
- The survey responses were analysed considering the overall opinions on the statements, and looking at whether there were any differences in opinion amongst those who live in ENP and those who don't
- A 'net agree' figure was calculated by selecting those who responded to the question and taking away the % of those who disagreed from the % of those who agreed; positive numbers indicate net agreement and negative numbers indicate net disagreement. For example if 80% of people agreed and 20% disagreed, the net agree figure would be +60%. If 20% of people agreed and 80% disagreed, the net figure would be -60%.
- The 'net agree' figure was compared with responses to the previous survey to see how opinions have changed in the last 10 years

# Special Qualities – getting better, worse, little change?

- Overall majority of people think there is little change in the special qualities; except for rights of way – a third think these are getting better; and deeply rural communities – a third think this is getting worse
- Overall the majority (68%) think that the special qualities capture what is special about Exmoor to them. 22% didn't state yes or no but gave a comment about what is special to them about Exmoor or the issues facing Exmoor. Of the 7% who said no their comments were mainly in relation to socio-economic issues including a feeling that they do not reflect the fact that it is a living working landscape
- Split by location – generally people living outside ENP were more likely to say that the special qualities were getting better
- Split by age - generally people over 55 were more likely to say that the special qualities were getting better

# Understanding & Enjoyment

- General support for increasing visitor numbers – up to 10% more visitors (66% net agree) but less support for 25% increase in visitors (6% net agree) and net disagreement over 50% increase in visitors (-39%)
- High levels of agreement that rights of way are well maintained (net agree 55%)
- Support for the provision of interpretation boards (net agree 22%); and disagreement with the statement that they should not be provided (net -33%)
- Support for increase in activities such as sea kayaking and canoeing (net agree 81%) and wildlife watching (net agree 73%) – both in the top 10 highest scoring statements. Also small camp sites (less than 10 pitches) – net agree 67%; river kayaking and canoeing (net agree 58%); Equestrian trails, courses and events (net agree 52%)
- Less support for wild camping (net agree 15%). Opinion was split regarding increase in mountain bike courses where equal numbers of people agreed and disagreed. There was disagreement with the increase in sites for caravans/camper vans (net agree -20%); large camping sites (more than 10 pitches) – net agree -48%. There was significant disagreement with the increase in 4x4 quad bike and motor bike trails and events which was the lowest ranked statement, at net agree -62%
- Support for more opportunities for less able people to access wilder parts of Exmoor (net agree 38%). There was much stronger support amongst those who responded outside Devon and Somerset (net agree 61%)
- Support to help younger people visit Exmoor (net agree 76%) & those from different backgrounds (net agree 66%)
- Support for increased volunteering – in the top 10 highest scoring statements
- Strong recognition of the importance of Exmoor for health & well-being – in the top 10 highest scoring statements
- Support for Dark Night Sky Reserve (in the top 10 highest scoring statements) and observatory

# Recreation & access

- High levels of agreement that rights of way are well maintained (net agree 55%)
- Opinions were mixed regarding the statement to increase the length of bridleways in ENP although overall there was net agreement of 14%
- Overall support for creating traffic free routes for cyclists and horse riders alongside busy roads (net agree 24%) although support was lower in ENP (17%)
- Overall support for more safe cycle routes (net agree 31%), again support was slightly lower in ENP (25%)
- Support for increase in activities such as sea kayaking and canoeing (net agree 81%) and wildlife watching (net agree 73%) – both in the top 10 highest scoring statements. Also small camp sites (less than 10 pitches) – net agree 67%; river kayaking and canoeing (net agree 58%); Equestrian trails, courses and events (net agree 52%)
- Less support for wild camping (net agree 15%). Opinion was split regarding increase in mountain bike courses where equal numbers of people agreed and disagreed. There was disagreement with the increase in sites for caravans/camper vans (net agree -20%); large camping sites (more than 10 pitches) – net agree -48%. There was significant disagreement with the increase in 4x4 quad bike and motor bike trails and events which was the lowest ranked statement, at net agree -62%
- Support for the provision of interpretation boards (net agree 22%); and disagreement with the statement that they should not be provided (net -33%)
- Opinions were split on the statement that in some parts of ENP dog faeces were affecting their enjoyment with a very slight net agree (0.25%) suggesting for quite a high proportion of people (39%) their enjoyment is being affected

# Landscape character

- High level of support for Dark Night Sky Reserve status (in the top 10 highest scoring statements) and creation of an observatory
- High level of support for maintaining tranquillity (net agree 63%) with higher levels of support outside Devon & Somerset (71%) than within ENP (65%)
- High levels of support for maintenance of traditional landscape features (hedgebanks etc) – in the top 10 highest scoring statements
- General support (net agree 21%) for replanting of non-native tree species that are more resistant to pests/diseases and climate change, particularly from respondents within ENP (net agree 27%) whereas opinion from outside Devon & Somerset was more evenly split (net agree 1%) (*there could be changes to landscape character as a result although opinions weren't directly sought on this*)
- Opinions were split on the statement regarding increasing the area of moorland with an overall net agreement of 17% although this was lower (9%) in ENP

# Intrusive Development

- There was agreement with the statement that the landscape should be as free as possible from intrusive development - net agreement of 36% although there was stronger agreement outside ENP than within
- This contrasted with opinions on the statement that it is more important for people to access modern communications than protect the landscape, where there was a net agreement of 4% but slightly stronger agreement (net 13%) from respondents within ENP
- There was recognition that the needs of local people for jobs and housing doesn't outweigh the National Park status (net -20%) and this was strongest within ENP (net - 21%)
- Opinions were split on the statement that the needs of farms including for modern farm buildings should be allowed even when prominent in the landscape; overall there was slight disagreement (net - 6%) on this but slightly stronger disagreement (net -12%) from respondents within ENP
- Opinions were also split on the statement that the character of towns and villages is being eroded by unsympathetic development / materials. Overall there was a net agreement of 12% on this but people living outside ENP were more likely to agree
- General disagreement (net -23%) that enjoyment of Exmoor is being eroded by excessive road markings and signage

# Moorland

- High level of agreement (net agree 46%) that moorlands should be maintained as open landscapes even if this requires more public funding to control the spread of scrub gorse and bracken; even higher levels of support (net agree 51%) in ENP
- Opinions were split on the statement to increase the area of moorland with an overall net agreement of 17% although this was lower (9%) in ENP
- High level of support (net agree 54%) for removing conifer plantations and restoration of moorland with higher levels of agreement outside Devon and Somerset (61%) than within ENP (53%)
- Net agreement (27%) for rewilding by allowing natural regeneration of woodland moving up onto the moor and heaths from the valleys and combs. Slightly lower levels of support within ENP (23%) compared to outside Devon & Somerset (34%)
- Support for Dark Night Sky Reserve (in the top 10 highest scoring statements) and observatory
- High levels of support for maintenance of traditional landscape features (hedgebanks etc) – in the top 10 highest scoring statements
- General support for replanting of non-native tree species that are more resistant to pests/diseases and climate change, particularly from respondents within ENP (there could be changes to landscape character as a result although opinions weren't directly sought on this)

# Farming & Forestry

- Opinions were split on the statement that the needs of farms including for modern farm buildings should be allowed even when prominent in the landscape; overall there was slight disagreement (net -6%) on this but slightly stronger disagreement (net -12%) from respondents within ENP
- Opinions were split on the statement regarding additional cattle and sheep on the moors even if this required more fencing with a net disagreement of -8%, but much higher (net -19%) from within ENP. The same question without reference to fencing resulted in a similar split in opinion although overall there was a net agreement of 8% (4% within ENP)
- High levels of disagreement (net -34%) that farms should be left to respond to market forces without public funding even if this means some will go out of business with higher levels of disagreement outside ENP than within (net -27%)
- General support (net agree 21%) for replanting of non-native tree species that are more resistant to pests/diseases and climate change, particularly from respondents within ENP (net agree 27%) whereas opinion from outside Devon & Somerset was more evenly split (net agree 1%)
- Opinions were split on the statement regarding increasing the area of moorland with an overall net agreement of 17% although this was lower (9%) in ENP
- High levels of disagreement (net -52%) with the statement that producing food is more important than conserving wildlife

# Game shooting

Three different statements were included regarding game shooting

- “I would like to see greater control over commercial game shooting to minimise any negative impacts”:
  - Overall net agreement of 25% although this was much higher (41%) in ENP compared to outside ENP but within Devon & Somerset (12%)
- “I think that levels of commercial game shooting in the National Park are about right”:
  - Overall net agreement of 9% but lower in ENP (1%) and higher (16%) outside ENP but within Devon & Somerset
- “I support the increase in commercial pheasant and partridge shooting even if it results in more release pens, game crops, feeders, etc, as it helps the local economy”:
  - Overall disagreement with this statement (net -21%) although again this was much higher within ENP (-40%) than outside ENP but within Devon & Somerset (-6%)

# Historic environment

- Support for increasing knowledge of Exmoor's archaeology and history (net agree 48%)
- Support for grants to help conservation of listed properties and Conservation Areas (net agree 59%)
- Support for grants to encourage landowners to look after historic monuments (net agree 64%) with stronger levels of agreement outside Devon & Somerset (71%) than within ENP (58%)
- High level of disagreement (net -36%) with the statement "I do not think that heritage conservation should be a high priority" with a higher level of disagreement (-40%) outside Devon & Somerset than within ENP (-31%)

# Wildlife

- Almost unanimous agreement (net agree 95%) for eradicating non-native species - this was the highest scoring statement
- High levels of agreement (net agree 92%) for conservation of rare species that are declining in ENP – this was the second highest scoring statement
- High levels of agreement for ensuring that wild red deer continue to be a special feature of Exmoor (net agree 83%) – in the top 10 highest scoring statements
- High levels of agreement (net agree 72%) for improving conditions in rivers and streams for fish such as salmon and trout
- High levels of disagreement (net -52%) with the statement that producing food is more important than conserving wildlife

# Local Economy and Communities

- Strong agreement with the statement that Exmoor's distinctive way of life and local communities' strong links to the land is important (responses outside ENP /Devon & Somerset were even stronger than within ENP on this!)
- High levels of agreement with more grants being available to help businesses grow (net agree 51%)
- General disagreement (net -23%) that enjoyment of Exmoor is being eroded by excessive road markings and signage
- Support for CareMoor schemes (net agree 38%)
- A high proportion of people within ENP (net 52%) had purchased Exmoor products in preference to similar products from elsewhere; unsurprisingly this was much lower outside of ENP
- Low level of current use of public transport, 74% never use public transport and only 3% use it at least once a week
- A range of opinions on the statement that public transport would be used if it was more widely available with an overall net agreement of 13% although this is much higher amongst those living outside Devon & Somerset (26%)

# Main differences of opinion according to where people live

- People within ENP less supportive of an increase in commercial game shoots than outside; and more supportive of greater control over commercial game shoots to minimise negative impacts. The response to the statement that existing levels of game shooting are about right was fairly evenly split between those who agreed and those who disagreed but those outside ENP were more likely to agree
- People within ENP were more in favour of telecom masts
- Much stronger support from people outside ENP for no intrusive development
- Stronger support for conservation grants for listed buildings from people outside ENP
- More people in ENP had purchased Exmoor goods
- Low support for agricultural funding if not linked to environment, even from within ENP. More support from within ENP for farmers to be left to respond to market forces without public funding
- Less support for more stock on the moors from within ENP than outside
- Stronger support within ENP for increase in visitors outside peak season

# Main differences of opinion compared to the 2007 survey

- Levels of support for maintaining tranquillity have fallen (net agree 54% compared to 72%)
- Levels of support for maintaining open moorland have fallen (net agree 40% compared to 60%)
- Levels of support for grants to conserve listed buildings / Conservation Areas have fallen (net agree 52% compared to 79%)
- Levels of support for increasing knowledge of Exmoor's archaeology & history have fallen (net agree 42% compared to 63%)
- Levels of support for increasing commercial game shooting as it helps the local economy have fallen (net agree -18% compared to -2%), particularly marked in responses from within ENP (net agree -40% compared to -10%)
- Opinion on allowing modern communications such as masts is more divided now (net agree 3% compared to -52%)
- Fewer people now think that the quality of settlements is eroded by unsympathetic design (net agree 10% compared to 20%)

# Main differences of opinion compared to the 2007 survey (2)

- Opinion on increasing visitor numbers by 25% is more divided now (net agree 6% compared to 65%)
- There is a stronger level of disagreement with increasing visitor numbers by 50% (net agree -39% compared to -19%)
- Levels of support for increasing visitor numbers outside peak season have fallen (net agree 29% compared to 59%)
- Levels of support for more safe cycle routes have fallen (net agree 27% compared to 61%)
- Opinion on increasing the length of bridleways is more divided now (net agree 12% compared to 54%)
- Levels of support for interpretation boards have fallen (net agree 19% compared to 46%)
- Levels of support for helping less able people to access the wilder parts of Exmoor have increased (net agree 38% compared to 18%)

# Main differences of opinion compared to the 2007 survey (3)

- Opinion on farmers receiving public funding not linked to caring for the environment is more divided now (net agree -21% compared to -48%)
- There is also less concern over farmers being left to respond to market forces without public funding (net agree -29 compared to -43%)