

Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017

Consultation Draft
November 2011



Together Serving Exmoor



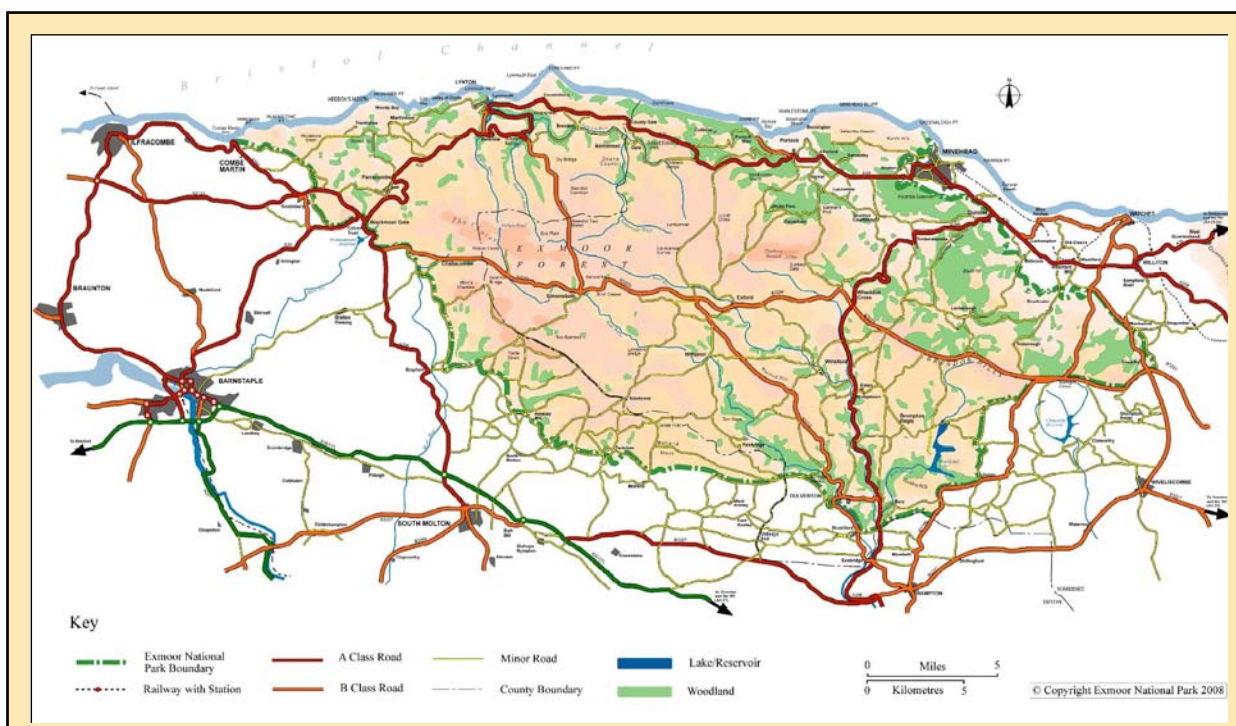
EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2012-2017

‘Together serving Exmoor’

Introduction

- 1.1 Exmoor is designated as a National Park for 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.**
- 1.2 The National Park Management Plan is the key mechanism for focussing and co-ordinating the effort to achieve the purposes for which the National Park was designated. Whilst the National Park Authority has the task of preparing the Plan, it is a plan for Exmoor not just the Authority – hence the plan is entitled ‘Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan’.

This plan is for all who care about Exmoor, the place, its communities and the benefits the National Park provides to the nation.



Aim of the Partnership Plan

- 1.3 Resources are likely to be constrained for the Partnership Plan period as government responds to the need to reduce the public expenditure deficit being faced by the UK. Within this context, setting priorities for partnership action will be more important than ever and the aim is that: **over the next five years, partners will focus on those actions that will contribute most towards keeping Exmoor National Park special and meeting the needs and wellbeing of local communities**

Exmoor's special qualities

1.4 The special qualities of the National Park are central to helping us decide what is most important about Exmoor that we should seek to conserve, enhance, understand and enjoy for the benefit of people today and future generations living in and visiting the National Park.

1.5 In 2006, when developing the Management Plan 2007-12, the National Park Authority sought views from a wide range of organisations and individuals to gain an understanding of those aspects of Exmoor that people most value. This revealed considerable agreement on the qualities that make Exmoor special amongst people from all walks of life, irrespective of whether they live in the National Park or are visiting. The descriptions of Exmoor's special qualities have been slightly amended for the Partnership Plan, but essentially remain as originally identified. The special qualities 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, 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, used and enjoyed Exmoor over the past 8000 years, including prehistoric landscapes and monuments such as burial mounds on ridges and discrete stone settings, ancient farmsteads, hamlets, 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 and cycling**
- **A landscape that provides inspiration and enjoyment to visitors and residents alike**

Vision for Exmoor National Park

- 1.6 The Management Plan for Exmoor National Park for 2007-2012 set out an ambitious programme aimed at '*Enhancing the qualities that make Exmoor special*'. Much has been achieved since adoption of the 2007 Plan and this Partnership Plan aims to build on these achievements.
- 1.7 In 2010, the Government developed a joint Vision for all National Parks in England¹ to guide their long term planning and strategic decision-making. This should also guide other public bodies who have a statutory duty to 'have regard to' National Park purposes in exercising their functions.

Government's vision for the English National Parks and the Broads

By 2030 English National Parks and the Broads will be places where:

- *There are thriving, living, working landscapes notable for their natural beauty and cultural heritage. They inspire visitors and local communities to live within environmental limits and to tackle climate change. The wide-range of services they provide (from clean water to sustainable food) are in good condition and valued by society.*
- *Sustainable development can be seen in action. The communities of the Parks take an active part in decisions about their future. They are known for having been pivotal in the transformation to a low carbon society and sustainable living. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, low carbon transport and travel and healthy, prosperous communities have long been the norm.*
- *Wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, restored and expanded and linked effectively to other ecological networks. Woodland cover has increased and all woodlands are sustainably managed, with the right trees in the right places. Landscapes and habitats are managed to create resilience and enable adaptation.*
- *Everyone can discover the rich variety of England's natural and historic environment, and have the chance to value them as places for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection, and a source of national pride and identity. They will be recognised as fundamental to our prosperity and well-being.*

- 1.8 Much has changed since 2007 including a major global economic downturn. This has impacted on the UK as elsewhere and the top priority for the government is to reduce the national public funding deficit. The government's spending review in 2010 is leading to substantial reductions in public funding across nearly all government departments. As an example, over the four years to 2015, Exmoor National Park Authority is expecting a reduction of around 30% in real terms in its annual grant from Defra. Similar or greater reductions are being experienced in local councils and public agencies such as Natural England and English Heritage.
- 1.9 The overall impact will be to reduce the capacity within the public sector and to place an emphasis on closer partnership working and greater community engagement. New ways of working and new sources of funding will also be

¹ English National Parks and the Broads. UK Government Vision and Circular 2010, Defra

needed with a greater emphasis on development to help achieve wider objectives.

1.10 Reflecting this changed context, the focus of the Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan is on retaining existing services which are most valued rather than setting ambitious aspects for improvement.

1.11 Thus, our vision is ***‘together serving Exmoor’*** so that:

- 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.
- 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.

Setting priorities

1.12 In setting the priorities for the Partnership Plan the National Park Authority has consulted with a wide range of organisations and individuals. A questionnaire was sent out to local residents and businesses; an online survey and questionnaire in Dunster National Park Centre gathered the views of a wide range of local people and National Park users, and views were also sought from representatives of youth groups and black and minority ethnic communities. A number of workshops were also held with land owners, farmers, foresters, National Park users, partner organisations and other interested groups to enable more detailed discussion of the issues facing Exmoor and what the priorities for action should be. Altogether, more than 1000 people contributed in some way to helping shape the plan through consultation responses and discussions.

- 1.13 Information on the condition of the special qualities, and the trends and challenges facing the National Park has also been collected in the **State of the Park report**, which accompanies this Partnership Plan, and which will be kept updated.
- 1.14 Together, the views expressed in the consultation, and the evidence from the State of the Park report, have informed the setting of priorities for action.

Programmes for Action

- 1.15 The priorities for action have been divided into three broad programmes:
- **A Thriving, Living Landscape** – working with the people who own and manage land on Exmoor, focusing on priorities that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park; deliver a wide range of public benefits, and provide sustainable livelihoods for the farmers, foresters, contractors and others engaged in managing Exmoor's land, natural resources and cultural heritage assets
 - **Connecting People and Place** – to benefit everyone who wishes to enjoy and learn about Exmoor National Park.
 - **Towards a Sustainable Future** – so that communities and businesses can lead in achieving the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the people who live and work in the National Park
- 1.16 Whilst these three programmes have been identified to structure the Partnership Plan, there are clear links between them, and many of the priorities for action will be delivered through an integrated approach by projects and partnerships that achieve multiple objectives.
- 1.17 However, given the current scarcity of resources, not all objectives will be able to be progressed during the next few years, although they will still remain long term objectives for the National Park. This is why the focus has been on setting priorities for action, to ensure that the resources that are available, are used to the best effect.

Programme A – A Thriving, Living Landscape

- 2.1 Each of the Programmes for Action will help to deliver elements of the Vision that we have set out. In working towards a Thriving, Living Landscape, we will seek to ensure that in 2030:
- 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.

Objectives for a Thriving, Living Landscape

- 2.2 The Partnership Plan for Exmoor and Exmoor Local Development Framework share 21 common objectives. In setting the priorities for action to achieve ‘**a thriving, living landscape**’ we have sought to address the following objectives:
- Objective 1 - To conserve and enhance Exmoor’s landscapes as living working landscapes that remain predominately free from intrusive developments, maintain a sense of tranquillity and protect Exmoor’s dark skies.*
- Objective 2 - To ensure that Exmoor’s moorlands remain open, remote and relatively wild in character; that views are preserved, and strategically important areas of former moor and heath are managed in a way that restores their wilder landscape character.*
- Objective 3 - To protect and enhance Exmoor’s wildlife and habitats and seek to improve the diversity, extent, condition and connectivity of Exmoor’s important and valued habitats.*
- Objective 4 - To maintain or increase the populations of native wildlife species on Exmoor that are valued for their conservation status and local distinctiveness, and control and eradicate non-native species.*
- Objective 5 - To ensure that the built tradition, character, distinctiveness and historic character of Exmoor’s settlements, buildings, farmsteads, landscapes, archaeological sites and monuments is conserved and enhanced and that the cultural heritage of Exmoor is protected through the careful management of development*
- Objective 6 - To encourage new development to use local materials, sustainable building design and methods, in ways that contribute to the distinctive character and cultural heritage of Exmoor*
- Objective 7 - To conserve and enhance Exmoor’s natural resources and to improve air and water quality, conserve water resources, ensure soils are in good condition, maximise carbon storage, and minimise pollution.*

Priorities for a Thriving, Living Landscape

- 2.3 Exmoor is one of 15 National Parks in the United Kingdom and one of only four in southern Britain. Designated for their natural beauty and for the opportunities they offer for open air recreation, National Parks contain some of the most spectacular scenery in Britain, predominantly large upland areas, where it is possible to experience open space, peace, wildness and tranquillity. Looking after Exmoor's unique landscapes consistently came out as a top priority during the consultation.
- 2.4 Exmoor's landscape character is complex and varied, with its combination of spectacular sea cliffs, open heather and *Molinia* moorland, rolling farmland, beech hedgebanks, deep wooded valleys and sandstone buildings. This varied landscape creates far reaching views across the diversity of scenery. Views from the National Park, into its wider setting within a deeply rural area are often equally important.
- 2.5 In 2007, ENPA commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment, to describe and assess the different landscapes that make up Exmoor. The LCA provides an important framework to improve the understanding of the landscape, inform decision-making that may affect the condition or visual quality of the landscape, and support positive management. A good deal of work has also taken place to better understand the ways in which people perceive and appreciate the Exmoor landscape.
- 2.6 In 2010 the ENPA and the Exmoor Society commissioned a Landscape Perceptions Study² which carried out an assessment of how people perceive each of the nine landscape character types over the four seasons of the year. It was found that each of the different landscape types evoke different responses by people. It was evident that it is not only the wilder, open landscapes that inspire people, but the farmed landscapes, woodlands and the diversity of scenery that people enjoy. Of overwhelming importance was the tranquillity, freedom from intrusive development and the ability that gave for spiritual refreshment and well being.
- 2.7 In order to strengthen landscape character the National Park Authority has drafted and consulted widely on a Landscape Action Plan which responds to the issues identified in the LCA, and sets out objectives and actions for each of the nine landscape character types, which will be an important focus for activity over the next five years. The nature of landscape means that trends and challenges set out in other sections in the Partnership Plan are also crucial in delivering landscape objectives. Conservation of Exmoor's habitats, wildlife and cultural heritage; the promotion of understanding and enjoyment; farming practices, management of carbon, recreation and tourism all have significant implications for the quality and condition of the Exmoor landscape.
- 2.8 One of the main threats to landscape character identified in the LCA is intrusive development. Ensuring that Exmoor remains a landscape relatively free from intrusive development requires the National Park Authority to manage the impact of development on the landscape, through the development management process, as well as guidance on changes that fall outside of this. An important part of this is working with neighbouring authorities to influence development outside the boundary of the National Park.

² Exmoor Landscapes Perception Study 2011 Fiona Fyfe for ENPA and Exmoor Society

- 2.9 The tranquillity and dark night time skies found on Exmoor one of the most important qualities and something that is increasingly rare, as recognised by the designation of Exmoor National Park in 2011 as a Dark Sky Reserve. Erosion of this tranquillity can be subtle, but once lost, is almost impossible to regain.
- 2.10 The maintenance of the landscapes, special character and features is fundamental to retaining Exmoor's distinctiveness, including its tranquillity, dark skies and 'untouched charm'.

The protection and management of the special character of Exmoor's unique landscapes is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority A1

- 2.11 Of all of Exmoor's varied landscape types, the wildness and openness of moorland is particularly valued by people who live in and visit Exmoor. Particular concern was expressed during the consultation over the changes in vegetation and the visual character of many of Exmoor's moorland areas in recent years. Close engagement with moorland owners and farmers and the local community, has revealed a widespread desire to learn from the traditional moorland management practices and develop a tailored approach to moorland management on Exmoor that retains the character of moorland landscapes, while maintaining and improving biodiversity, enabling access and conserving cultural heritage.
- 2.12 A successful bid to Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled the establishment of a new Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership to help address moorland management and increase community and public appreciation and engagement with moorland on Exmoor. The actions in the Partnership Plan will build on the achievements of this project.

Maintaining the open character of moor and heath in the National Park is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority A2

- 2.13 The main priority for wildlife conservation during the previous National Park Management Plan was to ensure that land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition. This provided a strong focus for action and has led the targeting of agri-environment funding through the new Environmental Stewardship regimes. Monitoring by Natural England indicated that, 100% of SSSI in the National Park had reached 'target condition' by the end of 2010.
- 2.14 As well as improvements in the condition of priority habitats in the National Park over the past five years, significant progress has been made on Exmoor in improving the prospects of important species such as fritillary butterflies, lowland birds, dormice, otters, migratory fish and bats.
- 2.15 However, much remains to be achieved and government policy set out in the Natural Environment White Paper (Defra, June 2011) places a high priority on conservation of biodiversity and the services provided to people by the natural environment. An independent review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network (Making Space for Nature, 2010) concluded that England's collection of wildlife areas is fragmented and does not represent a coherent and resilient ecological network capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and other pressures. The review called for '*a step-change in nature conservation [...] a new, restorative approach which rebuilds nature and creates a more resilient natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and ourselves*'. The review

summarised what needed to be done in just four words: more, bigger, better and joined. The ‘hot spots’ for biodiversity, like Exmoor National Park, have a vital role as and the focal point for programmes to help create the more resilient natural environment being sought by government.

- 2.16 Other issues highlighted during the consultation, include the importance of continuing to manage invasive species such as knotweed species and *Rhododendron ponticum* through co-ordinated programmes of spraying and clearance. A severe outbreak of the *Phytophthora* blight on Japanese Larch during 2010 has led to significant impacts on landscape. This disease and others affecting important tree and plant species are likely to be an increasing concern and will need close monitoring in future. And no programme for wildlife conservation for Exmoor would be complete without mention of the iconic red deer. Red deer are central to the culture and heritage of the Exmoor and many local people are closely involved in the management of deer in the National Park.

Maintaining in good condition, extending and connecting Exmoor’s important wildlife habitats is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority A3

- 2.17 Exmoor’s complex and varied historic environment provides a unique record of how people have lived here since the last Ice Age. The historic landscape includes thousands of individual sites and structures, and is fragile, vulnerable and irreplaceable.
- 2.18 Threats to heritage assets range from the need to prevent vegetation encroachment to longer-term changes such as rising sea levels which will directly impact on sites and structures and archaeological deposits in the inter-tidal and coastal environment. Flood events can lead to the direct destruction of historic structures such as bridges, mills and other waterside buildings. Currently many historic assets are protected through positive management by landowners under Stewardship Schemes. The current round of schemes comes to an end over the life of this Partnership Plan and the uncertainty about the nature of any successor schemes is a major factor influencing the future of many historic features.
- 2.19 Exmoor’s villages and settlements are one of its most distinctive and important features, with a wealth of historic buildings. However, their quality and character can easily be degraded by unsympathetic or inappropriate renovation, repair, extension, redevelopment, or simply by neglect. The historic character of settlements is also easily eroded by small changes over time as well as by new development and insensitive modernisation. The retention of traditional materials and building techniques is important to maintain local distinctiveness and historic character, but this requires the knowledge and skills of traditional craftsmen to be carried on and an adequate pool of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners to carry out maintenance and other works.
- 2.20 The importance of Exmoor’s local traditions, culture and ways of life was highlighted in the consultation, and the need to maintain these traditions and capture oral histories. Culture needs to live, but records of cultural activities must be kept in order to ensure their survival; this is especially true at a time when rural communities face the most uncertain and challenging future. There is a need to increase awareness of Exmoor’s living cultures by recording and through dissemination to local communities.
- 2.21 Participation in the cultural heritage leads to a valuing of it. Exmoor continues to provide inspiration for creative arts, as it has done for generations. Through support for appropriate projects, the cultural life of the community may be

enhanced and its influence extended beyond Exmoor. There is a need to support cultural events and activities which bring communities together. This can build on the wide range of traditional events and encompass new festivals that celebrate the National Park and provide a boost to the local cultural life and economy.

Protecting and managing Exmoor's cultural heritage and historic environment and promoting community engagement is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority A4

2.22 In the National Park Management Plan 2007-12, a section of the Plan focused on the condition of Exmoor's air, water and soil, and their importance to the quality of life enjoyed not only by those living in and around Exmoor and by all those visiting it as well. More recently, we have increased our understanding of the ways in which natural and managed landscapes provide a wide range of benefits to society as a whole.

2.23 The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) was published in June 2011 and provided a complete assessment of the benefits that nature provides, how they have changed over the past, the prospects for the future and their value to society. The benefits people get from nature are often described as 'ecosystem services'. Natural resources (such as food, timber and water) and functioning natural systems (such as healthy, fertile soils; clean water and air; and a regulated climate) are vital support services for our wellbeing and security, and are themselves sustained by biodiversity.

2.24 The NEA underlines the importance of managing ecosystems in a more integrated fashion, to achieve a wider range of services and benefits. This means, for example, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems and the natural features supporting such systems. Thus, the way in which land is farmed and managed is crucial to the delivery of wider benefits. Truly sustainable farming and land management can continue to provide high quality food, timber and other products where there is an active 'market', while maintaining a healthy environment that also provides a wide range of other benefits to people. These benefits include clean water, managed flood risk, opportunities for recreation, enjoyment and inspiration.

A priority for the Partnership Plan is to maintain and improve the quality of Exmoor's natural resources and ecosystem services = priority A5

2.25 The vital role that farmers, foresters and land managers have in maintaining Exmoor's special qualities has long been recognised, and this was again confirmed through the consultation. The wider benefits provided through managing ecosystems are also being better understood and recognised, as highlighted above. For many farms on Exmoor the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme has provided an important source of income linked to environmental management by farmers.

2.26 Uptake of the scheme has been very high in the National Park and it is generally well regarded by farmers who have participated in the scheme. Of particular value has been the inclusion of capital funding for hedge laying and other practical management works which has helped to maintain important features of the landscape and support farm contractors. The ESA scheme will have been phased out by 2013 when the vast majority of existing agreements will have come to an end.

2.27 The ESA is being replaced by a national Environmental Stewardship scheme and during the period of the Partnership Plan it will be important to manage the transition to the Environmental Stewardship scheme to maximise the benefits for environment and economy of the National Park, and to respond positively to new opportunities. Of particular importance will be the engagement of farmers and landowners in the design as well as the delivery of future environmental management schemes, together with closer monitoring of the impacts of different management approaches and greater local flexibility in implementation.

A priority for the Partnership Plan is to seek proper rewards for farmers, foresters and land managers for conserving Exmoor's landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and natural resources = priority A6

Priorities for action for A Thriving, Living Landscape:

- Priority A1 Protecting and managing of the special character of Exmoor's unique landscapes**
- Priority A2 Maintaining the open character of moorland**
- Priority A3 Maintaining in good condition, extending and connecting Exmoor's important wildlife habitats**
- Priority A4 Protecting and managing Exmoor's cultural heritage and historic environment and promoting community engagement**
- Priority A5 Maintaining and improving the quality of Exmoor's natural resources and ecosystem services**
- Priority A6 Seeking proper rewards for farmers, foresters and land managers for conserving Exmoor's landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and natural resources**

2.21 For each priority, a more detailed action plan is being developed in consultation with delivery partners. Indicative actions and potential partners are set out in the tables below.

Priority A1: Protecting and managing the special character of Exmoor's unique landscapes		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Control intrusive development and activities, and minimise cumulative impacts		
Conserve the characteristic features of the Exmoor landscapes and seek opportunities to enhance landscape character		
Conserve the setting of the National Park and views in and out of the Park		

Priority A2: Maintaining the open character of moorland		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Determine policy and priorities for moorland management through engagement of owners, farmers and interested organisations		
Support management traditions and practices, that maintain and enhance the special character of moorland landscapes		
Continue the Moorland Landscape Partnership to support those who manage the moorland, and help people to enjoy and appreciate it		
Work with partners and land managers to understand and provide evidence of the impact of different land management techniques on moorland		

Priority A3: Maintaining in good condition, extending and connecting Exmoor's important wildlife habitats		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Maintain and improve the condition of Exmoor's important habitats and key species		
Establish a Nature Improvement Area to restore and expand priority habitats and deliver multiple benefits		
Control non-native invasive species, including <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> , Japanese knotweed, and Himalayan balsam		
Monitor population trends in red deer and support local deer management		

Priority A4: Protecting and managing Exmoor’s cultural heritage and the historic environment and promoting community engagement		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Protect Exmoor’s heritage assets including ancient monuments, listed buildings		
Assess and develop mitigation for the impact of climate change on the historic environment		
Maintain the local distinctiveness and character of Exmoor’s settlements and built environment		
Promote community engagement in historic environment and cultural heritage		

Priority A5: Maintaining and improving the quality of Exmoor's natural resources		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Encourage best practice in land management to protect soils and maximise carbon storage		
Continue rewetting and restoration of peatland hydrology through the MIRE project		
Maintain Exmoor's local sheep, cattle and pony breeds to retain important genetic diversity		
Support improved management of existing woodland and new woodland creation to deliver multiple benefits including carbon storage, jobs, enhanced biodiversity and access		

Priority A6: Seeking proper rewards for farmers, foresters and land managers for conserving Exmoor’s landscapes, wildlife, cultural heritage and natural resources		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Seek to influence future agri-environment schemes so that they reflect Exmoor priorities and circumstances		
Seek alternative funding streams to reward land managers for delivering public goods		
Continue to support livestock farmers through access to Rural Development Programme funding		

Programme B – Connecting People and Places

- 3.1 Each of the Programmes for Action will help to deliver elements of the Vision that we have set out. In helping to Connect People and Places, we will seek to ensure that in 2030:
- 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.

Objectives for Connecting People and Places

- 3.2 The Partnership Plan for Exmoor and Exmoor Local Development Framework share 21 common objectives. In setting the priorities for action to ‘**connect people and place**’ we have sought to address the following objectives:
- Objective 8 - To provide opportunities for people from all backgrounds and abilities, to learn about and enjoy Exmoor National Park, leading to a greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life*
- Objective 9 - To maintain and improve the recreational opportunities in the National Park particularly the rights of way network, access to open country, other quiet and active recreation based on Exmoor’s special qualities; and ensure that opportunities for recreation can be enjoyed by people from all backgrounds and of all abilities*
- Objective 10 - To support, record and understand aspects of culture and traditions that are special to Exmoor*

Priorities for Connecting People and Places

- 3.3 National Parks are designated with two purposes of conservation and enjoyment. Exmoor National Park is a major tourism destination and an important area for recreation. It is one of the few remaining areas in England where true tranquillity and a sense of remoteness and inspiration can be experienced. The high quality landscape, peace and quiet, biodiversity and cultural heritage that Exmoor provides are the major attractors for visitors, along with the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities. The opportunities that Exmoor offers are rare in southern England and surveys support the view that the area remains an important environmental asset for a wide range of people. Visitor satisfaction is high with 99% of respondents to the 2010 visitor survey stating their overall satisfaction of the National Park as a destination being ‘very good’ or ‘good’, and this is likely to be behind the motivation for the high level of repeat visits.
- 3.4 Visitor numbers have remained relatively stable despite the economic downturn, but promotion and marketing will continue to be vital to sustain Exmoor’s tourism economy. Surveys carried out in preparation for the previous National Park Management Plan suggested that there was overall support for a modest increase in visitor numbers to the National Park in addition to growing the value of the visitor economy. In particular, extending the season, and increasing the visitor spend by providing a high quality experience, remain the focus. The designation of the National Park as the first Dark Skies Reserve in Europe in 2011 provides great opportunities for promoting Exmoor as a destination to enjoy the night skies. Tourism businesses have a key role to play and the Exmoor Tourism Partnership

has been established to bring together local businesses and local authorities to help promote the area.

Promoting Exmoor National Park as a special destination, and developing the Exmoor brand is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority B1

- 3.5 Many people explore the National Park by walking, horse riding and cycling and the public rights of way are a vital part of Exmoor's economic infrastructure. Short walks and sightseeing are particularly popular with visitors. Permitted and de-facto access also have a very important role to play for access on Exmoor and many of our favourite routes include permitted sections. Exmoor's vast areas of open access land provide a fantastic opportunity for the more adventurous walker and some areas of open access for horse riding are also available.
- 3.6 Exmoor is fortunate in having a high proportion of public bridleways as part of its path network, many of which are narrow and rugged in character. The previous Management Plan set a target to ensure that at least 95% of public rights of way should be open and easy to use in line with national standards by end of March 2011 from a baseline in 2007 of 43%. A partial survey in 2010/11 showed that paths that met the 'ease of use' standard had increased to 96%. The facilities that people use when they visit Exmoor are also important, including information, car parks or public transport, and toilets, and these services will need to continue to be maintained.

Maintaining high quality rights of way, services and facilities to enhance enjoyment and understanding of the National Park will continue to be a priority in the Partnership Plan = priority B2

- 3.7 An important part of the enjoyment of Exmoor is understanding what is special about the National Park. The more that people understand what is special about a place, the more connected they are likely to feel to it. Most visitors and local residents share a real enthusiasm to find out more about Exmoor and about aspects in which they have a particular interest. Local residents, particularly those working in the tourism industry or who come face to face with the public in other ways, are best placed to interpret Exmoor to others particularly if they receive support to provide information about the National Park that is accurate and consistent.
- 3.8 It is important to develop new and exciting ways to provide information and interpretative material through as many avenues as possible such as in accommodation, on public transport, at eating places and wherever people wait. Modern communication technologies offer new ways to provide the information people want, at times of their choosing and in a format they prefer.
- 3.9 There were many suggestions as part of the consultation for ways in which people could be encouraged to enjoy the National Park more. These included helping visitors to connect with people who lived in, farmed and managed the land, for example through farm open days, events and festivals, and activities with clubs and societies.
- 3.10 Close liaison with schools and colleges was also supported to encourage young people and families in particular to understand and appreciate what is special about the National Park. Reaching young people in schools and colleges within the National Park has been a focus for the National Park Authority, and expanding this to young people living close to Exmoor and in some of the larger

conurbations in the region is another priority so that they know of the National Park, how to get here, and ways in which the area can be enjoyed and looked after.

- 3.11 Provision of opportunities for volunteering can also make a substantial contribution to a deepening understanding and enjoyment of the National Park. The Mosaic project has helped to increase awareness of Exmoor amongst young people and non-traditional audiences.

Working with communities to inform, inspire and engage people about Exmoor's Special Qualities is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority B3

Priorities for action for Connecting People and Places:

Priority B1 Promoting Exmoor National Park as a special destination and developing the Exmoor brand

Priority B2 Maintaining high quality rights of way, services and facilities to enhance enjoyment and understanding of the National Park

Priority B3 Working with communities to inform, inspire and engage people about Exmoor's Special Qualities

- 3.12 For each priority, a more detailed action plan is being developed in consultation with delivery partners. Indicative actions and potential partners are set out in the tables below.

Priority B1: Promoting Exmoor National Park as a special destination and developing the Exmoor brand		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Strengthen the Exmoor National Park brand and its association with high quality experiences.		
Develop and support iconic, recognizable events, food and walking festivals.		
Support local arts, crafts, cultural events and traditions as part of the Exmoor experience		
Work with the local community, tourism businesses and providers to provide a high quality experience.		
Promote Exmoor National Park as a destination to appreciate and experience tranquillity & Dark Skies		

Priority B2: Maintaining high quality rights of way, services and facilities to enhance enjoyment and understanding of the National Park		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Maintain a high quality Rights of Way and access network		
Ensure access opportunities exist to encourage all users including easy to use short walks		
Ensure recreation is well managed to maximise enjoyment and protect National Park's special qualities from damage		
Continue to deliver access and recreational facilities including car parks, toilets, signage		

Priority B3: Working with communities to inform, inspire and engage people about Exmoor's Special Qualities		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Provide information on Exmoor's special qualities through a variety of media and outlets responsive to user needs		
Explore opportunities for communicating Exmoor's special qualities utilising developments in technology and social media		
Promote access, enjoyment and understanding amongst new audiences including families and younger people		
Support a range of volunteering opportunities for local communities and visitors to the National Park		
Develop National Park Centres as hubs for community based approaches to information provision, supporting local businesses, volunteers and local information points		
Focus on local schools & communities in and near to the National Park to increase their awareness, enjoyment and understanding of Exmoor		
Develop an inspiring, high quality interpretation and information centre in the Lynmouth Pavilion		

Programme C – Towards a Sustainable Future

- 4.1 Each of the Programmes for Action will help to deliver elements of the Vision that we have set out. In working Towards a Sustainable Future, we will seek to ensure that in 2030:
- 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.
 - 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.

Objectives for Moving Towards a Sustainable Future

- 4.2 The Partnership Plan for Exmoor and Exmoor Local Development Framework share 21 common objectives. In setting the priorities for action to help in ‘**moving towards a sustainable future**’ we have sought to address the following objectives:

Objective 11 - To enable Exmoor’s communities and partnerships to plan development in their neighbourhoods to help meet their needs and aspirations while conserving the special qualities of the National Park

Objective 12 - To address local and affordable housing needs, making the best use of existing developed land and buildings; ensuring a mix of housing and a housing stock which helps sustain local communities

Objective 13 - To improve the sustainability, resilience and self-sufficiency of the National Park’s settlements by supporting the retention, provision of, and access to community services and facilities

Objective 14 - To achieve a strong, diverse, resilient and self-sufficient economy and encourage economic and employment opportunities which does not conflict with National Park purposes.

Objective 15 - To achieve profitable farming, forestry and land management in ways that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park whilst producing food and other produce, and conserving distinctive local breeds.

Objective 16 - To support the tourism industry in providing a warm welcome and a range of sustainable accommodation, services and facilities, leading to a high quality Exmoor experience for visitors and local communities alike. .

Objective 17 - To achieve high quality telecommunications and essential utilities and infrastructure in ways commensurate with the conservation of the National Park’s natural beauty, landscape wildlife, cultural heritage and special qualities.

Objective 18 - To support sustainable transport for residents and visitors by improving public and community transport services and opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding including linkages across the National Park boundary

Objective 19 - To minimise the net emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and support measures which contribute to carbon neutrality in ways that both conserve and enhance the National Park

Objective 20 - To adapt to the anticipated effects of climate change on Exmoor's communities, businesses, landscape, wildlife and coast including flood risk, sea level rise, unexpected weather events and so on.

Objective 21 - To minimise waste and emissions and support opportunities for reuse and, recycling in ways compatible with Exmoor's National Park designation

Priorities for moving Towards a Sustainable Future

4.3 In virtually all discussions with communities in the National Park the need for local affordable housing receives top priority. A good start has been made and Xx affordable homes were provided over the period of the 2007-12 Management Plan. However, the economic downturn and cuts in government spending presage a future where there is substantially less public funding available for housing provision. The new development policies being set out in the Local Plan are taking account of these wider changes and the need to establish new mechanisms to encourage affordable housing provision.

4.4 Government is also undertaking a series of changes to the planning system and encouraging greater involvement of communities in shaping development through an increased emphasis on 'localism'. Exmoor National Park Authority has responded positively to this and is piloting the new approach to 'Neighbourhood Planning' in Lynton and Lynmouth. The emphasis on localism is particularly appropriate in Exmoor, given the very different needs and circumstances of communities across the National Park.

Thus, encouragement and support for community led initiatives that help to meet local needs is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority C1

4.5 The emphasis of the National Park Management Plan 2007-12 was on encouragement of strong elements of the existing economy such as tourism and farming, while encouraging new business opportunities where they can benefit and contribute to the special environment of the National Park.

4.6 The most sustainable businesses in a deeply rural context such as Exmoor, are generally those that arise and develop locally through local entrepreneurship. Wherever possible, it is vital to ensure that local businesses can take advantage of opportunities and infrastructure that are taken for granted in more urban areas. A key example is the need for access to the effective communication networks provided by 'broadband' telecommunications. During 2011, a joint bid by Somerset and Devon County Councils was successful in attracting more than £30 million towards the establishment of rural broadband infrastructure in the two counties and this provides a great opportunity for Exmoor.

Encouraging and supporting enterprises that seek to benefit from and enhance Exmoor's special qualities is a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority C2

4.7 In the previous Management Plan a priority was given to encouraging employment opportunities for young people, and this remained a high priority in the consultation responses. Some success was achieved during 2011 with the development a major apprenticeship programme led by West Somerset

Community College and part-funded by the Exmoor National Park Authority Partnership Fund. The scheme employs a Rural Employment Enabler to work with potential employers and apprentices to provide two year placements for more than 100 young people over three years. Hopefully, this will provide a good model for the future and encourage the growth of existing local businesses as well as the establishment of new ones.

Improving economic prospects for young people living and working on Exmoor, remains a priority in the Partnership Plan = priority C3

- 4.8 The Management Plan 2007-12 recognised the challenges facing the National Park arising from climate change, and set an ambition for Exmoor to respond to this by becoming a carbon-neutral National Park. As the changes in climate become more apparent, there is an ongoing need to better understand the impacts on Exmoor's landscape, wildlife, historic environment, communities and economy, and the measures needed to help adapt to these changes. However, the National Park is also helping to demonstrate measures to help mitigate climate change particularly through carbon storage in woodland, soils and peat.
- 4.9 Reducing energy use is another key aim, and good progress is being made with local communities to conserve energy and encourage greater use of renewable sources to meet local energy needs. The introduction of incentives such as the feed-in-tariff have increased interest in providing electricity from renewable sources such as solar hot water and photovoltaic cells, which will be beneficial from a climate change mitigation perspective.
- 4.10 There could be greater benefits from similar incentives that may be introduced to encourage renewable heat, such as woodfuel which could help to address fuel poverty in many of Exmoor's communities where people do not have access to mains gas, and are struggling to cope with rising fuel bills. This also brings economic opportunities for creating new markets for wood and could increase management of existing woods with benefits for wildlife. The benefits that renewable energy can bring to Exmoor need to be carefully managed to ensure that they do not damage the special qualities. Intrusive developments such as large scale wind turbines were particularly highlighted as concerns during the consultation.

Making progress towards becoming a carbon-neutral National Park remains a priority for the Partnership Plan = priority C4

Priorities for action for moving Towards a Sustainable Future:

- Priority C1** Encouragement and support for community led initiatives that help to meet local needs
- Priority C2** Encouraging and supporting enterprises that seek to benefit from and enhance Exmoor's special qualities
- Priority C3** Improving economic prospects for young people living and working on Exmoor
- Priority C4** Making progress towards becoming a carbon-neutral National Park

Priority C1: Encouragement and support for community led initiatives that help to meet local needs		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Support and work in partnership with Exmoor's communities to plan and achieve their aspirations through neighbourhood planning		
Encourage the delivery of local and affordable housing that is appropriate to and meets the needs of local communities		
Improve access of communities and businesses to high speed broadband and other communications technologies		
Support communities to enable them to become more self-sufficient and resilient		
Support initiatives that help communities to plan for and adapt to climate change services and infrastructure		
Facilitate improved transport links and better integrated public transport		

Priority C2: Encouraging and supporting enterprises that seek to benefit from and enhance Exmoor’s special qualities		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Encourage enterprise and skills development in activities that utilise and add value to Exmoor’s sustainable local resources such as food, wood and wool		
Support businesses, particularly those in the tourism industry, to enable them to become more sustainable		

Priority C3: Improving economic prospects for young people living and working on Exmoor		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Support apprenticeships, particularly in land-based industries and rural skills		
Identify and better understand the skills needs for local businesses and employment opportunities across the National Park		

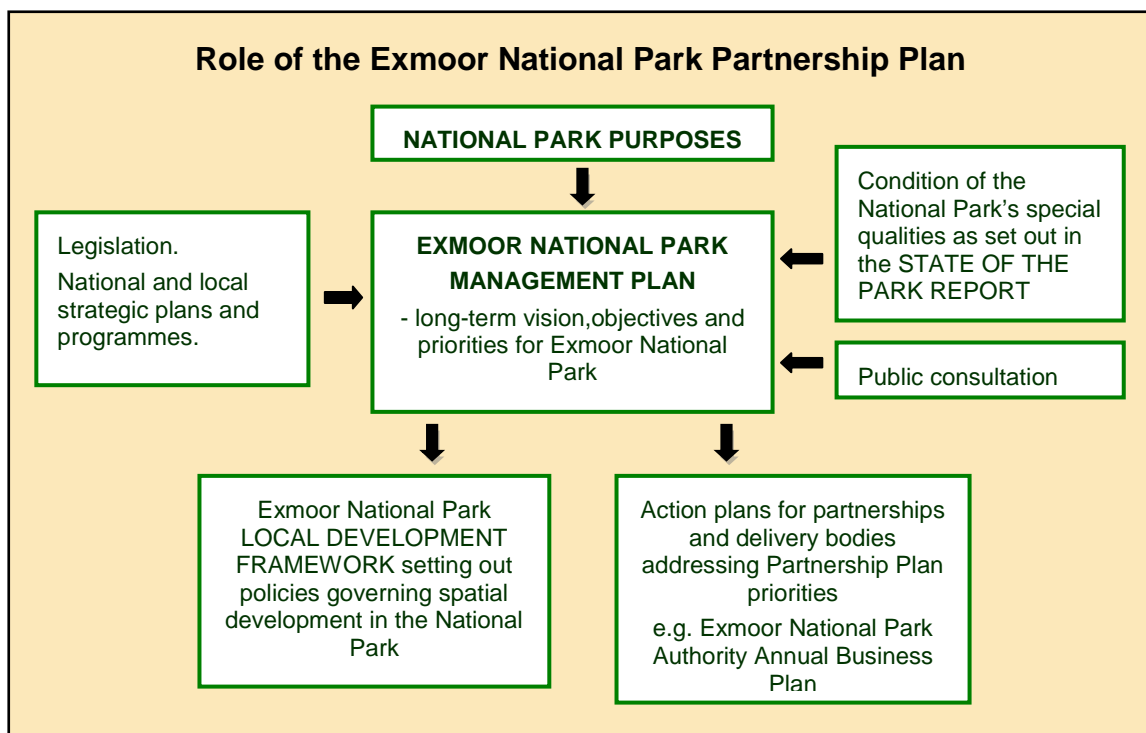
Priority C4: Making progress towards becoming a carbon-neutral National Park		
Indicative Actions	Delivery partnerships (lead partners in bold)	Milestones
Develop a strategic approach to guide and encourage appropriate renewable energy development		
Support efforts that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions arising from land use, land management and land use change		
Support communities in developing low carbon initiatives including those that improve energy efficiency and local access to goods and services		
Encourage and support low carbon transportation initiatives		

Partnerships for Action – Implementing the Partnership Plan

- 5.1 The Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan sets out the long term vision, objectives and priorities to be achieved during the period to 2017. While the National Park Authority is the statutory authority required to review and prepare the Plan, the Plan is a plan for Exmoor, not just for the Authority. It provides a framework not only for integrating the various activities of the Authority itself (planning, land and recreation management, information and education services, visitor facilities and so on), but also for stimulating and co-ordinating action by other agencies, whether public bodies, the private sector or voluntary organisations.
- 5.2 The Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2007-2012 will encourage partnership working within Exmoor’s communities to deliver the priorities for action.
- 5.3 The primary communities are considered to be:
- Owners and managers of land and heritage assets in the National Park
 - Wider resident community and people who live and work in the National Park
 - People who make use of the opportunities for learning and enjoyment that the National Park provides be they local residents in or close to the National Park and visitors from further afield – the ‘users’ of the National Park.

Delivery mechanisms

- 5.4 The Partnership Plan is the key mechanism for focusing and co-ordinating efforts to achieve the purposes for which the National Park was designated. Figure xx illustrates its central role.



- 5.5 The Partnership Plan, and the priorities for action that have been identified, sits within the context of international and national legislation, policy and strategy.

- 5.6 European Landscape Convention developed by the Council for Europe and signed up to by the UK Government in February 2006. The Convention raises the profile of landscape across the whole of Europe and is the first international agreement specifically addressing landscape issues. The Convention aims to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European cooperation on landscape issues.
- 5.7 The State of the Park report has provided much of the evidence regarding trends affecting the National Park. This, plus consultation with local communities and businesses, and people visiting Exmoor or with an interest in it, have informed the identification of priorities for action.
- 5.8 The National Park Authority is the lead organisation for many of the actions set out in the plan and is a key player in many of the delivery partnerships. In prioritising its commitment to Plan, the Authority has taken regard of the financial and staff resources at its disposal and the projections over the next five years. As well as making the most effective use of the resources made available from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs via National Park Grant, the Authority will work with partners to seek additional funding where this can be used to achieve targets set out in the Plan.
- 5.9 A key mechanism for delivering much of what is set out in this Partnership Plan is the Local Plan for Exmoor National Park, which will guide development over the next 30 years. A joint Vision and Objectives have been prepared to ensure that the policies and decisions regarding future development are consistent with the Partnership Plan. The Vision and Objectives are therefore long term, but the priorities for action identified in this Partnership Plan focus on the next five years, and will be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- 5.10 Delivery of many of the objectives will be achieved through partnerships and projects, some of which already exist, and others that may be established to address a specific need.

Securing resources

- 5.11 The resources for all the action plans have not been secured at the time of writing of the Plan. Many of the most significant actions will require the pooling of resources by several organisations and success in attracting funding from a range of public, private and voluntary sector sources.
- 5.12 It is vital that we engage as many people as possible in helping to achieve the Plan targets. More emphasis will be placed on encouraging volunteers and community groups to get involved in helping make the vision for Exmoor a reality.

Monitoring implementation of the Partnership Plan

- 5.13 Exmoor National Park Authority has a key role in monitoring progress of the Plan as a whole and in continually monitoring the condition of the National Park so that we can be sure that the Plan is succeeding in achieving the vision and outcomes for Exmoor and in retaining Exmoor's special qualities. In order to fulfil this strategic role the Authority will:
- Publish an annual review of progress against the objectives and priorities for action set out in this Plan.
 - Set in place mechanisms to monitor the state of the National Park environment and maintain an up to date '***State of the National Park***' report – available through the Authority website.

- Continue to convene an **Implementation Board, including external partners** to review progress, agree any refinements to the Plan and to contribute to public reports on Plan progress.
- Convene an **annual meeting of delivery partners** to report on achievements and update the action plans as required

Acknowledgements

5.14 Exmoor National Park Authority would like to thank the large number of organisations and individuals who have contributed towards the development of this Partnership Plan. Particular thanks are due to organisations that have committed to working together to help achieve the action plans set out in the document. Without this support little could be achieved.