

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

6 SEPTEMBER 2005

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY BY FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

Report of the National Park Officer

Purpose of Report:

To present the Sustainability Appraisal of the Authority prepared by Forum for the Future following a series of workshop sessions involving members and staff during April and May 2005

Legal Implications including Human Rights Act 1998:

None

Financial Implications:

Forum for the Future has undertaken the Sustainability Appraisal as one of a small number of pilot appraisals in the South West Region that have been enabled through private sector sponsorship and the work has not required a direct financial contribution from the Authority.

National Park Purposes:

The sustainability appraisal has evaluated the contribution made by the Authority to wider sustainability of Exmoor National Park. Whilst the Authority's core work is rightly focused on the achievement of National Park purposes, the appraisal has indicated ways in which the work of the Authority makes a positive contribution to sustainability of Exmoor's environment, community and economy.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Authority:

1. RECEIVES the sustainability appraisal
2. INDICATES its views on the main findings of the appraisal
3. SUPPORTS the proposal to take forward the findings of the appraisal into the forthcoming review of the Exmoor National Park Management Plan to be entitled '*A sustainable future for Exmoor*'

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Forum for the Future is testing the sustainability appraisal methodology in several geographic areas across the South West region. Exmoor is the first example where the methodology has been applied to a National Park and the results will feed into a number of review processes being undertaken by the National Park Authority during the year including the review of the National Park Management Plan and commencement of the new Local Development Framework, where the sustainability appraisal will help identify issues to feed into the public consultation prior to setting plan priorities.

2. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL PROCESS

2.1 The appraisal process has 6 main steps:

Step 1 Review baseline data and information to ‘characterise’ Exmoor National Park’s capital assets and trends for change for each of these. The summary characterisation is done on the basis of 5 types of capital assets (their stock and flows) rather than simply social, economic and environmental:

- **Natural** (climate and air, soils, water, biodiversity, landscape character, minerals and non renewables)
- **Human** (employment and skills base, education, training opportunities, health and well-being)
- **Social** (leadership and trust, community cohesion & sense of place, structures and institutions promoting good stewardship of land and resources, stakeholder processes)
- **Manufactured** (traffic, transport and access, processes and waste arisings, energy production and consumption, built heritage and buildings, archaeology)
- **Financial** (primarily types of public investment in the area and how these complement or work against each other)

Step 2 Involve Authority staff and members, and selected stakeholder representatives in a series of workshops to assess the state of each of the five capital assets, the trends for change, issues or problems and how these have or are being resolved.

Step 3 Draw up a sustainability profile for Exmoor National Park answering a sequence of questions for each capital asset in turn. These are:

- What are the sustainability issues/problems that need addressing within the Exmoor National Park area?
- How has or is the Exmoor National Park Authority helping to address these issues?
- How should the National Park Authority’s success in tackling sustainability issues be measured, e.g. what existing indicators measure sustainable outcomes, and what new indicators are needed?
- What rating would staff, members and key stakeholders assign to the National Park Authority’s performance to date?
- What would "good" look like for Exmoor National Park Authority in 10-20 yrs time, i.e. what do people want to see happen to achieve sustainable, integrated land use and resource management across the National Park area. This can be at the farm or site level up to landscape and catchment scale to include whole communities.

Step 4 Prepare a first draft of the appraisal report and consider ideas for future action to improve Park-wide sustainability, identify the key lessons from the appraisal process and the level at which barriers to further success need resolving.

Step 5 Prepare a final appraisal report and take forward the appraisal findings into the review of the National Park Management Plan and commencement of the Local Development Framework.

Step 6 Use the lessons learned from the Exmoor case studies for wider dissemination by the Forum for the Future so that good practice can be articulated and spread and to provide a greater understanding about the barriers to good practice and the scale at which these need to be resolved, by whom and how, so informing policy development and decision-making at all levels.

Nigel Stone
National Park Officer
11 August 2005

Background papers on which this report, or an important part of it are based, constitute the list of background papers required by Section 100 D (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to be open to members of the public comprise:-

Sustainability Appraisal for Exmoor National Park Authority. Forum for the Future. July 2005

Summary findings from the Sustainability Appraisal for Exmoor National Park Authority

Executive summary

Our land resource is finite and we need to find more integrated and sustainable ways of using it. The challenge is to safeguard and enhance soils, air, water and ecosystems at the same time as securing social equity and economic prosperity in rural areas.

Findings

The results for Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) are based on the views and perceptions of staff, members and selected local partners, i.e. it is a qualitative picture of ENPA's success in making Exmoor more sustainable, to show that it is making a considerable impact on Park-wide sustainability, but that there is clearly potential to do more to make Exmoor a more sustainable National Park.

(bar chart to illustrate ENPA's contribution to Park-wide sustainability to go here)

Natural capital

Landscape character (some direct or significant indirect contribution to Park-wide sustainability); ENPA's planning and management activities are delivering multiple benefits via a raft of measures to co-ordinate land management and recreational use. Having detailed soils and local landscape character assessment data on GIS would greatly enhance the Authorities performance, enabling them to achieve excellence.

Biodiversity (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability): ENPA leads by example. It's LBAP process, work on habitat restoration and improving management, and more general partnership working helps to achieve significant success in species and habitat conservation. There is potential to further build on their current approach to biodiversity by also helping to deliver Water Framework Directive responsibilities, e.g woodland retention and woodland planting to retain water and reduce/slow run-off, which would also be adaptations to climate change impacts (see climate and air quality below). However, the LBAP process is not statutory and agriculture on Exmoor continues to have negative impacts on local biodiversity. If ENPA is able to influence the further tailoring of the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, i.e. adjust the point scoring system, and hopefully run the scheme direct as the local delivery body, it

should have an even greater positive impact on biodiversity across Exmoor whilst maintaining farm livelihoods.

Climate and air quality (some direct or significant indirect contribution to Park-wide sustainability): Although not directly within its remit, ENPA is actually doing much to encourage improved local air quality and tackle climate change impacts by encouraging sustainable construction, less intensive farming and renewable energy development and encouraging more people to use public transport. However, overall, local air quality is influenced by pollution-laden prevailing winds from Europe.

Water and soil resource function (little contribution to Park-wide sustainability): ENPA is not explicitly required to address water and soil function as part of their remit. However, the Authority encourages its own tenants to adopt best practice and it could perhaps use its influence to do more to encourage soil conservation and water resource quality in connection with biodiversity and landscape character. Currently, the Authority makes little direct contribution to advice on local land management, but works indirectly via the EA, the RDS and others. Working relationships with these organisations could perhaps be strengthened to help deliver the vision for a more sustainable Exmoor.

Minerals (optimal contribution to Park-wide sustainability): As the planning Authority with responsibility for minerals and similar non-renewables, e.g. peat, ENPA scores “excellent” for local sustainability because it very actively protects and encourages the conservation and wise use of local resources, particularly for construction, both in the repair and restoration of historic buildings and new development; all of which will be given even greater emphasis with the new design guide. However, in a global context ENPA is helping to “undermine” global sustainability as some local building materials such as slate are much more expensive when locally sourced compared to overseas supplies, thus imports from as far afield as China and Brazil are being used in spite of the transport and carbon emissions involved. ENPA acknowledge that they need to address this.

Human Capital

Employment and skills (some direct to significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability): ENPA fulfils its socio-economic duty by successfully leveraging in money for

training purposes to raise local skill levels and help develop new employment opportunities. The Authority also has some control through the planning system to guide business diversification to help ensure that jobs are where people live. Perhaps the most important barrier to further success is the uncertainty about the long-term future of the SDF beyond 2008

Education and training (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability):

ENPA is very effective in promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Exmoor – surveys show that all of ENPA’s literature and activities are simple, effective and inclusive. The Authority is well placed to actively encourage increasing participation by under-represented groups and communities. It could also work with others to help alleviate the current shortage in supply of suitably trained educators/facilitators.

Health and well-being (some direct to significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability):

The Authority has worked hard to ensure that Exmoor is seen as a tremendous natural asset providing valued opportunities for recreation, peace, tranquillity and spiritual refreshment for physically and mentally able-bodied and disabled people alike. There are no real external barriers to ENPA achieving further success for health and well-being, within the context of the Authority’s current remit. It could focus on making stronger links between out-door recreation and healthy living.

Social capital

Community cohesiveness (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability):

The Authority directly supports local community events and local people are actively encouraged to take part in ENPA led committees and initiatives to make sure that local views help shape activities and outcomes, e.g. Planning for Real. ENPA also actively works at maintaining good links with parish councils and local interest groups, through its officers and members. The Authority uses its PR and media to encourage a strong local sense of place and to promote the Exmoor brand. It was seen as a trusted ally and ‘friend’ throughout the 2001 FMD epidemic and ‘recovery period’. As the Planning Authority ENPA has a small degree of control over the socio-economic make-up and cohesiveness of communities across Exmoor, but this is heavily influenced by longer-term national demographic trends.

Leadership and trust (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability):

The Authority is seen to be accessible, focused and very responsive to local as well as nationally important issues. It is increasingly looked to as a pro-active and objective mediator/facilitator between local communities and interest groups and the public sector. It is particularly good at taking on board local aspirations and concerns and raising their profile by providing a clear channel through to national government. ENPA has a strong social inclusion agenda in place

within Exmoor and the 'Greater Exmoor' fringe, but it could perhaps promote this in a more prominent and visible way.

Stakeholder networks and processes (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability): ENPA actively facilitates and encourages local networks and interest groups, and in doing so builds trust with and between its 'constituency'. It does this through the efforts of both staff and members. The Authority also maintains excellent links with other protected areas within and outside of the SW and strong links with other organisations important to local governance and socio-economic processes, e.g. local authorities, public sector agencies, LSPs, SW Tourism, SW Coast Path, etc. As an effective facilitator and enabler, ENPA uses its influence to share and network good practice via a web of interlinked groups. Staff and members consulted felt that ENPA could raise its game by seeking a wider cross-section of people as representatives on the various groups and panels that the Authority has direct control over.

Institutions conserving the land (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability): Unsurprisingly ENPA works very closely and effectively with the statutory environment agencies, as well as major NGOs like the National Trust (who own a considerable proportion of Exmoor) and the CPRE. In addition, ENPA is locally respected as the planning authority for Exmoor. There is perhaps an opportunity for ENPA to engage more directly with the Local Strategic Partnerships to make Exmoor's needs and opportunities more explicit in each Sustainable Community Strategy covering Exmoor at county and district level. Lastly, although ENPA has good relationships with each of the statutory agencies and regional organisations, it could possibly deepen these by being more pro-active in pushing them to work more directly towards realising the vision for a sustainable Exmoor.

Manufactured capital

Archaeology (some direct to significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability): ENPA has excellent working relations with EN, EH and an interdisciplinary approach to site work, recording and long-term management regimes (both strategic and on a site by site basis). Currently, there are a number of joint projects underway across the National Park. However, the full archaeological resource has yet to be surveyed and recorded in detail for the whole of the National Park area.

Development and built heritage (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability):

sustainability): ENPA is developing new design guidance to encourage sustainable construction, including the use of local materials such as timber as a result of the QUEST initiative. ENPA already does much to encourage sustainable construction but as the Local Planning Authority it could possibly do even more.

Transport infrastructure, traffic and access (some direct to significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability):

The Authority aims to lead by example, so it has developed a staff travel incentives scheme and is developing clear internal policies to reduce car use wherever possible. ENPA has little direct influence over public transport provision; this is the responsibility of the local authorities, but it has been successful in re-routing heavy traffic has used grant aid to set up good practice schemes. The next visitor survey will address sustainable transport issues for the first time. Off-road visitor access is well-managed by the Authority. ENPA does much to communicate which facilities, routes and tracks are suitable for which visitors using a variety of media. ENPA is responsible for writing, reviewing and implementing the Exmoor components of the ROWIPs for each County Council. Until the DOT seriously overhaul their guidance on signage for road traffic demand management in designated landscapes, or allow the National Parks greater interpretation it will be impossible for ENPA to achieve “excellent” in this aspect of Manufactured Capital.

Industrial processes and waste arisings (some direct or significant indirect

contribution to Park-wide sustainability): The Authority has effectively demonstrated good practice and raised awareness about waste reduction and management in a number of ways. There is much potential for ENPA to use its communications media to encourage tourist providers and visitors to reduce their waste. It may also be possible to work more closely with the 2 local authorities to achieve a more seamless waste management.

Energy production and consumption (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability): Once again, ENPA is leading by example to promote the use of renewable energy, improve energy efficiency and reduce consumption. Overall, the SDF has made it easier for ENPA to champion renewable energy development and to be pro-active in encouraging good ideas and innovation connected with the management of Exmoor’s natural resources. Another means by which the Authority has actively promoted energy efficiency and renewable energy development is through the planning system, but it could possibly be even more pro-active in this respect.

Financial Capital (significant positive contribution to Park-wide sustainability)

One of ENPA's biggest strengths is its ability and willingness to use its funding very flexibly in comparison to other bodies. The Authority has used its second purpose and duty of care to deliver its first purpose through awareness-raising and using the SDF to encourage local entrepreneurs to develop sustainable local business opportunities. Through its vision for Exmoor and close partnerships ENPA is able to influence the way funding is targeted and used on Exmoor.

The Exmoor Paths Partnership is one of ENPA's main sustainable tourism initiatives. The National Park Authority spends over £1 million each year on recreation management, rangers, estate services and volunteers.

ENPA actively promotes Exmoor as a high quality tourist destination. There is potential to make up some of the loss of income from hunting through development of the "equine tourism" market. Provision of a downhill bike centre and family cycle holidays are being investigated. Persuading visitors to stay longer is also part of ENPA's strategy for boosting Exmoor's economy. The Authority needs further

Research to study how well money circulates locally, for local businesses and households to reap the full benefits. This information should help guide the Authority's future use of the SDF monies.

What more ENPA could consider doing to make Exmoor sustainable

An important aspect of the appraisal workshops with ENPA staff and members was to look to some point in the future and imagine that current sustainability issues had been resolved, and to then think of ways that this could have happened: These ideas are listed below and have been developed in more detail in section 5 of the report:

- a) The Authority could be even clearer about its own policies for sustainable development

- b) Being more sustainable also means having a transparent and effective means of sustainability appraisal as part of ENPA's ongoing performance management and business planning cycle.

- c) The Authority could be more confident about building on its obvious success as a trusted local facilitator to be even more pro-active in encouraging effective, stronger partnership working, i.e. ENPA as a catalyst for strong leadership and lasting change.

- d) The Authority already has a strong focus on young people and could develop this further by encouraging “tomorrow’s local leaders and , business entrepreneurs” and “tomorrow’s sustainable tourists”.
- e) ENPA already has a very effective communications strategy, but it could review this with the aim defining what a sustainable Exmoor should look like and how to achieve it.
- f) The Authority has demonstrated innovation and success in local market development using the SDF. This approach could be further developed to help ensure that “local” means high quality produce that is reasonably priced,
- g) The Authority’s work on landscape and nature conservation is a solid basis on which to build a more explicit approach towards defining how natural resource protection fits with existing NP purposes. ENPA could consider taking the lead in defining what natural resource capacity and “limits of acceptable change” mean in practice for different parts of Exmoor.