

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

18 JULY 2006

EXMOOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND – 2005/06 REPORT SUMMARY 2005/06

REPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

A STORY OF SUCCESSFULLY SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES IN A NATIONAL PARK

This report describes the activities of Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA), local community, voluntary and statutory groups and local businesses in delivering the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund (ExSDF) from April 2005 to 31 March 2006.

In October 2005, the Authority and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWeRDA) agreed that an extra £300,000 of grant aid would be added to the ExSDF from SWeRDA. Before March 2008, SWeRDA expects to see projects supported by the ExSDF to safeguard or create 15 full-time equivalent jobs, signpost 5 people in to employment and give 15 people 'Skills for Life' training which improves literacy and numeracy skills.

Over the reporting period, 25 projects were offered grant aid from 69 expressions of interest. These projects will engage around over 2200 young people and reaching over 250 businesses, involving 17 community and voluntary groups through 21 new partnerships. The projects will, before March 2008, safeguard or create 10.45 full-time equivalent jobs and involve up to 420 people in training which improves their literacy and numeracy skills.

Grant aid has been offered to a total of 73 projects since August 2002; 30 are still in progress.

Six projects (24%) involve linking people from hinterland towns with Exmoor activities and groups, 4 (16%) projects have a specific focus on urban-rural links; no projects have a global perspective. 13 projects provide models of local sustainable development which could be replicated elsewhere, 20 are and will continue after the ExSDF grant aid has been spent and 20 projects involve a significant re-examination or change of/in attitudes, understanding and/or behaviour on the part of those affected; 7 projects (28%) involving young people.

Two exemplar projects are "Water Quality Improvements" and "Refurbishment of St Mary Lyncombe Centre":-

Aardvark EM Ltd., based near Wiveliscombe, have employed a new colleague to run their Exmoor Water Quality Improvement pilot business. Exmoor businesses with outflows in to streams and rivers, including farmers, campsite owners and an ice cream producer have signed up to test the unique mobile reedbeds technology (www.rentareedbed.co.uk).

For a copy of the full report, visit www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk



Over the next 18 months, the £30,000 grant aid will trial the practical and market robustness of the tested product, which has global potential.

Photo: Reedbeds being nurtured in a greenhouse, ready for installation at sites across Exmoor.
Credit: Aardvark EM Ltd.

Refurbishment of the **St Mary Lyncombe** environmental education **Centre** located in the Hoar Oak Valley near Lynton (owned by Ilfracombe College) will bring first hand experience and knowledge of sustainably maintaining a sensitive environment to hundreds of young people from across North Devon & Exmoor over the next 15-20 years, including students at the College's 'twin' college in Bristol.

The larger project to refurbish and re-kit the Centre is being funded by the New Opportunities Fund (£21,000). The Governors of Ilfracombe Community College have committed to insure, co-ordinate bookings, repair & maintain and pay taxes & rates for the Centre in future years.

The £9,552 Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund grant will enable, amongst other things, the perimeter of the site to be secured from stock by repairing/updating/replacing fencing & gates, draughty broken windows to be replaced with double glazed windows made from sustainably managed Mid Devon timber and the purchase and installation of the combined log stove and water & central heating boiler.

Overall, twelve projects will have a lasting impact furthering Exmoor National Park Authority's Purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park; 16 of the projects will further the Purpose to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public and 14 projects are and will foster the social and economic well-being of local communities.

The engagement of local people in the Independent Grant Advisory Panel has notably improved the quality of the projects.

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The total value of the 25 supported projects is over £1.45m with the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund (ExSDF) offering £311,393 (21%) matching over £1.025m (71%) of other funding and £114,384 (8%) of gifted time and materials. Administration, management, monitoring and evaluation of the Fund has cost approximately £35,000; only £20,000 has been met from the DEFRA SDF grant (the rest being gifted by ENPA).

The Fund is managed by the ENPA Sustainable Development Manager (SDM), who helps all applicants to meet the criteria of the Fund. Those applications which meet the criteria are then assessed by the SDM. Relevant applications for less than £2,500 are recommended by the SDM to the National Park Officer who, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Independent Grant Advisory Panel, decides. This Panel, comprised of twelve people who live and work across Exmoor National Park, advises upon all other applications recommended by the SDM. Whilst the final decision rests with the National Park Officer, no Panel recommendations have yet been 'called in'. Panel members also work with approved projects to add their own expertise.

Approximately 26 press articles, 6 radio interviews and 1 TV features (1 regional news, 1 national documentary) have been achieved by the SDO, ENPA publicity team and grant recipients.