

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK  
STATE OF THE PARK REPORT

CHAPTER 15. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Vision for traffic and transport

*Less reliance on the motor vehicle for access and more control over where vehicles go. Increased provision of public transport and a road network and related facilities that provide for those more reliant on their own transport in areas capable of accommodating such use.*

Objectives and Indicators

**Objectives** relate to the Exmoor National Park Management Plan  
**Indicators** may be shared with those from other plans or organisations

LP - Exmoor National Park Local Plan

BVPP – Exmoor National Park Best Value Performance Plan

AC – Audit Commission

CA – Countryside Agency indicators used in their ‘*State of the Countryside Reports*’

RWP – The Government’s Rural White Paper ‘*Our Countryside*’

NPA – ‘Headline’ indicators developed by the National Park Authorities’ Data Working Group

RO – Indicators developed for the South West’s Regional Observatory

**Objective 15/2**

*To reduce the need for travel within the National Park*

**Indicators:**

*Creation and loss of key local services; percentage of working population employed within the National Park; distance of households from key services (AC)*

**Objective 15/3**

*To reduce the impact of vehicles and the highway infrastructure on the environment of the National Park, while ensuring that the social and economic interests of the local community are not harmed and that road safety is not compromised.*

**Indicators:**

*Road Traffic Accidents within the National Park; volume of traffic (AC, NHI); volume of HGV traffic (NHI)*

**Objective 15/4**

*To achieve a shift in travel modes, from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport.*

**Indicators:**

*Percentage of bus passengers who could have made the journey by car*

**Objective 15/5**

*To encourage more sustainable travel behaviour by raising awareness of transport issues and influencing public attitudes to travel.*

**Indicators:**

*Percentage of people interviewed who are aware of issues*

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### Objective 15/6

*To improve accessibility to jobs, services and facilities for local communities.*

Indicators:

*Number and frequency of bus services; number of settlements with daily bus service throughout the year*

### Objective 15/7

*To integrate development and the use of land with transport policy.*

Indicators:

*Proportion of new businesses, houses and facilities accessible by public transport*

## HOW BUSY ARE EXMOOR'S ROADS?

### Current situation:

*A very low proportion of traffic on Exmoor is commercial traffic*

*A moderate proportion of traffic on Exmoor is tourist traffic*

*Traffic on Exmoor's A class roads is generally less than on similar roads in surrounding areas*

### Trends:



*Traffic is increasing slightly on some Exmoor roads and decreasing slightly on others but is staying the same on average*

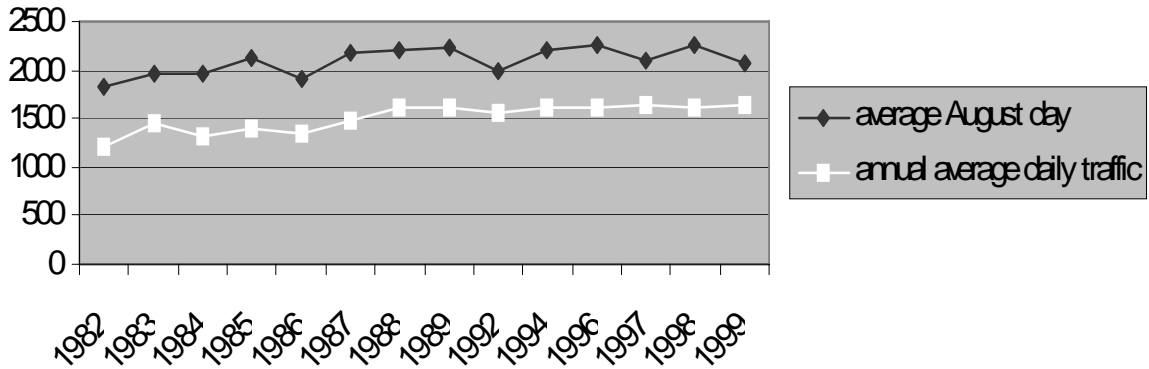
### Traffic has increased on Exmoor but not in recent years

The earliest traffic survey data we have for Exmoor is from the 1920s. In 1923 there were 558 vehicles a day in August on the A39 near Selworthy and 327 on the A396 just south of Dunster. By 1925 this had risen to 890 and 573 vehicles respectively. In 1923 about 12% of these vehicles were horse drawn and this had reduced to just 3% two years later. By 2002 there were 4700 vehicles on the A39 and 2850 on the A396, an increase of 6.7% and 6.3% per annum respectively. Nationally there was a steady growth in traffic of about 5% per year in the 1980s but during the early 1990s it slowed to about 1.5% per year. Exmoor traffic counters tend to be temporary and there are few long term figures. However, it seems that growth has mirrored the national trend but the proportional increase has been lower, generally less than 1% per annum over the last decade.

- *The most continuous monitoring on Exmoor has been on the B3190 at Raleigh's Cross, where traffic increased by 20% between 1982 and 1999, mostly during the 1980s. Source: WS Atkins, Somerset Traffic Statistics*
- *During the same period traffic on the A39 just east of Minehead increased by 70% whereas it decreased by 7% on the same road west of Porlock. Between 1987 and 1999 traffic on the A396 south of Dulverton increased by 11% and on the same road north of Dunster it decreased by 10%. Source: WS Atkins, Somerset Traffic Statistics*
- *The greatest recorded decrease for 1987 to 1999 is 25%, for the B3358 west of Simonsbath. Source: WS Atkins, Somerset Traffic Statistics*

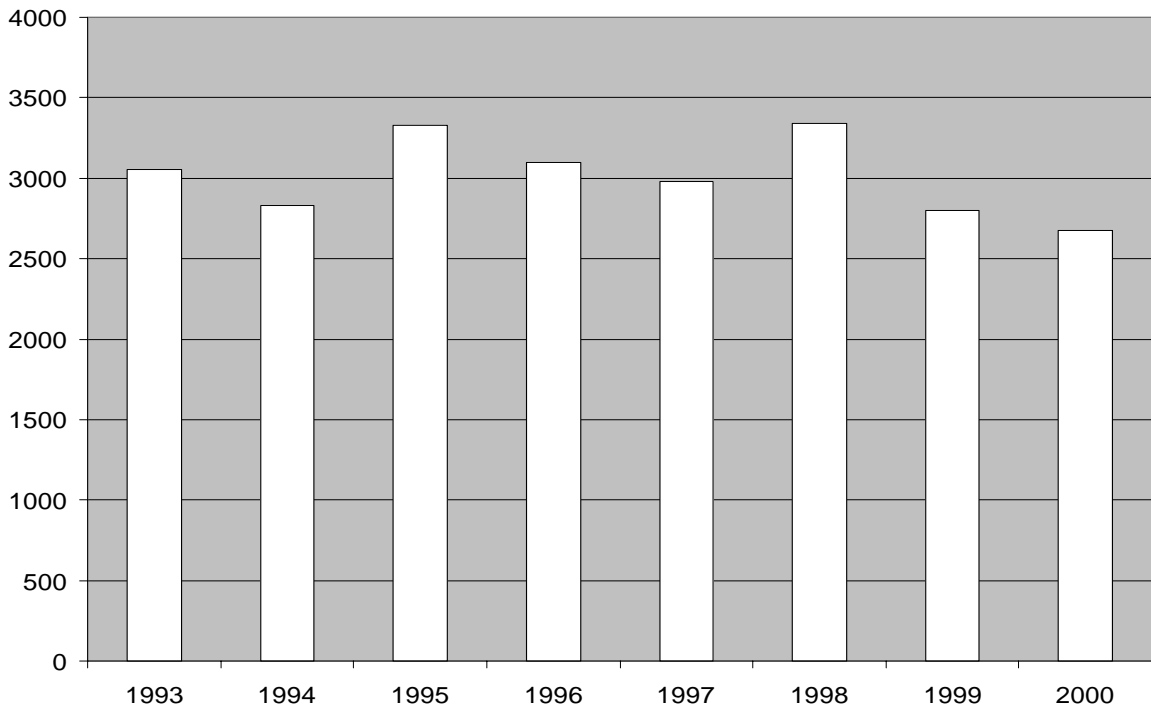
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**Traffic on B3190 at Raleigh's Cross**



Traffic in the western parts of the National Park may generally have decreased during the 1990s, as shown by the figures for Blackmoor Gate below. Construction of the A361 North Devon Link Road has taken some traffic away from Exmoor. A year after the construction of the road in 1988 traffic had decreased by about 55% on the former A361. However, the upgrading of the B3226 to A399 at the same time resulted in an average increase in traffic of 19% passing through Blackmoor Gate to the North Devon coast.

**Average daily traffic on A39 at Blackmoor Gate in Barnstaple direction (Source: Devon County Council)**



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The trend on Exmoor is contrary to the national picture, where traffic is still growing and more rapidly on rural roads than elsewhere. In Somerset and Devon as a whole traffic is generally increasing faster than in the country as a whole.

- *In the ten years between 1987 and 1997 traffic increased by nearly 40% in Somerset, compared with less than 30% nationally. Motorway and trunk route traffic is increasing faster: 54% in Somerset over the same period compared with 31% nationally. Source: WS Atkins, Somerset Traffic Statistics*

### ***Commercial traffic on Exmoor's roads is decreasing***

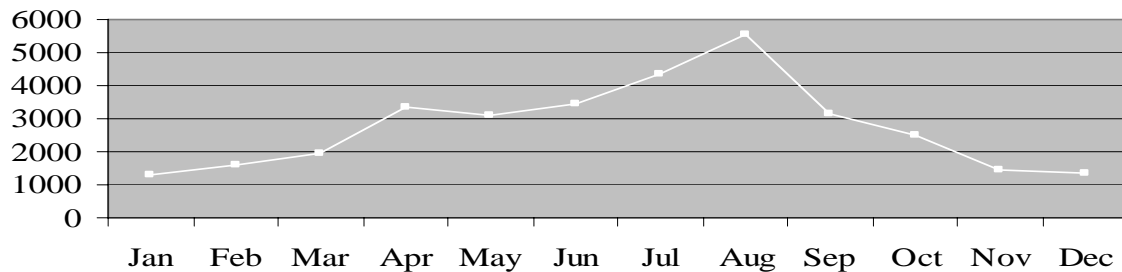
Generally in Devon and Somerset commercial traffic has not grown in the last ten years on roads other than motorways and trunk routes and heavy goods vehicles have actually decreased on minor routes as they have been channeled onto the main roads. The development of the A361 North Devon Link Road seems to have had this effect for Exmoor. Commercial traffic now forms a small percentage of traffic on Exmoor roads - vehicles over 1.5 tonnes form less than 3% of traffic on the A roads and less than 2% on most other roads. This percentage is generally less on Exmoor's A roads than for roads of comparable size in surrounding areas.

### ***Tourist vehicles form a large proportion of Exmoor's traffic***

Tourist traffic forms a large percentage of Exmoor traffic in season, as the figures for Blackmoor Gate suggest, where average flow in August is 420% higher than in January. Traffic in one direction varies from just over 500 on Christmas Day to over 9000 on the Saturday of August Bank Holiday weekend.

- *In 1994 recreational traffic constituted an average of 59% of the non-commercial traffic in the National Park, with a greater percentage at weekends. Source: All Parks Visitor Survey*

**Blackmoor Gate: average daily traffic in Barnstaple direction  
2000 (Source: Devon County Council)**



Although the volume of tourist traffic varies from year to year, the general trend is for average daily traffic to remain roughly constant within the National Park, as the figures for Raleigh's Cross show. Here, however, the gap between the summer and winter averages appears to be declining. This would suggest a reduction in summer visitor traffic, possibly combined with more local traffic and an extension of the holiday season.

- *The busiest road in the National Park is the A39 between Carhampton and Dunster, with an average daily flow of about 14600 vehicles in 1999. The flow on the same road decreases to about 4600 just west of Minehead and 1400 west of Porlock, rising again to about 5400 at Blackmoor Gate. Source: WS Atkins, Somerset Traffic Statistics*
- *The next busiest road is the A396, where the flow, although declining, is concentrated in the short distance between the A39 and the centre of Dunster. Dunster, Lynmouth and Porlock are the villages with the greatest traffic concentrations in the National Park. Source: WS Atkins, Somerset Traffic Statistics*

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Although traffic does not appear to be increasing in those settlements, this does not mean that existing traffic is not a problem, particularly at peak times. The expansion of Minehead, Dulverton and settlements surrounding them appears to have led to an increase of traffic in those areas. Such areas are also closer to main roads and the motorway and attract more commuters and second home owners coming for the weekend. In contrast, traffic seems to have fallen in the remoter western parts of the National Park, where much accommodation for local people has been converted to holiday lets whilst the overall number of visitors appears to be declining.

### HOW RELIANT ARE LOCALS ON MOTOR CARS?

#### *Current situation:*

*A there is a higher proportion of car ownership on Exmoor than in surrounding areas or nationally*

*A lower proportion of people on Exmoor travel to work than in surrounding areas*

#### *Trends:*



*Car ownership is increasing on Exmoor, although not as fast as nationally*

#### *Country people are more reliant on private transport*

There are over 2 million cars in the South West Region, with most (80 %) households owning at least one (Office for National Statistics, 1999). Average vehicle age is higher in the South West than in any other region at almost 8 years.

There are far more roads in the South West than any other area of England, partly because of the Region's size but also reflecting its nature as a rural peninsula. With nearly 50,000 kms, the Region has almost one fifth of all England's road length (Office for National Statistics, 1999). The distances travelled per person per year in the South West between 1997 and 1999 were amongst the highest in the country. Most distances (nearly 90 %) were travelled by car. This is partly the result of the lower accessibility to buses in this Region compared to anywhere else in the country. However, people in the South West are more likely to walk to work than in any other Region, and, despite the longer distances involved, more likely to travel to school by bus (all information provided by DTLR).

A higher proportion of people on Exmoor own cars than in surrounding areas.

- *In 1991 census 82% of households on Exmoor owned cars compared with 72.7% in Devon as a whole and 78% in Somerset as a whole. Source: National Census*
- *The average number of cars per household is higher on Exmoor than in surrounding areas: 1.19 on Exmoor compared with 1.01 for Devon as a whole and 1.1 for Somerset as a whole. Source: National Census*

This reflects the remoteness of Exmoor and the lack of public transport. There is a similar picture nationwide where the remoter the area, the higher the proportion of cars in the population: only 60% of households in London and metropolitan areas have cars and rural households are twice as likely to have more than one car as such areas. However, fewer Exmoor people travel to work than in surrounding areas.

- *In 1991 on Exmoor 48.5% of people traveled to work by car either as driver or passenger compared with 64.9% in Somerset as a whole. 29.5% worked at home on Exmoor compared with 8.4% in Somerset as a whole. About the same proportion walked to work as elsewhere. Source: National Census*
- *The proportion of households in Britain owning cars increased by five times between 1951 and 1971. Those on Exmoor owning cars increased by 6.9% between 1971 and 1981 and 6.6% between 1981 and 1991. This was not as much as in the nation as a whole, which increased by 9% between 1981 and 1991. Source: National Census*
- *The population of Exmoor increased by 6.9% between 1971 and 1981 and 6.1% between 1981 and 1991. This would account for some of the increase in traffic locally during the 1970s and 1980s. Source: National Census*

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**HOW DOES TOURISM AFFECT TRAFFIC ON EXMOOR?**

***Current situation:***

*A very high proportion of visitors to Exmoor comes by private transport*

*Most visitors come from within a 200 mile radius of Exmoor*

*A very high proportion of visitors use private transport to travel around the National Park*

*Half of the recreational traffic on Exmoor is just passing through*

***Trends:***



*The proportion of visitors coming by car is increasing but is now near 100%*



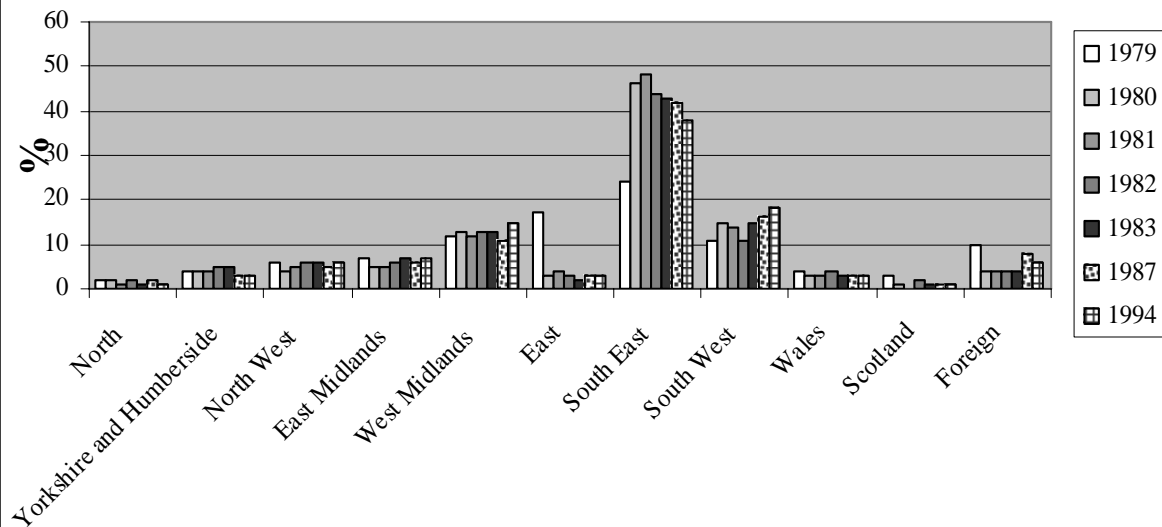
*The overall amount of visitor traffic is not changing, although there are good years and bad years*



*The distance travelled to Exmoor appears to be decreasing*

***Most visitors to Exmoor come by private transport and spend much of their time touring by private transport***

**origin of visitors staying on Exmoor**



The proportion of visitors coming by private vehicle increased from 74% in 1975 to 97% in 1994, reflecting an increase in car ownership nationally. The journeys of tourists to Exmoor appear to be dominated by the M5 and M4 corridors, with most visitors coming from the south east, south west and west midlands regions. The pattern has not

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changed much in recent years. If anything, there is a tendency for journeys to become shorter. In recent years there has been a slightly lower proportion of visitors coming from the east of England and greater proportion from the south west and west midlands. This may reflect both the tendency away from public transport and towards shorter break holidays.

It is clear that improved communications have not necessarily led to an increase in tourist traffic. Despite fluctuations from year to year, the proportion of visitors on day visits from home did not vary overall in surveys between 1980 and 1994.

- *In 1994 25% of visitors to Exmoor were on day visits from home and 58% on day visits from holiday accommodation outside of the National Park. Source: All Parks Visitor Survey*
- *An aspect not covered by previous surveys was the proportion of tourist traffic passing through the National Park. It was found on the roads surveyed that an estimated 1.5 million recreational through trips were made. The proportions varied according to the day of the week. 65% of all recreational traffic on a Saturday was passing through the National Park because it was the most direct route and 23% because it was the most scenic route. Only 11% of recreational traffic on a Saturday was actually visiting the Park. This increased to 27% on weekdays and 46% on Sundays but throughout the week more than half of the recreational traffic was merely passing through. Source: All Parks Visitor Survey*
- *In 2005 it was found that the average journey time of holiday visitors from home to Exmoor was 3 ½ hours, with a variation between ¾ hour and 12 hours. Most visitors were from the M4/M5 corridors. Source: QUEST Visitor Satisfaction Survey*

### IS PUBLIC TRANSPORT REDUCING THE RELIANCE ON PRIVATE TRANSPORT?

#### ***Current situation:***

*A moderate proportion of those who use buses could use a car*

*Travel to work distances on Exmoor are relatively short*

*It is not known what proportion of journeys is made by public transport*

#### ***Trends:***



*Travel to work distances on Exmoor are increasing rapidly*

#### ***Commuting is becoming commonplace on Exmoor.***

Between the 1981 and 1991 census the proportion of persons living and working in West Somerset district rose by 2%, contrary to the trend in the rest of the region. In 1991 only 9.8% of workers commuted to a different district. According to Somerset TEC household surveys the proportion continued to rise until 1994, since when there has been a steep decline from 89% to 60% of people living and working in the same district. Of the 40% who do not work in the district, 30% commute to the neighbouring districts of Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor, 5% work elsewhere in the region and 5% work elsewhere in the UK.

- *In 1991 48.5% of Exmoor workers travelled to work by car, 29.5% worked at home, 13.8% travelled on foot and 1.7% by public transport. Source: National Census*

#### ***Most people who use Exmoor buses do so because they have to but some do so because they prefer to.***

In 2002 49% of Exmoor parishes were served by a daily bus service. Although this may seem low, it is a relatively high level of service compared with the region and country as a whole. Services change from year to year and there is a high level of subsidy for services. Subsidies are from time to time withdrawn if they cannot be justified by the numbers of passengers. Unfortunately details of passenger numbers are not freely available and it is currently not possible to calculate the percentage of journeys made by public transport. However, Exmoor National Park Authority undertakes passenger surveys of some of the bus routes it promotes and a picture of the types of passengers and

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purposes of their journeys is emerging. The surveys take place in summer, so a relatively high proportion of holidaymakers are interviewed. Key results from the 1994 to 1996 surveys are as follows:

- *Most people using buses were elderly – in 1994 62% were over 60*
- *Most people using the buses were on day trips or holidays – 60% in 1994 and 68% in 1996*
- *Most people using buses did not have a car of their own – 55% in 1995 and 64% in 1996*
- *Of car owners, most would not have taken the trip at all if the bus were not available – 59% in 1995 and 55% in 1996*
- *Of car owners on holiday and using the bus, about half were trying to avoid using their car at all whilst in the National Park – 17% in 1994, 71% in 1995 and 55% in 1996*
- *The main reason for using the bus was sightseeing – 41% in 1995 and 40% in 1996 – and a low proportion of the journeys was essential for work, business or shopping – 20% in 1995 and 23% in 1996*
- *Most bus users thought that the fares were good value – 100% in 1994 and 96% in 1996*
- *Most bus users were completely satisfied with the quality of the service – 85% in 1994 and 87% in 1996. In 1994 99% said they would use the service again.*

### Actions

Some of these actions are objectives and actions from the Exmoor National Park Management Plan

#### **Objective 15/1**

*To develop an integrated approach to managing transport and traffic on Exmoor.*

#### **Action 15/1**

*Undertake surveys of accessibility of public transport*

#### **Action 15/2**

*Undertake surveys of off road motoring*

#### **Action 15/3**

*Study traffic speeds and methods of reducing them*

#### **Action 15/4**

*Review road signing and other highway structures (lighting, roadside barriers etc) and their impact on the environment (removal of hedgerows for visibility etc)*

#### **Action 15/5**

*Study traffic congestion in villages*

#### **Action 15/6**

*Undertake customer surveys of public transport*

#### **Action 15/7**

*Develop planning databases to monitor accessibility of new development to public transport*

*NB The information contained in this report is based upon the best information available at the time. Although every effort has been made to confirm its accuracy and ensure that it has been used in the proper context, Exmoor National Park Authority cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information.*

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