

**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK
STATE OF THE PARK REPORT**

CHAPTER 17. COMMUNICATION

Vision for communication

Wide understanding and appreciation of the value of protected areas at international, national and local levels, translated into support for efforts to secure the conservation, enhancement, understanding and enjoyment of Exmoor National Park from partner organisations and the community at large.

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 17/1

To achieve and sustain awareness of and support for objectives, policies and actions that fulfil National Park purposes.

Indicators:

Percentage of population and believing that National parks are important for conservation and public enjoyment

WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK?

Current situation:

Visitors to Exmoor have a high awareness of Exmoor as a National Park

Visitors to Exmoor have a moderate awareness of the work of the National Park Authority

The British public has a low awareness of Exmoor as a National Park

The British public has a low awareness of the work of the National Park Authority

Trends:



Visitors are probably becoming more aware of the National Park and the work of the Authority because a greater proportion are using the Authority's services



The public is gradually becoming more aware of the National Park and the work of the Authority

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People know more about Exmoor than is anticipated:

Exmoor is one of the least visited of the National Parks and one would suspect that it is one that the public is least aware of:

- *In 1977 Exmoor accounted for only 4% of all visits to National Parks and was the least visited of the ten National Parks at that time, apart from Northumberland. Source: Countryside Commission survey*
- *In 1994 Exmoor was the least visited of all of the National Parks. Source: All Parks Visitor Survey*

Few people come to Exmoor because it is a National Park:

- *In 1979 only 1% of all visitors came to Exmoor because it was a National Park, although 22% of visitors staying in the Park felt that its designation had an important influence on their visit. In 1994 2% came solely because it was a National Park and 11% named it as one of the reasons. Sources: ENPA Recreation Sites Survey; All Parks Visitor Survey*

However, surveys have shown that, in proportion to the number of visitors, awareness of Exmoor as a National Park is relatively high:

- *In 1979, 79% of visitors staying in the area, 70% of visitors on a holiday day trip and 78% of visitors on a day trip from home could name Exmoor as a National Park. Source: ENPA Recreation Sites Survey*

Different types of visitors have different levels of awareness:

- *In 1979, of the visitors staying in the area, those from the South West region were, surprisingly, less aware of Exmoor as a National Park than those from other regions, with those from the north of England and Wales being most aware. Source: ENPA Recreation Sites Survey*
- *Local people on day trips and foreign visitors appear to be more aware of the status of the National Park. This status seems more likely to influence the visits of people from far afield. Source: ENPA Visitor Surveys*

Most people in England and Wales know of the existence of National Parks and of the need for them but know little of where they are and how they operate:

Few people can name a National Park:

- *In 1983, while 90% of the British public was aware of the existence of National Parks, only 30% could actually name one of them. Source: Countryside Commission survey*
- *In 1985, 54% of people living outside of the National Parks could name one. Source: Countryside Commission survey*
- *In 1999, 51% of respondents could name at least one National Park. Source: Peak District National Park Authority telephone survey*

Fewer people are aware of the existence of a National Park than have visited it. Generally, the larger and more visited the National Park the larger the number but the lower the percentage of visitors aware of it. On Exmoor a larger proportion of visitors are staying in the National Park than in most National Parks and are, therefore, more likely to come across information. A large proportion also goes through visitor centres and sees publications such as the *Exmoor Visitor*:

- *In 1999, 12% of respondents could name Exmoor as a National Park, although 14% had visited Exmoor. In comparison, 92% of respondents knew of the existence of National Parks and recognition of individual National Parks ranged from 30% for the Lake District to 2% for the Broads and Northumberland. Source: Peak District National Park Authority telephone survey*

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Few of the public are aware of how National Parks work:

- In 1985 85% of people living outside of the National Parks thought that the land in them was publicly owned. There was also very low awareness of the work of National Park Authorities. **Source: Countryside Commission survey**
- In 1999 53% of respondents had no idea of who owned the National Parks. **Source: Peak District National Park Authority telephone survey**

A moderate proportion of visitors to Exmoor is aware of the work of the National Park Authority:

- In 1982, 58% of visitors (55% of staying visitors and 79% of day trippers) were aware that a warden service operated on Exmoor. **Source: Exmoor National Park Authority Visitor Survey**
- In 1994, visitor centre customers were asked to describe the National Park logo. 59% described it correctly, 35% did not know, 5% mistook it for the National Trust logo and 1% described it wrongly. **Source: ENPA Visitor Centre survey**

Everyone has their own idea of what the special qualities of Exmoor are. The term is not well understood, features and qualities are confused and many of the qualities or features selected are not special in the sense that they are by no means peculiar to Exmoor or to National Parks:

- In 1997 locals and visitors were asked to complete questionnaires as to what they thought the special qualities of Exmoor are. Answers were broadly similar and tranquillity and beauty were important to most people. However, locals were more specific and placed much more emphasis upon the wildlife and the variety of habitats than visitors, as well as the rural way of life. **Source: ENPA National Park Management Plan surveys**

<i>Special quality</i>	<i>Residents %</i>	<i>Visitors %</i>
Deer	38	
Peaceful/spiritual/uncrowded	25	36
Variety/contrast/ blend of scenery	35	26
Beauty/scenery	34	35
Unspoilt/uncommercialised	29	20
Openness	19	
Wooded combes/ trees	18	
Moorland		10
Wildness	16	7
Friendly locals		10
Wildlife	15	11
Rural way of life/ rural community	15	
Ease of access for walking/ riding	14	15
Exmoor ponies	11	
Sense of history/ timelessness		7
Gentle/ warm/ soft scenery		7

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HOW EFFECTIVE ARE METHODS OF COMMUNICATING WITH LOCALS AND VISITORS TO EXMOOR?

Current situation:

A moderate number of visitors reads local papers and visitor publications

Trends:



- *There are no figures on the uptake of press releases or the readership of published material.*

Exmoor National Park Authority communicates with a large percentage of local people and visitors to Exmoor.

The National Park Authority's visitor survey of 1980 showed that 19% (245 in 1981) of visitors staying in the Exmoor area read one of the local papers during their visit and 60% of day trippers (41% in 1981). This reflects the fact that most day trippers are from the local area. The Authority's *Park Life* newspaper goes to every household in the National Park and many others in surrounding areas. It is not clear to what extent the newspaper is read and digested. Surveys undertaken through the newspaper have not generated a large response from people living within the National Park and it is clear that much of the support for the National Park comes from people living outside of its boundaries.

The Exmoor Visitor was first produced in 1984. The 1987 ENPA Visitor Survey suggested that 64% of staying visitors and 33% of day trippers had seen this publication. The All Parks Visitor Survey of 1994 showed that 44% of respondents had seen the 'Exmoor Visitor' paper during their visit.

Usefulness of the 'Exmoor Visitor'

	Good	Adequate	Poor	Can't say
finding accommodation	17%	8%	0	75%
things to do	66%	20%	3%	12%
about Exmoor	71%	16%	2%	12%
about the National Park Authority	59%	19%	3%	19%

The low percentage of people using the 'Exmoor Visitor' for accommodation reflects the fact that the publication is only available within the National Park area and, from the National Park Authority's surveys, only 13% of staying visitors in 1980 (15% in 1981 and 1982 and 13% in 1983 and 25% in 1987) use any newspaper advertisements for obtaining accommodation. 18% (14% in 1981 and 20% in 1982 and 23% in 1983) use accommodation guides. However, in the 1987 ENPA Visitor Survey 26% used the Exmoor Visitor to find accommodation, three times more than any other guide.

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**DO PEOPLE CARE ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK AND SUPPORT ACTIONS TO
FULFIL ITS PURPOSES?**

Current situation:

It is not known what proportion of people support actions to fulfil National Park purposes

Trends:



It is not known how attitudes are changing but it is felt that local people are slowly becoming more supportive of the work of the National Park Authority

People are generally supportive of the idea of National Parks but there are many misconceptions which lead to lack of support for some actions

It is known from many surveys that the public is generally concerned about the environment. Surveys by the Department of the Environment between 1986 and 1993 showed that people were more concerned about the environment than most issues, including crime and education and that this concern was increasing steadily. Concern about employment was, however, greater at times, according to the rate of unemployment.

The same surveys measured the amount of concern about different environmental issues. Chemical pollution in various forms came top of the list. Noise came bottom of the list, well below concerns such as dog fouling. Most issues of direct relevance to National Parks were not high on people's list of concerns, although species loss was quite high and there was an increasing concern about loss of Green Belt land. Concerns varied considerably with age, sex, education and social group. Retired people were least concerned about most issues and women were generally more concerned than men. Concern varied for issues related to National Park purposes. Generally the more highly educated and higher the social class the more people were concerned about issues which did not affect them directly such as species loss, resource depletion and global issues.

Most people were optimistic that the problems could be solved. Many were prepared to change their behaviour by actions such as recycling or not using garden pesticides but few were prepared to pay for environmental action. In early surveys most felt that the Government should simply change priorities for spending but in later surveys most people thought that the 'polluter pays' principle should apply. However, few saw themselves as polluters and on issues such as noise, litter and dog fouling more felt that it was the local council's responsibility than that of those causing the problem. There was little support for taxing individuals but much support for stricter controls. On all issues people felt that the Government or local authorities were not doing enough to solve the problems and there was wide support for environmental education and subsidising farmers to protect and enhance the environment.

These attitudes also appear to apply to National Parks, where there is strong support for environmental education and subsidies but little support where the authorities appear to be taxing people or restricting their individual freedom. An opinion poll undertaken by NOP for the Peak District National Park Authority in 1999 showed that the majority of the public felt that they were achieving their purposes in protecting the environment but the majority thought that they had not been successful in supporting local communities or communicating with them.

Actions

This action is from the Exmoor National Park Management Plan

Action 17/1

Monitor support for National Park purposes

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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