

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK STATE OF THE PARK REPORT

CHAPTER 9. CULTURAL HERITAGE

Vision for cultural heritage

A cultural landscape, understood and valued for its expression of the interaction between Exmoor people and their environment over thousands of years. The farmsteads, settlements, buildings, structures, field patterns and archaeological remains of this historic landscape conserved for future generations to enjoy.

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 9/1

To conserve Exmoor's historic environment.

Indicators:

Total number of Listed Buildings; number of Listed Buildings added to and removed from the At Risk Register; total number of buildings removed from At Risk Register (other than by demolition); number of traditional farm buildings restored through ESA Conservation Plans; number of traditional buildings converted to different uses; number of Conservation Areas; number of Conservation Area enhancement schemes undertaken; number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments; number of SMR sites; number of archaeological and historic features managed through ESA Conservation Plans; numbers of cases of damage to archaeological sites

Objective 9/3

To conserve historic features, traditions and customs that are locally distinctive.

Indicators:

Populations of Devon cattle/ Exmoor horn sheep/ Devon closewool sheep/ Exmoor ponies within the Exmoor area

ARE EXMOOR’S HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS SURVIVING IN GOOD CONDITION?

Current situation:

The number of buildings and monuments in poor condition is low.

Trends:

?

It is not known how the condition of Listed Buildings is changing

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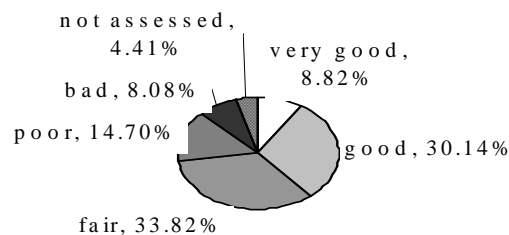
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Many of Exmoor's distinctive archaeological monuments are fragile and easily damaged.

The South West region has 39% of all Scheduled Ancient Monuments in England – a total of 15,798 compared with the regional average of 2438. There are 208 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the National Park representing 1.3% of the regional total. The numbers of monuments cannot be used to measure trends as there is a tendency towards listing several works on one site, so that the number of monuments may appear to be decreasing whilst the number of works listed is increasing. England has about 19,500 entries on the schedule but these entries cover about 35,000 works. The number of sites on the Sites and Monuments Records is increasing as more are discovered. There are over 4,000 at present. Generally the monuments in the South West are under less pressure than those in the rest of the country, with applications for Scheduled Monument Consent on 2.3% of monuments in 2002 compared with a national average of 4%. There is no complete survey of the condition of Exmoor monuments but there has been work undertaken in the areas of stone settings, which are Exmoor's most characteristic monuments, of which little is known.

- In 1985 a survey was undertaken on the National Park Authority's property at Warren, Pinford, Tom's Hill and Hayes Allotment. Of 136 sites investigated, 2.94% were considered of national importance, 27.9% of regional significance, 30.14% of local significance, 7.35% of no apparent academic significance and 31.61% of no academic significance. The main threat to the sites at the time was erosion from farm animals and vehicles during winter feeding. Source: Western Archaeological Trust*

Condition of archaeological sites on Warren, Pinford, Hayes Allotment and Tom's Hill, 1985



It was stated by Chanter and Worth in 1905 that Exmoor's standing stones were "not calculated to withstand small forces, even as a sheep might apply." A survey of Exmoor's stone monuments conducted by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England between 1988 and 1992 concluded that sheep were the principal threat to these monuments. A survey in 2001 of the condition of standing stones on Exmoor National Park Authority land showed that 30 out of 33 sites studied had erosion hollows caused by animals, just over half (17) of the hollows being actively eroded at the time and within the previous ten years two had fallen over as a result. Overgrazing exacerbated the problem and concentrating stock through winter feeding caused most damage, as did vehicles carrying feed. Fire through swaling (moorland burning) and vandalism were other threats and the only natural problem was frost weathering. It was recommended that all 17 actively eroding sites required some remedial action, with 6 sites requiring urgent attention.

- Comparison of surveys by Chanter and Worth in 1905-6 and RCHME in 1988-92 showed that 10% of archaeological sites surveyed had been totally destroyed in the intervening years. This destruction was mostly attributed to farmers taking the stones for agricultural improvements such as the construction and repair of drains, walls and gateposts. Some had been destroyed through WW2 military training and*

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subsequent bomb disposal.

It is often neglect or an accumulation of small, gradual changes which is threatening the character of Exmoor's buildings.

The West Country has 88,525 Buildings of Special Architectural; or Historic Interest, representing 20% of the national total and the highest of any English region. Exmoor has 1.2% of the regional total. Lists are compiled following occasional surveys. A major resurvey in 1987 increased the number of Listed Buildings in the National Park from 289 to 564 and in subsequent surveys, particularly in 1996, the number has nearly doubled again, mainly from separately listing some of the buildings in complexes such as farmyards.

There are 1,026 Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Sites) within the National Park:

Grade 1 secular	11
Grade 1 churches	11
Grade 2*secular	40
Grade 2* churches	21
Grade 2 all types	943

The Grade 1 secular buildings are: **Bratton Court (two dwellings, gatehouse and barn count as four buildings), Combe Sydenham, Dunster Castle (gatehouse counts as a separate building), Dunster Yarn Market, Gallox Bridge, Nettlecombe Court, Tarr Steps.**

The Grade 1 churches are the parish churches at: **Culbone, Dunster, Luccombe, Monksilver, Nettlecombe, Porlock, Selworthy, Timberscombe, Winsford, Wootton Courtenay** and St Petrock's church at **Parracombe.**

A few listed buildings and sites are also Scheduled Monuments. Totals are for listings, not individual buildings, as in some surveys all of the buildings on one site, such as a terrace, are listed as one and in others they are separated. At Bratton Court there are four Grade 1 buildings and three sets of Grade 2* farm buildings.

Surveys of Listed Buildings to assess condition were undertaken in the National Park in 1993 and 1996.

In 1996 Listed Buildings in the National Park were found to be in the following condition, where 1= very bad, 2=poor, 3=fair, 4=good:

1 - 1.2%	3 - 19%
2 - 2.8%	4 - 77%

The same buildings were given risk grades from 1A to 6, with 1 being most at risk and 6 being least at risk:

1A - 1.1%	4 - 1.6%
2 - 0.2%	4A - 13.5%
3 - 1.3%	5 - 10.4%
3A - 1.7%	5A - 9.2%
	6 - 60.9%

Buildings most at risk tend to be churchyard monuments, street furniture such as milestones and agricultural buildings rather than dwellings. In the following 'at risk' does not refer to the English Heritage 'at risk' register.

- *In 1995 a survey of Listed Buildings in Lynton and Lynmouth parish showed of 84 buildings 3 were considered 'at risk' and 7 had been changed so much by modern alterations to have spoilt their value. Since then 2 of the buildings 'at risk' have been restored. Source: Exmoor National Park Authority*
- *In 2002 a survey of Lynton Conservation Area found three Listed Buildings 'at risk'. Common problems within the Conservation Area were lack of maintenance, loss of original shop fronts, loss of boundary features and settings of important buildings for car parking and replacement of timber doors and windows with uPVC. Source: Lynton Conservation Area Character Appraisal, Exmoor National Park Authority*
- *In 2003 two important buildings in the National Park were highlighted as 'at risk'. The medieval packhorse*

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bridge at West Luccombe was said to be in a poor state of repair and in need of consolidation. The mine ventilation shaft and chimney dating from the 1860s in Chargot Wood was also said to be in a poor state of repair. Source: West Somerset Free Press

A lower percentage of Buildings 'at risk' in the West Country are capable of economic repair without public subsidy than the national average – 8.3% compared with the average of 10.9%. In 2002 the region had a Conservation Deficit of £37.3 million, 11% of the national total. The number of Buildings 'at risk' per local authority in the region is twice the national average.

ARE EXMOOR'S FARM ANIMALS AND CROPS LOCALLY DISTINCT?

Current situation:

World numbers of Devon cattle are high

Local numbers of Devon cattle are low

World and local numbers of Devon closewool sheep are very low

World and local numbers of Exmoor horn sheep are moderate

World and local numbers of Exmoor ponies are high

Numbers of free living Exmoor ponies are low

Trends:



Registration of Devon cattle has increased recently but the overall trend is downwards



Registration of Devon closewool sheep is in steep decline



Registration of Exmoor horn sheep has improved recently but the overall trend is for no change



Registration of free living and all Exmoor ponies is increasing

Once one of Britain's and the world's most common and widespread cattle, Devon cattle have declined in their Exmoor home

Devon cattle were developed on Exmoor in the 18th century and rapidly spread throughout the world. By 1851 there was a Breeders Society and records of pedigree animals began. Early records kept track of foreign herds but as numbers grew each country kept their own records. British herd books started in 1877. At that time the Devons on Exmoor represented about 25% of the British Devon stock. By 1908 there were 454,694 Devon cattle in Britain, the second most numerous breed after dairy shorthorn. However, only 983 of these were registered pedigree animals. The cattle were originally dual purpose and up until the Second World War there were hundreds of thousands of unregistered Devons used for milking. In 1947 it was estimated that over 64% of cattle in the Somerset part of Exmoor were Devons and over 25% were Devon crosses, most being used as dual purpose cattle. Many unregistered herds disappeared as the cattle became used for beef only but several large ones remain. It is difficult to keep track of

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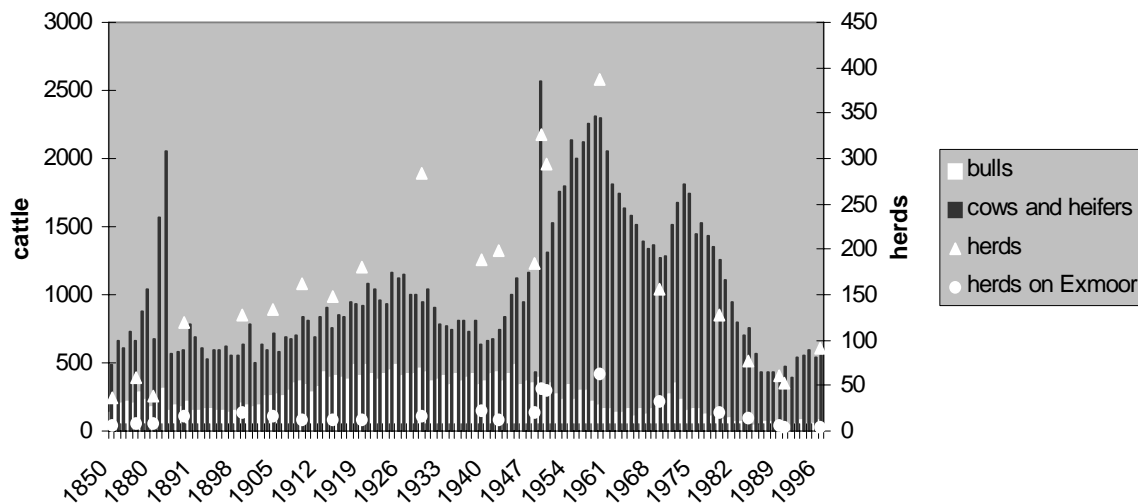
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numbers for this reason and because membership of the Breeders Society fluctuates. Members dropped to below 300 in 1982 but are back above that figure now, although only 130 members register cattle.

On the whole there has been a steep decline in pedigree Devons since the 1950s, locally, nationally and internationally, except for Brazil, where there are 34,000 cows and still increasing. In Britain about 600 cows and 80 bulls are registered each year, giving a pedigree base of about 2,400 cattle. 84% of these are in the West Country, 50% in Devon and 5% on Exmoor. Devons represent about 19% of beef cattle on Exmoor but there are only five registered herds and they continue to decline in their historic homeland. Seven West Country herds were lost through foot and mouth culling, including the important herd of Lord Clinton, which is now being rebuilt from other stock.

Annual registrations of Devon cattle



Devon Closewool sheep are Exmoor's most localised breed of farm animal and also the most endangered

Devon Closewools are the most localised of the local breeds in that their distribution is almost entirely confined to the North Devon edges of Exmoor. The number of registered Devon Closewool ewes dropped in the 1990s from about 11,000 to about 8,000. One of the largest flocks was lost from a foot and mouth cull in 2001. In 1997 there were 22 flocks on Exmoor with 3,913 registered sheep. This represented about 2.5% of all sheep on Exmoor. In 1947 they were estimated to be about 26% of the total sheep in the Somerset part of Exmoor, so were probably the most numerous of the pure-bred sheep over the whole of Exmoor. There were many more crossbred sheep with Devon Closewools commonly crossed with Exmoor Horns, Dorset Downs and Hampshire Downs. It was thought necessary to cross the Closewools with Exmoor Horns to keep them true to type, as they were originally derived from an Exmoor Horn X Devon Longwool cross. The crosses were harder than the pure breeds and were thus more common on the higher parts of the moor. Their future is of more concern than other local breeds in that their distribution is limited, total numbers are low and their decline seems to be rapid. As with all local breeds, they seem to have had their heyday in the 1960s, and there was a steep decline until the 1990s, since when a low population has been maintained. However, numbers are in decline at present and it would appear from the graph that rare breed status may well be reached within a few years.

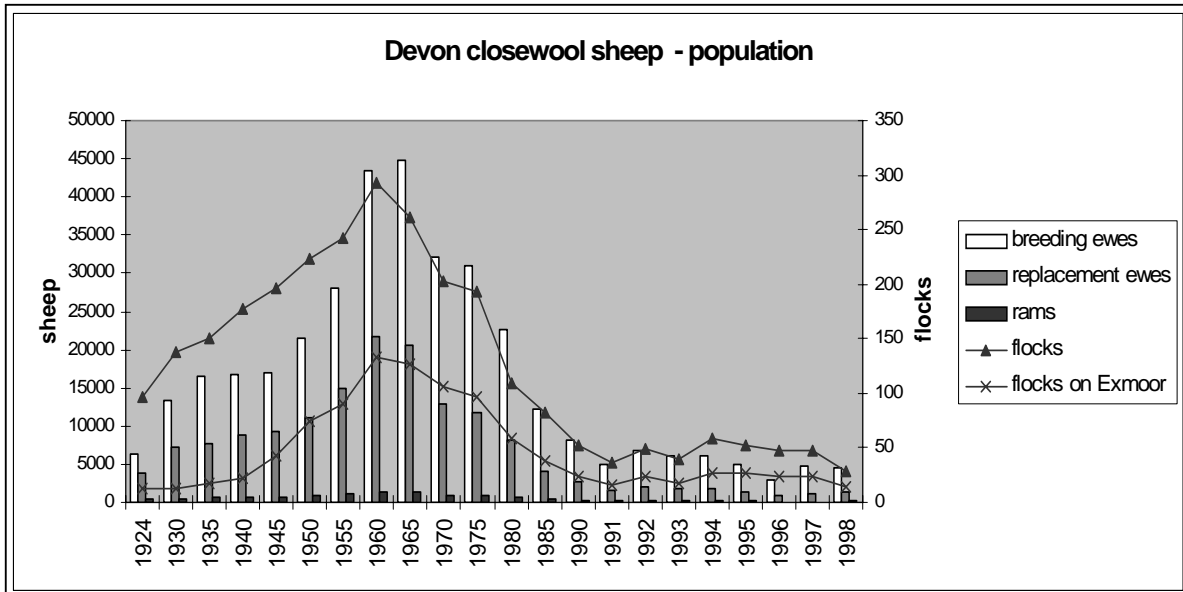
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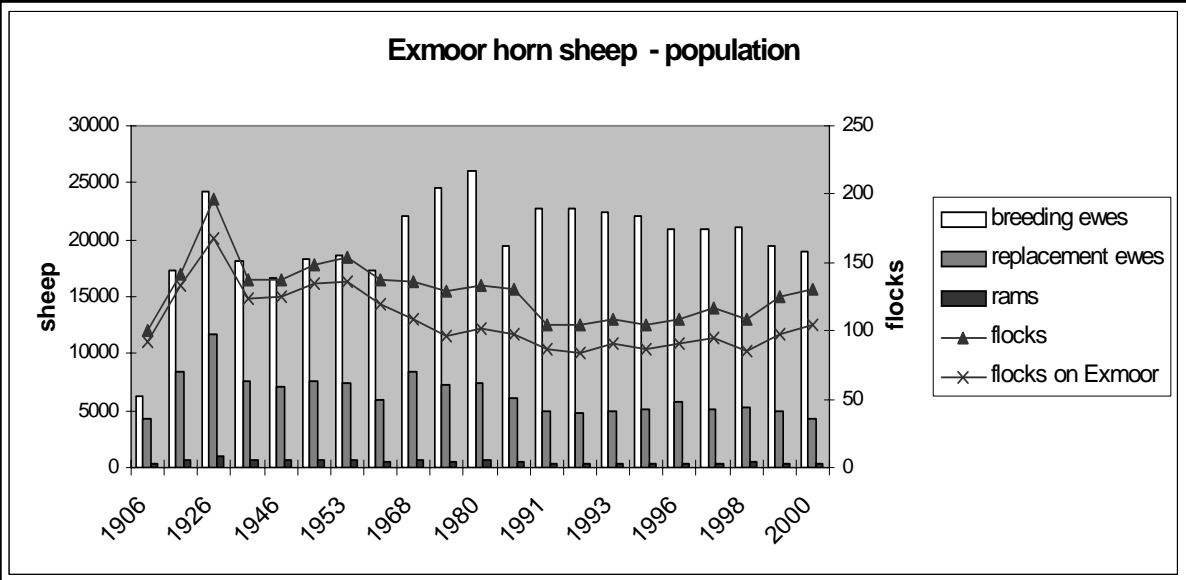
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Numbers of Exmoor Horn sheep have remained steady but they have declined as a proportion of all sheep on Exmoor

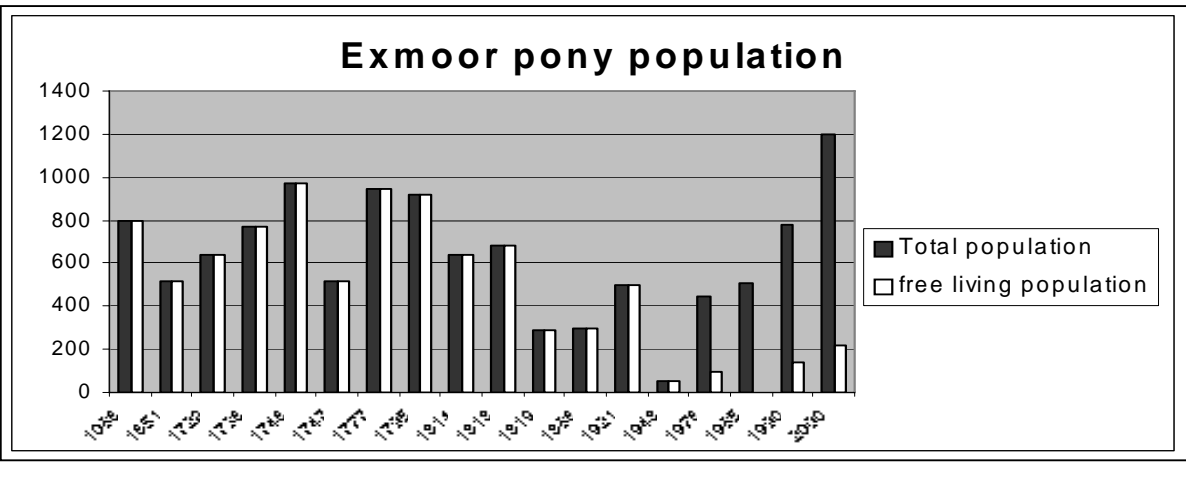
Exmoor horns were developed in the 19th century from stock with very old bloodlines. Records date from 1906, when the Breeders Society was formed. Early records should be ignored as membership was growing and sheep were being registered. Numbers have remained fairly constant from the 1930s and annual fluctuations are more to do with the proportion of members sending in returns than actual numbers of sheep. Changes in farming practices are reflected in the decline of replacement ewes as older ewes are no longer culled for mutton. However, there has been a slow decline in overall numbers during the 1990s. As the number of sheep increased on Exmoor during the 20th century and the number of Exmoor horns remained fairly constant, the proportion of registered Exmoor horns has decreased. In 1947 it was estimated that over 27% of sheep in the Somerset part of Exmoor were pure bred Exmoor Horns and 34% were Exmoor Horn X Closewool crosses. The numbers of sheep have doubled since then and the breeding Exmoor Horn ewes now represent only about 10% of the total of breeding ewes on Exmoor. Generally the size of flocks has increased in the 20th century whilst the numbers of flocks have decreased. In the last few years there have been more small flocks, with many smallholders farming them as a pastime. There are currently about 19,000 registered breeding ewes, about 15,000 of which are on Exmoor.

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Exmoor ponies are one of Exmoor’s most important distinctive features and have survived near extinction, although numbers of free-living ponies are still low

For over a century there has been much concern about the future of Exmoor ponies as a breed, particularly since the 1980s when there has been national publicity. In truth there probably never have been more than a few hundred ponies on Exmoor. Numbers within the Royal Forest can be estimated from records but it is not clear how many were pure bred ponies. Records of those have only been kept since their inclusion in the National Pony Society's stud book in 1899. A total of 715 ponies were registered between then and the start of the Exmoor Pony Society's own stud book in 1963. They had nearly been wiped out when they were killed for meat during the Second World War. Despite them still being classified as a rare breed, there are now more ponies than there have been since records began. However, they are scattered throughout the world and there are still very few free-living ponies on Exmoor. It is necessary that there is a core of free-living ponies to retain their natural characteristics and this part of the population is still very low, at just over 200 registered ponies.



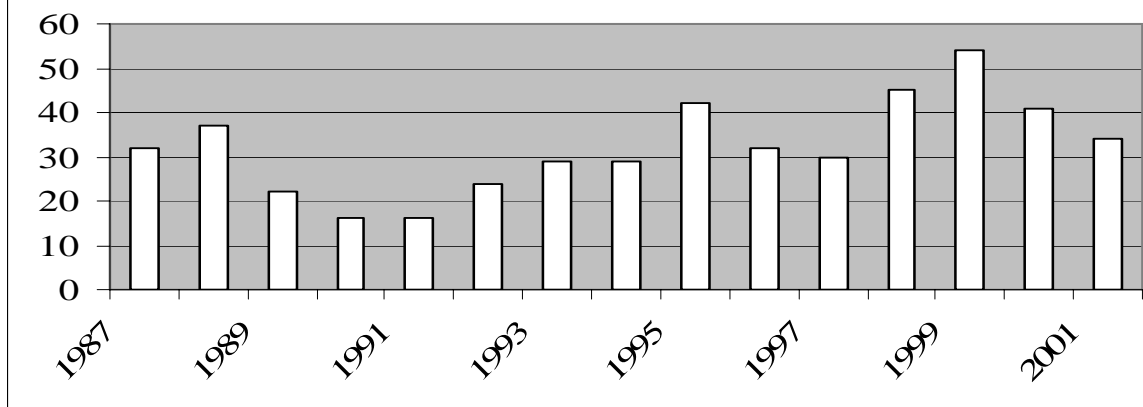
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ARE EXMOOR'S BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES LOCALLY DISTINCT?

There is little on Exmoor which can be considered to be unique to the National Park. However, much of its culture is rooted in West Country traditions and on variations of such traditions so that the culture can be seen to vary within the National Park. Devon as a county has more cob buildings and more thatched buildings than the rest of the country put together and also has the greatest length of hedgebanks and country roads. Exmoor shares in this concentration but such things are declining. There have been no new cob or thatched buildings in the National Park in recent years and replacement thatch has often been in materials and designs outside of the local tradition to the extent that there is little left which is locally distinctive.

Number of Listed Building consents



Improvements to historic buildings and the 'tidying up' and inappropriate development of historic sites can threaten local distinctiveness and historic integrity. Local features that give an area its distinctiveness are often lost by a process of gradual attrition. Not all such features are given national designations and even those that are may be subject to changes. Since 1987 there have been 483 consents for changes to Listed Buildings, equivalent to changes to 48% of Exmoor's stock of such buildings. In 2001/2 there was one application for Listed Building Consent for every 30 Listed Buildings on Exmoor. This compared with a regional average of one application per 12 buildings and a national average of one application per 13 buildings. Not all changes are to the detriment of such buildings and many consents are for essential restoration works but such figures show that the pace of change is rapid.

Exmoor has 16 designated Conservation areas. Of these 12 are substantial parts of settlements whereas 4 are individual buildings or groups of buildings. Appraisals are in the process of being written for the 12 settlement areas and currently in 2003 5 have been finished. The West Country has a much lower than average proportion (11.4%) of appraisals per local authority than the national average (28.6%) and currently Exmoor's proportion stands at 31.3%. In 2002 the West Country had 1603 such areas, more than average for English regions. Exmoor's Conservation Areas are not currently receiving any special grants, although the 4 areas which are not settlements were established in order to receive grants from a Conservation Area Partnership of English Heritage and the National Park Authority. These grants finished in 1999 but the National Park Authority has a small budget for Conservation Area enhancement and is financing the appraisals. Only 35% of local authorities in England have such a budget. Few Conservation Areas nationwide have Advisory Committees and Exmoor has none as there are not pressures from large scale developments and National Park staff are easy to contact for advice.

Two areas within the National Park are designated as Historic Parks and Gardens. These are at Dunster Castle (Grade 1, 284ha) and Nettlecombe Court (Grade 2, 117ha). In 2002 there were 285 such areas in the West Country, more than in other English regions, and

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Actions

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

Objective 9/2

To improve understanding of the cultural heritage and historic environment of Exmoor and to provide and maintain an appropriate database.

Action 9/1

Develop inventories of features of local distinctiveness

Action 9/2

Research the special characteristics of local breeds of stock and crop varieties

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.