

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK STATE OF THE PARK REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Edwards Report of 1991 '*Fit for the Future*' recommended that National Park Authorities needed to take a more structured approach to obtaining information. Changes to the Authorities and their work followed the report through the 1995 Environment Act. Under the Act, National Park Authorities were given the duty of producing a policy plan, the National Park Management Plan, every five years. Through this and the Government White Paper '*Rural England*', the Authorities were also encouraged to report on the state of their parks. Government did not specify how this reporting should take place except that a brief statement should be incorporated into the Authorities' Annual Reports. The following year, the Countryside Commission reviewed the extent to which the recommendations of '*Fit for the Future*' had been implemented and commissioned a report from Nene College on '*Improving Information for Park Management*.' In 1997 the Countryside Commission produced guidelines for the drawing up of National Park Management Plans and in doing so incorporated the Nene College recommendations that the

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Authorities should draw up State of the Park Reports for “developing a sound information base for developing policies for the initial National Park Management Plan and subsequent reviews.” These reports should:

- **enable the National Park Authorities to monitor relevant trends and the progress made in implementing National Park Management Plan policies;**
- **focus on changes which affect the special qualities and character of the Park;**
- **emphasise issues that are related to the purposes and duties of the NPA;**
- **draw on information collected by both the NPA and by other organisations;**
- **influence future change and new policies to deal with it.**

The Commission recommended that the Authorities should start straight away on their State of the Park Reports so that they could identify gaps in knowledge and have a full report in time for the first review of their National Park Management Plan. The current Exmoor National Park Management Plan runs from 2001 to 2006. This State of the Park Report is to provide some baseline data from which effectiveness of the plan can be assessed and will influence the formation of a new plan for 2007 to 2012. In theory, therefore, the next Report should be due in 2006 and thereafter every five years. The Countryside Commission recommended, however, that the information in the Report should be kept continuously up to date. With this in mind, Exmoor National Park Authority has decided to keep a digitised version continually updated and available through its web site. Facts and figures from the Report will be published from time to time in the Authority’s newspapers and Annual Report.

The Report follows the visions and objectives of the Management Plan where relevant. Some objectives of the plan relate to the gathering of information, the process of which in itself does not reflect the state of the Park. Such objectives are translated into actions within the report. Their progress will be simply monitored by noting whether the actions have been carried out. The Report contains other statistics which may be of interest to the public but do not necessarily relate directly to the Management Plan objectives. It contains indicators, which are factors that reflect the desired outcome of each objective. Many of these indicators have yet to be measured, not least because methods of measuring some have yet to be developed. It is important that the outcomes of Management Plan objectives can be measured and, if it proves impossible to measure them, new objectives which can be measured will be formulated for the next Management Plan.

Most local and national government agencies now have indicators for their policies. Indicators are usually factors which can be measured to reflect change. Sometimes it is difficult to measure the change itself and indicators are often used as a simple substitute for measurements of changes where a complex range of interacting factors are involved. Indicators often concentrate on the outcomes of particular activities rather than the activities themselves. Data is being gathered at local, regional, national and international levels to support these indicators. Some of the data used in this report is, therefore, from the work of other agencies gathering material for their own purposes. Problems inevitably arise when their data fits the boundaries of their authorities and not the National Park boundary, as is often the case. Much data is only available at parish, ward and district levels and the National Park boundary cuts through all such boundaries. Data gathering groups have, however, been set up at county, regional and national levels to ensure that data is compatible over wide areas and of maximum use to different organisations within those areas.

Indicators are also used by National Park Authorities for their Best Value Performance Plans as a measure of their efficiency. Such indicators relate to the work of the Authority whereas the National Park Management Plan is a plan for everyone concerned with Exmoor, not just the National Park Authority, and its indicators reflect this, although there is inevitably some overlap. At corporate level the National Park Authorities are working together to produce small sets of common indicators for both plans. This ensures that definitions are agreed so that indicators are measured in the same ways and comparisons can be made between National Parks. Exmoor also has a Local Plan which influences development control. This plan uses another set of indicators which may or may not overlap with the State of the Park indicators. Where these do overlap, efforts have been made to ensure that they coincide in terms of

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definition and means of measurement.

THE STATE OF EXMOOR

This is the first State of the Park report for Exmoor National Park. The information which it contains is largely that which influenced the objectives and policies within the National Park Management Plan, although some is more up to date. This information, therefore, brings few surprises on the state of the National Park. It is, however, useful to quantify issues which were already patent. The scale of the issues determines the scale and priority of action towards them. All of the big changes to Exmoor have been as a result of outside pressures. The National Park Authority is a small organisation which works through co-operation with other organisations. On its own it can make little impact on many of the problems facing Exmoor. Through this report, however, it can draw attention to the problems and, hopefully, solutions can be found.

The following are the main issues raised by the report:

The good news:

Conservation

The landscape of Exmoor is still worthy of its designation as a National Park: it is still a relatively wild and open landscape providing opportunities for outdoor recreation.
The landscape is well protected, particularly along the coast, and is still free of large eyesores.
The quality of sea and fresh water on Exmoor is high.
Exmoor is still a stronghold for particular species of wildlife, particularly red deer, bats and lichens.

Enjoyment and understanding

Exmoor provides a high level of enjoyment amongst visitors, with little spoiling their pleasure.
There is a good network of Rights of Way on Exmoor and paths are generally in good condition and well signposted. In addition there is good access to open country.
Exmoor is still a relatively tranquil place.
Exmoor is a relatively safe place to enjoy outdoor recreation.
There is a high level of contact between the National Park Authority and visitors and consequently a relatively high level of awareness of Exmoor as a National Park.

Community

Unemployment on Exmoor is no higher than elsewhere.
New houses are being built to supply local needs.

The challenges:

Conservation

Many of Exmoor's habitats are in poor condition for wildlife because of lack of management or management which is too intensive.
Invasive species of plants are reducing Exmoor's value for native species.
Many wildlife species are declining, particularly some birds and insects.
The biodiversity of Exmoor's grass moorland is low.
The restoration of moor and heath habitats is difficult.
The negative effects of climate change are likely to outweigh the benefits.
Exmoor is losing its cultural distinctiveness.
The amount of waste is increasing and the space to dispose of it decreasing.
Meeting targets on renewable energy is difficult.
Preventing light pollution is difficult.

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Enjoyment and understanding

Access for disabled persons is difficult on Exmoor.

Exmoor is little used in proportion by some sections of the public such as the young, old, poor and ethnic minorities.

The public has a good understanding of the need for conservation but poor understanding of the processes, practicalities and behaviour changes required.

The public does not have a clear understanding of the roles of National Parks and their Authorities in culture, tourism and community.

Community

Making a living from land based industries such as farming, forestry and fishing is becoming increasingly difficult.

The number of jobs and proportion of local people in employment appears to be decreasing whilst the age of the population appears to be increasing.

The education and skills base of Exmoor workers is low.

Wages on Exmoor are low.

It is difficult to retain the crafts and skills which maintain the landscape.

House prices on Exmoor are high, as is the proportion of second and holiday homes.

Exmoor residents are becoming increasingly reliant on motor cars.

Holidays on Exmoor are relatively expensive and the pattern of tourism is changing.

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THE FORMAT OF THE REPORT

The report focuses on the two purposes of National Parks:

To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage

To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public

In doing this the National Park Authority:

Seeks to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park, without incurring significant expenditure in doing so, by co-operating with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the National Park.

The report, therefore, also covers socio-economic aspects of the National Park, although it concentrates on those aspects which affect National Park purposes. Topics such as health, crime and social deprivation are not covered, although some figures for these are available.

The report follows the chapters of the Exmoor National Park Management Plan, with the addition of a Park Profile. This is a set of standard statistics which is gathered by each National Park Authority for comparison between Parks. Each chapter lists the visions and objectives set out in the Management Plan. Objectives which are purely for the gathering of information are linked to the actions at the end of each chapter. It is clear that there is much more information to be gathered and research has to be undertaken on methods of gathering such information. Many of the Plan's objectives are to achieve targets like quality, diversity, sustainability, tranquillity, enjoyment and understanding, all of which mean different things to different people. Amongst the tasks to be undertaken between this and the next report, therefore, is to define some of these targets in ways which enable them to be measured and compared with measurements of other places. The indicators linked with the objectives attempt to do this, although not all have been rigidly defined at present. Indicators are constantly being refined as data is gathered and the same indicators may not be repeated in the next report. However, it is important that measurements can be compared to show trends. Many national and regional indicators have clear definitions and, where appropriate, these have been used as it is useful to compare what is happening on Exmoor with other areas. Where the indicators are used for other purposes these are shown after each by the appropriate initials as follows:

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

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**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK
Park Profile 2006**

Topic	Figure for National Park	Data sources
Area		
Total Park area	692.8 sq km	Monitoring Landscape Change
Somerset	491.9 sq km	Monitoring Landscape Change
Devon	200.9 sq km	Monitoring Landscape Change
Parishes totally\ partly in the Park	43	OS\Designation maps
Population		
Population normally resident	10873	ONS derived from 2001 census
Age 0-15	1629	ONS derived from 2001 census
Age 16-74	8009	ONS derived from 2001 census
Age 74+	1238	ONS derived from 2001 census
Housing		
Households	4896	ONS derived from 2001 census
Owner occupied	68.26%	ONS derived from 2001 census
Private rented\housing association	30.6%	ONS derived from 2001 census
Local authority	1.14%	ONS derived from 2001 census
Vacant housing stock	3.8%	ONS derived from 2001 census
Household spaces	5675	ONS derived from 2001 census
Spaces not used as main residence	563	ONS derived from 2001 census
Employment		
Economically active aged 16-74	63.13%	ONS derived from 2001 census
Unemployment	2.85%	ONS derived from 2001 census
Nature conservation		
SSSIs	193.07 sq km	English Nature
National Nature Reserves	5.38 sq km	English Nature
Section 3 coast\foreshore	7.85 sq km	Section 3 Map (hand measured)
Section 3 moorland	169.11 sq km	Section 3 Map (hand measured)
Section 3 woodland	49.84 sq km	Section 3 Map (hand measured)
Heritage		
Scheduled Monuments	208	English Heritage Listings
Conservation Areas	16	ENPA files
Grade I Listed Buildings	22	English Heritage Listings
Grade II* Listed Buildings	61	English Heritage Listings
Grade II Listed Buildings	943	English Heritage Listings
Leisure		
Public Footpaths	438 km	Definitive Map \GIS
Public Bridleways	464 km	Definitive Map \GIS
Other PRow	64 km	Definitive Map \GIS
Visitor days\year	1,397,000	All Parks Visitor Survey 1994
Day visitors days	23%	All Parks Visitor Survey 1994
Days\staying outside park	45%	All Parks Visitor Survey 1994
Days\staying inside park	31%	All Parks Visitor Survey 1994

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