

Exmoor National Park Management Plan Priorities to deliver through Farming in Protected Landscapes

Partnership Plan Ambitions

FiPL projects will be expected to deliver aspects of the Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2018-2023. FiPL projects should contribute to at least one, preferably more, of the following Partnership Plan ambitions:

People – *Exmoor for all: where everyone feels welcome*

1. **Well managed recreation and access:** first class rights of way network
2. **Thriving tourism built on sustainability:** vibrant, innovative, growing and celebrates Exmoor
3. **The Exmoor Experience:** get involved and learn about the special qualities

Place - *Inspiring landscapes: diverse and beautiful, rich in wildlife and history*

4. **Celebrated landscapes:** natural beauty and distinct character are celebrated, conserved and enhanced.
5. **Wilderness and Tranquillity** with Dark Skies and Sensitive Development
6. **Valued Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage**, better understood cared for and protected
7. **Rich in Wildlife**, habitats are in good condition, expanded connected and support a greater number of species

Prosperity – *Working landscapes: thriving and a vibrant local economy*

8. **Working Landscapes** – Exmoor’s land based communities and businesses are supported to provide healthy food and good quality timber and ensure that Exmoor’s landscapes continue to be well managed and cared for.

Combined ambitions – *Where People, Prosperity and Place come together*

9. **Farmland** – distinctive farmed landscapes are conserved and enhanced as part of an active farming system, delivering a health natural and cultural environment.
10. **Moorland** – extent retained and restored with quality of heather increased

- 11. **Woodland** – well managed, productive with natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
- 12. **Rivers streams and associated valleys** - in good condition, their native flora and fauna thriving and flood risk reduced
- 13. **Coast** – Exmoors stunning coast is better understood, enjoyed and conserved

Further ENPA policy priorities which FiPL projects should help deliver:

The Climate Emergency declaration¹ highlights the urgency of action to combat climate change sets climate action as a priority in all aspects of Authority activity.

The Nature Recovery Vision² sets out more detail on how the Rich in Wildlife ambition can be achieved, guided by the ‘Lawton’ principles of More, Bigger, Better and Joined habitats. It also identifies the coast and moorland zones as being focus areas for nature recovery.

Recent consultation with the farming community including the Exmoor’s Ambition Test and Trial³ project and Defra’s Agricultural Transition Advocacy Project has shown a willingness to deliver on environmental outcomes, provided resources are realistic. FiPL provides an excellent opportunity to explore this further with real work on the ground.

Indicative Projects

The kinds of indicative projects which might support delivery of the Partnership Plan ambitions include:

Partnership Plan Ambition	Indicative FiPL project type
<p>1. Farmland – distinctive farmed landscapes are conserved and enhanced as part of an active farming system, delivering a health natural and cultural environment.</p>	<p>1.1 Wildflower rich pasture and meadow with low input Species rich grasslands support a wide range of wildlife, including pollinators, enhance the landscape, encourage water retention in the soil, and help conserve any archaeological features present. This can include enhancing field margins to allow habitat corridors through the landscape and restoring meadows back to flower-rich condition especially when cut late cut for hay as an alternative to silage, and adapting grazing regimes. Given the predominance of pasture in the Exmoor landscape this is a high priority outcome for FiPL on Exmoor.</p>

¹ ENPA website: [Climate Change Emergency Declaration](#)

² ENPA Nature recovery Vision November 2020 [ar-enpa-03.11.20-Item-13.pdf \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

³ Exmoor’s Ambition Test and Trial project report March 2021 [Exmoor - DEFRA Tests and Trials \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

1.2 Regenerative and mixed farming systems

Farming systems that work more sympathetically with the environment including innovative rotational grazing and wood pasture to encourage healthy soils and carbon storage. The multiple benefits of this approach make this a high priority. Mixed farming has the potential to benefit farmland bird when carried out with low inputs, spring sown crops and winter stubble.

1.3 Field boundary management

Creation and enhancement of hedges and field banks can help conserve the historic landscape, create additional habitat, help connect habitats, store more carbon and benefit flood alleviation. Newly created hedge banks can help with reducing flood risk by holding back surface run-off. The restoration of lost boundaries to re-establish historic field pattern should be considered with the traditional style of hedging, walling and planting. Whilst the benefits are significant, this is a lower priority for FiPL as other schemes are available.

1.4 Trees outside woodland

New trees within fields and on field boundaries create more habitat and link wooded areas for woodland wildlife and are needed to help deal with the impact of Ash Dieback disease. This includes the potential for re-establishment of orchards and historic landscape features. Species established should be resilient to tree disease and changes in climate.

1.5 Reducing plastic reliance

Adapting the farm system to use less plastic, such as silage bales has benefit to the landscape and the environment at a whole. This could combine with wildflower-rich meadow (above) as a high priority outcome.

1.6 Pond creation

Ponds create wildlife habitat and store more water in the landscape. They can also contribute to sustainable grazing systems by providing drinking water for stock away from watercourses. Ponds needs to be sensitively located in areas lacking in wetland habitat and have consideration for the health of livestock. Consideration should also be made for historic or archaeological sites and for the reinstatement of former ponds shown on historic mapping.

	<p>1.7 Ditch blocking Ditch ‘blocks’ help reduce the speed of water run off into rivers and streams and help re-establish a healthy functioning river catchment. This also helps establish damp areas that provide additional habitat.</p> <p>1.9 Wood pasture Grazing systems that incorporate trees and woodland help create additional habitat, store carbon and can have benefits for grazing livestock. Where this is next to a woodland it helps create a beneficial ‘transition’ habitat.</p> <p>1.10 Leat restoration These historic features are part of Exmoor’s traditional agricultural landscape and can provide additional aquatic habitat as well as assisting with water retention.</p> <p>1.11 Historic buildings and structures Sensitive works to traditional buildings and structures such as farm and industrial buildings play an important role in helping to conserve the cultural environment. In addition, they can also provide habitat for wildlife such as bats and nesting birds as well as specialised plants. Many are irreplaceable habitats, considering that bats and many other species are habitual, and carry knowledge of roost locations over years even if they don’t visit them annually. This can range from the traditional repair of roofed historic farm buildings to the sensitive consolidation of ruins and historic landscape features. Small interventions made early on buildings can provide effective solutions at low cost.</p> <p>1.12 Archaeological and historic landscape conservation Protected landscapes contain some of the best preserved archaeological sites and measures to prevent erosion or damage to earthworks or buried archaeological sites are important in protecting Exmoor’s cultural heritage. In many instances such sites also form rich wildlife habitats and they form part of its landscape setting. Works could include earthwork consolidation, vegetation control (plantation, scrub, bracken), arable reversion, the establishment of wildflower rich pasture or meadow over the site, the re-establishment of setting, views and connections. A joined up ‘landscape scale’ approach involving multiple land holdings could be considered for designed landscapes and Exmoor’s designated Principal Archaeological Landscapes.</p>
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<p>2. Moorland – extent retained and restored with quality of heather increased</p>	<p>2.1 Moorland expansion Re-establishing moorland in key locations helps reconnect upland habitat and restore the historic landscape. Where moorland has been lost to agricultural improvement, there are opportunities for restoration to more wildlife-rich habitat such as rough grassland, scrub or potentially heathland. The main benefits are for wildlife and landscape. Moorland and heathland are one of the major attractions to visitors and contribute to the green economy. Some opportunities have been previously identified in the Moorland Units project⁴ and there are additional opportunities these areas could offer to create more mosaic or transitional habitat. Buffering of moorland edges is also desirable (see below).</p> <p>2.2 Moorland vegetation enhancement Bespoke management tailored to individual areas of moorland is sometimes needed to ensure diverse mosaic moorland habitat is maintained in good condition including retaining and restoring heather, particularly where designated as a SSSI. Innovation to achieve this in a sustainable way is a high priority. Peatland restoration is part of this but is expected to be largely resourced via alternative funding mechanisms.</p> <p>2.3 Fence and eyesore removal Restoring an open landscape through removal of fences and ‘eyesores’ enhances the quality of the landscape and creates a feeling of openness associated with the former royal forest and traditional commons and moors. This is a high priority for the distinctiveness of Exmoor, encouraging visitors and tourism.</p> <p>2.4 Peatland restoration Much of Exmoor’s moorland holds reserves of peat which are a significant carbon store. Prevention of drying out is crucial to maintain peat reserves and damp conditions may also encourage further peat production. Restoration of ‘functioning’ peatlands has multiple environmental benefits including carbon storage, flood risk management and wildlife habitat. Whilst these outcomes are highly beneficial there are existing funded programmes through the South West Peatland Partnership which may be more appropriate than FiPL.</p>
<p>3. Woodland – well managed, productive with natural</p>	<p>3.1 Woodland management and establishment Native woodland located in the right place, for example not on priority open habitats, using the right mix of species is highly beneficial for many environmental outcomes. Innovation in woodland management is strongly encouraged</p>

⁴ ENPA 2010 [Moorland Units report](#)

<p>beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage</p>	<p>to ensure woodland is more resilient to both the stress caused by climate change and potential future diseases and provides habitat for wildlife. This may also include invasive species management and opportunities to re-establish lost wildlife and sustainable methods such as avoiding plastics and herbicide. It is expected that existing Woodland and Forestry grant schemes will for the most part support creation of new woodland so this aspect is not expected to be a high priority for FIPL. Measures to respond to the impact of Ash Dieback are especially encouraged.</p>
<p>4. Rivers streams and associated valleys - in good condition, their native flora and fauna thriving and flood risk reduced</p>	<p>4.1 Leaky dams and woody debris Using ‘soft engineering’ methods to delay the flow of water across the landscape helps reduce the damage of frequent extremes in weather. This needs to be carried out in a co-ordinated way to ensure water course catchments function effectively and works are sensitive the historic environment and landscape.</p> <p>4.2 Water quality improvement Projects that improve the quality of water in rivers and streams, such as reducing soil erosion and poaching, benefit both people and wildlife.</p>
<p>5. Rich in Wildlife – actions applicable across all parts of Exmoor.</p>	<p>5.1 Transitional habitat and habitat connectivity ‘Blurring the edges’ between different habitat types such as moorland and woodland can create some of the most diverse and vibrant habitat as well as making the adjoining habitats richer. It can also improve landscape quality where sudden transitions appear harsh and artificial. This is a high priority opportunity for nature recovery. Linking habitats allows wildlife to move through the landscape and can be improved by adding hedges, trees and improving watercourses.</p> <p>5.2 Invasive species management Invasive species such as Japanese and Himalayan knotweed, skunk cabbage, Monbretia and Himalayan balsam are a major threat to the health of habitats and ecosystems and eradicating them before they get out of all practical control is a high priority. Whilst they may often be found in riparian habitats they are also invasive in hedges, woodlands and moorland. American signal crayfish are highly damaging non-native invasive species and have established themselves in some of Exmoor’s watercourses such as the Exe and the Barle.</p> <p>5.3 Species re-establishment and reintroductions Species that once thrived on Exmoor and have been become rare or extinct are often indicators of good habitat condition. Targeted reintroduction can be supported by coordinated work of multiple landowners. Such projects</p>

	<p>maybe be beyond the timescales of the FIPL programme, however some activity could pave the way for future projects.</p>
<p>6. Well managed recreation and access: first class rights of way network</p>	<p>6.1 Access opportunities New permissive paths create additional opportunities for safe enjoyment of the landscape, and repairs to eroded path surfaces and drainage can enhance enjoyment as well as reducing soil erosion and water flow rates into water courses. Enhancement can also be to existing public rights of way to allow other users e.g. allowing cycling and horse riding on a public footpath, or allowing use by less able people, where convenient and safe to do so.</p> <p>Levels of potential public use will be an important factor when assessing new access proposals, along with the potential to provide for a greater diversity of users, health and wellbeing outcomes and local economic benefits. New access is encouraged to archaeological sites and landscapes, viewpoints and the re-use of former lanes and routeways. Enhancements could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved surfaces to allow easier use for the existing legal rights. • Changing furniture where appropriate to make PROW or other public access more accessible e.g. stiles to gates <p>Providing permitted/permissive access for non-legal rights e.g. allowing horse riders to use a public foot path by landowner permission, or new permitted/permissive paths.</p>
<p>7. The Exmoor Experience: get involved and learn about the special qualities</p>	<p>7.1 Engagement activities ‘Access’ improvements can also be non-physical by providing facilities, information or hosting activities. Farmers may want to partner with other organisations such as schools and charities to help people understand more about Exmoor, its farming, its wildlife and its special landscape.</p>
<p>8. Other project themes – project ideas applicable across all parts of Exmoor</p>	<p>8.1 Natural capital assessment Auditing the natural capital of land holdings, including habitat and soil health will help land managers plan ahead for delivering ELM public goods. The Exmoor Test and Trial developed methods to assess natural and cultural capital and could help act as a blueprint for others to follow.</p>

	<p>8.2 Sustainable management techniques We want to encourage use of sustainable methods and materials such as planting trees without plastic tubes, using hardwood posts in place of machined treated softwood. FIPL could add value to existing planned work by funding the difference to do so as sustainably and sensitively as possible to the landscape.</p> <p>8.3 Independent farmer Challenge Fund It is a specific aim of the FiPL programme to help prepare the farming community for ELM. Whilst we welcome applications from all land managers we are keen to encourage applications from those with less access to professional advisors. It is the aim of the programme to engage at least 100 separate land managers and farmers throughout the life of the scheme.</p> <p>8.4 Collaboration and farm cluster Challenge Fund A focus of the fund is to facilitate joint working between landowners to work towards a more ecologically rich landscape that is resilient to more frequent weather extremes. The coastal belt for example has high potential for farmers to work together to enhance the coastal woodlands habitat. This can also include helping to connect to habitats and landscapes beyond the National Park Boundary.</p>
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