



An independent statutory advisory body administered by Exmoor National Park Authority, the appointing authority, from its offices at Exmoor House, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9HL
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5th April 2024

EXMOOR LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

To: The Members of the Exmoor Local Access Forum

A meeting of the Exmoor Local Access Forum will be held **in Exford Memorial Hall, Exford TA24 7PP on 18th April 2024 at 2pm.**

The meeting will be open to the press and public in accordance with the provisions of reg. 7 of The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 (under s 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). There is public question time at this meeting when the Chairman will allow members of the public two minutes each in which to ask questions.

(The agenda and papers for this meeting can be downloaded from the Exmoor National Park Authority's website at www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

Sue Applegate
Secretary
Exmoor Local Access Forum

Please note that the B3224 is closed between Luckwell Bridge and Exford so if you are coming from the Wheddon Cross direction, you may need to allow extra travel time to divert around it. Further details are on the Somerset Council website here [Roadworks and travel information \(somerset.gov.uk\)](http://Roadworks and travel information (somerset.gov.uk))

DEPOT VISIT (LAF Members Only) from 11:15am:

The meeting will be preceded by a visit to the ENPA Depot at Exford led by Tony Mann, ENPA Field Services Team Supervisor.

Please meet in the public car park at Exford from 11.15am (parking is free, public toilets are available here). Tony will come and find the group to start the tour at about 11.30am.

Following the site visit, there will be time for lunch from about 12.30/12.45 onwards – please either bring your own lunch or you can buy food at the village shop. The LAF meeting will be held in the Exford Memorial Hall – please make your way there on foot leaving cars in the public car park by the depot as parking is very limited near the hall. The doors at the hall will be open from 12.45pm with tea and coffee available – the meeting will start promptly at 2pm.

MEETING AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Reappointment of Exmoor LAF Members & Resignations**
3. **Declarations of Interest:** Members are asked to declare any direct or indirect personal interests (including financial) in relation to items on the agenda for this meeting and shall disclose the nature of those interests to the meeting.

(NB. The regulations do not prohibit any member having such an interest from remaining in the meeting and participating in the discussion).
4. **Minutes**
 - (1) To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 29th November 2023 [Item A].
 - (2) To consider any Matters Arising from those Minutes which are not elsewhere on the agenda.
5. **Meet the Community / Public Question Time:** This part of the meeting enables members of the public to engage with the Local Access Forum on issues concerning open access, rights of way and outdoor recreational pursuits in the National Park.
6. **Exmoor LAF (20 mins)**

To consider the current membership of the LAF and it's future aims and purpose [Item B Terms of Reference and Item C Natural England - LAF Guidance (2009) are provided as background information]

 - a. Member summaries – brief background, areas of expertise and reasons for joining [verbal]
 - b. Aims and purpose
7. **Recruitment (10 mins)**

To consider potential recruitment of new LAF members
8. **Access Policy and Changes to Rights of Way and Access Management on Exmoor (20 mins)**

To receive an update from Dan Barnett, Access & Recreation Manager
9. **Externally Funded Access Projects on Exmoor (10 mins)**

To receive updates and provide advice where appropriate on the following projects through which (wholly or partly) access improvements can be achieved:

 - a) DEFRA Access for All Funding Year 3 [Item D]
 - b) Active Travel Funding via National Parks England [Item E]
 - c) Pioneers Royal Forest HLF [Item F]

10. Consultations (5 mins)

To note the consultations received between meetings; Wootton Ridge 2nd consultation, Devon CC RoWIP [SA]

11. ENPA Updates (10 mins)

- a) Driver Farm
- b) Partnership Plan

12. National Updates (5 mins)

To receive an update on:

- a) National access legislative changes & proposals
- b) ELMS
- c) Access Land Review [Item G]

13. Public Path Orders / Legal Matters (5 mins)

To note updates on orders made since the last meeting:

- i. Great Bradley Bridge (DU10/38)- informal consultation complete, order made – no objections – awaiting bridge construction before confirmation
- ii. East Lynch (WL21/12) – informal consultation complete, order made, confirmed, 3 new kissing gates installed replacing stiles. Complete.

14. Access & Recreation Highlights November 2023 – April 2024 (10 mins)

To receive a presentation on the work of the Access & Recreation Team since the last meeting (November 2023 – April 2024)

15. Date of next meeting and agenda items: To agree the date, method (and venue if needed) of the next Forum meeting.

16. Any Other Business of Urgency

For further information about the Exmoor Local Access Forum and its work, please contact the Secretary, Sue Applegate, at the postal address, telephone number, or email address given at the top of this agenda.

EXMOOR LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting of the Exmoor Local Access Forum held on **Wednesday 29th November 2023** at 10:00 at Exmoor House.

PRESENT

Alison Kent (Chair)
Graham Lavender (Vice)
Simon Gibson
George Curry
Peter May

Annie Prebensen
Kate O'Sullivan
Robert Billson
Nick Thwaites

No members of the public were present.

Exmoor National Park Staff in Attendance:

Dan Barnett
Sue Applegate
Joanne Poulton

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Laura Carew
Domonic Elson
Chris Binnie
Rupert Martin

2. Resignations / Welcome to new members / Reappointment of Exmoor LAF Members

AK and GL have come to the end of their 3 year term and agreed to stay on as members of ELAF. There were no resignations.

New members were welcomed to the Forum - Nick Thwaite and Dominic Elson who are ENPA Authority representatives.

3. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Exmoor Local Access Forum

AK announced she is stepping down as Chair after 6 years. She thanked the forum for their support and Dan and Sue for their help in running the Forum.

Graham Lavender nominated George Curry for the Chair position, and this was seconded by Alison Kent and unanimously voted for by Forum members.

Vice Chairman position is held by Graham Lavender who said he was willing to continue in the post and in the absence of any other nominations this was unanimously voted for by the Forum members.

The retiring Chair stepped down as chairman and the new Chair reconvened the meeting and thanked Alison for her extended service taking the Forum through the uncertain period of budget cuts.

4. Declarations of Interest : None

5. MINUTES: (1) APPROVAL

SG pointed out a correction to the minutes at (2) Matters Arising item 11 – which reads ‘that the Forestry Commission were putting native species back as native trees were susceptible...’ to ‘that the Forestry Commission were not putting native species back as native trees were susceptible...’

The above change was made, and the minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd May 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MINUTES: (2) MATTERS ARISING

Item 9 – Dog Issues on Exmoor: RB asked about use of the word ‘worrying’ in relation to dog sheep worrying. There was a discussion on what the Police have interpreted as the law as to whether a landowner can shoot a dog that is frightening his sheep in any way. In examples given one sheep had been attacked and survived and another sheep had been killed. In the example given the land was private land with no rights of way.

Item 9 Dog issues on Exmoor: DB said he has not changed the online guidance yet regarding externally applied flea and tick treatment on watercourses. DB had researched the issue and found that although there have been some studies, there is currently no recognised government guidance, and he was reluctant to change the guidance without an official source. There was some discussion around this area, and it was pointed out that the manufacturers put information on their products (for example not letting your dog go into the water for 2 or 3 days after applying the product topically) and vets also have guidance on what to prescribe. The Forum felt we could advise dog owners on the effect on water courses as well as the reduced efficacy of the product.

Action: DB to revise information on the website and potentially in the Exmoor publication.

Item 9 Dog Issues on Exmoor — AK reported back on her attendance at the ADEPT dog event in June and said that the issues above regarding worrying and flea and tick treatments had been discussed. She said she had learned a lot from the event.

6. Meet the Community / Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present.

7. Attendance and Recruitment

The ELAF currently has 14 members. LAF guidance states that if members have not attended 2 meetings a year it is up to the Forum to decide if they can continue to serve. SA reported that recruitment is very difficult and we want to retain all of our LAF members; we have a wide range of expertise and interests in the membership.

Determining the best date for the meeting helps with attendance, as in using the Doodle Poll.

The members of the Forum discussed the member attendance concerns and noted that an email reminder was the way to go forward if a member has missed two meetings. It was agreed that this should be a standard procedure and SA to write to members who had not been at the last two meetings. AP said that EG had not been receiving email communications and SA will endeavour to contact him another way to determine a new email address / contact method for upcoming meetings as well as write to other members not present to confirm they would still like to be on the LAF. Overall SA reported that speaking to other Local Authority LAF's, ENPA's LAF compared well for attendance and interest from members.

Action: SA to follow up members not attending for 2 meetings where appropriate

8. Wootton Ridge Future Management Consultation

SA reported on the consultation being led by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Butterfly Conservation which was commented on by the LAF since the May meeting.. There has recently been a meeting with all landowners which include Minehead Town Council, the Fairfield Estate and the National Trust; Ranger Tim Parish attended on behalf of ENPA and reported back. There are a wide variety of stakeholders using the public access land. Some were not keen to see cattle grazing. Consideration was being given to whether hard fencing is appropriate or electric collars. There are issues with a lack of infrastructure for grazing animals eg. Lack of water supply. Footprint Ecology's report will be circulated ahead of the next meeting. RB said they had done a similar exercise 12 years ago and it didn't go anywhere; the proposal was for hard fencing and there was strong opposition to this. SG commented that collars wouldn't work with sheep.

Action: SA circulate report when available

Related to this area RB reported that the tree work carried out by Forestry England at Wootton Ridge this summer had been very well managed and kept bridleways open with great consultation and planned well with local people.

Action SA to pass comments back to Forestry England from ELAF

9. Changes to Rights of Way and Access Management on Exmoor

DB talked through Item B.

KO'S asked if measurements for path categories are as the crow flies – confirmed this is so.

AK asked about wood v metal gates – DB said Park uses appropriate material depending on location.

SG asked if could have clarification on the last line of paragraph page 2 under All gates category 1 routes. Re: obstructive gates. DB said that landowners will be asked to replace or repair gates over 8 foot and that rangers are now speaking to landowners to say we can only contribute up to 25%, usually in the form of a gate kit. So far, the response to this has been good. It was felt that gates could be a future issue as gates are less well maintained.

ITEM A

With respect to paring, this is an area where the service has reduced by 40% and cut backs will have a more immediate effect. Some discussions regarding paring and noted that the categories are still settling in. Also discussed the difference between the ENPA standards, worked on by the LAF in 2016, (which applied up to the recent budget review) and the BVPI national standard (Open and Easy to Use Standard). The forum discussed the work of the new Path Fixers volunteer role and volunteer work parties working with Rangers and FST to fix practical issues. KO'S asked what the impact of less paring will be and DB said that a lot of paths will be more overgrown.

Signage and waymarking was discussed and there was some concern that it would be far more likely that people would get lost if this is reduced. With respect to Signs DB emphasised that we would still be providing the 2/3/4 finger signposts on junctions and between junctions to mark the route. Paint dots would be used on category 2 and 3 paths.

Discussed the status of stiles and that stiles are only legally allowed to be there if they are mentioned in a statement and Highways have to give permission. If a stile is not legal then the ENPA will ask for it to be replaced by a gate. Degree of negotiation to ask for kissing gates to replace stiles. If the stile is legally allowed there is a legal duty to provide 25% of the cost. The ENPA will not do a full cost replacement which encourages farmers to put in a gate. If there is a diversion, there is also an opportunity to replace stiles with gates.

The percentage of Parishes with Path watchers is approximately 50%. This led to some discussions regarding the lack of communication since the Rights of Way Support Officer role was lost.

AK asked if there would be a review of Permitted Paths, DB said we would wait until a significant expense arises and then review each path on a case-by-case basis. We will look at alternative funding options before closing a path. Rangers have categorised permitted paths, to help with this process. We will consult with the LAF regarding this policy as things develop.

Overall, the Forum had some concerns about potential future deterioration of the access network caused by the cuts in services and discussed whether to make representations at this stage. DB explained that funding is now in line with the proportion of our government grant ring fenced by DEFRA, plus the amount received from both County Councils, and whilst our access work has had the largest cut we were relatively well funded historically. We have reduced our BVPI target now to 80% (previously 95%, achieving 99% in 2022). Surveys are undertaken 4 times a year in May, August, December and February. These combine to give an annual figure in March as the published figure. SA said that fails are often signs and fallen trees. If there is a failure it is counted in the stats and our figures can be trusted as a true indicator of the network condition. It is likely we will start seeing the impact of budget cuts soon but certainly in 3 to 5 years' time and the LAF said they would make representation when impacts are better understood. The LAF discussed the significance also of the budgets of the County Councils.

ACTION: SA to put impact of budget cuts to rights of way on the agenda for the next meeting.

10. LAF Visits

It was agreed at a previous meeting that LAF members would organise their own site visits if they wish to. Members expressed an interest in a tour of the Exford depot - may be a suitable destination to combine the meeting and a visit and also look at the tree nursery and perhaps use the village hall for the meeting. Lee Abbey was put forward by SG to look at work on the England Coast Path and perhaps host the meeting for November.

ACTION: SA/DB to organise depot visit with the next meeting.

11. ENPA Car Parks – Introduction of Charging

DB reported Ashcombe was reviewed 18 months ago and recently Exford and Haddon Hill were the subjects of a public consultation regarding improvement works and future charging.

The result was that ENPA will continue to introduce charging at Haddon Hill - improvement works will be put back to drier weather in the spring.

Exford – it has been noted that the car park here has a high level of use to access village facilities and is not predominantly a recreational use car park. The Parish Council have offered to consider a grant towards car park maintenance and charging plans have been paused whilst this is considered.

Following the consultation, we have also made changes to the price structures and introduced a discount for our annual pass for benefit recipients (£60 discounted to £30). 1 pass can have two different car registrations. £1 per hour, £3 per half day and £5 full day. Income does not go to the rights of way budget it goes to the facilities budget to manage car parks on a day-to-day basis. However, anything which reduces pressure on core expenditure can help with freedom to spend elsewhere. ENPA policy is to offer machines that take coins and cards/electronic payment. Ashcombe does not currently have connectivity for electronic payment and so this is coins only at the moment.

The top car park at Valley of the Rocks is owned by ENPA, and the charges there are set to correspond to the Town Council car park rates.

Action: SA to include link to car park consultation results with the draft minutes

12. National Access Legislation Update

SA updated the Forum on the national access legislative changes and proposals – item C. The main point is that the deadline for claims for historical rights of way has now been moved from 2026 to 2031. Additionally, a date has been set for the review of Access Land mapping of 2031.

13. Public Path Orders and Legal Matters

The Forum noted the recent footpath orders which had been circulated since the last meeting. It was noted that the charge for a diversion is usually between £1,500 and £2,000

ENPA are not accepting new landowner applications at present due to the lack of capacity to process them (loss of RoW Support Officer). DB said they are putting forward a proposal for external funding for a part time officer post.

14. Implementation of the King Charles III England Coast Path on Exmoor

SA presented progress on the England Coast Path to the Forum. The changes are as a result of the Marine and Coastal Act 2009. Natural England looked at the whole Exmoor coast with ENPA and proposed 6 changes to the route to accord with the Act. There were negotiations with landowners and all comments were in a report in 2017 with approval by the Secretary of State in 2021. The LAF at the time supported all of the proposals except for Lee Abbey (where they would have liked to have seen a different route around Duty Point) and Hurlstone Point (where the LAF felt the route should remain in Hurlstone Combe). 4 planning consents were obtained in 2021/2 and in 2023, grant applications for the implementation grants were submitted to Natural England. These were approved recently and now we have from October 2023 until March 2024 to get the works done.

Glenthorne : Some work has been done on the ground but the path is not open yet.

The ECP route is not shown on the definitive map. ENPA will be responsible for the route as Access Authority. Grant funding will come from Natural England and their commitment will be ongoing.

The Forum were pleased to see that the route would still be marked as the Coast Path and the acorn National Trail symbol will still be used. Where the coast path route is changing, the South West Coast Path will move to the ECP route. The old route will remain a public right of way and overall there will be a significant increase in public access.

15. Access and Recreation Highlights April to November 2023

The forum enjoyed a presentation of the work being carried out by the team in the last 6 months. This included a diversion at Combeshead, preparations for Great Bradley Bridge including the public appeal, the new Path Fixers and the replacement of one of the Ranger Landrovers with an electric van.

The Chair congratulated the team on all of the good work that has been undertaken.

16. Date of Next Meeting and Agenda Items

Sue will send a 'doodle poll' for a date and the next meeting will be at Exford with a visit to the depot in early May.

ACTION: – SA to circulate in the new year

17. Any Other Business of Urgency

None.

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:55

DRAFT



Exmoor Local Access Forum Terms of Reference

Local Access Forum under section 94(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Title: The Forum shall be known as the Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF)

Remit of the Exmoor Local Access Forum

The purpose of the Exmoor Local Access Forum (ELAF) shall be to provide advice to Exmoor National Park Authority and other specified bodies on how to improve “public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area”, (section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act), in ways which address social, economic and environmental interests.

The Exmoor Local Access Forum will have a remit to advise on and identify potential for strategic programmes, projects, policies that may be relevant towards improving and increasing access to increase and improve access to, and enjoyment of, open spaces, public rights of way and the general countryside in Exmoor National Park. The Forum will provide an arena within which to raise strategic issues, exchange ideas and share good practice and experiences.

Specifically, the Exmoor Local Access Forum will:

1. Support and advise the Exmoor National Park Authority on strategic access and recreation issues relevant to Exmoor National Park. This should include specific advice on items discussed at LAF meeting where appropriate.
2. Comment on strategic national, regional and local (county/district) consultations and policies in so far as they impact on access issues affecting Exmoor National Park.
3. Contribute to the development and revision of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) for Exmoor (a chapter within the Devon and Somerset RoWIPs first published in 2005).
4. Act as a consultative body in relation to access restrictions on Open Access Land or to the implementation of Coastal Access.
5. Instigate and develop partnerships with other groups and organisations to influence delivery of recreational/access infrastructure and promotion of recreational/access opportunities.
6. Oversee progress by all partners under Priority B2 of the Partnership Plan for Exmoor.
7. Consider the impact of people on the National Park, in particular, relating to sensitive sites and advise Exmoor National Park Authority accordingly.

2022-25

ITEM B

In partnership, the Authority (as the Access Authority) is expected to:

- Consult the forum on relevant strategic matters.
- Provide relevant information, reports and background papers.
- Give feedback on advice received from the Forum.
- Raise awareness of the Forum amongst officers and members throughout the Authority.
- Act as secretariat to the Forum.

Review

The terms of reference will be reviewed, as a minimum, every three years.

Date of next review: May 2025.

Appendix 1 – Membership

Forum members shall represent one or more fields of interest rather than any particular organisation of which they might also be a member. Where a member wishes to or is requested to represent a particular organisation, this may be permitted at the discretion of the Chairman and the extent of representation should be clearly defined.

Members of the Forum shall be appointed to achieve a reasonable balance of the following interests:

- a) Users of Exmoor's path and access network (for example walkers, horse riders, cyclists, people with limited mobility), and
- b) owners and occupiers of access land or land crossed by local rights of way, and
- c) other interests relevant to Exmoor, such as tourism, sport (including field and country sports), recreation, wildlife conservation, cultural heritage, health, outdoor education, public transport, community safety and local business.

Members shall be appointed by Exmoor National Park Authority following open advertising and a fair and transparent appointment process. The appointment process will include consideration of applicants' interests and attributes (such as age, connections to working with younger people, gender, disability and ethnicity) alongside the interests and the social attributes represented by existing Forum members to ensure balance and diversity is maintained.

Before appointment members shall confirm:

- their commitment to working within the Guidance on Local Access Forums in England, issued by the Secretary of State, (Defra, February 2007) and achieving the purpose of the Forum through constructive working with other members;
- their ability to devote the necessary time to attend Forum meetings;
- their willingness to attend training sessions and to network with a wide range of relevant parties outside meetings.

Members shall be appointed for a term of three years. Members may re-apply for appointment at the end of their term. Membership may be terminated by the Authority where a member is absent from meetings for a year.

The lower and upper limits to the size of the forum (10 and 22) are set out in the Regulations. Exmoor National Park Authority regards a membership of 12 to 18 as an effective working size whilst allowing a wide representation of interests. Authority Members will be allocated to the Forum in line with the relevant regulations.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be appointed by the Exmoor Local Access Forum at its meeting in April/May and shall hold office for one year. Subject to their continuing membership of the Forum, they shall be eligible for re-election annually thereafter. Whilst there is no restriction upon the number of years these offices are held, providing the members remain appointed to the forum, the recommendation is that the position of Chairman is held for no longer than three years.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman should come from different interest groups but may both be from the 'other interest' category if their interests are different.

Members shall disclose the nature of any direct or indirect interest in any matter brought up for consideration at a meeting of the Forum which might “affect a member’s well being, financial position, or business (which would be a ‘direct’ interest, as it impacts on a member directly) or that of a relative or friend (which would be an ‘indirect’ interest) to a greater extent than that of other council tax payers, ratepayers or other inhabitants of the area.” However, members may still participate in the discussion.

Allowances:

Members may claim travelling allowances for attendance at Forum meetings and authorised training events, and where appropriate, a carer’s allowance, at rates in line with the Authority’s policies.

Appendix 2 – Administration

ELAF will identify:

- An annual work programme (with some flexibility to allow for reactive nature of ELAF).
- What input may be required from ENPA staff.
- What it will not do.

Exmoor National Park Authority will be responsible for organising the meetings and the associated administrative tasks such as sending out invitations and circulation of appropriate papers. The officer(s) undertaking these duties shall be titled for the purposes of the Forum the 'Secretary' or 'Joint Secretary'.

Agendas: Any items for the agenda should be submitted at least three weeks prior to each meeting. The agenda will be circulated to members at least two weeks prior to each meeting. The agenda will be made available to the public at least five working days before the meeting via the Authority's website. Meeting agendas shall be agreed between the Chairman and the Secretary.

Minutes: Exmoor National Park Authority will arrange for any minutes/actions from the meeting to be recorded and circulated to members within 14 days of the meeting.

Forum Meetings: The Forum will hold at least 2 public meetings per annum with additional meetings as required and at the discretion of the Chairman. Public meetings held by the Forum will be held at various venues within the National Park to facilitate engagement with local communities.

Working Groups:

- Working groups to complete the agreed work may be held between public meetings as directed by the Chairman.
- Work to be completed will be agreed at the public meetings of ELAF and completed work will be disseminated to ELAF members and ratified at a public meeting of ELAF.
- Members of a Working Group will be agreed at a public meeting but in exceptional circumstances changes to Working Group membership may be approved by the Chairman between public meetings.
- The Chairman may be a member or a Chairman of a Working Group.
- A Working Group may appoint (by vote) a Chairman for the purposes of the Working Group only.
- Meetings of Working Groups will operate without additional secretarial support from the Authority unless specific agreement is made otherwise.

Public Questions: Public questions may be submitted in writing three days before a meeting or taken at the meeting, at the discretion of the Chairman. Where public questions are taken at the public meeting, two minutes shall be allowed per person. Further comments and questions may be taken at the discretion of the Chairman where it is directly relevant to the work of the Forum and productive in executing that work.

Annual Report: An Annual Report will be prepared at the end of each calendar year in the form set out by Natural England.

ITEM D

ID#	Project Name	Details	Project	Cost	Year	Lead	Quoted	PO raised	Likely to go ahead
	Pinkery Pond Path	Surface improvements to allow tramper standard access	Path	20000	3	PS or RTE?			Y
	Resting places on popular routes	Resting places on exisiting easy routes - eg to Wheal Eliza.	Infrastruct	2000	3	DB			?
	Wimbleball - West Wood to Causeway surface	Path surface improvement suitable for trampers and less able	Path	15000	3	DB			?
15	Auction field (DU 4/6)	Path surface improvement suitable for trampers and less able	Path	4800	3	RTE			y
	NT Webbers Post access path	Path surface improvement suitable for trampers and less able	Path	3000	3	CW			?
	Accessible Picnic Benches	At Haddon	Infrastruct	1600	3	DB			y
	Stone pitching near Wheal Eliza	Improve stone surface of damaged paved path with high quality pitched/cobbed finish	Path	10000	3	Phil or Rich			y
	Bridleway at Bridgetown	Surface improvement for route - popular route esp. with campsite nearby	Path	4000	3	TP			y
	Bridleway from Pound - Simonsbath to Wheal Eliza	Surface improvement for route - popular route with adjacent parking	Path	5000	3	Phil or Rich			y
	Bench near to Snowdrop Valley	Resing place on this popular route	Infrastruct	600	3	CW			y
	online resources			3000	3	CW			?
	Cobblers Park bench	Access friendly bench on new ECP route			3	RTE			?
	Audit of NPCs? New Dulverton Center	See visit England templates			3	DJ			?
	North Hill Interpretation	Could this contribute to FIPL funding - total project cost £15k		5000	3	TP			?
	Tall Trees Trail refurbishment			5000	3	Forestry England			Y



Active Travel England

National Parks Capability Fund 2023/24 - Proforma

Introduction

This proforma is designed for National Park Authorities (NPAs) to submit proposals for delivery of the National Parks Capability Fund 2023/24. Please refer to the **Guidance note** for further details about the fund and how to complete this proforma.

The deadline for completion of this proforma is **5pm Monday 11 March**.

All questions marked with * are mandatory and must be completed.

Which National Park Authority (NPA) are you preparing this proforma submission on behalf of? *

Exmoor National Park Authority

Who are the main points of contact for this proforma? *

Name 1*

Dan Barnett

E-mail address 1*

djbarnett@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Name 2*

Ben Barrett

E-mail address 2*

bbarrett@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Section A: Capability building activities

The main activity that should be delivered using the capability fund is the development of a **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), or equivalent plan**. You should provide details of how you intend to deliver this activity in the boxes below. If applicable, you can provide details of additional capability building activities from the following list in subsequent activity boxes.

- Network design
- Scheme planning and design
- Public engagement/ consultation
- Street/Route audits
- Data & evidence collection
- Bespoke training for NPA officers and board members

Activity A:

Exmoor Active Travel Plan

Briefly provide any details related to the development and/or delivery of this activity, and anticipated outputs or outcomes including how you are expecting them to be realised by your activity (max 300 words) *

We will develop an Active Travel Plan for the entire National Park, that will also consider access to the Park from nearby urban centres. There will be special focus for larger settlements within the National Park to focus on travel within them and connectivity with neighbouring settlements.

The plan will include a strategic exercise exploring key issues and opportunities. It will make reference to our County LCWIPs and Local Transport Plans along with our own Partnership Plan, Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Family Friendly Cycling Feasibility Study and our promoted walking and cycling network.

The plan will consider local commuter journeys and visitor travel, and both utility and leisure journeys. 97% of our visitors arrive by private transport and then continue to use their car for most journeys during their stay. Our ambition is to help local people and visitors to rely less on private transport and achieve experiential, health and carbon benefits. We are not able to set targets, but these can be developed as part of the Plan.

Community consultation and evidence gathering will be an especially important component, as our evidence base is currently poor. We will include a wide spectrum of interests and take active steps to include underrepresented groups.

The plan will also aim to identify specific high priority infrastructure investment opportunities, to help ensure we have a range of projects that are ready and fit for funding. A wide spectrum cost- benefit analysis will be used to evaluate intervention proposals.

OFFICIAL

We will use a combination of in-house and external consultant capacity to complete the plan and liaise carefully with our partner Local Authorities - Devon County Council and Somerset Council.

The project will include some up-skilling of key staff and members through training sessions and use/dissemination of good practice guidance, Government and ATE resources.

What amount of funding are you seeking for this activity? *

£70,000

What are the expected start and end dates for this activity? *

DD/MM/YYYY

Start date

1st April 2024

End date

31st March 2025

Do you want to add another activity? *

Yes

No

Activity B:

Off Road Public Access Opportunity Studies

Briefly provide any details related to the development and/or delivery of this activity, and anticipated outputs or outcomes including how you are expecting them to be realised by your activity (max 300 words) *

The unsealed surface public access network, (comprising of unsurfaced county roads, public rights of way, permissive paths, Access Land and de-facto access) provides the basis for enjoying the National Park and is key to getting out, staying healthy and engaging with nature.

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Our access network is important for local business too. Tourism was worth an estimated £134 million to the National Park economy in 2019 and our 2021 visitor survey shows that 65% of visitors enjoy a short walk and 60% a long walk (over 2 hours) as part of their stay. Using our STEAM survey data from 2019, we can estimate that there were 2.32 million visitor days within the National Park boundary and that our visitors enjoyed at least 1.5 million walks during a typical year.

Understanding how this network can change and improve is vital to guide future plans and funding bids but detailed planning and design are required on an area-by-area basis which take considerable time and specialist expertise to develop.

This component of work will fund 5 area-based Public Access Opportunity Studies focussed on our key settlements to map out, assess and cost up key opportunities in those locations.

The studies will include consultation with landowners, local community and public access user representatives (including unrepresented groups) to better understand the public access opportunities and barriers in the area.

The completed reports will help guide future investment and funding bids with a focus on active leisure and enjoyment of the National Park. They provide a plan of potential routes for improvement/creation with detailed costing, public benefit assessment and ease of implementation scoring.

What amount of funding are you seeking for this activity? *

£25,000

What are the expected start and end dates for this activity? *

DD/MM/YYYY

Start date

1st April 2024

End date

31st March 2025

Do you want to add another activity? *

Yes

No

Activity C:

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Legal advice and cost estimates to resolve impasses on Family Friendly Cycle Trails

Briefly provide any details related to the development and/or delivery of this activity, and anticipated outputs or outcomes including how you are expecting them to be realised by your activity (max 300 words) *

During 2019-2021 we completed a Family Friendly Cycle Trail Feasibility Study for Exmoor National Park.

Whilst Exmoor is renowned for its tough mountain biking and challenging road cycling the offer for more accessible family friendly cycling is limited.

Multi-purpose routes have proven popular with local communities and visitors in the region and have a wide appeal to people of all ages and in particular families. This demographic has been decreasing in terms of visitor numbers to Exmoor (the proportion of young adults (24–45-year-olds) visiting Exmoor has almost halved in the last 10 years) and without new relevant products, this will remain a hard-to-reach group. High profile visitor attractions such as branded cycle trails can also encourage longer stays where the activity is combined with more traditional pursuits.

The purpose of the feasibility study was to develop some 'ready to fund' opportunities for investment and it successfully identified two highly suitable trail options, completed landowner and parish council consultation, and identified costs for physical implementation.

Unfortunately, there were 2 locations where we could not get landowner agreement and these specific locations are key to unlocking the rest of the identified route.

For this piece of work we will explore a potential creation by order, under section 26 of the HA 80, in two locations for a new bridleway, or use of compulsory purchase to achieve the same end. We plan to use this funding to obtain specialist advice focussed on our particular cases, including estimating the legal costs and compensation value for these specific examples, but the exercise will also help build staff knowledge and skills.

This work will be necessary for us to begin full public consultation on these routes and achieve some high quality 'ready for funding' new infrastructure options.

What amount of funding are you seeking for this activity? *

£5000

What are the expected start and end dates for this activity? *

DD/MM/YYYY

Start date

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1st April 2024

End date

31st March 2025

Do you want to add another activity? *

Yes

No

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Activity D:

Briefly provide any details related to the development and/or delivery of this activity, and anticipated outputs or outcomes including how you are expecting them to be realised by your activity (max 300 words) *

What amount of funding are you seeking for this activity? *

What are the expected start and end dates for this activity? *

DD/MM/YYYY

Start date

End date

Do you want to add another activity? *

Yes

No

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Activity E:

Briefly provide any details related to the development and/or delivery of this activity, and anticipated outputs or outcomes including how you are expecting them to be realised by your activity (max 300 words) *

What amount of funding are you seeking for this activity? *

What are the expected start and end dates for this activity? *

DD/MM/YYYY

Start date

End date

How will these capability building activities support delivery of the objectives of the fund and your strategic objectives? (300 words max) *

The Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan is the statutory document that sets out the vision and key issues that need to be addressed to achieve National Park purposes.

The draft aims of our emerging new plan are:

- A. A cared for landscape and heritage
- B. A nature-rich landscape
- C. A net zero National Park, mitigating and adapting to climate change
- D. A welcoming place for all, that people feel connected to, improving their health and well-being
- E. A sustainable, innovative economy with thriving communities
- F. Sustainable Landscapes, delivering National Park purposes

The programme of projects in this submission will help us achieve a net zero National Park. Along with all 15 UK National Parks we have committed to lead collaborative efforts to pilot new technologies and strategies to reduce carbon emissions and to achieve net-zero as places (including tourism) by 2045. Car travel is the single largest contributor to the overall footprint of Exmoor National Park (35% of the combined footprint of the residents and

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visitors), so active travel could play a huge role in future to help us achieve our net zero target.

This piece of work will also help with our ambition to improve peoples' health and wellbeing and improve their experience and access to the landscape by 'paving the way' for a funding-ready network of improved walking and cycling opportunities, carefully designed to maximise public benefit and longevity.

For our local community, an improved walking and cycling network will allow more sustainable and safe commuter journeys and provide new business opportunities and increased visitor spend.

The community and visitor consultation activities in this project will increase the likelihood that different groups will be more aware and engaged with our active travel plans and our schemes will be more representative of their needs.

If you are unable to use the total amount of grant available (£100,000), what amount of grant are you seeking? (this should equal the total of the funding you are seeking across all of your activities) *

How would you use any additional funds over £100,000, if available? (300 words max) *

If additional funding was made available at an early stage, there is room for further expenditure on evidence gathering for how our road and travel network is currently used. Through remote surveys and other methodology.

Also, we could increase the number of Public Access Opportunity Studies.

Section B: Working with others

The guidance documentation for the National Parks Capability Fund specifies that any proposal should include a commitment to work in partnership with relevant local authorities and highway authorities. Are you confident that your NPA will be able to meet this requirement? *

Yes

No

Describe how you aim to ensure that the proposed activities will complement the activities of the local authority, local highway authority and other relevant local organisations? * (e.g. current/planned LCWIPs, LTPs) (max 300 words)

Through our Agency Agreements with Devon County Council and Somerset Council we have delegated responsibility for Public Rights of Way Maintenance. This partnership approach provides us with close working relationships with the Councils and our Highway Authority colleagues.

Both Councils have completed, or are in the process of producing, LCWIPs for various locations and have completed some county wide analysis and strategic work that we can mesh with our own studies. Somerset Council has an ambition to complete a county wide LCWIP. Both Councils are also developing new Local Transport Plans, hopefully to come into effect 2026, so there is some potential to share resources and consultation activities with them over the period of our own project.

We will liaise carefully with both local authorities to ensure that any evidence gathering, and consultation activities compliment their own approach and can be useful for county-wide strategy development.

Section C: Public Sector Equality Duty

Please outline how you will meet your public sector equality duty obligations to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when delivering your activity(s) (300 words max) *

Please refer to the protected characteristics listed where relevant: age; gender reassignment; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or on maternity leave; disability; race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

ENPA are committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of our services and to ensuring that within the resources available, services are accessible and appropriate to the differing needs of the public, in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

We will undertake a specific Equality Impact Assessment for this project.

In particular we will ensure that:

- available equality and deprivation data and impacts are considered as part of any infrastructure intervention cost-benefit analysis.
- our consultation process will be highly accessible, and we will take extra steps to ensure we engage with a wide variety of individuals and underrepresented groups.
- principles of inclusive mobility will be included in design briefs for any new infrastructure.

Section D: Monitoring and Evaluation

The guidance documentation for the National Parks Capability Fund sets out the monitoring and evaluation requirement that each authority must undertake.

Are you confident that your authority will be able to meet these requirements? *

Yes

No

Please provide a summary of how you plan to evaluate the impact of the funding on achieving the objectives of the fund and your strategic objectives? * (300 words max)

For each of the three activities detailed above we have set out key milestones and a schedule of task delivery and expenditure, along with clearly stated outputs, outcomes and strategic objectives.

Our in-project monitoring will include review of project progress against the schedule.

We have included for capacity to ensure monitoring reports issued by ATE are completed to deadline and for post project evaluation.

Post project evaluation will focus on our stated outputs, outcomes and strategic objectives and will include an independent quality assessment of our completed Active Travel Plan. This will include feedback from consultees, partners and key contacts within local HAs. Have we done what we set out to achieve, how good is it, will it make a real difference? These questions can be scored by all relevant stakeholders.

Do you agree to participate in the National Evaluation if relevant? *

Yes

No

End of the proforma

Please sign in the box below to confirm that you have completed this form to the best of your knowledge. *

Name 1: *

D J Barnett		Access and Recreation Manager
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Name 2: *

B Barrett		Head of Finance and Operations
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Please save a final copy of the proforma for your own records before you submit it.

Please return this proforma as either a PDF or word document to charles.critchell@activetravelengland.gov.uk with the subject line: 'National Parks Capability Fund Submission_XX' (Authority name)

It has not been possible to provide the whole report as a paper at this stage as no landowner consultations have taken place as yet. Therefore, just the background and context is provided for information.

Feasibility Study

Access Improvement Opportunities around Simonsbath and the Royal Forest, Exmoor

NLHF Funded Study

January 2024



Easy access route along the Barle Valley to Wheal Eliza

Sue Applegate

Public Rights of Way & Access Officer

Access & Recreation Team, Exmoor National Park Authority

Background

The Royal Forest area of Exmoor National Park provides some excellent opportunities for walking, cycling and riding and includes some high value historical and natural assets with Simonsbath acting as a hub and destination in its own right.

Walking is the top activity undertaken by visitors to Exmoor. 70% undertake short walks under 2 hours whilst 43% undertake longer walks over 2 hours. Over 60% of the Park's public right of way network is public bridleway or higher status and the area is a wonderful resource for cycling and riding.

There is an opportunity to improve the connectivity between key assets both within the immediate Simonsbath village and in the wider area to create safer and more accessible routes that appeal to a wider variety of users and make the most of the areas features of interest.

The focus of this piece of work is to map out these opportunities in more detail and carry out basic feasibility assessment to provide a variety of deliverable improvements.

The bid document for this initial phase of the project (ref) provides full details on the history, geography, geology, socio-demographic and other background details relevant to the area. I therefore do not intend to repeat them here but to provide a brief summary of those factors that relate directly to public access to provide context for this report. This is largely covered in section 2 of the report.

The route summaries which are found in section 3 of the report, and form the main focus of this study, are designed to work as stand-alone improvements or where relevant, are in conjunction with other improvements – this is clearly identified on each assessment by means of a reference number eg. R23. A key consideration in these times of limited core funding, has been the financial sustainability and on-going maintenance of each route. The routes are not considered in any particular order other than being geographically grouped as some rely on others nearby to make them viable. The routes include some that were identified in the Exmoor Vision but also new ones that were identified during the initial stages of the feasibility study, both by talking to ENPA staff and through map based studies of the area.

Potential new influences and developments were considered during the study as these could impact hugely on the access network and demand for it. For example, particular consideration was given to linking access routes to the potential new car park at Simonsbath Saw Mill and particular focus was given to Driver Farm which has recently come back under the direct management of ENPA and whose future use is still under consideration.



View from public bridleway above Limecombe, near Simonsbath 2024

Exmoor Local Access Forum National Access Issues Update

A) Deregulation Act 2015 – Rights of Way Reforms Update

There seems to be very little progress to report on this item. As was previously reported the 'Cut Off Date' for claiming historical rights of way has now been enacted albeit with an extended date to 1/1/2031:

Commencement Order:

[The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(Commencement No. 16\) Order 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Cut-off Date Extension:

[The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(Substitution of Cut-off Date Relating to Rights of Way\) \(England\) Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

It was reported by DEFRA at a recent national RoW Group meeting (ADEPT) as follows:

The issue of exceptions to the cut-off date was still under consideration. A specific timetable for the other provisions was not available and it was pointed out that this may be an election year which may fog the situation further. It was stated that the Guidance was going to be delayed until later in the process. The ongoing work was in relation to the Right to Apply changes. The statutory instruments would include regulations for the application forms, amendments to a register of applications and the recovery of costs by parties. The DMMO changes were coming later so there was little further update.

B) ELMS – Environmental Land Management Scheme and FiPL (Farming in Protected Landscapes)

Update on ELMS

A recent update at an Access and Engagement Forum from DEFRA was as follows:

- There are scheme changes planned for ELMS for 2024 including broadening access options for farmers and land managers.
- One of the options will look at bringing in new access to the scheme, as well as broadening out the eligibility of groups for educational access, compensating farmers and landowners in the process.
- Options will also include new permissive access for people with reduced mobility, upgrading existing rights of way, and opening up more areas for open access.
- Payment rates and application process for ELMS will be supported by advisors from the Forestry Commission or Natural England.

Update on FiPL

Recently a third access prescription was made available through FiPL which is in addition to the 2 existing prescriptions for permitted footpath and bridleways. The new prescription is as follows:

HN05 - Access for people with reduced mobility

Aim

This option is used to create new routes for those with restricted or reduced mobility, such as wheelchair users or those with pushchairs/prams.

The option payment covers the ongoing costs of management and maintenance of the route. Provision of a hard surface, access furniture and other capital items can be funded by capital works.

Management requirements

FiPL Access for people with reduced mobility
Allow public access on all agreed permissive routes and areas for quiet countryside enjoyment at no charge. Access routes must be kept safe for users and free from litter. Access furniture must be maintained in a good useable condition. Any overhanging vegetation and branches to be cut back so that there is clearance to the full width of the path and to a minimum height of 2 m.
Ensure any necessary access furniture or infrastructure is in place within 3 months from the date of your agreement unless otherwise agreed in writing by your FiPL contact.
Ensure that a safe, even surface of at least 1.2 metres in width is provided and maintained for permissive paths for those with reduced mobility. Adequate passing places should be provided.
Install all site maps and waymarks provided under your agreement within two weeks of receipt. These should be installed in accordance with the guidelines provided by your FiPL contact and in the locations approved. On receipt of any site map, send a copy to the Parish Council.
Animals which are known to be, or are likely to be dangerous, such as dairy bulls, aggressive suckler cows and beef bulls, must not be kept on land to which permissive public access is being granted.
Organised games or sports, camping or overnight stays, visitors carrying firearms or use by motor vehicles (except where necessary for the management of the land) must not be allowed unless specifically agreed in advance in writing by your FiPL contact.
The access may be closed to the public for up to 10 days in each year (but not on a public holiday). If access is to be closed under this condition, a notice of closure in a format agreed by your FiPL contact must be posted at the points of access at least four weeks in advance of closure.
Ensure that at all times there is adequate public liability insurance cover.
Activities on land adjoining permissive access areas and which are within your control must not interfere with the access.

C) Review of Open Access Land

Update summary from the National Open Access Forum reported in November 2023:

- 20 year deadline for CROW land is coming up so DEFRA has asked Natural England to scope out what a review might look like (initially should have been at 10 years but was pushed back by regulations)
- No programme of work yet but the review is in the public domain with stakeholder discussions taking place
- Particular focus is on the mapping of 'Downland', the mapping of Common land that has come into being since 2004/5, impact of tree planting/natural regeneration on existing access land.
- They are learning from other delivery programmes such as coastal access where the consultation process worked well
- Single national deadline has been set for the review of 1st January 2031 and there will be a continuous review thereafter