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Barlynch Priory



Exmoor National Park Authority Corporate Strategy 2023-26



Introduction

Exmoor National Park Authority's role is to further National Park purposes: to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and to promote opportunities for people to understand and enjoy its special qualities. In pursuing these purposes, it has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park, working closely with partners including the Local Authorities. National Parks are also increasingly being asked by Government to deliver on wider agendas including climate change, health and wellbeing, and equality, diversity and inclusion. Further details of the role of ENPA and how we deliver National Park purposes are given in Appendix 1.

This three year Strategy has been prepared to give staff, Members and the public a clear view of our strategic direction for the three years, 2023 - 2026. It describes our 6 priorities and the outcomes that we want to achieve. It reflects the emerging themes of the 2024 – 29 Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan and the priorities identified in Government's response to the Landscapes Review.



New electric minibus at Pinkery

Our Priorities

1. **A clear response to the nature and climate crises**
2. **A welcoming place for all, improving people's health and well-being**
3. **A cared for landscape and heritage**
4. **A place with flourishing, vibrant, communities and businesses**
5. **A highly performing Estate, delivering National Park purposes**
6. **A great organisation to work for**

1. A clear response to the nature and climate crises

The nature and climate crises are well documented. In 2010 Professor Sir John Lawton's report, Making Space for Nature, called for ecological networks which can withstand climate change and improve the state of biodiversity. "To make space for nature we need more, bigger, better and joined up sites". Following the development of the 25 Year Environment Plan and in response to the crisis of biodiversity loss, in 2020, the UK Government committed to protecting 30% of land for nature by 2030.

The 2019 Landscapes Review (Glover et al 2019) contains 27 recommendations. The first was that: National landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature. The Landscapes Review proposed that National Park Management Plans should support and encourage efforts to create wilder areas in some places and that they should "do so while also ensuring the continuation of the cultural traditions which gave our landscapes their natural beauty in the first place". In 2021 ENPA adopted the Exmoor Nature Recovery Vision with bold targets to deliver a nature rich National Park.

The nature crisis goes hand in hand with the climate crisis, and the impacts of a changing climate with warmer, wetter, winters; hotter, drier, summers; and more extreme weather events being felt across all parts of the globe. The UK Government has set ambitious targets for carbon emissions, aiming to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels, and to reach net zero by 2050. Exmoor is not immune to these changes, and in 2019 ENPA declared a climate emergency and committed to work towards being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, and to support this ambition across the whole National Park. This means we will ensure climate action is integrated across all we do.

To tackle the climate and nature crises, we will:

- Manage the land we hold for the nation as a place where nature can thrive, naturally beautiful, wilder in character
- Find opportunities across the national park to create more and diverse habitat including woodland, scrub and trees in the landscape
- Continue our ambitious programme of restoring peatlands, bogs, wetland and valley mires
- Support and promote regenerative farming – growing sustainable food, while supporting the environment, nature, cultural landscapes and local economy
- Support and promote regenerative and sustainable tourism, helping people to access and enjoy the National Park in ways that minimise their carbon impact, contribute to their health and well-being, and sustain local businesses
- Work with partners to help the National Park be net zero by 2040
- Implement our ENPA Climate Emergency Action Plan to ensure that we are carbon neutral by 2030.

2. A welcoming place for all, improving people's health and well-being

Exmoor has over 1,000km of footpaths and bridleways, and large areas of open access land for people to enjoy. We want to encourage access from all parts of society, and especially those that are not aware of National Parks and the benefits they provide, or lack the opportunities to access and enjoy them. We want to reinforce the founding mission of the National Park movement - giving everyone access to some of the wildest and most beautiful parts of the countryside.

To support a welcoming place with access for all we will:

- Remove barriers that prevent under-represented people from enjoying and accessing Exmoor and the benefits that access brings
- Provide a warm welcome, information, and opportunities to inspire everyone to understand, enjoy and care for Exmoor and better connect to its nature
- Maintain a safe Public Rights of Way and access network, prioritising available resources to higher use areas.

3. A cared for landscape and heritage

Conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and cultural heritage remains an overriding priority for Exmoor NPA. The rich character of the landscape, reflecting how people have lived and worked on the land over thousands of years has an irreplaceable value and enriches our lives.

To look after for our landscape and heritage we will:

- Continue to work closely with land managers to explore emerging new sources of finance to support the delivery of National Park purposes
- Explore how future landscapes can be equally beautiful, better for nature and help mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Ensure historic landscapes, sites and buildings are resilient, better understood cared for and valued
- Encourage sustainable development which is well designed and responds to local character
- Help people to understand, enjoy and care for these landscape features and heritage assets by telling their stories, providing information, events and volunteering opportunities

4. A place with flourishing, vibrant communities and businesses

Exmoor is home to around 10,000 people, and 1,300 businesses operate in the National Park; many of these are micro-businesses with less than 10 employees. ENPA is the local planning authority and as such has responsibility for preparing a Local Plan and determining planning applications. Local authorities and other service providers are responsible for housing, economic development, transport, health and other services. ENPA will work with these partners to support local communities and businesses to enable delivery of National Park purposes.

To support flourishing, vibrant communities and businesses we will:

- Work in partnership to deliver National Park purposes including co-operating with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the facilitation of economic or social development within the National Park
- Oversee implementation of the Local Plan and deliver an effective development management service to ensure appropriate development in the National Park
- Work with the housing authorities, Exmoor Rural Housing Enabler, Exmoor Young Voices and housing providers to support the delivery of the affordable houses needed by local communities
- Work with local authorities, businesses and partners to deliver the Rural Enterprise Exmoor vision
- Work with Visit Exmoor, local tourism businesses and partners to promote and encourage sustainable and regenerative tourism on Exmoor.

5 A highly performing Estate, delivering National Park purposes

Exmoor NPA is unusual in owning around 7% of the National Park, a much higher percentage than most NPAs. A lot of this was acquired through the 1970s and 1980s to prevent ploughing of moorland or loss of ancient woodland. As well as large areas of moorland and extensive woodlands, numerous built structures including heritage assets, offices, visitor centres, public toilets, car parks, cultural buildings, a period farmhouse, and bungalow make up the Estate which is also abundant in natural capital. We will review our Estate, rationalising the buildings and land we need to keep so that it is delivering National Park purposes and, where possible, increasing income and providing wider opportunities.

To make the most of the land we hold for the nation we will:

- Draft and deliver the Estate Strategy, which sets out how we will run our Estate to help nature recover, mitigate and adapt to climate change and increase access and inclusion while generating better economic returns
- Re-prioritise and organise our staff and resources to focus on delivering our priorities on our Estate, being an exemplar for how to achieve National Park purposes, address the nature and climate crises, innovate and trial new approaches, and sharing our learning with other land managers and partners.

6. A great organisation to work for

To deliver its ambitious agenda, ENPA needs to be a flexible, resilient organisation, with capacity to respond to funding opportunities and deliver change at pace. Since the substantial funding cuts of 2010, ENPA's budget has continued to decline, and we will need to change the way we work.

To ensure ENPA is a great place to work, we will:

- Support our greatest asset – our staff, by developing an Organisational Development Strategy – reconnecting staff to the organisation and its priorities, strengthening our shared culture and sense of pride to work for a National Park and embracing changes to the way we work
- Work across teams in a more integrated way
- Enable cultural change to be more commercially focussed, delivering opportunities for increased funding from non-Defra sources
- Reduce our liabilities – to ensure we are safe, legal and financially sustainable
- Use emerging technology and data to improve efficiency, understanding, and information sharing
- Be more efficient in all we do - ensuring our time is spent well, reducing costs, improving decision making and being more sustainable.

Monitoring and Delivering this Strategy

The priorities set out in this Strategy have informed the specific actions that will be delivered in 2025-26 set out in Appendix 2, and which will guide staff work programmes. Details of how we will use our resources to deliver these priorities, and our Medium Term Financial Plan are given in Appendix 3.

Delivery against our priorities and actions will be reported in the six-month progress report and annual report to Authority. At the end of each financial year the Authority also completes an annual performance review. This provides information about the progress made in delivering the actions in the Corporate Strategy, together with achievement against the Authority's set of performance indicators.