



Exmoor National Park

Rights of Way and Access

Annual Report 2024/25



Summary of Rights of Way Report 2024/25



89% of our paths are open and easy to use



537 volunteer hours surveying paths

Ten major path repairs



Our Ranger team surveyed:

16.6% of our 1000km paths network

16.6%

Our Field Services Team work involved



55% of faults fixed within 3 months



cutting back vegetation on 215km of paths



Our Field Services Team have produced and installed:

390 signs and 198 signposts



10 new bridge sections

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Front cover photograph courtesy of Shaun Davey

INTRODUCTION

During the period of this report our National Park Partnership Plan identified well managed recreation and access as one of our 18 ambitions. This recognition of the importance of public access has been carried through to our new National Park Management Plan that includes a core objective to ensure that *public paths, open access land, recreational facilities and popular sites are well maintained and accessible for all to experience and enjoy*. This new plan includes several specific targets and measures including:

- At least 80% of Exmoor's public rights of way are assessed as 'open and easy to use'
- Improve the public access network by delivering enhancements to cycling, riding and walking opportunities and improving accessibility
- Increase opportunities for green travel and active travel to and within the National Park

Our public rights of way network extends to almost 1,000km (footpaths 449km, bridleways 483km and Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic 68km). In addition, there are 193 km of permitted paths. This figure is lower than previous years partly as paths have changed in status along the England Coast Path, permitted paths have become redesignated as Coast Path (please see Coastal Access section page 28 for further details). There are approximately 18,000ha of Access Land within the National Park.

Our rights of way network is one of the special features of Exmoor and is key to getting out, staying healthy and enjoying the National Park. Along with our Access Land and permitted paths, it offers unrivalled access on foot, horseback or bicycle for everyone to enjoy.

Our access network is important for local business and jobs too. Tourism was worth an estimated £242 million to the National Park economy in 2024 and our 2024/25 visitor survey shows that 76% of visitors enjoy a short walk and 52% a long walk (over 2 hours) as part of their stay. It's clear that our public rights of way and access network supports a huge part of our local economy and is the foundation for getting out and enjoying the health and wellbeing benefits of the National Park.

The public rights of way network is managed and maintained by Exmoor National Park Authority which has delegated powers from Devon and Somerset County Councils. This means that most maintenance and legal work is carried out by Exmoor National Park Authority. During 2022 we undertook a major review of our public access work expenditure to help reconcile deep cuts to our core government grant and other substantial budgetary pressures. This resulted in a substantial drop in our overall maintenance expenditure for Public Rights of Way alongside staffing cuts and a reduction in the standards that we aim to achieve. However, after much deliberation and effort, support from our local councils was increased and our lead role for public access work was kept in place with a number of initiatives to reduce costs whilst maintaining high standards of public satisfaction.

One result of this challenging time was that we did not produce this annual report 2022/23 or 2023/24 however the statistics and some reflections within this report cover that full period.



Quantities Exmoor National Park Rights of Way Furniture:



251 sets of steps & 19 Boardwalks



183 Kissing Gates & 326 Stiles



665 Bridleway Gates and 67 pedestrian gates



3000 signposts



316 Bridges



955 Field Gates

THE ACCESS AND RECREATION TEAM

At the end of 2024/25 year the Authority employed 17 members of staff within the Access and Recreation Team led by the Access & Recreation Manager. However, our work is increasingly diversified, and our Rangers and Field Services Team now spend a greater proportion of their time working on our estate and conservation projects alongside our public access work.

Our eight Field Services Team members carry out practical work to maintain and improve the rights of way network along with work to maintain our own estate.

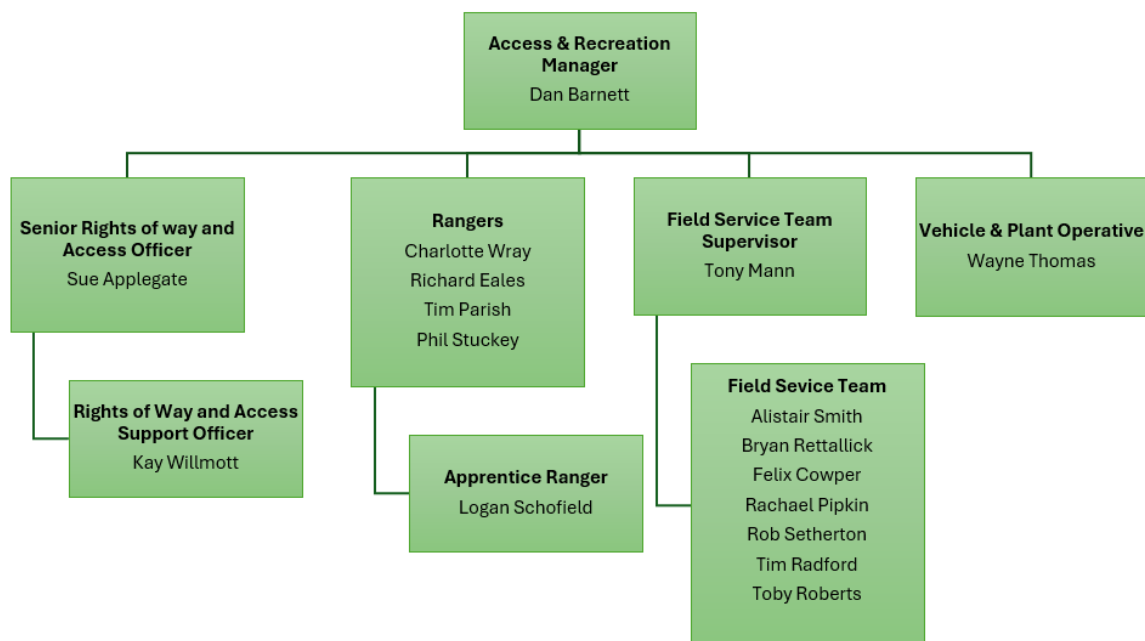
We now have an in-house Vehicle and Plant Operative servicing and repairing ENPA vehicles, plant and equipment, replacing our previous contract arrangements.

There are four Rangers leading on inspections, works specifications, project management and landowner/user liaison for rights of way. They also carry out minor maintenance and, in total, rights of way work accounts for around 50% of their role. We have also recruited an Apprentice Ranger on a 16-month work programme part-funded through the Exmoor Pioneers Heritage Lottery funded project.

Our Senior Rights of Way and Access Officer leads on more technical and legal rights of way and access matters. A Rights of Way Support Officer was recruited to provide additional support across the team mostly funded by our Active Travel Project and PROW income.

For help or information about any access or recreation issues please contact our Ranger Team at access@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk or 01398 323665

Fig. 1 The Access and Recreation Team:



Logan Schofield Apprentice Ranger under tuition



Field Services Team at the Coast Path Opening July 2024



REPAIR WORKS & ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

The Ranger Service identifies issues on the path network through routine parish path inspections and through receiving reports from Path Watcher Volunteers, members of the public and landowners. Public reports of damage or obstructions on the network are important to us so if you have noticed something that needs attention then please visit the [report a problem](#) page on our website or contact us via email access@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk.

Once an issue has been identified, the Ranger will follow this up and if needed, will produce a work ticket that instructs our Field Services Team with what works are required. Our Field Services Team respond to the majority of routine repair works and for major projects we use local contractors, or our Field Services Team to complete the works.

Our Field Services Team resolved a total of 628 faults this year and 55% of faults were resolved within 3 months, which is below our 80% target. Extreme weather events such as this year's Storm Darragh and longer growing seasons continue to impact on our performance and capacity. A total of 10 major works were delivered this year (2024/25) with a further 9 having been completed in 2022/23 and 10 in 2023/24 when no RoW Annual Report was produced. All of these were carried out using either our own Field Services Team or local contractors, see more details in the Major Works chapter.

Table 1: Faults resolved within 3 months

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total faults resolved	789	816	1010	834	1048	950	950	519	539	628
Faults resolved within 3 months	78%	78%	84%	66%	56%	58%	56%	54%	50%	55%

PARING (CUTTING BACK VEGETATION)

It is the responsibility of the Highway Authority (and Exmoor National Park Authority as their agent) to manage vegetation growing up from the surface of the public right of way (undergrowth).

Highways legislation specifies that it is the landowner’s responsibility to cut/remove overhanging vegetation that grows across or from beside a public right of way and the Authority has a duty to ensure this is done to maintain good access for the public. This support from landowners is important and some go further but, in many cases, landownership is unclear or it is simply easier to cut back side growth as part of the surface cutting process.

201km of routes were pared in 2024/25 along with an additional 11 **separate works tickets** to undertake paring work on the paths network.

Table 2: Total length of paring since 2015/16

Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Paring (Km)	172	184	155	200	159	215	201	194	No Data	201

Field Services Team paring paths



TREES

Trees that fall across a public right of way are the responsibility of the landowner and are often cleared without our involvement. However, many of the trees that fall across public rights of way are cleared by our Field Services Team where that is a more timely or cost-efficient method. Our Ranger Team liaise with landowners to ensure that very large or particularly difficult trees are cleared promptly.

Table 3: Trees cleared by the field Service Team

Year	Number of hazardous/windblown trees
2022/23	141
2023/24	111
2024/25	566 (Storm Daragh)



DRAINS

Heavy rainfall and flash flood events are occurring more frequently due to climate change, and this can result in a path surface becoming gullied and washed out. To reduce the severity and likelihood of this happening, routine maintenance is required to clear out, and repair drains along rights of way. In 2024/25, our Field Services Team cleared 72 drains and a further 42 were cleared by contractors on our behalf. Where major repairs are carried out or new drains installed, we try to increase their capacity and design to improve the networks' resilience to major rain events and climate change.

FURNITURE

Highways legislation requires a minimum 25% contribution from the Highway Authority towards stock control furniture (gates and stiles) on public rights of way, with the rest being provided by the landowner. However, within the National Park we install and maintain most stock control furniture at full cost, unless it is a gate over 8 feet where, following a change of policy in 2023, the landowner would normally be expected to maintain the gate (with the ability to claim 25% of the costs from ENPA – normally we do this by providing the gate for the landowner to install) The design of the furniture adds to the local distinctiveness and recreational experience on Exmoor. Most gates, stiles and signposts are constructed and installed by our Field Services Team, produced from timber sourced from our own woodland estate.



Volunteer and FST team working at the Exford Depot

Table 4: Field Service Team Furniture Output since 2015

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
No. of signs produced	456	617	831	759	620	507	577	454	312	390
No. of signposts produced	268	283	404	391	290	213	233	226	160	198
No. of gates produced	152	107	155	138	157	134	116	131	81	93
No. of new bridge sections produced	28	28	27	10	58	0 (Due to high stock)	0 (Due to high stock)	3	0	10

MAJOR WORKS

‘Major works’ are larger projects which are beyond routine maintenance, typically requiring more than 15 person workdays per project. Although many of our major works are carried out by contractors, some are also completed by our own Field Services Team. During the past 3 years, 29 **major works** projects have been completed. Many of these projects were funded by the DEFRA Removing Barriers accessibility fund which provided capital funds during the years of 2022-23 and 2024-25.

Fig 2. Major works project locations for 2022/23 until 2024/25 financial years

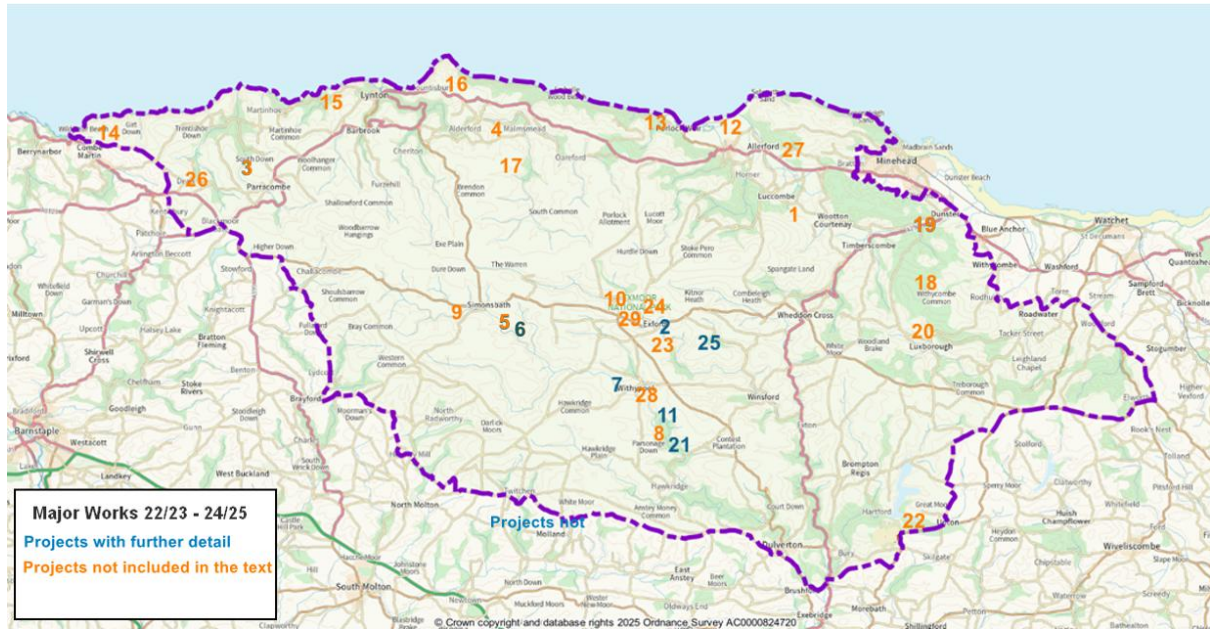


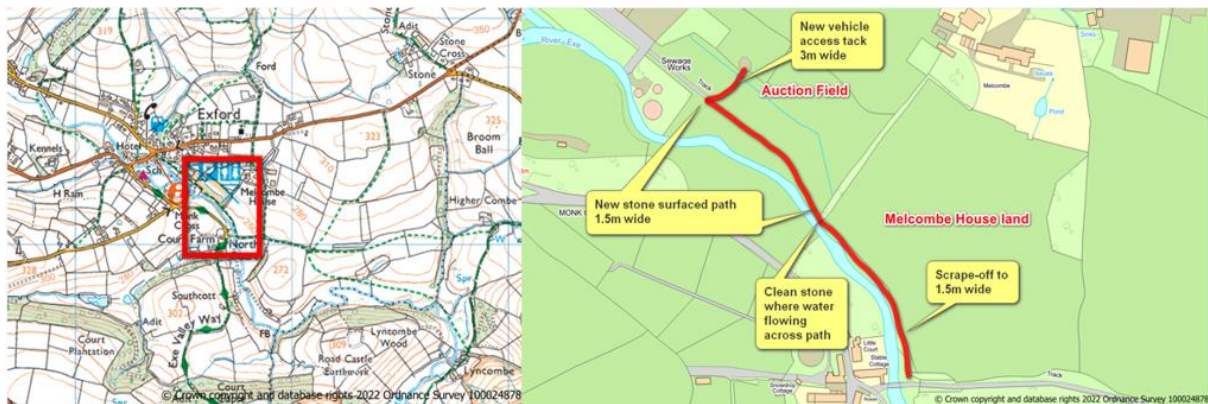
Table 5: Major Works carried out from 2022 – 2025 (for green highlighted projects see more detail below)

	Project Name	Parish	Brief description	Grid Location	Year Completed	Funding Source
1	Huntscott Bridge	Wooton Courtenay	Drain clearance works	SS922436	2024/25	Core funds
2	Auction Field	Exford	Surface works for easy access	SS856382	2024/25	DEFRA Access
3	Gratton Cottage	Parracombe	Fencing and Gateway installation	SS659452	2024/25	Core funds
4	Southern Ball Bridleway	Countisbury & Brendon	Clearing bridleway of fallen trees	SS782479	2024/25	Core funds
5	Pound to Wheal Eliza	Exmoor	Path improvement ground works	SS780386	2024/25	DEFRA Access
6	Beech Trees Riverside Path	Exmoor	Improvements to path surface and width	SS788377	2024/25	DEFRA Access

7	Withypool footpath improvement	Withypool & Hawkridge	Path surface and furniture improvements	SS842354	2024/25	DEFRA Access
8	Bradley Wood Bridleway	Withypool & Hawkridge	Surface improvements	SS858337	2024/25	DEFRA Access
9	Simonsbath Leat Path	Exmoor	Groundworks and new bridges to improve accessibility	SS770391	2024/25	FIPL
10	Bossington Coast Path & Cycle Route	Selworthy	Surface improvement	SS894480	2024/25	DEFRA Access
11	Great Bradley Bridge	Withypool & Hawkridge	Bridleway bridge crossing the River Barle	SS857338	2023/24	Various
12	Bossington - Coast Path	Porlock	Improvements to path surface	SS903488	2023/24	England Coast Path
13	Worthy Wood – Coast Path	Porlock	New route created for the Coast Path	SS857483	2023/24	England Coast Path
14	Cobblers Park – Coast Path	Combe Martin	New route created for the Coast Path	SS576474	2023/24	England Coast Path
15	Lee Abbey – Coast Path	Lynnton and Lynmouth	New route created for the Coast Path	SS701495	2023/24	England Coast Path
16	Glenthorne – Coast Path	Countisbury	New route created for the Coast Path	SS794497	2023/24	England Coast Path
17	Black Hill Brendon Common	Brendon	Path surface improvements	SS769457	2023/24	Core Funds
18	Black Hill & Red Girts track repair	Withycombe	Track improvements	SS903443	2023/24	Core Funds
19	Aville Ford	Dunster	Path surface repairs	SS976431	2023/24	Core Funds
20	Luxborough path repairs	Luxborough	Surface repair for two ford crossings in Colyhill and Chargot Woods	SS969367	2023/24	Core Funds
21	Tarr Steps Meadow	Withypool & Hawkridge	Path improvements	SS866322	2022/23	DEFRA Access
22	Pepperpot-Upton Bridleway	Upton	Surface improvements	SS988287	2022/23	DEFRA Access
23	Court – Room Hill – Butterslide Bridleway	Exford	Regrade Bridleway Surface	SS855373	2022/23	DEFRA Access
24	Ludslade Bridleway	Exford	Improvements to drainage	SS850396	2022/23	Core Funds

			and surface of bridleway			
25	Lyncombe Lane Bridleway	Winsford	Improvements to bridleway and drains	SS867375	2022/23	DEFRA Access
26	Higher Cowley Footpath	Kentisbury	Drainage improvements	SS637452	2022/23	Core Funds
27	Deans Lane Gate and Wall work	Selworthy	Widening the gate and wall	SS926473	2022/23	Core Funds
28	Uppington Bridge	Withypool & Hawkrigde	Improve drainage and ground to allow removal of small bridge	SS851352	2022/23	DEFRA Access
29	Edgcott Bridge	Exford	Protect bridge from river erosion	SS848386	2022/23	Core Funds

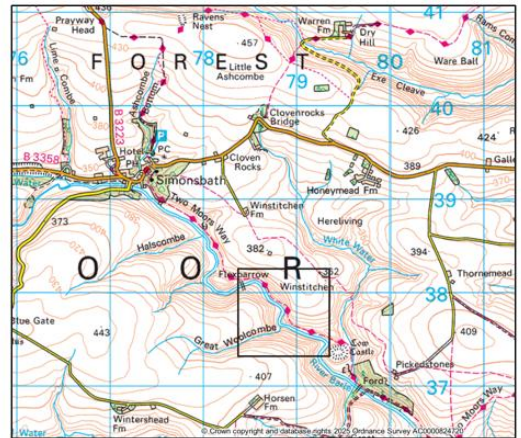
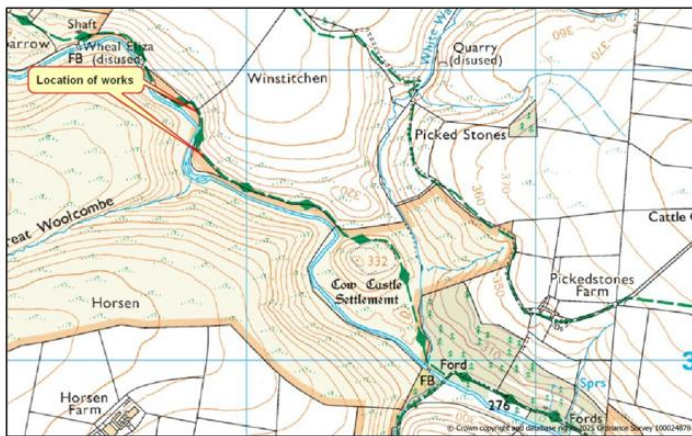
2. EXFORD AUCTION FIELD





This route provides an important link between the settlement of Court and nearby village facilities in Exford, as well as being an important start point for recreational walks. The work has significantly improved the accessibility of the route, especially for powered wheelchair/ buggy users through the winter season and in wet weather.

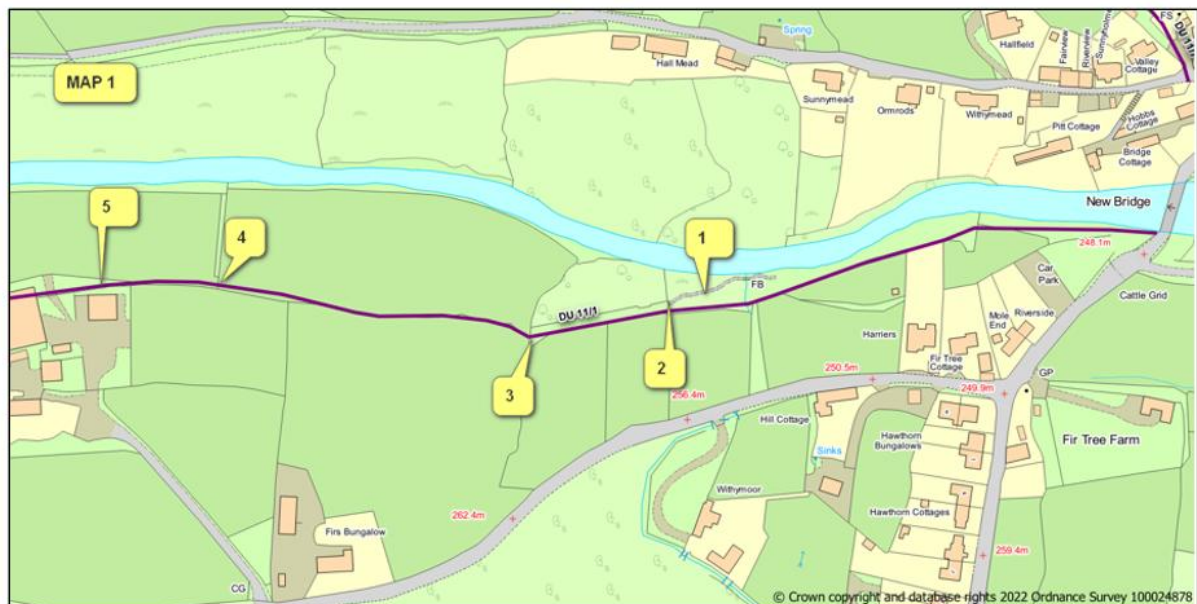
6. BEECH TREES RIVERSIDE PATH, SIMONSBATH





This popular recreational route provides relatively easy access from Simonsbath into one of our most dramatic moorland landscapes. The route is level with good width and all-weather surface as far as the Wheal Eliza ruins. These works have extended this access further downstream towards Withypool by addressing the poor surface and width in this location.

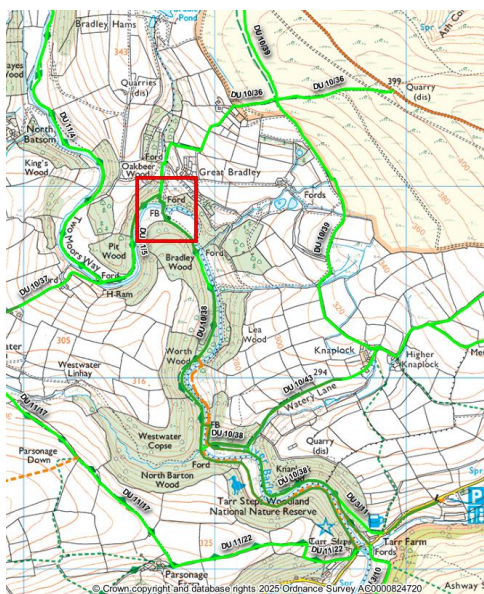
7. WITHYPOOL FOOPATH IMPROVEMENTS





The route provides a well-used level riverside route from the popular visitor destination of Withypool village. It suffers badly from erosion and muddy ground and had several elements of inaccessible boundary furniture. These works have provided an all-weather surface and improved several of the gates and styles to make them more accessible.

11. GREAT BRADLEY BRIDGE



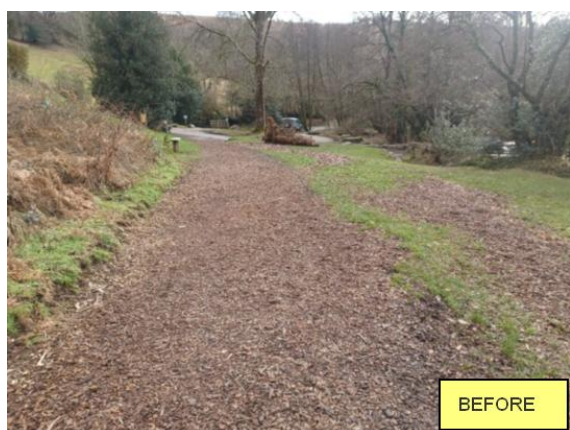


A new 28m span bridge across the River Barle was opened on the 19th October 2024 (Exmoor Day) in celebration of Exmoor's 70th anniversary of its designation as a National Park.

The new crossing has helped secure the route of the popular Two Moors Way and opens up new access opportunities for walkers, riders and cyclists in the Barle Valley. It allows a permissive path through sensitive wet woodlands and which has been heavily eroded to be closed, and a much better bridleway on the opposite side to be utilised for the benefit of all.

The project was funded through the generous support of CareMoor for Exmoor supporters, alongside contributions from the Farming In Protected Landscapes scheme, the British Mountaineering Council, the Keene Foundation and many others.

21. TARR STEPS MEADOW



This route sees very heavy use in this popular visitor location adjacent to the Tarr Steps historic monument. Erosion and weather damage had made it muddy rutted over time. These new surface works ensure it is easy to use for all users including electric powered wheelchairs, anyone less steady on their feet and pushchair users.

25. LYNCOMBE LANE BRIDLEWAY

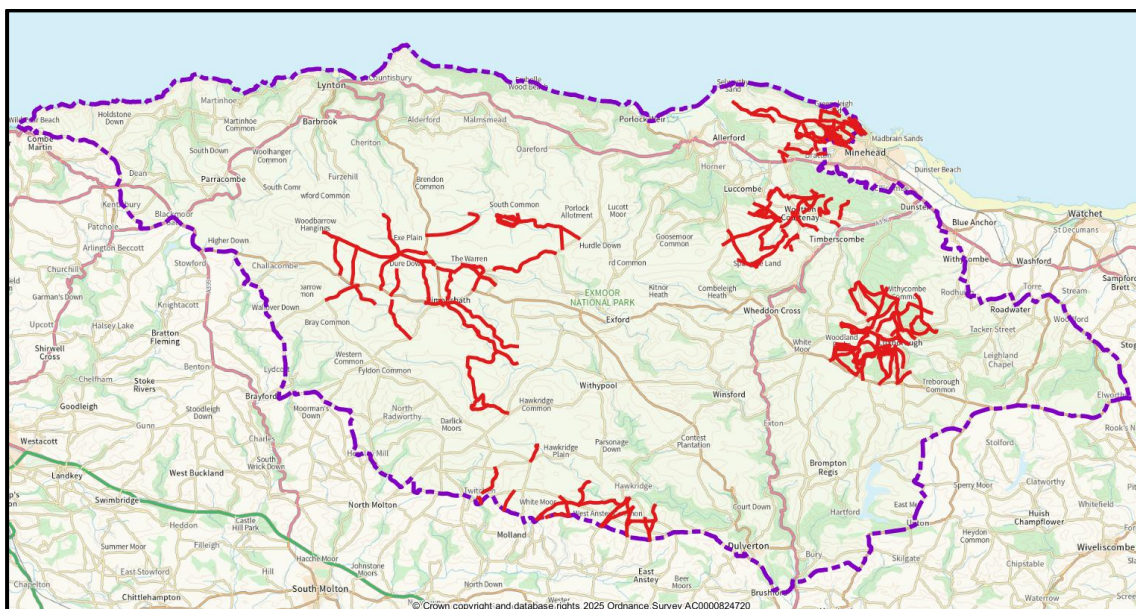


This route forms an important link within the public bridleway network. The bridleway that runs on the track leading out of Lyncombe Farm has become eroded between the two hedgebanks. A stream also crosses the track half-way along. Water overwhelms the drain and the old drainage ditch has silted up. This results in a massive area of deep standing water after rain. As the water disperses the track becomes muddy. This route is an important link in the local network that is otherwise in good condition and suitable for off road mobility scooters. Works include major resurfacing plus improvement and addition of drainage and will improve access for all along this scenic river valley.

PATH INSPECTIONS

Parish path inspections are undertaken by the Ranger Team to proactively identify and resolve any issues on our paths. Since 2022, this has been operating on a six-year cycle - the aim is to survey one sixth of the network each year. Bridges and structures requiring inspection remain on a 3-year cycle. In 2024/25 we carried out proactive inspections on **16.46%** of the public rights of way and our adopted permitted paths network. As part of these path surveys, **52 bridges** and **26 structures (flights of steps, revetment walls etc)** that we are responsible for, were inspected to ensure that they are safe for the public to use. In addition to the planned path inspections, Rangers also carried out additional reactive inspections to respond to reports from members of the public and land managers.

Fig 3: Proactive path inspections carried out by Rangers on paths shown in red for 2024/25



‘OPEN AND EASY USE’ ASSESSMENT

The statutory duty of the Highway Authority is to maintain the surface of rights of way in a condition suitable for their intended use and to assert and protect the rights of the public. Path surveys are carried out by volunteers each year to produce our ‘open and easy to use’ indicator score. This assessment uses a nationally recognised methodology where a 10% random sample of our paths are surveyed, and it provides an important indication of the condition of the whole PROW network. Since 2023/24, our score has been gradually decreasing – there are a number of factors involved, including climate change, but the main factor is the maintenance resource and budget pressures that we have had to respond to. The score for 2024/25 was 89%, which, whilst still exceeding our new target of 80% (previously this was 95%), is the lowest score we have had for over a decade and may decrease further in coming years with current resource arrangements.

Table 6: BVPI scores since 2015/16(% based BVPI 178 highway links methodology).

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
93%	96%	96%	93%	92%	98%	97%	99%	93%	89%

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers contribute to our rights of way work in a variety of ways including our Path Watcher scheme which was developed in 2013. Path Watcher volunteers are given in-house training on how to undertake a path survey, map reading, way marking and resolving practical rights of way issues.

Within in a year, volunteers walk all the paths within a given parish and report back any problems encountered to the Ranger team. The Ranger team can action any works that are necessary or investigate further. In 2024/25, the Path Watcher volunteers have dedicated **537.6 hours** surveying rights of ways in **all Parishes** within Exmoor National Park.

The Path Fixers group, established in 2023, meets fortnightly on a Wednesday and has contributed **318.5** hours to helping us with practical tasks on the access network. Finally, our Path Parers provided **86.83** hours dedicated to cutting back vegetation. They have been directed to areas which were later in the summer on the Field Service Team schedule, allowing the rights of way network to remain usable during the fast-growing season.



ENPA Path Fixers - Higher Combe, Exford



ENPA Path Fixers - North Hill, Minehead



West Somerset & Exmoor Bridleway Association clearing a bridleway near Wimbleball Lake



Pathwatchers training event Porlock 2025

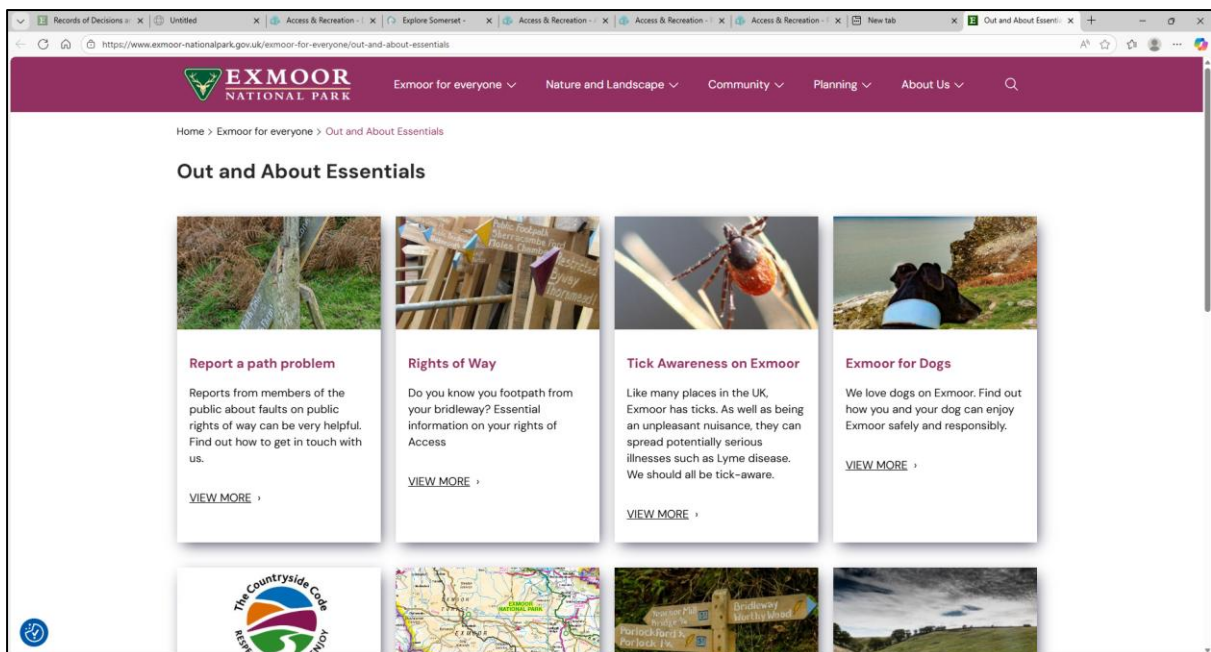
ADVICE

Rights of way advice is available in many forms. Our Ranger Team, Public Rights of Way and Access Officer and Rights of Way Support Officer deal with many enquires via email, on the phone and face to face. The Exmoor National Park Authority website has several pages dedicated to rights of way information including current path news, where we regularly update about path closures, proposed changes to the network (e.g. diversions) and permanent closures. Our website also includes information about Access Land, recreational events, advice for land managers, advice for dog walking, ticks and Lyme disease along with facts and figures about the path network and all kinds of walking and visiting advice.

We also have an active X account (@PathsENPA), to inform people about path closures, photos of completed works and other activities that we are involved in. The Rangers can also be followed on X (@ExmoorRangers), with a wide range of posts from wildlife sightings to Ranger recommended walks and historical photos of Exmoor.

Another good source of information regarding rights of way, is the [Somerset County Council ROAM Map](#). The ROAM map can be used to view all rights of way and permitted paths within Exmoor National Park. It can be used to report any issues that people find on our path network, including overgrown vegetation, obstructions, nuisances and broken furniture. Any issue reported through this website, will be sent directly to the Area Ranger to investigate and try to resolve. The map will denote a red circle if the issue has already been reported.

Fi. 4: ENPA website walking page



LEGAL EVENTS AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC

The Authority has its own powers concurrent with those of the Highway Authorities to undertake legal work to create new, or divert existing, public rights of way. These are powers rather than duties. The Authority also has other powers for example to authorise new gates on public rights of way, to temporarily close a right of way to keep the public safe or to permanently divert a public right of way by means of a public path diversion order.

In the last twelve months 29 **legal events** have been completed; see table 4 below. The number of 21day closures requested by landowners has reduced since charges were introduced (in line with our partner authorities) in 2023. The number of diversions being processed has been low due to staff capacity although this work is slowly being moved forward again. Our good working relationship with landowners means that enforcement work to protect and assert the rights of the public continues to form a smaller part of our work.

In addition to this there are many elements of our rights of way work which are more difficult to evidence. Many obstruction and minor maintenance issues are dealt with by our Ranger Team without the need to raise a work ticket or record a fault on the SCC system.

Table 7: Legal Events

Legal Orders	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Section 147. Gate Authorisations	4	2	1
Surface Authorisations	0	0	1
21 Day Emergency Closures	18	9	17
6 Month Closures	2	2	4
6 Month Closure Extensions	0	0	1
Permitted Path Agreements	0	0	0
Permitted Path Closure	0	0	1
Informal Consultations for changes to the path network (before commencing Public Path Orders detailed below)	4	2	1
Section 119 Diversion	3	3	1
Section 119 Confirmation	3	2	2
Section 26 Creation Order	0	0	0
Section 26 Confirmation	0	0	0
Total	34	20	29

Furthermore, during 2024/25 we have commented on a total of 42 **consultations** to ensure that public rights of way are properly considered and protected (Table 5). The number of planning applications being commented on has declined over the past few years due to staff capacity – only those with a significant rights of way issue are commented on in detail. Consultations for grant funded work continue to come in, though the numbers fluctuate.

Table 8: Consultations Commented on

Consultations	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Planning Applications	62	42	16
Forestry Applications	25	13	11
Major Works Consultations	1	2	2
Farming in Protected Landscapes Applications	39	47	10
Mires	1	7	3
Hedgerow Felling Licence	0	4	0
Definitive Map Review	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0
Total	129	115	42

THE OFFLINE PATH PROJECT

An ‘offline issue’ exists where the recorded definitive PROW route is obstructed or is very difficult to use for some reason. The Offline Project has focused on historical issues which have been in place for many years. Any new obstructions are dealt with as a priority via Ranger contact and enforcement where necessary.

The main types of offline issues include:

- Buildings, fences, hedges and banks obstructing the definitive PROW line.
- Very boggy or difficult ground, quarries or very steep ground where a sensible used alternative is well established.
- Vegetation blocking the path making it difficult to walk the definitive PROW line – often on moorland or in woodlands.

The vast majority of our offline issues have reasonable alternative routes that are well established on the ground. We have never included dead-end routes or user-status issues as ‘offline’ issues however these are often equally as important as they can cause difficulty or confusion for users.

The ‘Offline Project’ was begun in 2008/2009 as a means of tackling these historical issues to ensure that wherever possible, the definitive line is open and usable to the public. The Access and Recreation Team have worked towards resolving these using any one of the following actions:

- Opening up the definitive line (for example by removing an obstruction, clearing vegetation or installing a gate in a fence line)
- Gathering evidence to prove the definitive map is incorrect (in preparation for a Definitive Map Modification Order)
- Diverting the definitive line of the public right of way by means of a Public Path Order (Highways Act 1980) to create a sustainable route that is enjoyable and easy to use.

Whilst this work continues as and when opportunities arise, other work pressures (including staffing) have meant that progress in recent years has slowed.

Over the past 3 years, 6 of these offline issues have been resolved – 5 as a result of public path orders and one where landowner contact relating to a planning issue allowed an offline to be resolved by reopening the definitive line. In total, since recording of offline issues began in 2008, 128 issues have been resolved with a further 2 assessed and identified as needing no action. There are currently 239 offline issues recorded as unresolved.

The table below shows which offline issues have been resolved over the past 3 years:

Table 9: Offline issues 2022-2025

2022/23

Location	Path Number	Parish
Cloud Allotment and Oare Manor [Ref: 428]	WL17/3	Oare
The landowner wished to apply for a diversion for land management reasons. At the same time we were able to resolve a long-standing offline issue where the definitive line of the bridleway followed an old sunken lane which had not been used for decades. The diversion was to an adjacent track which is easy to use and maintain.		

Location	Path Number	Parish
Cloud Farm [Ref: 35 & 429]	WL17/2 WL17/14	Oare
As a result of a planning application where the landowner wanted to provide camping pods in an area crossed by the definitive line of the footpath, a diversion order was made which resolved several offline issues on the same path whilst putting the legal line into a sustainable position which had been in use for many years.		

Location	Path Number	Parish
Hantons [Ref:344]	DU4/5	Exford
A FiPL application to plant an orchard led to this public bridleway diversion to the route which had been in use for many years.		

2023/24

Location	Path Number	Parish
East Lynch [Ref: 55]	WL21/12	Selworthy
A tree planting proposal led to this diversion request to allow the young trees to be fenced off – the legal line was diverted to the well-used alternative route and stiles were replaced with gates (see section*)		

2024/25

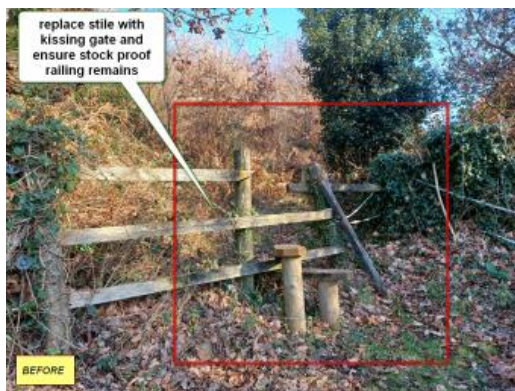
Location	Path Number	Parish
Barton Town [Ref: 394]	213BW11	Challacombe
A planning enquiry led to a proposal to remove a lean-to which had been obstructing the definitive line of a bridleway enabling the route to be reopened.		

Location	Path Number	Parish
Newcombe Farm [Ref: 124]	WL13/31, WL13/33 WI13/45	Luxborough
A planning application led from the new owner led to a site visit and discussion and a diversion proposal to resolve a very long-standing and difficult offline issue on this bridleway which also carries the Coleridge Way promoted walking route. As a result, a diversion order has been made to open up the line as close as possible to the original but on an easy route. The legal order has been confirmed but the practical work will follow during 2025/26.		

IMPROVEMENTS

Small improvements to the rights of way network can make a huge difference to the accessibility of a path to users. Improvements to the rights of way network can include changes to furniture or surfaces, diverting paths onto better routes, upgrading a path status to allow access for a wider range of users or even creating completely new routes. The photos below show some of the rights of way improvements that have been carried out over the past 3 financial years. In total 12 stiles have been replaced with gates over this period.

Location	Path Number	Parish
Blackball Hill [Ref: 7790]	Public Footpath WL25/37	Timberscombe
Stile close to Timberscombe village replaced with kissing gate which is more accessible for all users.		



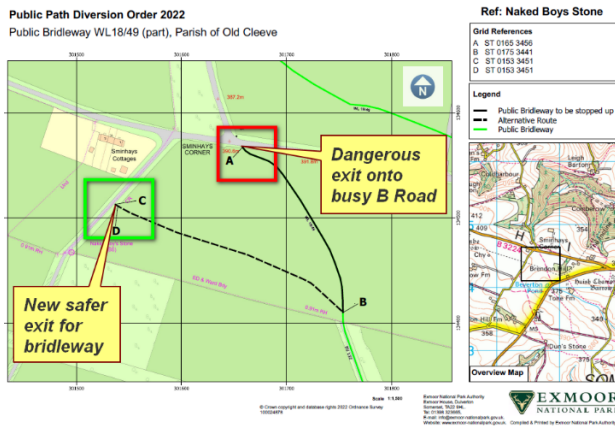
Location	Path Number	Parish
Brockwell Farm	Public Footpath WL32/23	Wootton Courtenay
Two consecutive stiles changed to kissing gates which are more accessible for users.		



Location	Path Number	Parish
Bougham Farm	Public Footpath WL25/8	Timberscombe
Stile replaced with gate providing easier access for users.		



Location	Path Number	Parish
Naked Boys Stone	Public Bridleway WL18/49	Old Cleeve
This diversion (with the kind permission of the owners and the support of the West Somerset and Exmoor Bridleways Association) allows the bridleway to join the road network at a safe place and brings users to a safer crossing point of the busy B Road.		



RECREATIONAL EVENTS

Recreational, sporting and challenge events that make use of the public rights of way network are popular on Exmoor. Well organised events are an opportunity for people to explore Exmoor and can support the local economy which is especially welcome during the shoulder season.

Importantly, many of these events raise money for local and national charitable causes. We also encourage event organisers to donate to our charitable CareMoor for Exmoor scheme. This often can be as little as £1 per participant but funds a whole variety of projects including access, nature and heritage projects. For more information – please see our CareMoor webpage.

The National Park Authority supports event organisers in a wide variety of ways. For example, by providing advice on a proposed route, helping the consultation process with landowners/ key contacts and making event organisers aware of other events that might clash with theirs. The Exmoor National Park Authority website provides a good source of advice for event organisers.

Event organisers are responsible for managing the event in a timely manner, consulting with all relevant stakeholders including landowners, Parish Councils, Police, Highways Department, and local communities as necessary. Organisers should also produce an event management plan, risk assessment, and obtain appropriate public liability insurance. Finally, organisers should plan an event that minimizes any potential negative impacts and clear away any litter and signage as soon as possible.

In 2024/25 there were a total of 29 events held and the table below shows the type of these events.

Table 10: Recreational Events in 2024/25

Type of Event	Number	of	Events
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Running	5	7	4
Motor Event	5	8	9
Road Cycling	1	1	2
Mountain Biking	2	3	3
Walking		5	4
Triathlon	1		1
Equestrian	3	2	6
Canoe	0	0	0
Swimming	0	0	0
Total	17	26	29

COASTAL ACCESS

Between 2022 and 2024, ENPA have continued to work closely with Natural England to assist and advise them in the implementation of the new coastal access legislation. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, establishes the coastal access duty which in summary is “to create a long-distance walking route around the English coast and to identify beside it, the coastal margin which should be accessible on foot”. Although the South West Coast Path already runs along the entire Exmoor coast, implementation of the coastal access duty has led to several changes to the coast path route. This is partly to propose a route which better meets the coastal access criteria or in some cases, new routes have been proposed by landowners. Ultimately, this will become part of the King Charles III England Coast Path.

In July 2024 after a great deal of negotiation, consultation, formal approval, obtaining consents and practical works, six new stretches of Coast Path were opened on Exmoor. This amounted to 7 miles of new access and meant that a quarter of the coast path has now moved closer to the sea. These routes are now officially part of the South West Coast Path and the King Charles III England Coast Path – in all cases, the former coast path route remains accessible as a public right of way. Details of the new routes can be found on the website link below.

[First Section of New Coast Path opens on Exmoor | Exmoor](#)

Fig. 5: New Coast Path Section on Exmoor opened 2024





The Coast Path now takes in Hurlstone Point east of Bossington



The new off-road Coast Path route at Lee Abbey approaching the Valley of Rocks.



The Coast Path Opening Event included a guided walk on the new route through Cobblers Park at Combe Martin



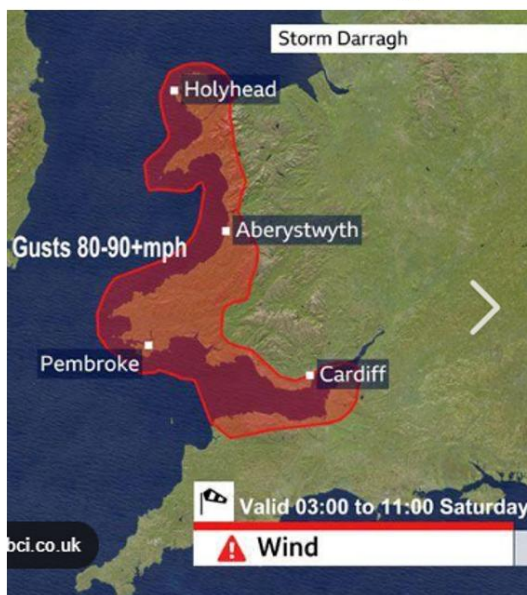
The Opening Celebration at Combe Martin on 17th July 2024 attended by all the partners who helped the project happen.

STORM DARRAGH

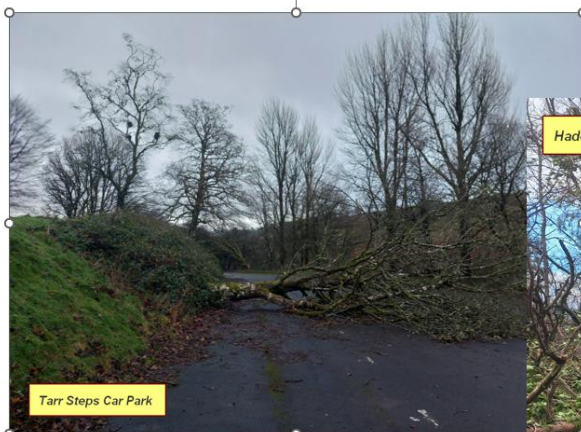
Over the weekend of 6th December 2024, Storm Darragh, a particularly intense storm with rare Red Weather warnings hit the Exmoor coast. The predominate winds were from the north west so the Exmoor coastal valleys were particularly hard hit, some areas having devastating tree damage. Many paths on Exmoor’s 1,000km rights of way network were blocked by fallen trees and some path surfaces on steep ground fell away.

Sections of the South West Coast Path, Two Moors Way and Coleridge Way were impassable and the National Park Field Services Team, along with teams from ENPA partners including the National Trust and other landowners, worked hard to reopen routes as soon as possible. It took over three months to reopen the whole the path network, and there are still many weakened trees coming down months after the event.

Storm Daragh – 6th – 8th December 2024



ENPA Owned Buildings and Land



Including access to homes & businesses

Coast Path



Inland Rights of Way



Bridleway near Dunster

Watery Lane, Winsford





Field Service team working to clear rights of way



EXMOOR PROMOTED WALKS PROJECT



Our collection of promoted walks branded as Exmoor Strolls, Exmoor Explorers and Exmoor Classics are available on our website and as tough, water-resistant guides from our National Park Centres or online shop.

The promoted walks are very popular and have been enhanced over the past 3 years as a result of Accessibility Funding from DEFRA. This has allowed us to produce short videos for the for the Explorers walks (in addition to the Strolls) which can help people decide if the route is suitable for them or their group. Additionally, the Strolls and Explorers have been graded where possible using the Miles Without Stiles criteria which help people understand how accessible a route will be using this national standard.



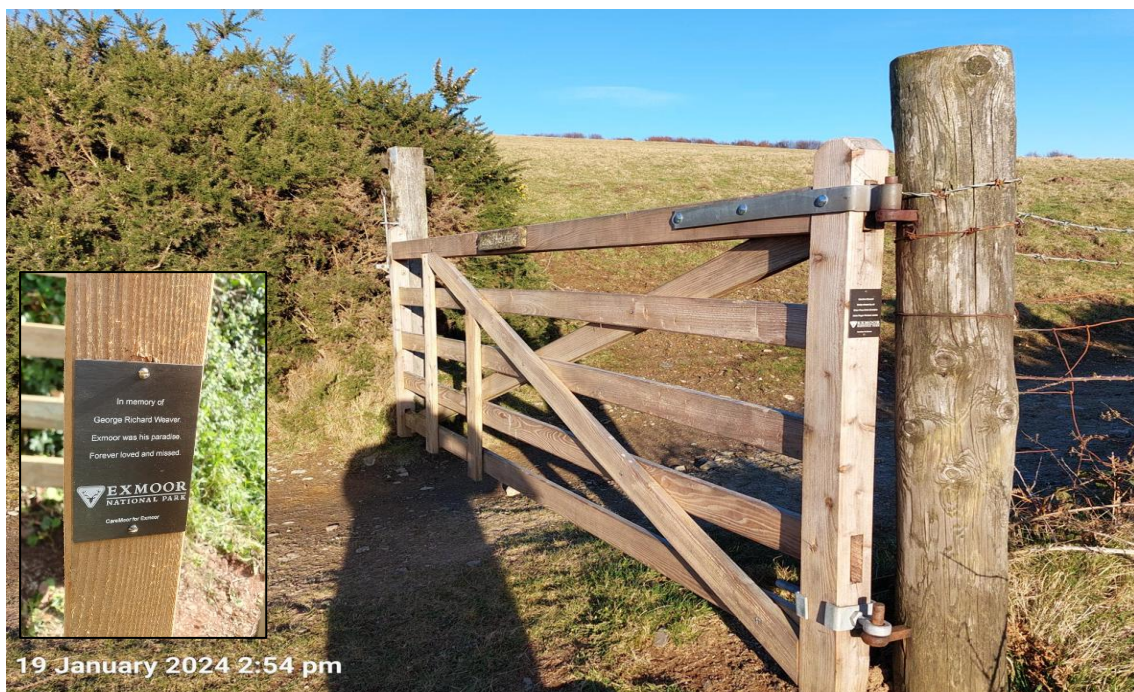
[Miles without Stiles Exmoor](#)

DONATE A GATE OR A SIGN

In 2019 we developed a trial approach to allow the public to make a donations towards replacement gates on PROW. The purpose of this programme was to bring in funds towards gates that we had identified as needing to be replaced, thereby offsetting costs for us and achieving some good engagement with our National Park users. People can make a set donation for each gate of their choice and in exchange we place a discrete plaque on the gate with a few words of their choosing. The website, interactive mapping and systems behind the scenes to make this all work smoothly were set up working with colleagues across the organisation. Our plan was always to review and potentially improve the scheme a year or so after its development, but COVID and other pressures meant that we did not come back to it in earnest for some years. However, in 2024 we undertook a review of the scheme and decided to expand its remit to include finger posts, as well as gates along with a review of fees. Some of the systems and public interface were further refined and the scheme continues to bring in welcome funds as shown in the table below:

Table 11. Showing income from the Dontate a Gate/ Sign Schemes since inception

2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
£3000	£1750	£1750	£1500	£545	£2365



EXMOOR ACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN

During 2024 and 2025 Exmoor National Park Authority explored how to improve 'Active Travel' options, like walking, cycling and horse riding, in and around Exmoor. With local input and special government funding provided by Active Travel England, we developed the Exmoor Active Travel Plan.

Active Travel means using your own body and energy to get around. It can offer the health benefits of more exercise along with reduced traffic and pollution.

An open public consultation was run alongside engagement with key stakeholders and some harder to reach groups. Specialist consultants were engaged to look at evidence and technical guidance and develop the plan. Two Active-Travel-Off-Road (ATOR) studies were also conducted around Parracombe and to the west of Minehead to look at opportunities to enhance the PROW network for cycling and horse riding; more detailed within-settlement studies were carried out for Lynton and Lynmouth.

The Exmoor Active Travel Plan was adopted by the Authority and will now be used as a framework to steer future work, funding bids and planning decisions. The full document can be found on the ENPA website and its vision is aligned with that of other strategic documents including the ENPA Management Plan and Local Plan.



FINANCE

During the financial year of 2024-25 Exmoor National Park Authority invested an estimated **£416,222** into our Rights of Way and access network and related activities. This expenditure was supported by contributions of £60,305 from Somerset County Council and a further contribution of £51,766 from their capital works program. Devon County Council provided £14,500 and a further contribution of £20,000 from their capital works program. Natural England provided £16,335 for our maintenance of the South West Coast Path. Our expenditure is also supported via substantial income from chargeable activities such as public path orders, support for Natural England's implementation of the new England Coast Path, fundraising through our CareMoor donation giving scheme, grant funding from South West Coast Path Association and FIPL Fund for projects such as Great Bradley Bridge and Simonsbath Leat Path.

A further **£187,275** was spent on contracted works and fees, mostly funded by grants and specific project donations.

Other expenditure included within these totals are for staff, equipment, materials and other support for Rangers, Rights of Way legal work and our Field Services Team.



LOOKING FORWARD

Over the coming years, in addition to our core service provision we will:

- continue to adapt to new funding arrangements and make more use of project funding, grants and other external funding to deliver our access work, developing systems and structures to work effectively with these funding mechanisms.
- continue to deliver public access enhancements as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Pioneers Scheme.
- continue to develop plans for potential access improvements as part of our active Landscape Recovery Schemes.
- further develop our Exmoor Active Travel plan through design and planning for potential schemes and through more research and investigation of potential Active Travel opportunities.
- engage with the Government plans for enhanced public access to nature proposals put forward by Environmental Improvement Plan, December 2025 and in the upcoming Access to Nature Green Paper.
- develop a proposal to expand wild camping opportunities on ENPA land
- implement the new regulations that relate to Public Path Orders within the Deregulation Act and review our charges for this work if the regulations come into force (the Government regulations for this have been delayed several times and there is currently no published timescale).



Picture courtesy of Shaun Davey