

A photograph of two hikers with large backpacks walking across a stone bridge. The bridge has a large stone archway through which a river flows. The scene is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The text '2. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES' is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

2. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Walkers crossing Barle Bridge, Dulverton
Steve Guscott

2.1 The vision for Exmoor National Park and its communities is based on the vision set out in the Exmoor National Park Partnership (Management) Plan 2012-2017 and the National Parks' and the Broads Circular 2010. The vision sets out the outcomes that are sought for Exmoor by 2031.

2.2 The National Parks' Circular states that the National Park Authorities' primary responsibility is to deliver their statutory purposes and in doing so, they should ensure they are exemplars in achieving sustainable development, helping rural communities in particular to thrive. The Circular sets out a joint vision to 2030 including that:

"By 2030 English National Parks and the Broads will be places where:

- *There are thriving, living, working landscapes notable for their natural beauty and cultural heritage. They inspire visitors and local communities to live within environmental limits and to tackle climate change. The wide range of services they provide (from clean water to sustainable food) are in good condition and valued by society.*
- *Sustainable development can be seen in*

action. The communities of the Parks take an active part in decisions about their future. They are known for having been pivotal in the transformation to a low carbon society and sustainable living. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, low carbon transport and travel and healthy, prosperous communities have long been the norm.

- *Wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, restored and expanded and linked effectively to other ecological networks. Woodland cover has increased and all woodlands are sustainably managed, with the right trees in the right places. Landscapes and habitats are managed to create resilience and enable adaptation.*
- *Everyone can discover the rich variety of England's natural and historic environment, and have the chance to value them as places for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection, and a source of national pride and identity. They will be recognised as fundamental to our prosperity and well-being".²⁵*



²⁵ DEFRA (2010) English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular

Vision For Exmoor National Park To 2031

'Keeping Exmoor special' so that:

1. Exmoor's distinct and diverse landscapes and seascapes are maintained and enhanced, with an increased awareness of their importance.

In 2031, Exmoor's outstanding natural beauty with its mosaic of distinct and diverse landscapes and its dramatic coast and seascape, has been safeguarded and enhanced. Exmoor is still recognised as providing a sense of remoteness, wildness and tranquillity with landscapes predominantly free from, and with no increase in, intrusive structures and large scale development. It is renowned for its views of the night sky and lack of light pollution. Exmoor National Park Authority and neighbouring authorities have worked together to ensure that the quality of the environment extends beyond the National Park boundary.

2. There is an increased extent of wildlife habitats and linkages between them, more habitats are in good condition and populations of valued native plants and animals are thriving.

Exmoor's geological sites have been conserved and its habitats are maintained, restored, extended, created and linked effectively to other ecological networks including moorland, mire, coastal heath and native woodlands. These habitats have been expanded and connected to form networks of multi-functional green infrastructure. This has taken place at a landscape scale achieved through partnership working within and across the National Park boundary. Together with farmed landscapes, habitats have thriving populations of native plants and animals. Consequently, wildlife populations are more resilient and therefore, the number of species declining or lost from Exmoor as a result of climate change has been minimised.

3. There is an enhanced knowledge of the historic environment of Exmoor; increased awareness of the value of its cultural heritage, and the most important historical sites, settlements, buildings and features are conserved and their historical character retained.

The historic environment, cultural and community heritage of the people of Exmoor has been sustained. Archaeological sites, historic settlements,

buildings, farmsteads and features are conserved and where appropriate enhanced. Appropriate and necessary alterations to buildings, which preserve their historic interest and integrity, have helped to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and to enable adaptation to climate change. New development has been carefully managed to ensure that the diversity and traditional and historic character of Exmoor's settlements and buildings are conserved and enhanced for future generations. Communities and partners, including Exmoor National Park Authority, have worked together to produce and deliver a vision and holistic plan for the enhancement of individual settlements. Together, these have been recognised for their contribution to Exmoor's distinctive cultural heritage and in strengthening its communities. The result has been high quality, sometimes contemporary, sustainable, design. This has successfully blended the new with the old and minimised its contribution to climate change by using natural and, where possible, local materials, being energy efficient, using sustainable construction techniques and appropriate renewable technologies. There are sources and supply chains for local building materials to serve the needs of Exmoor's communities including from small scale stone quarries and well managed woodlands. These local sources of building materials both conserve and enhance the environment and support the local economy.

4. Exmoor's natural resources are used sustainably and the full benefits of its ecosystems are understood and harnessed. Pollution is minimised, air and water are high quality, and soils are conserved and in good condition.

Exmoor is valued for the range of ecosystem services its natural environment provides, from clean water, and sustainable food to increased woodland cover and mire, which act as 'carbon sinks' and help to address climate change. The level and nature of development and lifestyles have ensured that these natural environment services are sustainable in the longer term. Exmoor's air and water are clean and of high quality. Pollution is avoided or reduced to below harmful levels. As climate change results in hotter, drier summers and wetter, stormier winters, measures are in place to conserve water, reduce runoff and avoid and reduce flooding and soil erosion in a way compatible with National Park purposes.

5. We are closer to achieving a carbon-neutral National Park to help mitigate climate change, and have introduced measures to adapt to changes in climate that are already happening.

The impacts of climate change on Exmoor's natural environment, its communities, businesses and the effect on its resources are better understood through monitoring and research. They are being planned for and actively addressed through mitigation and adaptation measures to help make Exmoor more resilient to changes without compromising the special qualities of the National Park. The coastal communities of Porlock Weir and Lynmouth, affected by sea level rise, are working with Exmoor National Park Authority and other partners to plan for and adapt to changes. Since Exmoor is an exemplar for sustainable development, it has inspired local communities and visitors to live within environmental limits and to play their part in working towards a carbon-neutral National Park and more sustainable lifestyles, increasing energy efficiency to help tackle and adapt to climate change. Appropriate renewable energy technologies, are in place and these are located, designed and at a scale to conserve Exmoor National Park's landscape and wildlife with areas, including its skylines and open expanses, remaining free of them. Exmoor's communities have found ways of reducing and reusing waste, and have access to recycling facilities. Together with sustainable agriculture, low carbon transport and travel, sustainable living is becoming the norm.

6. There is increased public awareness and enjoyment of the National Park, a warm welcome and high quality experience for everyone seeking inspiration, tranquillity and active outdoor recreation, leading to greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life and a wider appreciation of the contribution that National Parks make to quality of life.

There is a warm welcome and high quality Exmoor experience for everyone who visits the National Park to discover its natural and historic environment, seek inspiration, enjoyment, tranquillity, wildness and to take part in active outdoor recreation and activities. These are linked to a viable and sustainable local economy (including the local area beyond the National Park) with a range of accommodation. This

includes accommodation which enables young people and families to stay, based on small scale, accessible educational, tourism and recreation facilities, which benefit from and are in sympathy with Exmoor's environment and ways of life and which respond to the needs of visitors and local communities. As travel has become more expensive, people are choosing to extend their visits, some use alternative forms of transport and rely less on the private car.

7. Exmoor's communities retain a continuity of connection with the land; and communities are taking the lead in shaping future development to meet their needs and aspirations including access to services, housing, communications and infrastructure.

All communities on Exmoor are viable, healthy, prosperous and able to retain young and working age people. They take an active part in decisions and development in the National Park and are at the heart of decisions about their future. They work in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority and others to plan and achieve their aspirations while conserving Exmoor's environment. Everyone, including those without a private car, can access essential services and facilities within and outside the National Park in Devon and Somerset. This has been achieved through the retention of and, where opportunities have allowed, the improvement and increased flexibility of community services, facilities, recreational and green space, and this has helped meet the needs of Exmoor's communities and visitors, and minimised the need to travel.

The development that has taken place in the National Park has addressed the socio-economic needs of the local community rather than external demand. As the priority has been to address local affordable need, new housing is small scale and sympathetically designed to provide for local and affordable housing needs for those with a strong connection through living or working in the National Park. These have been achieved through the best use of land, existing homes and buildings. New housing and employment is located in and adjoining Exmoor's settlements and is compatible with the National Park's landscape. It may be rented or owner occupied and many are self-build projects. Existing homes have been adapted, subdivided or new

development designed to be flexible to the changing needs of a household. Some homes may be live/work units or are designed to be part of a low impact, land-based, sustainable lifestyle, linking with local resources, economy and services. As a result, local families, young and older people and those with a disability have been able to stay on Exmoor, and thereby contribute to vibrant, mixed working communities with strong support networks and a buoyant local economy. This together with the retention of services and facilities, community areas - such as sports and recreation areas - and local employment, has benefited Exmoor's communities and visitors, as its settlements seek to become increasingly self-contained.

Public and community transport services have been retained and tailored to the needs of communities and visitors, connecting with provision outside the National Park, while opportunities for walking, cycling and horse-riding, have been increased by linking rights of way and access to open areas and green space including across the National Park boundary. The traditional and distinctive character of Exmoor's environment has been conserved and, together with the safety of all users, has been enhanced through innovative approaches to slow traffic in settlements and encourage more walking, cycling and horse-riding through appropriate highway design and infrastructure, minimising signs and street lighting. Essential utilities and infrastructure have been well designed to blend in with the landscape.

8. There is a strong, diverse and resilient economy where farming, forestry, land management and rural enterprises are playing a lead role in conserving and enhancing Exmoor's special qualities, producing high quality food and other produce, and conserving local breeds. There is a sustainable tourism and recreation economy in harmony with local communities and the environment.

Sustainable and viable low carbon farming, forestry, land management and rural enterprises based on Exmoor National Park's special qualities are playing a lead role in stewardship of the land, and the conservation and enhancement of Exmoor's landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage. In addition, there is a recognised Exmoor brand for high quality food, and an increase in the use of biomass, such as



wood fuel from Exmoor's woodlands serving a local market. Traditional breeds are thriving on Exmoor, and are adding value to the local economy as well as supporting traditional land management. Together, farming, forestry and land management help underpin a strong, diverse and sustainable local economy that benefits from and contributes to the care and appreciation of Exmoor National Park. Small businesses and homeworking increasingly make an important contribution to Exmoor's employment and local economy, with both new and existing businesses able to take advantage of high quality broadband for all and improved telecommunications. These are designed to ensure that Exmoor's landscape is conserved by mimicking natural features or using existing structures.

Objectives

2.3 The vision has been translated into objectives, which are shared with the Partnership Plan. The policies within the Plan, when implemented, will contribute towards meeting the vision and objectives. The objectives set out below do not appear in any order of priority. They relate to sections throughout the Plan, where appropriate.

1. To conserve and enhance Exmoor's landscapes as living, working landscapes that remain predominately free from intrusive developments, maintain a sense of tranquillity and protect Exmoor's dark skies.
2. To ensure that Exmoor's moorlands remain open, remote and relatively wild in character; that views are preserved, and strategically important areas of former moor and heath are managed in a way that restores their wilder landscape character.
3. To protect and enhance Exmoor's wildlife and habitats and seek to improve the diversity, extent, condition and connectivity of Exmoor's important and valued habitats.
4. To maintain or increase the populations of native wildlife species on Exmoor that are valued for their conservation status and local distinctiveness, and control and eradicate non-native species.
5. To ensure that the built tradition, character, distinctiveness and historic character of Exmoor's settlements, buildings, farmsteads, landscapes, archaeological sites and monuments is conserved and enhanced and that the cultural heritage of Exmoor is protected through the careful management of development.
6. To encourage new development to use local materials, sustainable building design and methods, in ways that contribute to the distinctive character and cultural heritage of Exmoor.
7. To conserve and enhance Exmoor's natural resources and to improve air and water quality, conserve water resources, ensure soils are in good condition, maximise carbon storage, and minimise pollution.
8. To provide opportunities for people from all backgrounds and of all abilities, including young people and new audiences, to learn about and enjoy Exmoor National Park, leading to a greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life.





9. To maintain and improve the recreational opportunities in the National Park particularly the rights of way network, access to open country, other quiet and active recreation based on Exmoor's special qualities; and ensure that opportunities for recreation can be enjoyed by people from all backgrounds and of all abilities.
10. To support, record and understand aspects of culture and traditions that are special to Exmoor.
11. To enable Exmoor's communities and partnerships to plan development in their neighbourhoods to help meet their needs and aspirations while conserving the special qualities of the National Park.
12. To address local and affordable housing needs, making the best use of existing developed land and buildings; ensuring a mix of housing and a housing stock which helps sustain local communities.
13. To improve the sustainability, resilience and self-sufficiency of the National Park's settlements by supporting the retention, provision of, and access to community services and facilities.
14. To achieve a strong, diverse, resilient and self-sufficient economy and encourage economic and employment opportunities, which do not conflict with National Park purposes.
15. To achieve profitable farming, forestry and land management in ways that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park, whilst producing food and other produce, and conserving distinctive local breeds.
16. To support the tourism industry in providing a warm welcome and a range of sustainable accommodation, services and facilities, leading to a high quality Exmoor experience for visitors and local communities alike.
17. To achieve high quality telecommunications and essential utilities and infrastructure in ways commensurate with the conservation of the National Park's natural beauty, landscape wildlife, cultural heritage and special qualities.
18. To support sustainable transport for residents and visitors by improving public and community transport services and opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding including linkages across the National Park boundary.
19. To minimise the net emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and support measures which contribute to carbon neutrality in ways that both conserve and enhance the National Park.
20. To adapt to the anticipated effects of climate change on Exmoor's communities, businesses, landscape, wildlife and coast including flood risk, sea level rise, and unexpected weather events and so on.
21. To minimise waste and emissions and support opportunities for reuse and recycling in ways compatible with Exmoor's National Park designation.

Strategic Priorities

2.4 The Local Plan responds to the key issues identified through consultation, monitoring, and analysis of evidence base documents. The following strategic priorities are of equal importance and have been identified as a focus for development management within the National Park:

1. To ensure sustainable development which enables communities and businesses to thrive, whilst conserving and enhancing the National Park's special qualities by:

- i. Protecting Exmoor's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and avoiding adverse impacts of development on these special qualities.
- ii. Making the best use of existing land and buildings and protecting the open countryside.
- iii. Ensuring new development is located primarily in settlements and reflects their scale, form and character.
- iv. Encouraging high quality design and sustainable construction, to enhance the National Park's landscapes and settlements.

2. To support and empower communities to help meet identified local needs, prioritising the delivery of affordable housing, safeguarding community services and facilities, improving accessibility where possible, and responding to climate change by:

- i. Prioritising local needs affordable housing, and housing for the specific needs of Exmoor's communities (rural workers, succession farm, extended family dwellings, and accessible and adaptable housing for older and more vulnerable people).
- ii. Enabling flexibility to deliver affordable housing through Principal Residence housing.
- iii. Encouraging a balanced housing stock with a mix of sizes, types and tenure.
- iv. Retaining existing local services and facilities and supporting provision of new ones.
- v. Helping local communities adapt to climate change including flood risk and coastal change.

- vi. Contributing towards climate change mitigation through supporting natural resource conservation, sustainable travel (within the constraints of a remote, rural area) and small-scale renewable energy.
- vii. Improving accessibility in the National Park through development that is well connected to existing services and facilities.

3. To enable a diverse and resilient local economy through locally generated growth and sustainable development which:

- i. Safeguards existing employment land and buildings.
- ii. Provides flexibility for business development including home based businesses, and supports appropriate agricultural and forestry development.
- iii. Supports provision of improved communications networks including mobile and broadband coverage.

4. To encourage understanding and enjoyment of the National Park through recreation and tourism development which are compatible with the quiet enjoyment of Exmoor's special qualities by:

- i. Providing for a range of holiday accommodation.
- ii. Ensuring that development in relation to outdoor recreation activities is compatible with the quiet enjoyment of Exmoor's special qualities.
- iii. Ensuring the access network and routes of former railways are safeguarded.