



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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28th November 2025

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 the Committee Room at Exmoor House, Dulverton TA22 9HL on 9th December 2025 at 10am.**

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

MEETING AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Reappointment of Exmoor LAF Members**
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 25th June 2025 [Item A].
 - (2) To consider any Matters Arising from those Minutes which are not elsewhere on the agenda.
 - (3) Request for items to be raised under AOB
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. **Access to Rivers (5 mins)**

To consider issues raised in an email from a member of the public.
7. **Report (Sept 2025) All Party Parliamentary Group for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature (10mins)**

To consider this report previously circulated and its potential implications for access on Exmoor.
[APPG Outdoors website](#)
8. **ENPA Management Plan (formerly known as the Partnership Plan) (10 mins)**

To receive an update on the Management Plan Launch on 16th October from those members who attended.
[Exmoor National Park Management Plan launched in lead up to Exmoor Day | Exmoor](#)
9. **Active Travel on Exmoor (10 mins)**

To report back on the village audits and receive a verbal update on plans Phase II of the ATE funding [SA]
10. **Other Externally Funded Access Projects on Exmoor (5 mins)**

To receive updates on the following projects [Item B] [SA]:

 - a) DEFRA Accessibility Funding – update on Year 4
 - b) Pioneers Royal Forest HLF Funded Access Work (includes Driver Farm access improvements)

c) Reving Exmoor's Heartlands Landscape Recovery Access Plan

11. Wild Camping on Exmoor (20 mins)

- a) To watch a short presentation from Camp Wild – a wild camping platform
- b) To consider the question of wild camping on Exmoor – in particular on ENPA owned land.
[Item C]
- c) To consider any advice the ELAF wish to provide to ENPA on this issue

12. Exmoor Visitor Survey 2025 Results (10 mins)

To consider the findings of the recent visitor survey and discuss.

[Visitor Survey 2024/25 Report](#) (PDF)

[Summary Infographic](#) (PDF)

[Data tables](#) (PDF)

13. Livestock and Public Access (10 mins)

To receive a verbal update on the recent incident and ENPA procedures for livestock related issues.
[SA]

14. Dogs Attacks and Livestock (5 mins)

To receive a verbal update on the bill currently going through parliament [AK]
[Dogs \(Protection of Livestock\) \(Amendment\) Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

15. Definitive Map Review and Modification Order Backlog on Exmoor (5 mins)

To discuss the current position and approach to the definitive map review by Somerset and Devon County Councils [GL]

16. Public Path Orders / Legal Matters (to note only)

To note updates on orders made since the last meeting:

- i. Newcombe Farm – order made and confirmed, practical work started 26/11/25
- ii. Ford Farm – order made and confirmed, practical work pending

17. Date of next meeting and agenda items:

To agree the date, method (and venue if needed) of the next Forum meeting.

18. 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 25th June 2025** at 10:00 at Exmoor House, Dulverton.

PRESENT

George Curry (Chair)
Graham Lavender (Vice)
Alison Kent
Nick Thwaites
Rupert Martin

Jon Richardson
Mark Lutyens
Tony Lowe
Laura Carew (joined remotely)

No members of the public were present.

Exmoor National Park Staff in Attendance:

Dan Barnett
Sue Applegate
Kay Willmott

James Maben (Consultant for Exmoor Heartland Access Study)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Mike Dicks
Chris Binnie
Simon Gibson
Gill Whitehead
Andrew Bray

2. WELCOMES, REAPPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

George Curry and Graham Lavender have agreed to be reappointed to the LAF for other three-year term.

Peter May has stepped down from the LAF after serving since January 2019.

Action: Sue Applegate to write and thank him for his work on the LAF

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST : None

4. MINUTES: (1) APPROVAL

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18th December 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the chair.

MINUTES: (2) MATTERS ARISING

Action: SA to chase OSS response on Wootton Courtenay ridge consultation from RB and forward to members

MINUTES: (3) REQUEST FOR ITEMS TO BE RAISED UNDER AOB

None

5. Meet the Community / Public Question Time

No members of the public were present.

6. ENPA Partnership Plan

Members discussed the partnership plan working group meeting on 29th January regarding access [Item B].

All comments from the meeting were fed back to Clare Reid and taken into consideration for an August publication of the Partnership Plan.

7. Meeting with Dartmoor LAF

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Exmoor and Dartmoor LAF arranged an informal meeting to discuss how the two Forums run within the National Parks. Both groups had similar concerns, about not being consulted at the early stage of projects, an issue which has been brought up at a previous meeting and measures are now in place to improve this. The members feel they should be consulted at an early stage of potential changes which might impact access throughout ENPA. An example of this was recent land sales, and whether there were any permissive paths which could be lost due to the sale.

8. Permitted Path Closures and Ash Die Back

a) Feedback on site visit

Meeting with NT report [Item C] – GL had nothing to add to what was in the paper, except that the meeting only addressed Horner Wood not Watersmeet. DB has recently walked the Ladycombe Leat path, Lynmouth, southern side of the river, which the NT has closed and is under review. It appears it would be expensive to reopen, and a difficult job due to access. The NT team are prioritising keeping sustainable paths clear and well maintained, they have explained it's about balance. CB had raised the issue that in relation to the Eastwater path, there was inconsistency between the NT advice that it was 'open access' and the signs on the closed path saying, 'Strictly No Entrance' and this was discussed. LAF agreed to write to NT suggesting a review of their signage wording – to provide more clarity. DB commented that NT generally take a sensible approach to risk, and their approach is consistent with national good practice. NE have been advising NT on disturbance to the sensitive sites involved.

Action SA to draft letter to NT thanking for meeting and all information, referring to wording on the site signage

9. Active Travel on Exmoor

DB provided a short presentation on the Active Travel Plan work which consultants WSG have provided for Exmoor and took members through the 11 activity themes. It has now been to Committee and members were largely happy and approved the plan, some amendments were suggested which have been added and the plan is now ready for publication. DB will circulate the plan to the LAF members once it has been issued.

The Active Travel Off Road (ATOR) studies are also complete.

We are awaiting WSP audits of specific areas and some other appendices.

The Members were interested whether there was anything specific highlighted by the report to improve active travel. DB explained that this is largely a strategic document but that details were in the appendices for the audited areas and in the ATOR studies – soon to be shared with LAF. The plan will be a good tool and is a necessary prerequisite for applying for funding. It was suggested that the LAF could form a working group to drive implementation of the plan. This can be considered further once full plan is circulated. It was suggested that ENPA could write to the parish councils to highlight the importance of this document and encourage them to develop and take projects forward. DB agreed and explained that the document was for anyone on Exmoor to use, not just ENPA. DB also explained that there were some easy wins within the report which ENPA hope to take forward, even if extra funding for this work is not forthcoming.

Action: *GL, AK, TL, GC all interested in forming a working group to drive progress with the AT forward – will consider best approach and who will be on the group once the report is published.*

Action: *SA to circulate both the full Active Travel report and the Active Travel Off Road reports for Parracombe and Minehead.*

10. Reviving Exmoor's Heartlands Landscape Recovery (Exmoor Heartlands) Access Project

James Maben provided a presentation looking at his brief to produce a study on improving access within the Landscape Recovery Project. He explained that the access plan is a small proportion of the Landscape Recovery (LR) project.

Areas of investigation include:

- Circular routes
- New access routes linked
- Linking into other project areas, - but funding only within the area.
- Connect with travel infrastructure. – ND bus links
- Environment & heritage – steer people away from sensitive areas and to specific areas.
- Maintenance and planning – LR not for PROW maintenance but could help with upgrading/ non-statutory routes. Being realistic about scope of projects.
- Steering Group/ LO think it already has good number of routes, perhaps formalising some agreements for permitted paths would be a positive.

JM has met with the landowners signed up to the Landscape Recovery Scheme about potential access improvements and getting their suggestions for improving access. A number of landowners have shown interest in improvements although many think the access network is already very good in the area. The plan will be concentrating on improvement of existing access routes within LR, less likely to look at increasing the network.

LR is still in the initial two-year development phase, however it is a 20 year agreement, the access plan will make recommendations for the 20 year plan and provides a good opportunity to work with landowners and come up with long-term solutions.

Discussion with group over map and look at routes during tea break.

Action: SA to share a link to the map with everyone and request comments to pass onto JM.

Break

11. Other Externally Funded Projects on Exmoor

DEFRA access for All

DB shared progress on the DEFRA Access for All Funding Year 3, showing costs and examples of some of the work which has been carried out during 2024/25.

ENPA have been offered more funding this year 25/26 of £80,000. Suggested projects a) upgrading a bedroom at Pinkery for Access and path to Pinkery Pond. GL raised concerns of impacts on sensitive flora around the suggested area of the works around Pinkery Pond.

b) Wimbleball some improvements for West Wood and Causeway

c) Popery Lane, Wheddon Cross

d) Toilet facilities – accessibility across the park, what can be done to improve them.

Pioneers Royal Forest HLF

HLF funded project – a small part of which are access improvements. SA is working on a number of access projects that have been highlighted during recent audit of the area. SA liaising with project team to improve access around Simonsbath and Exmoor parish on ENPA owned land. SA shared practical plan to phased works for this.

GL be aware of moonwort fern population near footpath at Prayway head East of the road.

12. Public Path Orders / Legal Matters

- i) Newcombe Farm WL13/31 confirmed and certified but practical works pending
- ii) Ford Farm WL6/17 Order going out on Friday

13. Hinds Pitt Footbridge

This footbridge on the Tarr Steps Circular Route was closed in early June following a bridge engineer's inspection. The bridge had been monitored frequently by the ranger team (via photographic monitoring) since the last structural survey in 2019 but the side trusses have now deteriorated to the extent that it needed to be closed.

ITEM A

TL – queried why more wasn't done to prioritise replacement of the bridge after the 2019 inspection. DB - We followed the advice of the last inspection e.g. limiting numbers on the bridge and preventing horse access but various other work priorities have stopped us developing a project to replace the bridge sooner and we had hoped we would have more time. SA explained that the access situation there is complicated and we are in delicate discussion with landowners but moving forward as fast as we can. SA reported that discussions are going well so far and hoping to sort out the legal situation which should secure access in the future.

DB – we are aiming for a replacement to be completed in Summer 2027. There will need to be an effort to pull together the funds for the cost of the new bridge including a public appeal.

Action DB – Contact Highways about Tree catcher at Tarr Steps and make them aware of the of the Hinds Pit bridge closure

Members asked if there were any other large bridges which have potential to fail – DB explained that Wheal Eliza bridge has just been inspected and we are waiting for report. No Public Right of Way over it.

Lower Hawkcombe bridge can be repaired and kept open for some time and hopefully will become redundant once rewetting project moves forward.

14. Access & Recreation Highlights December 2024 – June 2025

The forum received a presentation of the work carried out by the team in the last 6 months. This included work to clear and repair paths after Storm Daragh which has caused a huge backlog of work for FST, recruitment of an apprentice Ranger (funded through Pioneers) and 2 new temporary FST staff to help support recovery from backlog. BVPI figure has fallen to 89%, replacement of Pickedstones Bridge (collaboration with landowner)

15. Date of Next Meeting and Agenda Items

ACTION: – SA to circulate a doodlepoll with dates for meeting in November 2025

16. Any Other Business of Urgency

The Chair closed the meeting at 12.45

Externally Funded Access Projects on Exmoor

In addition to the Active Travel England Funding that has been received by Exmoor (agenda item 9), there are 3 other externally funded projects which either fully support access projects or where there is an access element within the project.

a) DEFRA Accessibility Funding Year 4

The offer for 2025/26 was made in August 2025 and is for £61,822. The year 4 funding must be spent by the end of March 2026. The funding has been allocated to numerous projects including:

Pinkery Highly Accessible Room	Pinkery – to develop at least one room that is very highly accessible
Pinkery Pond Path	Surface improvements to allow tramper access
Wimbleball - West Wood to Causeway surface improvement	Path surface improvement suitable for trampers and less able
Public Toilet Accessibility Survey	A full audit of all public toilets within the National Park boundary.

The Pinkery Pond Path improvements were largely completed in September/October 2025 and have made a huge difference to the accessibility of the route. The works had to be handled extremely carefully due to the sensitivity of the site.

Plan & photos

b) Pioneers Royal Forest HLF

The Pioneers Royal Forest Project has a wide remit around nature recovery, heritage, landscape and local skills but also has an access element to it.

The first step (following the award of funding) was to carry out an internal consultation on the proposals to ensure that ecological, landscape and historic environment concerns are properly addressed. This took place in September/October and the results are still being worked through. Some changes to the proposals may occur as a result of the consultation.

A programme of practical access improvements will then be confirmed to be implemented between 2026-28. This includes permitted routes at Driver Farm and link routes across to Pinkery.

c) Exmoor Heartlands Landscape Recovery Funding

LAF members were consulted on ideas for the Access Plan at the June meeting with a presentation from James Maben, Access Consultant and those present contributed ideas to the map. A consultation with all members followed in August 2025 where the map of suggestions was circulated.

ITEM B

Since then, James has been working on assessing the feasibility of the routes and has been involved in discussions with the 23 landowning partners involved in the scheme. We cannot provide more details at present as sensitive negotiations are taking place but I can report that there have been some very encouraging conversations.

The Access Plan has to be ready to submit with the rest of the project by the end of March 2025 so we will update members further at the next meeting.

Sue Applegate

Senior Public Rights of Way & Access Officer

Wild Camping on Exmoor

As a result of the recent challenge to wild camping on Dartmoor, the question of whether we should be doing more to enable or encourage wild camping on Exmoor has been raised, particularly in relation to ENPA owned land. Dan Barnett has led discussions with the ENPA Leadership Team and raised the issue at an ENPA Members workshop in October.

We would like to seek the views of the Exmoor LAF on this topic but would like to stress that discussions are at a very early stage.

The paper below was prepared by Dan to guide the consultations so far and will hopefully prompt discussion at the meeting:

Should Exmoor National Park Authority make some of its land available for wild camping without any need to make us aware or pay?

Following the legal case on Dartmoor National Park and growing public interest in this topic I have been asked to consider this question and put a paper together help the Authority decide how to proceed on this matter.

Wild camping is a form of camping that takes place outside of developed campgrounds, typically in remote, natural areas without designated campsites or amenities. It allows campers to connect with nature on a deeper level, enjoy a more secluded and peaceful experience, and develop skills and confidence through self-sufficiency and preparation. It is often enjoyed as part of a long-distance walking, cycling or even horse-riding activity, and makes use of very small tents or bivvy bags.

Wild Camping on Dartmoor National Park is provided for via the Dartmoor Commons Act and the legal situation there is very different to anywhere else in England or Wales. Dartmoor National Park Authority are somewhat expert in the matter and have coined the term 'Backpack Camping' to differentiate true Wild Camping from the activity of camping near to a car with large amounts of equipment and associated unwelcome activity.

The current situation on Exmoor National Park

Section 2.7 of our 2014 Estates Policy states the following:

2.7 Camping – Wild camping or bivying as part of a long distance walk for example can be desirable for visitors and the Authority will be more tolerant of this type of camping than multiday stays supported by a vehicle. Also, organised groups such as scout groups will be treated more sympathetically. Camping will only normally be allowed by agreement but there may be some locations where 'wild camping' spots could be agreed without a need to confirm permission with us.

The current policy wording is rather ambiguous and would benefit from better definition.

There are many occasions where groups get in touch with us and we allow camping on our own land. We are also aware that true wild camping (or backpack camping) occurs on our land and is particularly popular in certain places. This is not something that raises concerns or Rangers/Estate Team take any action about. However, if we become aware of tents put up in more visible locations, close to roads or main paths, Rangers or other relevant staff will go and visit and ask people to leave.

We are also aware that people use some of our car parks for overnight stays in campervans. We have signs in place at all our car parks explaining that this is not permitted. However, in practice it is very difficult to stop someone in a campervan staying for one or two nights. We are sometimes asked if we can introduce a scheme to formally allow campervan stays in some of our car parks. This is an interesting topic but quite different to the discussion here about wild camping.

In previous years, we have had some long-term encampments at some of our car parks, with campervans and caravans. Again, this is a very different issue to the discussion here about wild camping or 'backpack camping' and we have an existing policy for dealing with this matter.

The National Trust have a similar approach to ENPA in most locations but their approach in the Lake District is more relevant – see link to information [here](#). Forestry England have no published view on wild camping but do not actively allow it. To my best knowledge no other National Park Authorities formally allow wild camping without permission but the Lake District NPA public information page is interesting, see link [here](#). No other significant private landowners on Exmoor formally allow wild camping without permission but in practice where wild camping is done using discrete and remote locations and using 'leave no trace' principles, it would be difficult to know it is happening.

Generally, in England and Wales, where a small number of people camp overnight without the permission of the landowner, and no law is being broken e.g. criminal damage, they may be committing trespass, but this is a civil offence and so any action to remove the persons or stop them doing it would need to be taken by the landowner, rather than being a duty for the police.

Current information on our ENPA website on wild camping may be found following the links below:

[Wild Camping and camper vans | Exmoor](#)

[Expeditions and Groups | Exmoor](#)

What are the potential benefits of a more open policy towards wild camping and how does this fit with NPA and Government objectives?

Wild camping is normally free and therefore offers opportunities for a wide demographic of people, though the necessary equipment requires some significant investment. Typically, it is popular with younger and more active people though it is quite a niche activity. Making wild camping more easily available could encourage more young people and those on lower incomes to enjoy the National Park. Wild camping can provide a deeper understanding of the National Park and therefore accommodating it could help to fulfil our second purpose and provide additional public benefits from publicly owned land.

How could this offer be promoted and managed?

Current software allows us to provide detailed interactive maps via our website where specific zones or parcels of land can be shown. The current information provided by Dartmoor National Park provides an idea of the kind of information we could make available. [Camping Map | Dartmoor](#). This information can also be provided in downloadable forms for people to use on personal devices in the field.

Potential impacts on ENPA land and for the Authority

There are some potential impacts from irresponsible wild campers including litter, fires, toileting, camping in the wrong place or on neighbouring land etc. By promoting free and open wild camping on our land we might accidentally encourage more irresponsible wild camping. This might have negative impacts for the environment, for our tenants and neighbouring land managers, and for others enjoying those spaces. Careful consultation will be required, especially with our tenants, and any new approach would need to be monitored. We should reserve the right to change or remove it if significant problems occurred.

There would be an early impact on staff resources to put this approach in place and then a lesser but ongoing resource, mostly for our Estate and Ranger staff, to respond to any issues and complaints and maintain information resources in good order.

We would need to consider our view on commercially run wild camping stays.

We would also need to consider if we want a view on maximum group size.

There may be an increased need for staff to remove unpleasant litter and human faeces as a result of this offer and this needs to be considered.

Potential impacts for private campsites

It is possible that some people who might have paid to use a private campsite might use our wild camping offer instead and therefore we could cause negative impacts for private campsite providers. However, I think these are quite different activities and this approach may mainly legitimise what is already happening so I wouldn't expect the impact to be significant.

Nevertheless, we would be wise to consult directly with our main public campsite providers and any new approach would need to be monitored. We will undoubtedly get criticism from some campsite providers, and we should listen but also be robust and separate facts from perceptions.

Potential impacts for neighbouring land and landowners

We know that people often misunderstand the detail of schemes such as Access Land for example, so it's likely that some people may simplistically interpret our information to mean they can wild camp anywhere in the National Park. This could cause problems for private landowners who do not wish to allow it, or problems for our own estate in locations that we do not wish to make available. Any new approach would need to be monitored, and we would want to reserve the right to change or remove it if significant problems occurred. We may want to combine this new offer as part of a wider marketing campaign to promote camping more generally including high comfort 'glamping', more affordable traditional sites and wild camping.

Options for how the offer could be provided

If we did decide to go ahead with this, we would probably only want to map out areas that are a good distance away from roads as allowed for wild camping or have distance from roads as part of the use code. We might also want to consider much smaller or discrete areas or focus on long distance routes such as the Two Moors Way only, perhaps as part of a phased/ test and trial approach.

Dan Barnett, Access & Recreation Manager