

Exmoor National Park

Landscape Character Assessment

2018



Exmoor National Park

Landscape Character Assessment

2018

The 2018 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment was commissioned by Exmoor National Park Authority in June 2016. It has been prepared by Fiona Fyfe Associates, with Countryside, Alison Farmer Associates and Douglas Mitcham.

All photos by Fiona Fyfe and Exmoor National Park Authority staff unless credited otherwise.

Exmoor National Park Authority
Exmoor House, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9HL
Tel: 01398 323665
email: info@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk
www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

FRONT COVER:

©Rosina Woodthorpe

INSIDE COVER:

“Hangman Hills” by Kester Webb. Image © Estate of Kester Webb

©Exmoor National Park Authority

April 2018

Contents

	Executive Summary	6
	Part 1: Introduction	8
1.1	Introduction to the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment.....	10
1.2	Purposes of the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment	10
1.3	How to Use the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment.....	10
1.4	Status of the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment as a Supplementary Planning Document .	11
1.5	Statement of Consultation	11
1.6	Defining ‘Landscape’	11
1.7	The Process of Landscape Character Assessment	12
1.8	Existing Landscape Character Assessments which overlap or abut Exmoor National Park.....	13
1.9	Landscape Change and Condition.....	14
1.10	Valuing Exmoor’s Natural Capital.....	16
	Part 2: The Story of the Exmoor Landscape	18
2.1	Location and Boundaries of the National Park	20
2.2	National Park Purposes and Special Qualities	20
2.3	The Natural Environment	22
2.4	Climate.....	28
2.5	Historical Background.....	29
2.6	Exmoor in Art and Literature	37
2.7	Designations	39
2.8	Exmoor’s Natural Capital and Ecosystems Services	48
2.9	Forces for Change on the Exmoor Landscape	52
	Part 3: Landscape Planning Guidelines	60
3.1	Purpose and Format of the Landscape Planning Guidelines.....	62
3.2	Relevant Planning Policies	64
3.3	The Sensitivities of Exmoor’s Landscapes to Development	65
3.4	Advice for Developers.....	66
3.5	General Guidelines on the Integration of Development into the Landscape.....	67

List of Maps

Map 1	The Location and Boundary of Exmoor.....	4
Map 2	Landform of Exmoor	24
Map 3	Landscape and Nature Conservation Designations.....	42
Map 4	Cultural Heritage Designations.....	46
Map 5	Landscape Character Types and Areas.....	74

	Part 4: Landscape Character Assessment of Exmoor	72
4.1	Exmoor's Landscape Character Types and Areas	76
LCT A	High Coastal Heaths	78
	A1: Holdstone Down, Trentishoe and Heddon's Mouth	79
	A2: Valley of Rocks	80
	A3: The Foreland	81
	A4: North Hill	82
LCT B	High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves	96
	B1: Heddon Valley	104
	B2: Woody Bay	105
	B3: Lyn	106
	B4: Culbone - Horner	107
	B5: Bossington	108
	B6: Culver Cliff	109
LCT C	Low Farmed Coast and Marsh	118
	C1: Porlock	125
LCT D	Open Moorland	134
	D1: Northern	144
	D2: Southern	145
	D3: Winsford Hill	146
	D4: Haddon Hill	147
LCT E	Farmed and Settled Vale	156
	E1: Porlock - Dunster - Minehead	165
LCT F	Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons	170
	F1: Northern	179
	F2: Southern	180
	F3: Eastern	181
LCT G	Incised Wooded River Valleys	190
	G1: Bray	199
	G2: Mole	200
	G3: Barle	201
	G4: Exe	202
	G5: Haddeo	203
	G6: Avill	204
LCT H	Plantation (with Heathland) Hills	214
	H1: Croydon and Grabbist	222
LCT I	Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes	230
	I1: The Brendons	238
	Part 5: Appendices	246
Apx. A	Glossary of Acronyms and Technical Terms	248
Apx. B	Adjoining Landscape and Seascape Character Assessments	250
Apx. C	Landscape Change and Condition	254
Apx. D	References and Sources of Further Information	255

Map 1: The Location and Boundary of Exmoor



© Copyright Exmoor National Park 2018

Key

-  Exmoor National Park Boundary
-  A Road
-  B Road
-  Bristol Channel

-  Moor & Heath
-  Woodland
-  Cliff & Foreshore
-  Farmland

- Long Distance Paths**
-  South West Coast Path
-  Two Moors Way
-  Coleridge Way (Footpath)
-  Coleridge Way (Bridleway)

Scale 1:140,000



Executive Summary

Exmoor National Park is one of the most varied and beautiful landscapes in Britain. Although it is one of the smallest of the UK's National Parks, covering just 267 square miles, it contains a unique combination of spectacular coastline, expansive moorland, steep wooded valleys, attractive settlements and distinctive farmland. The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment is both a celebration and an analysis of the Exmoor landscape. As a Supplementary Planning Document it is a planning and management tool to aid the continuation and enhancement of Exmoor's distinctive landscapes into the future, as well as shaping priorities for future land management schemes.

The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment 2018 is based on the 2007 Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment, but contains a wealth of additional information on the cultural, historic and perceptual qualities of the landscape to complement the descriptions of the landscape's physical characteristics. It also reflects the extensive research which has been undertaken in the past ten years, on a range of topics including moorland and woodland management, people's perceptions of the landscape, moorland archaeology, and the condition of the natural and built environment. New ways of thinking about landscape, such as the ecosystem services approach and the concept of natural capital, are explained and integrated within the document.

The landscapes of Exmoor which we see today are the result of millions of years of geological and geomorphological processes, followed by millennia of human exploitation for farming, settlement, fuel, mineral resources, defence and recreation. All have helped make today's diverse and rich landscape. Exmoor's extraordinary value for nature conservation, cultural heritage and landscape quality is reflected not only in its designation as a National Park, but also in the wide range of designations which cover sites throughout Exmoor. These include moorlands and oak woodlands which are designated at an international level for the habitats and species which they support. The archaeology and cultural history of Exmoor is outstanding, with new sites and discoveries still being made. New information and evidence is being gathered to expand and further inform the designations. The designation of Exmoor as an International Dark Sky Reserve shows that skies are also a valued part of the landscape.

Many issues are currently affecting Exmoor's landscapes, and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. These forces for change may be natural or man-made, and relate (for example) to development, changing agricultural practices, recreation, energy generation, woodland and moorland management, climate change and coastal erosion. The forces for change acting on the landscape are described in the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment, along with recommendations to 'protect, manage and plan' to enhance Exmoor's landscapes in the future.



Exmoor is very diverse, with its rolling hills, steep valleys, species-rich rivers and streams, characterful settlements, historic sites, distinctive skyline and dramatic coastline all contributing to its scenic beauty, visual compositions and sense of place. Its landscapes continue to inspire a rich and distinctive tradition of art and literature.

The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment identifies nine Landscape Character Types within the National Park, namely: High Coastal Heaths; High Wooded Coast, Combes and Cleaves; Low Farmed Coast and Marsh; Open Moorland; Farmed and Settled Vale; Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons; Incised Wooded River Valleys; Plantation (with Heathland) Hills and Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes. The nine Landscape Character Types are sub-divided into 27 Landscape Character Areas, reflecting their local character and distinctiveness.

The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment describes each of these nine Landscape Character Types in detail, using a combination of maps, text, photographs and illustrations. Each one has a summary description, followed by information on the key landscape characteristics; natural landscape features; historic landscape features and the built environment; landscape perceptions and cultural associations; natural assets and ecosystem services; Landscape Character Areas and (where relevant)

Seascape Character Areas; strength of landscape character and landscape condition; landscape issues and forces for change; landscape management recommendations and specific planning guidelines.

This 2018 update of the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment contains Landscape Planning Guidelines which are relevant across the National Park. They are intended for use by planners, developers, land agents, and members of the public submitting planning applications. The document will also be used by National Park Authority Committee Members in decision-making. The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide the tools to enable people to think about, and understand, the relationships between buildings/ structures and their landscape settings. They describe the key characteristics of Exmoor's landscapes which are particularly sensitive to development, and also provide general guidelines on the integration of development into the Exmoor landscape. This should promote sensitive design and location of new development, so it can fit comfortably into the landscape and make a positive contribution to landscape and settlement character.

