

# Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy



This report was written for the  
Exmoor National Park Authority by  
**nef** (the new economics foundation)

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### Photo credits

#### FRONT COVER:

3 Exmoor men in their 10's and one in his 50's gaining their chainsaw certificates

Credit: Oliver Edwards

young Exmoor women gaining sailing instructor certificates Credit: Active Exmoor

#### THIS PAGE:

solar roof tiles and small wind turbine providing electricity to the Pinkery Centre  
Credit: Exmoor National Park Authority

chipping for a wood fired central heating system Credit: South West Wood Fuels Ltd

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## List of Acronyms

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy of the EU
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
DBS	Devon Business Survey
DCC	Devon County Council
DR	Devon Renaissance
ELU	European Livestock Unit
EBLEX	English Beef and Lamb Executive
ELU	European Livestock Units
EU	European Union
ENPA	Exmoor National Park Authority
ERDP	England Rural Development Plan
ExSDF	Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund
GENRE	Greater Exmoor Network for Renewable Energy
GVA	Gross value added
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LAG	Local Action Group
L&BR	Lynton and Barnstaple Railway
NFU	National Farmers' Union
NDDC	North Devon District Council
REG	Rural Enterprise Gateway
RDPE	Rural Development Plan for England
SAAS	Somerset Agricultural Advisory Service
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SME	Small- and micro-enterprise
SCC	Somerset County Council
SRRP	Somerset Rural Renaissance Partnership
SRYP	Somerset Rural Youth Project
SWEH	South West Eco Homes
SWRDA	South West of England Regional Development Agency
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis
WRT	Wessex Redevelopment Trust
WSBN	West Somerset Business Network
WSCC	West Somerset Community College
WSC	West Somerset Council

## Executive Summary

This report describes the results of a project undertaken by **nef** (the new economics foundation) for the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA). The objective of the project was to 'provide a better understanding of the economy of the greater Exmoor area and the strategic actions needed to improve well-being and economic prospects; tackle problems, and realise opportunities provided by National Park designation'. This was to take the form of a **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy**.

The project was funded by the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), with contributions from ENPA, Devon and Somerset County Councils, North Devon District Council and West Somerset Council.

The starting point for the project was the vision for Exmoor articulated in the National Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012. More specifically, the project was based on the proposition that environment, well-being and economic development are inextricably linked, and that well-being simultaneously depends and impacts on both the environment and the economy. We called this the 'Exmoor Model': it posits that the National Park status provides a unique framework for using the environment as an economic driver for delivering increased well-being while respecting environmental limits. Greater Exmoor can provide an example of this type of 'one planet development' for the South West Region.

The project was rooted in the asset-based approach to rural community development and in emerging ideas about the links between the characteristics of the asset base and the diversity, dynamism and resilience of the local economy. It focused on local money flows, made use of the well established image of a local economy as a leaky bucket, and sought opportunities to 'plug the leaks' from the Greater Exmoor economy.

The main body of the report focuses on three central and closely interlinked areas of economic activity in Greater Exmoor: Agriculture and Food, Tourism and Recreation and Building and Renewable Energy. A number of critical themes cut across these areas, including business support, youth, training and affordable housing.

The report identifies 43 suggested **Actions** and 13 **Ideas** that should provide a basis for a way forward. As appropriate, **Actions** and **Ideas** are linked to objectives in the **National Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012: A Sustainable Future for Exmoor** and the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan**.

By and large the **Actions** and **Ideas** highlight opportunities where targeted innovation, coordination, brokerage, training and skills development, business support and investment could have significant impacts on local money flows long-term development and well-being. Many of the **Actions** and **Ideas** build on on-going initiatives including a number funded in part by the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund. The work of this fund since 2003 represents an excellent base of experience and achievement upon which the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy** is built.

Given the magnitude of the task and the complex administrative context, a coordinated approach to implementation is recommended in which an enlarged version of the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund should play a central role.

The **Actions** and **Ideas** are shown below. Taken individually, a number of these might not appear much different from hundreds of other recommendations to stimulate economic development. However, when taken together, and placed within a model of local economic development that starts with local assets; links the characteristics of the asset base to the diversity, dynamics and resilience of the local economy; and prioritises actions that strengthen local money flows; these **Actions** and **Ideas** provide the underpinnings of an integrated, area-based strategy for sustainable development. The strength of this strategy is that it is forward looking, proactive and puts Exmoor's distinctiveness at its very core.

## Introduction

### *The Brief*

This report is the main output of the project entitled **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan** undertaken by **nef** (the new economics foundation) for the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA). As outlined in the final version of the project document the objective was to:

‘Provide a better understanding of the economy of the greater Exmoor area and the strategic actions needed to improve well-being and economic prospects; tackle problems, and realise opportunities provided by National Park designation.’

In addition, the project sought to:

- Provide an overview of existing initiatives, programmes and ideas – and where appropriate provide ideas for improved integration across the National Park (i.e. across Devon / Somerset boundary).
- Provide an input into the National Park Management Plan leading to take up and integration with county and regional development strategies.
- Identify practical actions (i.e. an Action Plan), that will lead to change, that are linked to possible funding streams, and that have identified delivery responsibilities.
- Help position the Exmoor area to take advantage / influence the allocation of future funding opportunities e.g. Axis 4.
- Comment on future approaches to business development and support taking into account the rural context, and considering entrepreneurs and innovation, transferable skills and infrastructure development.
- Link with other relevant initiatives, including those focused on overall local/regional food systems (i.e. the **nef**-Sustain project funded by Tudor Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation), rural livelihoods (the **nef** project funded by Carnegie UK Trust and the Northern Rock Foundation) and thriving communities (the **nef** project funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation).

Four specific deliverables were identified:

- Input to National Park Management Plan;
- Input to key economic development programmes;
- Recommended ‘Action Plan’ with timescales and responsibilities (**Actions** and **Ideas** are inserted into the text)
- Recommended series of projects to address identified issues.

## **Report conventions**

Distributed throughout the remainder of this report the reader will find three categories of highlighted points as follows:

**Idea:** Here we highlight emergent ideas that if further developed might contribute to the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy**.

**Action:** Here we recommend a specific action that should be undertaken in the near-term as an essential part of the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan**.

**Link:** Here we highlight how a proposed **Action** or **Idea** links with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan**.

## **Points of departure**

In 2002, in response to the Foot-and-Mouth crisis, ENPA produced a paper entitled 'A Statement on the Economy of Exmoor'. This, together with other key documents including 'The State of Farming on Exmoor 2004' (Lobley et al. 2004); 'The Role of Shooting in Exmoor: Final Report' (PACEC 2006); 'Exmoor National Park Management Plan 2001–2006' (ENPA 2001); and 'Draft Exmoor National Park Management Plan 2007–2012' (ENPA 2006) provided the project team with a wealth of information and insight.

In the light of this extensive body of previous work, much of which addressed one or more aspects of sustainability, the project was based on the assumption that further intensive data collection was not required. Rather, the task was to re-frame this information and combine it with the interests and insights of local people in order to more effectively affect sustainable economic development.

The Exmoor economy must be seen to include Exmoor National Park, the immediate surrounding towns and villages and to some degree, Devon, Somerset and the South West more broadly. Such an approach allows for maximum economic linkages and synergies. The Project Board agreed to a definition of 'Greater Exmoor' as encompassing approximately 10 miles beyond the National Park boundary and including Minehead, as well as places slightly further away including Bampton, Ilfracombe, Williton, South Molton, Watchet and Wiveliscombe, and on the western coast, Morte Bay and Woolacombe.

From the beginning of this project we were clear that sustainable development in and around Exmoor will depend in large part on maximising the positive linkages and synergies between the environment, agriculture and tourism. Further, approaches in each of these areas of economic activity will need to be innovative while maintaining the special characteristics and distinctiveness of the Exmoor environment and experience (from the point of view of both residents and visitors). In this way the project was very much rooted in the vision of a 'sustainable future for Exmoor' as laid out by the ENPA (Box 1).

Any discussion of sustainability or sustainable development must look to the future, and whether in relation to environmental, economic or social sustainability, this naturally and rightly focuses attention on future generations. This project therefore

had a strong orientation toward young people, and particularly in the light of very real concerns about the affordability of housing, and the availability of education, training and employment opportunities that would allow young people to stay and to thrive in Greater Exmoor. In a sense then, the availability of appropriate education and training opportunities, and the affordability of housing can be seen as golden threads running throughout this report.

Finally, the project was rooted in the understanding that in general people have good insights into the opportunities and challenges within their local economies, and that successful implementation of change is contingent on their active engagement and support. Thus, planning for sustainable development must be genuinely participatory and provide channels for long-term engagement.

Box 1. The vision articulated in the **2007 – 2012 Management Plan**.

**Vision of ‘A Sustainable Future for Exmoor’**

- Exmoor’s distinct and diverse landscape is in good condition and there is an increased awareness of its importance.
- There is an increased extent of wildlife habitats in good condition and thriving populations of native plants and animals that are most valued nationally and locally.
- There is an enhanced knowledge of the historic environment of Exmoor, as well as an increased awareness of the value of its cultural heritage, amongst local people in particular, but also amongst visitors. The most important historical sites, settlements, buildings and features are conserved and their historical character retained.
- Air, water and soil are of high quality; people and communities living and working on Exmoor have more sustainable ways of living, and we are closer to achieving a carbon neutral National Park.
- Profitable and competitive farming, forestry and land management enterprises in Exmoor National Park play a lead role in conserving and enhancing Exmoor’s landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage, and make a major contribution to achieving a carbon neutral National Park to help tackle climate change.
- There is increased public awareness and enjoyment of the National Park, particularly by young people and non-traditional users, leading to greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life and a wider appreciation of the contribution that National Parks and the wider countryside make to quality of life.
- There is a warm welcome and high quality experience for everyone who visits Exmoor seeking inspiration, tranquillity and active outdoor recreation, provided by a thriving tourism and recreation economy in harmony with local communities and the environment.
- There are balanced communities with a continuity of connection between people and the land; thriving towns and villages; local access to affordable services and facilities, and a strong economy providing diversity of opportunities that benefit from and contribute to the care and appreciation of Exmoor National Park.

**Source:** Draft of the **National Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012: A Sustainable Future for Exmoor**, November 2006.

## Vision and philosophy

### Environment and sustainable development

This report is rooted first in a view that posits intimate, essential and two-way links between the quality of the natural environment and sustainable economic development (Figure 1). This vision has been articulated previously and informs much current thinking about sustainable development. We have, however, enriched the vision by placing people's well-being at the very centre of the 'environment-sustainable development' dynamic (Figure 2). Here we understand well-being to encompass (1) feelings and functionings (at a personal level: happiness, self-esteem, satisfaction, engagement, autonomy, competencies and skills; and at a social level: trust, respect, belonging, optimism about society, pro-social behaviour, generosity and giving)<sup>1</sup> and (2) a series of objective indicators touching on poverty and the availability of food, housing, health, water, energy and education.

Figure 1. Environment and sustainable economic development: the basic model.

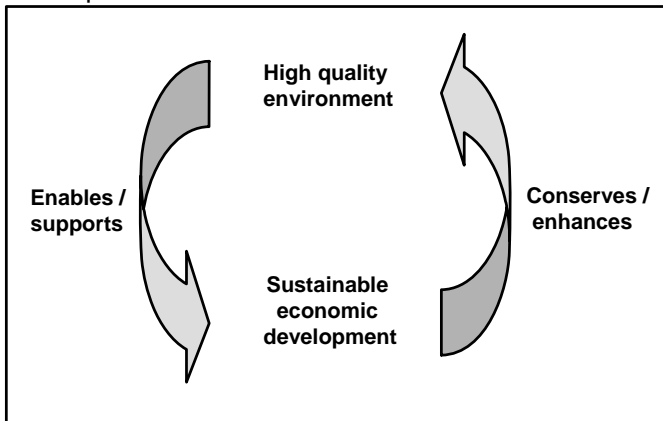
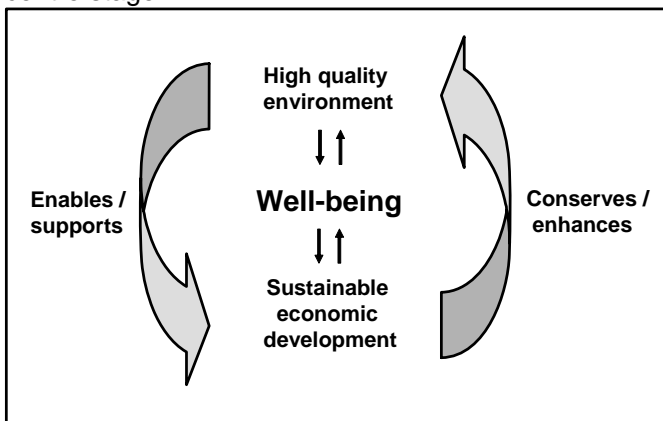


Figure 2. Environment and sustainable economic development: the 'Exmoor Model' puts well-being at centre stage.



By putting well-being at the centre of this dynamic we are also making explicit the idea that well-being simultaneously depends and impacts on both the environment

<sup>1</sup> See: Marks, N. & Thompson, S. 2006. **Well-being, culture and policy**. Unpublished paper, nef (the new economic foundation), London.

and the economy. We are also highlighting the fact that while conservation and sustainable development are legitimate concerns in and of themselves, our ultimate objective is to link conservation and development in a way that sustainably supports human well-being. For the remainder of this report we will refer to this as the 'Exmoor Model'.

### *Assets and local economies*

This report is based broadly on an 'asset-based' approach to development. Here we use the term 'asset' to mean 'something of value', and for the purposes of this report, assets within communities can be classified as human, social, cultural, natural, physical, organisational and financial.<sup>2</sup> Asset-based approaches to community development are often described as starting with what is in a community (i.e. the assets) as opposed to the problems faced by the community.

Assets are the basis of economic and social relations. Therefore, any analysis of local economic development must be concerned with how assets are (1) produced and re-produced, (2) distributed/controlled and (3) used. In relation to the distribution/control of assets it is important to highlight that our interest is not limited to what are sometimes referred to as 'community assets', but rather we are concerned with all the assets that are found in a given location, which may be owned and/or controlled by individuals, groups, 'the community', companies, trusts or some arm of the state.

The patterns of asset production/reproduction, distribution and use are not constant but vary through time and space, and are affected by a web of social, economic and political relations. While these relations have a distinctly 'local' aspect, they also reflect larger-scale (regional, national and global) policies and processes (such as globalisation), as well as relations between the state, the private sector and the 'third sector'. An important implication here is that many of what appear to be 'local' issues reflect processes and policies that originate outside the local area and are to some degree outside local control.

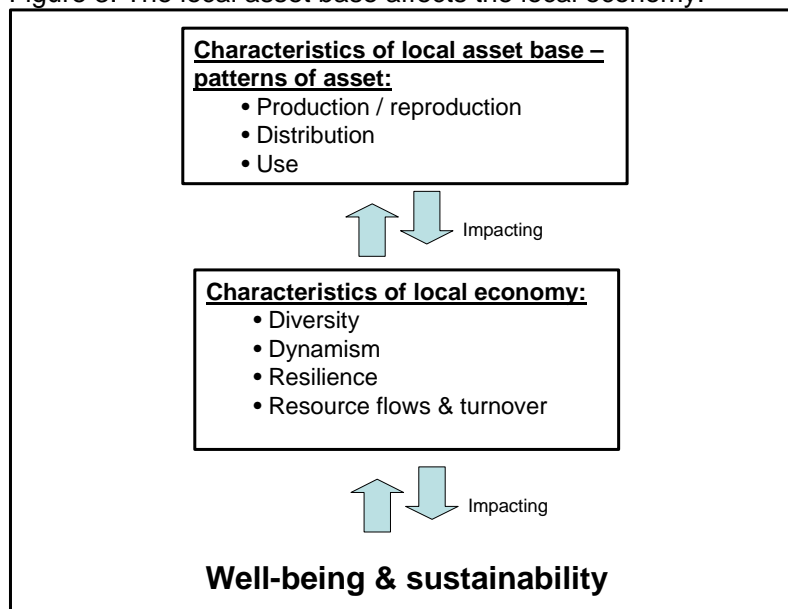
It is a central tenant of this report that patterns of local asset reproduction, distribution and use can help explain the variation that can be observed in the diversity, dynamism and resilience of different local economies (Figure 3).<sup>3</sup> We assume that in a context of sustainability and sustainable economic development, increasing the diversity, dynamism and resilience of a local economy will be as or more important than a singular focus on economic growth.

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<sup>2</sup> We note that asset-based approaches to rural community development are not entirely new to Exmoor. Indeed they were central to the **South West Sustainable Land Use Initiative, Exmoor National Park Authority, Sustainability Appraisal Case Study**, undertaken by Carol Somper and Forum for the Future, September 2005.

<sup>3</sup> See: Tilzey, M. and Sumberg, J. 2007. **Enterprise Ecology, Socio-Economic Disadvantage and Rural Community Development**. Unpublished paper, nef (the new economic foundation), London.

Figure 3. The local asset base affects the local economy.



*Assets, infrastructure, money flows and leaks*

While we recognise that all rural areas in the UK, including Greater Exmoor, are more or less integrated into regional, national and global arenas, following an asset-based approach means that we start our analysis of the local economy with the assets found within the local area. However, assets in and of themselves are only the beginning of the story – the building blocks of economic activity – and in this report we use the term ‘infrastructure’ to indicate that various assets must be combined, and made to work together, in order to support economic activity. For example, a livestock market, an abattoir and meat processing facility can be seen as individual assets, but when brought together they form a key part of the physical infrastructure that supports the meat sector. In reality the situation is even more complicated as infrastructure of several types (e.g. physical, financial and social) is required in order to support economic activity, and the character, extent and efficiency of the economic infrastructure will determine the pattern of local money flows. For example, without the infrastructure for adding value to primary production, a significant proportion of that value will ‘leak’ from and be lost to the local area. These ideas form the basis of the **Plugging the Leaks** approach to local economic development.<sup>4</sup>

The plugging the leaks approach, where a bucket is used to illustrate a local economy, is based on the idea that the longer money circulates within a local economy the more benefit local people will derive from it (Figure 4). This is simply a re-statement of the well-known principle of economic multipliers. The corollary is that when local individuals, businesses or government purchase goods or services from outside a local area, or invest outside the area, that money is considered to have ‘leaked’ from the local economy (Figure 5). In principle, every such leak represents

<sup>4</sup> Sacks, J (2002) **The Money Trail: Measuring Your Impact on the Local Economy Using LM3**. London: nef (the new economics foundation); Ward, B and Lewis, J (2002) **Plugging the Leaks: Making the Most of Every Pound That Enters Your Local Economy**. London: nef (the new economics foundation).

an opportunity: if the leak can be 'plugged' by provision of the good or service locally, then local people should benefit through increased employment, trade and the like.

Figure 4. The local economy as a bucket.

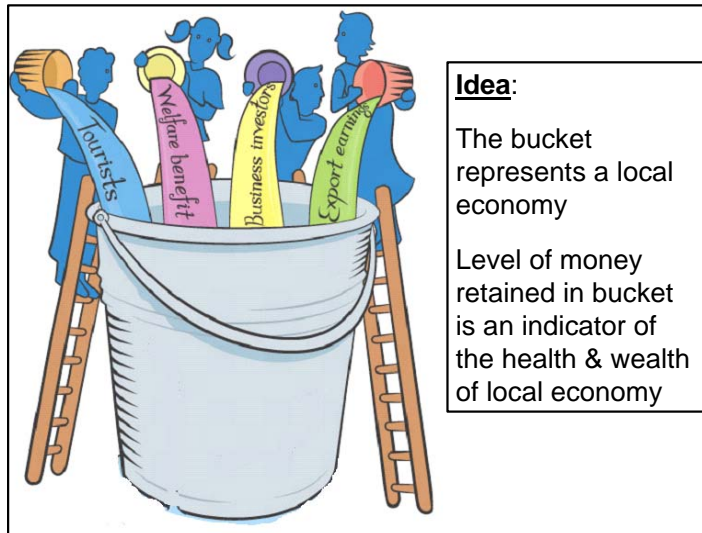
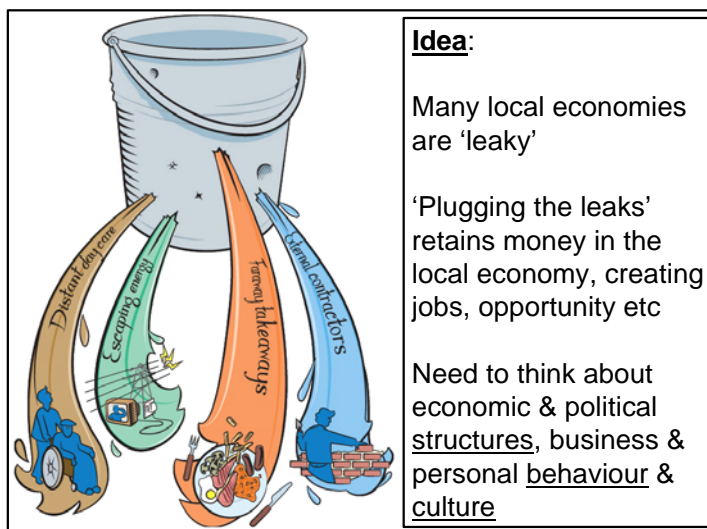
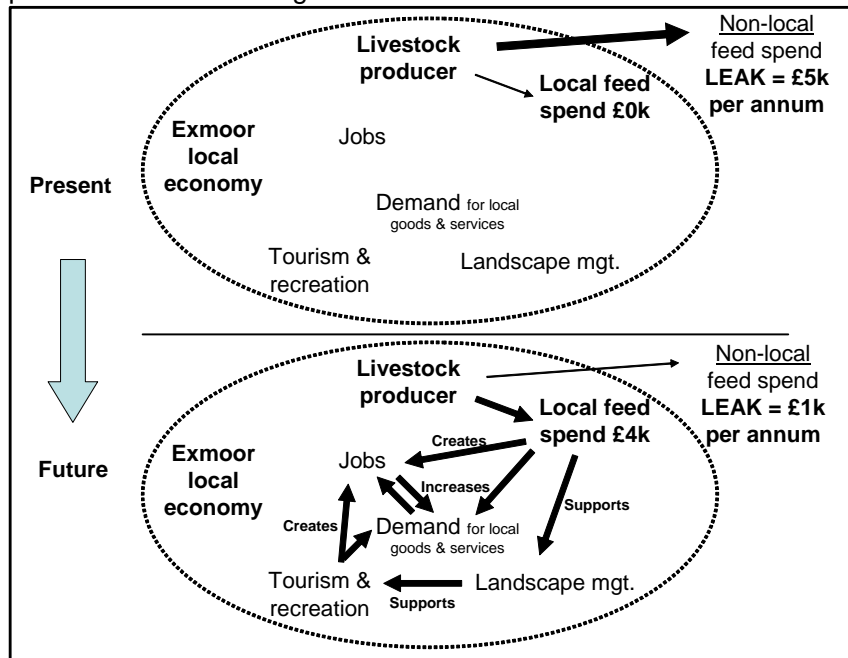


Figure 5. Many local economies are 'leaky'.



These points are illustrated in Figure 6 for the case of a livestock producer who presently purchases all of his/her feed requirements from outside Greater Exmoor. The top part of the figure shows that all the money used by this producer to purchase feed leaks from the local economy. As a result, the feed component of this farm business results in few positive local linkages in terms, for example, of job creation, demand for local goods and services or landscape management (which is so vital for Greater Exmoor's tourism businesses). The bottom part of the figure illustrates the suggestion that by changing the feed procurement pattern and thus plugging this particular leak, it is possible to strengthen these key linkages. It is however clear that in many situations successfully plugging the leaks requires much more than simple decisions by individual producers, businesses or public agencies. New assets and infrastructure may also be required, and these are therefore the focus on many of the **Actions** and **Ideas** identified in this report.

Figure 6. Plugging a leak: an example of how purchasing feed locally creates many positive economic linkages.



So far we have focused on the money or value that is presently leaking from a local economy. However, this is essentially a defensive approach to local development that privileges existing transaction patterns, and the notion that these result in local 'losers' and distant 'winners'. We need to expand this view in two ways. First, by highlighting the opportunities for increasing inward money flows from, for example, government grants, increased visitor spend and the refurbishment of homes owned by non-residents. Second, the idea of a leaky local economy can be expanded to encompass the potential for value-added in the local economy that is presently not being realised by anyone, either locally or in more distant places. The point is that by widening the idea of a leak, so that it captures the yet untapped opportunities to create value-added, we are in a much better position to think creatively and expansively.

Here it is worth simply drawing attention to the issue of 'displacement', which refers to the fact that by plugging a leak, that is to say, by localising a previously extra-local stream of expenditure, income is being withdrawn from businesses or individuals outside the local area. In other words, plugging economic leaks does not necessarily increase the total amount of economic activity, but rather re-distributes it in space. Taken to an extreme, and if widely pursued, economic localisation strategies as exemplified by plugging the leaks will likely be to the detriment of sparsely populated, remote rural areas (as, for example, if tourists stayed much closer to home, consumed their own 'local' food and the like).

**nef** has used the plugging the leaks approach extensively in both urban and rural settings in the UK. This experience shows that the image of the leaky bucket and the idea of plugging the leaks of the local economy are very powerful, and help people to better understand the workings of the local economy and to see new opportunities for local economic development. Finally, it is important to stress that plugging the leaks can be both a specific exercise organised for example around a workshop, and/or a guiding principle used to inform local economic development. For this project, plugging the leaks was very much the guiding principle.

## Background

### Greater Exmoor

As indicated above, the scope of this project extended beyond the boundary of the National Park to include 'Greater Exmoor' (Map 1). The reasons for focusing on this broader area were threefold. First, aside from the overlaps in administrative areas (see below), the National Park boundaries bear little relation to economic or social reality. There are intimate connections – aesthetic, ecological, infrastructural, agricultural, economic, social and practical – between the National Park and adjoining areas, including part of the North Devon and Quantock Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). A simple example of these connections is that many people travel into, through or from the National Park on a daily basis to get to work. Second, the potential for increasing well-being in line with the National Park's purposes is greater if the National Park is seen in the context of the wider area (for example, the main towns in the area lie outside the National Park boundary). Finally, the partners supporting the project include West Somerset Council and North Devon District Council, only part of whose areas are included within the National Park. The same is obviously true for Devon and Somerset County Councils.

Despite the strong rationale for a focus on Greater Exmoor this wider view caused some difficulties in that neither economic nor social data are reported for Greater Exmoor. Neither is it straight forward to use existing data to construct a coherent statistical picture of Greater Exmoor as defined above. Consequently, much of the information used in this report is for the National Park, which we use as a proxy for Greater Exmoor.

Map 1. The Greater Exmoor area.



Source:

<http://www.exmooraccommodation.co.uk/files/map.htm?PHPSESSID=651136b2db91ad26d568dd897c0fcc2b>

### Exmoor National Park

Exmoor National Park lies at the centre of Greater Exmoor. The National Park was formally established in 1954 under the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*. Its 267 square miles straddle the Somerset – Devon boundary, with

approximately 70% of the National Park's area lying in Somerset and the rest in Devon. The National Park encompasses a varied and sparsely populated<sup>5</sup> landscape of heather moorland, beech hedges, arable and pasture land, wooded combs, rivers, coast and small settlements.

Exmoor National Park Authority's primary purpose is to promote the conservation and good management of the National Park in line with National Park purposes. Specifically, the purposes of a National Park, set out in Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995, are to:

- 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage' [of the park]; and
- 'promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public'.

The 1995 Act also gave National Park Authorities a duty to 'seek to foster the economic and social well-being' of their local communities. It is important to stress that this duty is not an additional or competing purpose for ENPA, but is to be achieved whilst meeting National Park purposes. This is a critical point and here it is worth going back to the basic model presented above that posits a fundamental and positive relationship between a high quality environment and sustainable development. This model sees well-being not as ancillary to environmental conservation and management, but rather as an integral component. In other words, from this perspective, it is unlikely that ENPA will be able to achieve its statutory purposes if the well-being of the population living and working in and around the National Park is not also enhanced.

Within the National Park, ENPA functions as the sole local planning authority, and is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date development plan or plans. Exmoor National Park Authority shares some of the other powers available to local government in rural areas, allowing it to make access agreements and orders and management agreements with anyone in pursuit of National Park purposes. Furthermore, ENPA is an access authority under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and can appoint wardens, erect signs and stiles, and authorise entry for the purposes of monitoring the access position on appropriate land. Exmoor National Park Authority, like all National Park Authorities, must prepare and publish a National Park Management Plan as a statement of policy for managing and carrying out its functions.<sup>6</sup> It must also produce annual reports on its performance.

Exmoor National Park Authority comprises 26 members as follows: Parish Members (5); NDDC Members (2); WSC Members (5); SCC Members (5); DCC Members (2); and Members appointed by the Secretary of State (7). While it is true that some of these members live on Exmoor, and the public can make representations through them, there are also a number of other mechanisms through which consultation and public engagement takes place. These include the Exmoor Consultative and Parish

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<sup>5</sup> The 2001 Census put the population of the National Park at 10,873, giving an overall population density of 0.16 persons per hectare, compared to 2.07 in the South West and 3.45 nationally.

<sup>6</sup> A draft of the **National Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012: A Sustainable Future for Exmoor** was put out for consultation in November 2006. In the remainder of this report it will be referred to as the **2007 – 2012 Management Plan**.

Forum<sup>7</sup> and the Exmoor Local Access Forum.<sup>8</sup> Public consultation is also undertaken on an ad hoc basis, for example as part of the process of developing the 2007 – 2012 Management Plan.

### *ENPA's Sustainable Development Fund*

Since 2002 ENPA has demonstrated its concern to address broader social and economic sustainability issues through the operation of its Sustainable Development Fund (ExSDF). With resources from DEFRA and SWRDA the fund has supported more than 90 projects with grants ranging from £900 to £60,000 (with total disbursement from 2002/3 to 2005/6 of £849,600). All projects must clearly further one or both of the National Park's purposes, contribute to the local economy and benefit local communities. It would be quite wrong to see this fund as simply another mechanism for the disbursement of public funds. A major difference with the ExSDF is that it is backed by the expertise and commitment of ENPA staff, many of whom work in partnership with grant holders to ensure successful and sustainable project outcomes.

While these projects vary tremendously in size, ambition, and degree of innovation, taken together they represent an excellent base of experience and achievement upon which the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy** can be built. We will refer in more detail to a number of initiatives funded in part through the ExSDF in later sections of this report.

### **Public sector governance**

#### *The local authority structure*

The whole of Greater Exmoor has a three-tier local government structure, consisting of Devon and Somerset County Councils, North Devon District Council and West Somerset Council and civil parishes. Of the civil parishes, 18 lie wholly within the National Park, while another 22 are partly within the Park. While 20% of WSC's population is within the National Park, the equivalent figure for NDDC is just over 3%.

#### *A complex policy context*

This effort to fashion a sustainable development strategy for Exmoor must be seen as a link in a long chain of aspirations, strategies, policies, programmes and action plans stretching from Brussels and London, through Exeter, Taunton, Williton and Barnstaple, to Greater Exmoor and the National Park (Figure 7). At each level – European, national, regional, county and district – there are strategies and policies, objectives and planned outputs in relation to jobs and training, agriculture and livestock, the environment, energy, sustainability, tourism, transportation, information and communications technology (ICT) and business support (not to mention public engagement and participation).

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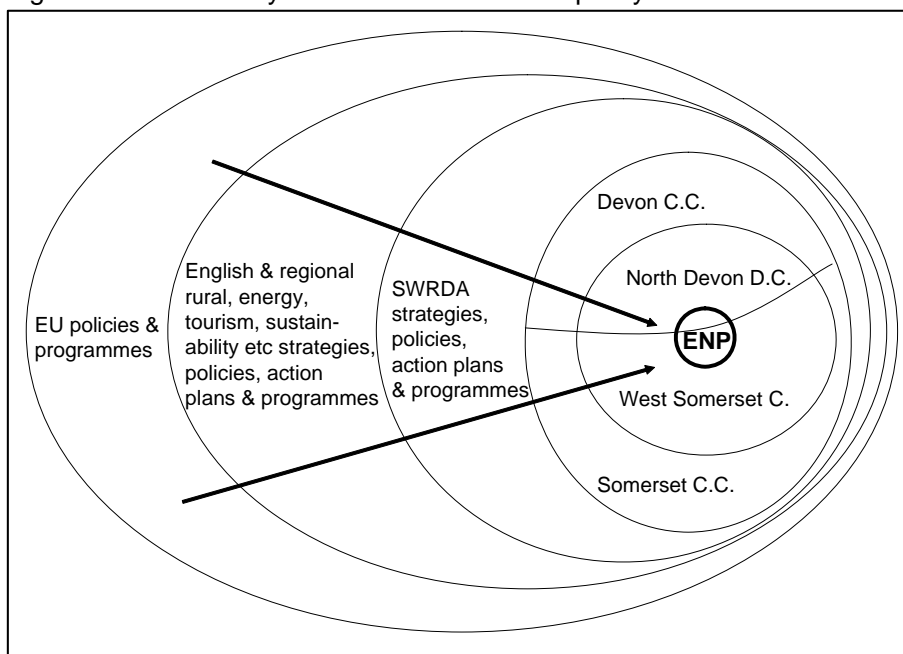
<sup>7</sup> The Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum is a combination of previously separate Parish Forum and Consultative Forum, which pre-dated the establishment of ENPA in 1997. It is meant to be a sounding board of local people and environmental experts.

<sup>8</sup> 'The purpose of the Exmoor Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the Exmoor National Park Authority and to the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation, in ways which address environmental, social and economic interests' (Source: Exmoor Local Access Forum Terms of Reference).

Despite much political rhetoric around devolution, the reality is that the grand lines of strategy and policy are set closer to the Brussels and London end of this chain, with primarily the responsibility for and details of implementation being devolved. Add to this the fact of funding sources being tied largely to European and national initiatives, and it becomes clear that in relation to sustainable development, authorities at the level of the National Park and its surroundings have relatively few degrees of freedom.

The challenge for the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy**, therefore, is to develop a vision and a plan that uses all the opportunities afforded by higher-level strategy, planning and funding to respond effectively to the very particular and context-specific opportunities for increasing well-being and sustainability that are present in and defined by the Greater Exmoor populace and environment.

Figure 7. The multi-layered administrative and policy context.



One important mechanism that gives different administrative units the ability to join up budgets and services in innovative ways is a Local Area Agreement (LAA). A LAA provides the opportunity to focus high level joint action on areas of service delivery or problems that will result in a real improvement in quality of life. There are four themes or blocks for LAAs: Children and Young People; Safer and Stronger Communities; Healthier Communities and Older People; and Economic Development and Enterprise. We note that Somerset County Council have under the headline outcome of 'More sustainable Somerset rural economy' (LAA Outcome 9): finalisation of the sustainable economic strategy for Exmoor in Nov 2006.

## Society and Economy

### General overview<sup>9</sup>

At the time of the last national census in 2001, the population of the National Park was 10,873 (approximately 40% of which was accounted for by the three settlements of Lynton & Lynmouth, Porlock and Dulverton). This represents a 2% increase on the 1991 population, compared to increases over the same period of 7% in the South West and 4% nationally. In the West Country, death rates are generally greater than birth rates, and population growth is therefore mainly through migration. For North Devon, a 5.5% increase in population has been predicted by 2011, but it is important to note that this masks a 32.3% *increase* in the population over 60 and a 4.7% *decrease* in those under 19. Indeed, within the National Park there is a steadily decreasing proportion of young people and an increasing proportion of the elderly. While this echoes national trends, for the last three censuses, the National Park has had a higher proportion of older people and a lower proportion of young people than both surrounding counties and the nation as a whole.

Of the 8,009 people aged 16-74 resident within the National Park in 2001, 57.8% were employed and 36.9% economically inactive. As is evident from Table 1, the proportions of self-employed and retired people within the National Park are significantly higher than either the South West or the nation. In 2001 unemployment within the National Park stood at 2.9% (although this varies from place to place; for example, Lynton and Lynmouth have historically had higher levels of unemployment than the surrounding rural areas).

Table 1. Self-employed, retired and unemployed (as % of people aged 16-74).

Area	Self employed	Retired	Unemployed
Exmoor N.P.	24.5	21.6	2.9
South West	10.1	15.5	2.6
UK	8.1	13.6	3.4

Three industries – ‘Hotels and catering’ (15%), ‘Wholesale and retail trade and motor repairs’ (14.5%) and ‘Agriculture, hunting and forestry’ (13.7%) – together account for 43% of the 4,815 employed people who reside within the National Park.<sup>10</sup> Over the years there has been a steady decline in the proportion of people working in the primary industries of agriculture, hunting and forestry, and according to the 2001 Census Monitor, ‘if the trend continues at the same rate, by the next census there will be more people employed in real estate and business activities, and health and social work [than in the primary industries], **and by the 2031 census the agriculture industry will be finished**’ (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup> This is in stark contrast to the vision outlined in the draft 2007 – 2012 Management Plan<sup>12</sup> and points to a future that is

<sup>9</sup> This section is drawn primarily from the **Exmoor National Park 2001 Census Monitor**.

<sup>10</sup> Census data cover the resident population, whose employment is not necessarily within the National Park.

<sup>11</sup> Some caution is needed here as ‘There appears to be considerable net import of labour from areas outside the National Park that does not show in the census returns. Many of the contractors for farming and forestry are based outside the national Park’ (**A Statement on the Exmoor Economy**, 2002)

<sup>12</sup> ‘By 2020, profitable and competitive farming, forestry and land management enterprises in Exmoor National Park will play a lead role in conserving and enhancing Exmoor’s landscape,

definitely not contemplated within this **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy**.

The largest occupation group on Exmoor is 'skilled trades' which includes farmers and people in the construction and service industries. This helps account for the fact that in 2001, 31.4% of the population of Exmoor reported working from home. The relatively low earnings generally associated with these occupations probably explains why on Exmoor, 36.8% of men and 17.7% of women in employment reported working more than 48 hours per week – compared to 24.2% and 6.9% for men and women in England respectively. It is also important to note that compared to the national average, a greater proportion of people on Exmoor work part-time.

There is a relatively low proportion of people in the National Park who have an educational qualification at the A-level standard or above, and the proportion with a degree-level qualification is particularly low in comparison with other National Parks. This is reinforced by estimates from The Basic Skills Agency (BSA) to the effect that in West Somerset 30.2% of economically active people have poor literacy skills and 25.3% poor numeracy skills, while nationally 24% of economically active people have poor literacy and numeracy skills. Further, the BSA's index of 'deprivation of education, skills and training' shows Exmoor to be the most deprived area of the West Country.

Exmoor has for some time had a much higher than average proportion of economically inactive people – mainly because of the high proportion of people who have retired before pensionable age – and there is a trend over time of decreasing economic activity. Whilst the general health of Exmoor people is above average, there are an above average number of old people with limiting long-term illnesses. This is a reflection of the higher than average proportion of older people in Exmoor; and as a result, there is a higher than average proportion of people in the National Park providing unpaid care. Care responsibilities such as these restrict the ability of some people to undertake work outside the home.

In 2001 there were 4,896 occupied houses in the National Park plus 216 vacant houses and 563 second or holiday houses. A relatively high proportion (68.8%) of residential spaces in the National park is owner-occupied. On the other hand, compared to other National Parks, Exmoor has a much higher proportion of homes rented from housing associations and social landlords (11.7%), and a lower proportion rented from local authorities. It is interesting to note that 10% of the housing stock within the National Park was classified as second or holiday houses: this can be compared, for example, to 0.6% nationally, 1.8% in the South West, 4.6% in Cornwall & Isles of Scilly, 3.5% in Devon, 11.1% in South Hams District (South Devon), 15% in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and 18% in the Lake District National Park.

Finally, with 6,779 cars and vans owned by residents of the National Park there are on average 1.38 vehicles per household. The proportion of households having no car or van decreased from 30.7% in 1971 to 12.9% in 2001.

### ***SWOT analysis***

The facts and trends presented in the thumbnail sketch above have informed much previous thinking about the future of Greater Exmoor. By-and-large they have led to

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wildlife and cultural heritage, and make a major contribution to achieving a carbon neutral National Park to help tackle climate change'.

the kind of analysis summarised in the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) format in Box 2. We suggest that analyses such as these, and the strategies and action plans that flow from them, are of limited value because they (1) are backward looking, in that they assume the continuation of present trends, (2) are defensive, in that they seek primarily to respond to these trends, and (3) fail to take much account of Exmoor's assets and distinctiveness.

Box 2. SWOT analysis of the Exmoor economy: the conventional view.

<p><b>The conventional view</b></p> <p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High quality environment; a 'good place to live &amp; work'</li></ul> <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small, aging &amp; poorly skilled workforce</li><li>• High proportion of self-employed &amp; 'lifestyle' businesses; limited ambition to grow</li><li>• Reliance on low wage, seasonal, static or declining sectors (e.g. primary industries &amp; tourism)</li><li>• Poor road access &amp; communication</li></ul> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Farm diversification</li><li>• Knowledge economy &amp; creative businesses</li><li>• High value, high quality tourism market (e.g. short-breaks)</li></ul> <p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EU agricultural policy reform; globalisation leading to continuing decline of agriculture</li><li>• Competition from overseas tourist destination &amp; local high-profile attractions (e.g. Eden Project)</li><li>• Extra restrictions on economic development associated with National Park &amp; AONB status</li></ul>
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An alternative approach, and the one that informs this **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy**, is rooted in the thinking around local assets and local economic development introduced earlier in this report. While accepting the social and economic facts highlighted above, this approach results in a distinctly different SWOT analysis (Box 3), that is forward looking, proactive and puts Exmoor's distinctiveness at its very core. It is important to note that this approach is in line with much of the thinking behind the **2007 – 2012 Management Plan**.

Small and micro-enterprises form a substantial part of the local economy in Exmoor. Data from the latest Devon Business Survey (DBS) found that more than 97% of the 120 businesses surveyed in that part of the National Park that falls within Devon were SMEs. Of these, 21% were sole traders working from home and 65 were micro-businesses. Equivalent data from Somerset are not available but the West Somerset Business Network (WSBN) estimates that small and micro-businesses comprise 70-80% of the 2,500 businesses in the West Somerset area (an estimate of 95% is given in the West Somerset Community Plan 2004 – 2007). A third of businesses in the West Somerset area have a turnover below the VAT threshold of £50,000.

Box 3. SWOT analysis of the Exmoor economy: an alternative view.

<p><b>The alternative view</b></p> <p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High quality environment; a 'good place to live &amp; work'</li><li>• Strong consensus among resident population around value of local environment</li><li>• Strong social &amp; business networks</li><li>• Skills &amp; knowledge of older people</li><li>• Incomers bring new ideas, networks, resource &amp; energy</li><li>• ENPA having put sustainability and well-being at the core of its vision &amp; plan</li></ul> <p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor coordination among networks</li><li>• Fragmented approaches to business support</li><li>• Inefficient use of existing assets &amp; poorly developed economic infrastructure result in significant 'leaks' from local economy</li></ul> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Park &amp; AONB status as framework and driver for eco-friendly economic development &amp; long-term sustainability; Greater Exmoor can provide example for the South West Region</li><li>• Possibilities to link National Park with two nearby AONBs</li><li>• New forms of education, recreation &amp; outdoor tourism used to link food &amp; agriculture more closely to tourism &amp; recreation</li><li>• Higher energy prices &amp; carbon pricing create opportunities in relation to (1) domestic tourism, (2) greener travel, and (3) business opportunities (esp. sustainable energy and sustainable construction)</li></ul> <p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Competition from other areas/parks with similar ambitions &amp; strategies</li><li>• More expensive transportation associated with higher energy prices &amp; carbon pricing (1) create greater isolation and push people out of the area and (2) reduce tourist numbers</li><li>• Increasing emphasis on localisation disadvantages sparsely populated rural areas.</li><li>• Unaffordable housing for local workers</li></ul>
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***The business environment***

**Action 1:** Work with relevant branches of government, the business community, ongoing programmes and local educational institutions to further develop an integrated, long-term plan to address the broad range of skills needed for sustainable development in Greater Exmoor.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on skills as a key to improved business productivity and competitiveness (paragraph 3.5).

***Business support***

**Action 2:** Explore alternative models for a more coordinated approach to business support that takes explicit account of the realities of the Greater Exmoor business context.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on business support and best practice business advice targeted at the food and drink sector (paragraph 3.5).

**Idea 1:** Could the three dimensions of a local economy – dynamism, diversity and resilience – be used to frame an alternative, sustainability-oriented set of priorities and achievement indicators for business support?

#### *Finance and investment*

**Action 3:** Explore with Wessex Reinvestment Trust, Somerset Community Foundation, Devon Community Foundation, the Exmoor Trust and the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund the potential for a dedicated Reinvestment Fund for Greater Exmoor that could both tap local financial resources and provide an additional source of capital for the area's micro businesses and SMEs.<sup>13</sup>

**Link:** This **Action** links in a general way with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on rural business development (paragraph 3.11). It also links to **Ideas 2** and **3**.

#### *Networks*

**Action 4:** Complement the on-going investment in ICT with additional training that would enable businesses to maximise its usefulness in accessing new markets and its potential for networking and 'business-to-business' functions.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on (1) skills as the basis for improved productivity and competitiveness, and knowledge transfer networks and partnership as a basis for innovation (paragraph 3.5), and (2) accessing new markets (paragraph 3.11).

**Action 5:** Recruit a 'Local Economy Broker' for an initial three year period.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on collaboration and partnerships (paragraph 3.5).

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<sup>13</sup> Such a fund might have three distinct but related functions. The first would be to provide support and pump-priming funds to innovative individuals, businesses, groups and networks. Just as with the present Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund, this would essentially mean the gathering and disbursement of public funds in the form of grants. The second would be to help businesses gain access to capital by matching individual investors with local investment opportunities. The third would be to act as a collective investment vehicle that provides local businesses with access to capital and allows individuals to invest in a diversified portfolio of sustainable local businesses.

**Action 6:** Liaise with the individual involved to facilitate a feasibility study of a collaborative marketing structure for home-based business services providers and the provision of training and support for them.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on collaboration and partnerships (paragraph 3.5).

### *Premises*

**Action 7:** Develop a mechanism, possibly via a website such as **OpenSource** onto which user-generated content can easily upload, that would help bring together people in search of workspace and those having either existing workspace or redundant buildings that could potentially be converted.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on collaboration and partnerships (paragraph 3.5).

### *People moving into Greater Exmoor: a sleeping asset?*

**Idea 2:** It might be possible to arrange periodic, informal events, along the lines of 'speed dating', that would quickly expose interested local business people and budding entrepreneurs to the broad range of experience within the population of incomers. Depending on levels of interest and commitment, other mechanisms for matching local people with volunteer coaches or mentors could be developed, including a permanent roster of needs and interests, a website and the like.

**Idea 3:** People involved in relationships such as these could be the basis of a Greater Exmoor version of **Dragons' Den**<sup>14</sup> that would serve to both highlight and nurture local entrepreneurialism. While using the **Dragons' Den** format, the objective would be primarily educational and only secondly about matching entrepreneurs with venture capital.

**Link:** These **Ideas** link with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on 'maintaining strong and inclusive communities' (paragraph 3.11). **Ideas** 2 and 3 also link to **Action** 3.

### *Housing*

**Action 8:** In the light of ENPA's demonstrated ability to think and act radically in relation to affordable housing, it is appropriate to fully explore models such as community land trusts, which hold key assets such as land in trust for the long-term benefit of community members.

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<sup>14</sup> **Dragons' Den** is a BBC television series where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas to secure investment finance from a panel of elite business entrepreneurs - the 'dragons' (see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dragonsden/>).

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on community development and social enterprise (paragraph 3.11).

## **Youth**

**Action 9:** Develop a strategy for ‘youth proofing’ sustainable development initiatives so that the link between sustainability and young people becomes central to planning and implementation around economic development and environmental management.

**Idea 4:** Would it be possible to develop formal links with recreation, leisure and/or tourism teaching and research programmes at the Universities of Exeter, Bristol and/or The West of England that would encourage more students to use the National Park for their dissertation research? In addition to providing a potentially useful stream of practical research, this would have the added advantage of exposing local young people to the possibility of pursuing degree programmes in these subject areas. Local young people completing degrees in subjects such as recreation, leisure, tourism and catering management might be more likely to return to and find suitable work in Greater Exmoor.

**Idea 5:** Would it be possible to develop a leisure access card for young people living in the area to allow them to have discounted admission to sports and leisure activities in Greater Exmoor? This might be linked to a web-based scheme to provide lifts to and from leisure destinations where there is no access by public transport.

**Idea 6:** Would it be possible to allocate a small part of the funding available through schemes such as the Somerset Rural Community Chest and the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund to community and environmental projects which are led by young people? Young people could also be involved in the adjudication of these grants.

## *Young people and a sustainable future*

**Action 10:** Work with school authorities to explore opportunities for integrating the ‘Exmoor’ curriculum with **Learning to Lead** in order to lay a stronger basis for public engagement with and democratic management of environmental resources.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on building capacity and support for the development of local governance (paragraph 3.11).

## **Getting in touch and staying in touch**

**Action 11:** Develop a plan to make active use of community spaces so that to local people, and especially young people, can be more closely linked to the vision and implementation of the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy**.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on encouraging community collaboration to ‘develop sustainable multi-use facilities’ (paragraph 3.11).

## **Building a Sustainable Exmoor Economy**

In developing the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy** we have concentrated on three key economic areas:

- Tourism and Recreation;
- Agriculture and Food;
- Building and Renewable Energy;

We posit that despite long-term downward trends and generally low wages, the first two areas – Tourism and Recreation, and Agriculture and Food – will be crucial to the achievement of the National Park’s purposes as well as the well-being of people living and working in Greater Exmoor. Building is perhaps less obvious, but can be seen as an emergent area that offers real potential to plug significant leaks from the local economy as well as to develop positive linkages to both environmental management and tourism.

### ***Tourism and Recreation***

#### *A vision for 2017*

Our vision for tourism and recreation in Greater Exmoor in 2017 is for a varied yet integrated offer that is built around stronger and more explicit linkages with the natural environment. Greater Exmoor will be widely acknowledged to be at the cutting edge of low environmental impact tourism. Visitors will remember their stay in Greater Exmoor because of the thrill of walking, riding or shooting in an exquisite landscape, because of the vibrant local communities and excellent local food, and because it demonstrates in a very practical way how sustainability can move from a vague idea to a stunning reality. Most importantly, with the experience of a fulfilling, low environmental impact holiday – a real ‘carbon bargain’ – they will take away new understanding and inspiration of how they can play a more active part in this transition. By 2017, young people growing up in Greater Exmoor will stay and have a much better appreciation of the expanded range of livelihood opportunities that can be developed through tourism and recreation in Greater Exmoor.

The **Actions** and **Ideas** identified here, with their emphasis on quality of experience, better coordination, information and marketing, breadth of activities and a year-around offer, and stronger linkages with local food and farming will help deliver this vision.

**Action 12:** Support all initiatives that seek to present the whole of Greater Exmoor and its diverse attractions as a single entity, and work with the DMOs so that they fully appreciate the value of this integrated approach.

**Link:** This **Action** links with **Action 23**.

## *Opportunities*

### Food and accommodation

**Action 13:** Task the Local Economy Broker to work with **Source and Hampers on Exmoor** to further develop supply chains for locally produced or processed food to local shops.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on greater integration within food and drink supply chains and greater collaboration and cooperation between farmers, and between farmers and the supply chain (paragraph 3.7).

**Action 14:** Work with Tourist Information Centres so that they can provide better information and guidance about outlets for various types of local food.

**Action 15:** Work with local food businesses, Exmoor and Quantock Food Links, Visit Exmoor and the Exmoor Food Festival to develop more opportunities for visitors to Greater Exmoor to see and experience the production and processing of local food and drink.

**Action 16:** Work with local food producers, processors and suppliers to monitor and adapt the food hamper service presently being trialled in North Devon with a view to making a similar service available to all visitors to Greater Exmoor.

**Link: Actions 13 - 15** link directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on linking tourism and the environment (paragraph 3.9).

### Game shooting

**Action 17:** Expand local capacity to breed and rear game birds for shoots, possibly linking shoots with land managers in less vulnerable landscapes on the periphery of the area, yet still following the Exmoor Shoot Guidelines.

**Action 18:** Commission more detailed study of local money flows associated with game shooting, to focus particularly on leaks, indirect expenditure and local multipliers (existing or potential, additional to the direct expenditure identified in the PACEC report).

### Outdoor pursuits

**Action 19:** Develop a funding plan that will make it possible to maintain full support for the **ActiveExmoor** project and facilitate links with both educational institutional and business development programmes.

### Getting there and getting around

**Action 20:** Work with transportation service providers, website organisers and information centres to improve the visibility of public transport links to and between settlements, the path and bridleway networks and key attractions.

**Action 21:** Make car-free Exmoor tourism easier by developing integrated ticketing between national rail/coach operators and local operators (buses, WSR, LLCR).

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on creation and improvement of appropriate recreational access to protected landscapes (paragraph 3.9).

**Action 22:** Undertake a feasibility study covering the set up of a rental, maintenance and repair network for low environmental impact cars (e.g. the electric SMART EV that have a 70 mile range or cars running on bio-diesel – see Action 40).

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on creation and improvement of appropriate recreational access to protected landscapes (paragraph 3.9).

**Idea 7:** Could ‘transport tourism’ become an important new and integrating theme for Greater Exmoor?

**Idea 8:** If Greater Exmoor wants to become a premier destination for green, carbon neutral tourism it needs to be bold and plan now to make best use of its assets. For example, opportunities to travel to and around the area without a car should not be seen as simply additional to the current pattern of car-based tourism, nor should moving some traffic to trains and buses be seen as a way to make space for more cars. Rather, could Greater Exmoor pursue ambitious traffic reduction targets; introduce road pricing based on the environmental impact of traffic (not congestion) levels; begin a rolling programme of Quiet Lanes designation; and start closing roads (seasonally or permanently) where this would benefit well-being and the environment?

**Action 23:** Bring the proposed **Heart of Exmoor Centre** to fruition and explore other opportunities for smaller-scale re-use of existing buildings to provide other wet weather attractions.

#### Tourist packages

**Action 24:** Build on the success of the Coleridge Way and develop more activity or interest packages aimed at specific tourist markets, with maximum local sourcing. Explore the feasibility of offering packages around renewable energy development.

## Tourism, recreation and habitat restoration

**Idea 9:** Why not start now on a long-term landscape plan for the Brendons? Such a large-scale project would: deliver landscape and wildlife benefits from habitat creation and/or restoration, e.g. including a mosaic of restored moorland, new woodland and cultivated land; create a larger area in which to spread visitor pressure and within which species can adapt to the stresses of climate change; offer excellent potential for low-impact recreation; and bring significant prestige, income and skills development opportunities. Further, why not consider doing this through a locally controlled social enterprise?

**Link:** This **Idea** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on improving the status and condition of priority habitats and species (paragraph 3.10) and maintaining strong and inclusive communities through social enterprise (paragraph 3.11), and with the **2007 – 2012 Management Plan** by addressing Objective A2 (Targets A2.1 and A2.2).

## Marketing and tourist information

**Action 25:** Develop a strategy to more actively and effectively market Greater Exmoor generally, but also National Park day visits and activities to Butlins visitors and to the more than one million people living within 50 kms. Such a strategy would highlight the special features and value of the Greater Exmoor environment (countryside, landscape, wildlife, tranquillity, dark skies), and perhaps incorporate images of Greater Exmoor as the '*real Eden project*' and/or '*our "local" National Park*'.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on linking tourism and the environment (paragraph 3.9). It also links to **Action 11**.

## **Agriculture and Food**

### *A vision for 2017*

Our vision for food and agriculture in Greater Exmoor in 2017 is based on significantly improved producer profitability. This will be underpinned by a transition from commodity production and the leaking away of value added to a focus on local processing, local markets, quality products, and closer integration with tourism and recreation. Food and drink producers in Greater Exmoor will contribute positively to sustainable environmental management, and this linkage will in turn create added value for them. Producers will have a significantly higher level of involvement with and control over post-production processes which will help underpin increased profitability. Taken together these changes will mean that Greater Exmoor will be well on its way to a low food miles, low carbon food economy. They will also mean that young people will again look to food and agriculture for livelihood opportunities that will allow them to remain in Greater Exmoor while challenging them to confront the issues of environmental management and sustainability that will define the coming decades.

The **Actions** and **Ideas** identified here, with their emphasis on quality, distinctiveness, plugging the value added leaks and coordination will help deliver this vision.

**Action 26:** Commission new work to re-assess the agricultural economy of Greater Exmoor in 2007 or 2008, with a specific focus on the effects of the new support programmes.

#### *Opportunities*

**Action 27:** Use the proposed 'Local Economy Broker' to actively develop local marketing opportunities for Exmoor produced meat products with Butlins, local schools, *Source* etc.

**Link:** This **Idea** links with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on linking tourism with the environment by, for example, via marketing of food and promoting local food to visitors (paragraph 3.9), and through its focus on collaboration (paragraph 3.5) and greater integration within the supply chain (paragraph 3.7).

**Idea 10:** Following suggestions that individual islands in the Windward Islands group may convert to an organic production model, is it possible to envisage a wholesale shift of livestock production within the National Park to an organic basis, so that all livestock could be marketed under a unifying, area-based, quality-assured brand such as '*Organic Exmoor*'? What would be the constraints to and implications of such a move?

**Link:** This **Idea**, while appearing radical, can actually be seen to link directly with the **2007 – 2012 Management Plan** by addressing Objectives E1, E2 and E3 and with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on land management that conserves soil, water and energy resources (paragraph 3.8), sustainable grazing systems (paragraph 3.10, and creating value-added around land-based products (paragraph 3.7).

**Action 28:** Stay abreast of emerging results from the **Eating Biodiversity** project, and particularly any practical implications for local livestock management and the development of the Exmoor Horn Gate to Plate Action Plan.

**Action 29:** Work with EBLEX to review the experience of other breed and locality branding initiatives and develop a proposal for Exmoor as appropriate.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on innovative ways of creating value-added around land-based products (paragraph 3.7), 'support for sustainable grazing systems and production associated with locally distinctive landscapes and high quality environments' (paragraph 3.10), and the conservation of farm animal genetic resources (paragraph 3.10), as well as with the **2007 – 2012 Management Plan** by addressing Objective E5.

**Idea 11:** Is there scope to develop the basis of a new 'signature cuisine' for Exmoor – incorporating locally identifiable ingredients such as whortleberry, cider, lamb and beef – that would help showcase local food and add value for both producers and restaurateurs?

**Link:** This **Idea** links with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on linking tourism with the environment, for example, via marketing of food and promoting local food to visitors (paragraph 3.9).

**Action 30:** Using a social enterprise model (if appropriate) explore options for more direct producer involvement in post-production supply chain steps.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on collaboration (paragraph 3.5), greater integration within the supply chain (paragraph 3.7) and social enterprise (paragraph 3.11).

**Action 31:** Form a broad-based 'Greater Exmoor Livestock Development Group' to push the strategy forward over the coming years.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on collaboration, networking and partnerships (paragraph 3.5), and greater integration within the supply chain (paragraph 3.7).

## ***Building and Renewable Energy***

### *A vision for 2017*

Our vision for building and renewable energy in Greater Exmoor in 2017 is for a sector that is an acknowledged leader in the use of innovation to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits to local people and communities. Specifically, enhanced links between business and education/training providers will mean local businesses can hire young people who bring new skills and who are steeped in ideas around the environment, local materials and sustainability. New building materials and renewable energy systems will be combined with new models of ownership to provide permanently affordable housing. The existing housing stock will be maintained to the highest standards by skilled local tradesmen using local materials. Retrofitting homes and other buildings with conservation measures and renewable energy systems will be a realistic and widely exercised option and will significantly reduce running costs and lower carbon footprints.<sup>15</sup>

The **Actions** and **Ideas** identified here, with their emphasis training, pump-priming and high-visibility examples should help deliver this vision.

### *Opportunities*

**Action 32:** Undertake a feasibility study of the commercial viability of local production of wood fibre board from coniferous forest waste.

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<sup>15</sup> We note that this is very much in line with the DTI's proposed Code for Sustainable Homes and the recent Green Paper that made the case for carbon neutral housing.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on encouraging, promoting and expanding the use of locally grown timber in the region (paragraph 3.7).

**Action 33:** Develop proposals for promoting the use of local materials to builders and home owners for refurbishment, restoration and repair projects.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on encouraging, promoting and expanding the use of locally grown timber in the region (paragraph 3.7).

**Action 34:** Work with Magna Housing, Falcon Housing and other regional housing providers to promote the use of local materials, especially around timber frame construction.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on encouraging, promoting and expanding the use of locally grown timber in the region (paragraph 3.7).

**Action 35:** Work with SWEH to maximise the use of local materials and labour in the Carhampton sustainable housing project and use it as a showcase.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on encouraging, promoting and expanding the use of locally grown timber in the region (paragraph 3.7).

**Idea 12:** Could the sustainability and local economy agendas be pushed even further in relation to the Carhampton housing development by making it a high-profile node in the emerging Greater Exmoor local food economy?

**Action 36:** Collate a register of building contractors in Greater Exmoor with have qualifications and/or experience in sustainable building who could act on a sub-contract basis for housing developers.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on knowledge transfer and collaboration (paragraph 3.5).

**Action 37:** Undertake a skills audit for existing construction workers and work with potential training providers to devise appropriately delivered local training programmes in sustainable construction.

**Action 38:** Link initiatives in vocational training taking place at West Somerset Community College and Kingsmead Community School in Wiveliscombe with employers on and around Exmoor to plan for a skill base for future expansion of sustainable building.

**Link:** These two **Actions** link directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on skills (paragraph 3.5). It is also linked with the Sustainability Appraisal recommendation that ENPA ‘develop and widen its support for training in sustainable construction for local contractors and young people entering the trade’ (Somper, p.48).

**Idea 13:** Can local training programmes in sustainable building be combined with a ‘self-build’ model to help address the demand for permanently affordable housing?

**Action 39:** Undertake feasibility study into development of processing infrastructure for a ‘thermafleece’ type insulation product from sheep’s wool for the local and regional market.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on supporting pastoral regions and their dependence on grazing livestock (paragraph 3.10)

**Idea 14:** Could the demand for locally produced insulation be stimulated through the promotion/extension of the existing Devon household advice service for energy saving across the whole of Greater Exmoor? This would also plug a ‘leak’ of expenditure on energy and improve household income.

**Idea 15:** Could the use of distinctive local materials and renewable energy sources be encouraged by developing appropriate designs that combine local distinctiveness and low energy use – creating a ‘new vernacular’ for Exmoor? Could such design ideas be encouraged by holding a design competition?

**Action 40:** Work with local members of SW Woodfuels and other interested parties to develop a reliable supply chain for woodfuel for key housing developments and other markets.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on encouraging, promoting and expanding the use of locally grown timber in the region (paragraph 3.7) and capturing the ability of woodlands to offer environmental, economic and social benefits (paragraph 3.10).

**Action 41:** Work with Magna Housing to undertake a feasibility study for the development of a solar installation business based in the first instance on retrofitting their existing housing stock.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on developing supply chains for innovative renewable energy products (paragraph 3.7)

**Action 42:** Muster available resources, including the ExSDF, the proposed Local Economy Broker and others to assure the successful establishment of a suite of environmental businesses including bracken composting (funded by ExSDF in January 2007), processing of wood pellets from local sawdust, to

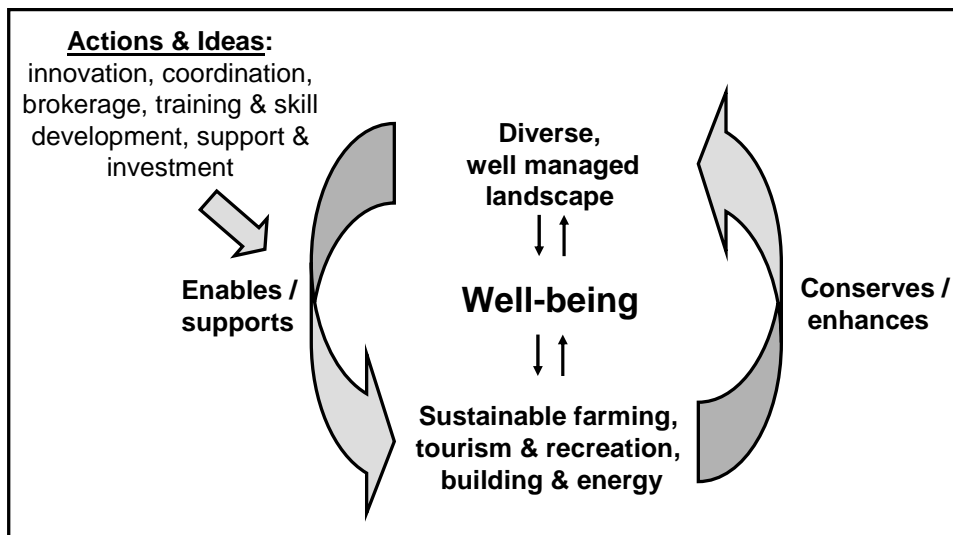
stimulate domestic biomass heating, energy from farm waste, and small-scale reprocessing of catering oil into bio-diesel.

**Link:** This **Action** links directly with the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan** through its focus on developing supply chains for innovative renewable energy products (paragraph 3.7)

## Moving Toward a Sustainable Future for Greater Exmoor

We began this report with a conceptualisation of the links between environment, well-being and sustainable development that we called the ‘Exmoor Model’. In the light of this model, the report highlights a number of **Actions** and **Ideas** that are compatible with both the **National Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012: A Sustainable Future for Exmoor** and the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan**, and have the potential to contribute to sustainable economic development and increased well-being in Greater Exmoor (Figure 9).

Figure 8. Suggested **Actions** and **Ideas** within the ‘Exmoor Model’.



The **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy**, and the **Actions** and **Ideas** that underpin it, reflect an approach to development that is rooted in (1) the environmental, social and economic realities of particular places, (2) asset-based approaches to development and a set of ideas about the relationships between assets and the local economy and (3) an appreciation of how local economies and opportunities are also linked to regional, national and global policies and processes. We have used the images of ‘local money flows’, a ‘leaky bucket’ and ‘plugging the leaks’ to help frame the strategy.

The list of suggested **Actions** should not be seen as a step-by-step formula for sustainable economic development in Greater Exmoor. Rather, they represent stepping off points that will need to be discussed and negotiated, revised in the light of changing policies, priorities and programmes and ultimately brought alive through the interest and commitment of individuals, community groups, businesses, ENPA and the various levels and branches of government exercising responsibility in

Greater Exmoor. This process began on 9 February 2007 at a meeting of the Project Board, where the proposed **Actions** and **Ideas** were discussed.

We recognise that this is a tall order. However, with three touchstones – the National Park purposes, the Exmoor Model making explicit the links between environment, well-being and sustainable development, and the engagement of local people – we believe that the strategy and associated **Actions** and **Ideas** can provide a solid basis for real progress toward the sustainable future for Exmoor envisaged in the **National Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012**.

It is important to highlight again that much of what we have suggested in this report builds on initiatives undertaken over the last five years, many of which were supported or are currently being supported by the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund. These achievements and experience will be invaluable as the local economic development, well-being and sustainability agendas become increasingly interlinked. It is logical therefore, that ExSDF should continue to play a central role in the delivery of this strategy. However, as the focus is explicitly Greater Exmoor, the need for effective coordination with the two county councils, the district councils and the regional bodies will be paramount.

It is clear that much consultation and discussion will be required before any concerted effort to move ahead with this strategy is undertaken. Nevertheless, we can already foresee two basic alternatives in terms of approach. The first would be based around individual projects, perhaps not unlike the present *modus operandi* of the ExSDF. The second possible approach would be more focused and more coordinated, and would both deploy the resources of the ExSDF and seek additional resources, based on a longer-term plan of attack. Given the importance and the magnitude of the challenges, we believe that a more rather than a less coordinated approach would be desirable.

One potential vehicle for the required level of coordination is the **Leader** approach under the new Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13. DEFRA expect evidence of lagging economic performance, and the social and environmental problems that this creates, to be used to target Leader. Local Action Groups (LAGS) will remain an element of the Leader approach, and under the new programme can be either existing Leader groups, existing groups that operate according to the Leader approach, or new groups. These groups are meant to root the Leader approach firmly in the community.

There is a clear opportunity for a Greater Exmoor Leader proposal and a good match between the **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy** outlined here and the **Rural Development Plan for England 2007 – 2013, Draft South West Regional Implementation Plan**. Greater Exmoor had a scheme under Leader II (1995-9) which defined an area beyond the National Park boundaries: a similar approach would assist in overcoming the complex administrative context that characterises Greater Exmoor. However, as the RDPE Leader approach will be limited to investing public money at 50%, many micro and SME businesses will need additional sources of capital and finance. Consequently, creating a mechanism, such as a dedicated Greater Exmoor re-investment fund (**Action 3; Ideas 2 and 3**), to allow private investment in a range of sustainable businesses will be critical.

Finally, it is important to remember that sustainable development is ultimately about the cumulative effects of the actions of individuals, firms, agencies and government. We believe that this **Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy** provides the basis for more coordinated and effective action, using the

environment of Greater Exmoor as a driver for development and well-being within environmental limits.

# Greater Exmoor Strategy for Sustainable Economic Development

This document summaries the proposals from a project undertaken by nef (the new economics foundation [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)) for the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA).

The objective of the project was to ‘provide a better understanding of the economy of the greater Exmoor area and the strategic actions needed to improve well-being and economic prospects; tackle problems, and realise opportunities provided by the designation of Exmoor as a National Park.

## The Context of this Strategy

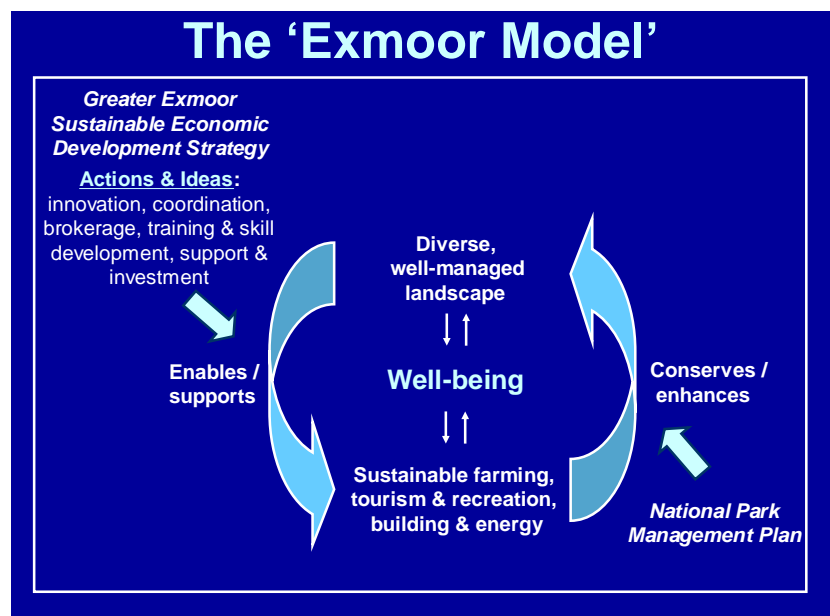
The role of the 2007-2012 Management Plan for Exmoor National Park is to “enhance the qualities that make Exmoor National Park special”. The Plan sets out the desired future for the National Park economy:-

***“By 2020, Exmoor will have a strong economy providing diversity of opportunities that benefit from and contribute to the care and appreciation of Exmoor National Park.”***

## Environment, People & Economy intra-linked

The project was based on the proposition that the environment, the well-being of people in their communities and the development of Exmoor’s economy are inextricably linked, and that well-being simultaneously depends and impacts on both the environment and the economy.

**nef** propose that the **National Park status provides a unique framework for using the environment as an economic driver for delivering increased well-being while respecting environmental limits.** Greater Exmoor can provide an example of this type of ‘one planet development’ for the South West Region.



## Assets first

To foster sustainable development of Exmoor's economy, we should *concentrate on the assets in our communities* as opposed to the problems faced by our communities.

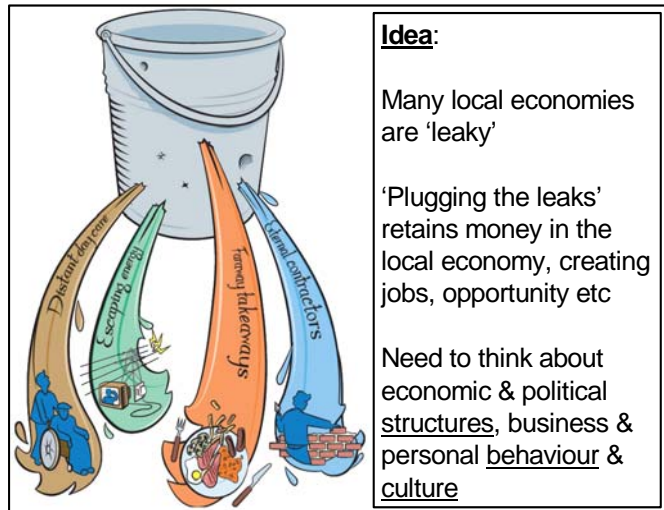
We should aim to build on the assets of the Greater Exmoor area and achieve a diverse, dynamic and resilient local economy. A more self-sustaining and self-reliant economy, using local resources and recirculating money will support local well-being and make a positive contribution to environmental management. We can then resist and absorb shocks from outside Exmoor (Foot & Mouth disease in the past, possibly carbon trading in the future).

### **Asset based activities are already making the Exmoor economy more diverse, dynamic and resilient:**

Some of the businesses that supplied the hunting industry are re-focusing their assets on providing services to other types of visitor to Exmoor. The Exmoor Shoot Guidelines should make that industry more resilient against potential regulation. Some farmers have diversified by converting their buildings to holiday cottages; others are processing and producing foodstuffs from their crops & animals; some accommodation providers are offering and marketing 3/4 night breaks.

Investment from the **Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund** has helped numerous environmental economy businesses and projects. For example, Active Exmoor to train young people to become instructors in adventure sports; the Exmoor Renewable Energy Group to install more small hydro-electric schemes; Exmoor & Quantock Food Links to develop & promote the local food and drink economy; South West Wood Fuels to expand the local wood heating industry; tourism infrastructure such as the Treborough Common Cross-Country course, [www.equinetourism.co.uk](http://www.equinetourism.co.uk) and Wimbleball Lake developments.

## Plug those money leaks



The leaking economy of Exmoor is illustrated by the case of oil, gas, LPG & electricity, most of which is bought from outside Greater Exmoor.

Almost all of the money used to purchase energy leaks from the local economy. As a result, there are no positive local linkages in terms, for example, of job creation, demand for local goods and services or landscape management (which is so vital for Greater Exmoor's tourism businesses).

By investing in modern wood, solar, hydro and small wind power and largely plugging this leak, we can create jobs, improve management of Exmoor woodlands and make Exmoor's electricity and heat provision more resilient against the challenges of carbon pricing and volatility of global energy markets.

**The strength of this strategy is that it is forward looking, proactive and puts Exmoor's distinctiveness at its very core.**

## Re-circulate the money

Many people and businesses already re-circulate money by sourcing goods and services from local companies.

The Exmoor local food and drink distribution cooperative of 28 local producers, **SOURCE**, is helping the catering industry become more dynamic and is stimulating food businesses to diversify their supply chains whilst ensuring they can become resilient against future increases in global food prices (from drought & desertification) and the possible pricing of carbon' food miles'.

**The full nef report** focuses on three central and closely interlinked areas of economic activity in Greater Exmoor: Agriculture and Food, Tourism and Recreation and Building & Renewable Energy. A number of critical themes cut across these areas, including business support, youth, training and affordable housing. The report identifies 43 suggested **Actions** and 13 **Ideas** that should provide a basis for a way forward.

Given the magnitude of the task and the complex administrative context, a coordinated approach to implementation is recommended in which an enlarged version of the **Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund** should play a central role.

The funding Authorities (see logos) propose **SIX** key priority actions:-

### 1) Local Economy brokerage

.....to plug leaks and recirculate money; this may need people and/or a web service and must build on the work of the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund, Rural Enterprise Gateway, Agricultural Advisory Service and economic

development work and funds at local Councils;

### 2) Exmoor ReInvestment Fund + Dragon's Den

.....where public sector and private philanthropic money is invested in businesses that help plug leaks and recirculate local money;

### 3) YouTube 'Space going to Waste' ...connecting those with spare rooms & buildings with those needing more space;

### 4) Affordable Housing

... continuing the delivery of the Exmoor Rural Housing Project, with houses built from local materials and carbon neutral, thus plugging leaks and recirculating money;

### 4b) "Exmoor Sustainable Building Initiative"

... to ensure that the materials and people involved in new and refurbished buildings plug leaks and recirculate money.

### 5) Tourism and Recreation sector

... developing an Exmoor "self-sufficient, low carbon" brand and integrating increased local purchasing, reducing fossil energy use and waste creation to make the industry more resilient against the upcoming challenges of carbon pricing and offer 'Carbon Bargain' quality holidays.

**The involvement of people living and working across the Greater Exmoor area is needed to help deliver these and other actions for the long term benefit of Exmoor.**

**Overall**, the Actions highlight opportunities where focusing on new ideas, putting people in touch and coordinating the flow of ideas, knowledge & communication, providing training & skills development for individuals & businesses and injecting financial investment could have significant impacts on local money flows, the long-term development of Exmoor and peoples' well-being.

Many of the **Actions** and **Ideas** build on on-going initiatives including a number funded in part by the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund. The work of this Fund since 2003 represents an excellent base of experience and achievement upon which the Greater Exmoor Sustainable Economic Development Strategy is built.

Taken individually, a number of these Actions and Ideas might not appear much different from hundreds of other recommendations to stimulate economic development.

**Taken together**, and placed within a model of local economic development that starts with local assets; links the characteristics of the asset base to the diversity, dynamics and resilience of the local economy; and prioritises actions that strengthen local money flows, then **these Actions and Ideas provide the underpinnings of an integrated, area-based strategy for sustainable development.**

We will all know if we have been successful in creating a sustainable economy across Exmoor if:-

- i) Livestock farming is properly rewarded for conserving Exmoor's landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage;
- ii) Exmoor is more actively promoted as a 'carbon bargain' quality tourism destination;
- iii) everyone seeking quiet enjoyment has a high quality experience;
- iv) ways of living and working are moving Exmoor towards becoming a carbon neutral National Park;
- v) the economy develops in ways that benefit from and enhance Exmoor's special qualities; and
- vi) young people living and working on Exmoor are benefiting from the development of the environmental economy.

Download the report from [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk), or call 01398 323665 for a printed copy. To offer involvement in delivering the Actions in the Strategy, contact Angela Lamplough, West Somerset Council on 01984 635318, Ellen Vernon, North Devon District Council on 01271 388368 or Phil Cookson, Exmoor National Park Authority on 01398 323665.

