

Exmoor PARK Life

Keeping you informed
Listening to your views

Contents

New Outdoor Group
– Page 2

Fit for the Future
– Page 3

State of Farming
– Page 4

Outdoor Education
– Page 5

Exmoor's Special Qualities
– Pages 6-7

Access and Recreation Team
– Page 8

National Mapping Programme
– Page 9

Affordable Housing
– Page 11

Help Shape the Future
– Page 12

PARK LIFE IS PUBLISHED ON BEHALF OF THE EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY BY THE WEST SOMERSET FREE PRESS LTD. EDITOR: CLARE O'CONNOR



Photos: Heather Lowther/Sieve Gascott

Boost for Exmoor's moorland

THE future of Exmoor's moorlands has received a significant boost with the news that, after 2 years' work, Exmoor National Park Authority's Landscape Partnership bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for nearly one million pounds has been awarded a First Stage Pass grant of £69,700 to enable the projects to be developed for the next stage of the process.

The initial grant will be used to help develop 23 different moorland projects over the coming year, ready for work to start 'on the ground' in 2009.

Although there is not a guarantee that HLF will fund Exmoor through to this final hurdle, this grant takes the scheme one step further to the final goal of attracting the full grant of £912,500 from the Heritage



Lottery Fund for Exmoor's moorland.

A team from the National Park Authority has led on the scheme, working closely with a number of key partner organisations that have put forward many of the projects.

Kate Mitchell, Moorland Partnership Assistant at Exmoor National Park Authority, said: "The overarching theme for the projects is reconnection, we want to forge new connections between the moorland and the people who live around and visit it.

"The projects include a local schools project to discover how the moorland was used in the Second

World War, a volunteer activity programme with ambitious target of involving 250 volunteers over the 3 years, and an apprentice scheme to train up our moorland managers of the future.

"Most importantly the whole scheme is about people – helping people access, understand, enjoy and celebrate their moorland heritage and so give them the confidence to participate in its conservation and we will want everyone to get involved."

Commenting on the award, Dr Nigel Stone, chief executive of Exmoor National Park Authority, said: "It's great news that we have reached the next stage of our bid to attract funding for Exmoor's moorland and I'd like to thank our partners and the many landowners and farmers for all their help in getting us to this stage."

Tour of Britain returns to Exmoor

AFTER the success of last year's event, the Tour of Britain is set to return to Exmoor this year.

Somerset County Council has collaborated with Exmoor National Park Authority, Devon County Council and South Somerset District Council to bring the Tour of Britain to the region again and, for the first time, the stage is also being supported by the South West of England Regional Development Agency.

Taking place on 9 September, the 185km South West stage is the longest in the race and will have a backdrop of stunning scenery as it takes riders through two designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Exmoor National Park and on to the first ever coastal finish at Burnham-on-Sea.

Exmoor's rugged terrain will again test the riders as they speed through Withypool and revisit Exford and Wheddon Cross and Dunster before passing through Williton, Bishops Lydeard and the Quantock Hills AONB.

Guy Lavender, South West England Director for the 2012 Olympic Games, said: "We are delighted that the South West stage of the Tour of Britain is not only returning here this year, but will incorporate North Devon and the first ever coastal stage finish.

Continued on Page 11



Praise from one of the world's top botanists

Nearly 200 people from all over Exmoor attended the E4Exmoor (Energy for Exmoor) event organised by the Exmoor Trust recently. The event was the brainchild of Edwin Beckett, the Trust's chairman, who sought experts to provide the

best possible advice on the importance of local contributions of micro-energy.

A major coup for event was the attendance of one of the world's foremost botanists, Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance FRS, VMH, former Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Scientific Director of the Eden Project and Visiting Professor at the US National Tropical Botanic Garden Hawaii and the University of Reading, amongst other posts and honours. In his address on the conservation of biodiversity Sir Ghilleen singled out for praise the work of Exmoor National Park Authority and quoted from its Management Plan and the Biodiversity Action Plan.

After his visit, Sir Ghilleen wrote: "I was glad to be invited

to speak on the conservation of biodiversity at the energy day sponsored by the Exmoor Trust because it gave me an opportunity to revisit Exmoor. I spent several days in the previous week walking on Exmoor and gathering information and photographs for the lecture. I already knew the importance of Exmoor from many previous visits mainly as a youth.

Early conservationists were often critical of mixing people and conservation and wanted people removed from conservation areas, but there has been a welcome and gradual acceptance that conservation without the involvement of local people won't work. Exmoor is setting a good example with the many partnerships that are involved in its conservation especially between the National Park Authority and the landowners. I was particularly happy to see the co-operation between the Authority, Butterfly Conservation and landowners to conserve rare butterflies such as the high brown fritillary. I also came across an area where Rhododendron ponticum and laurel were being removed and replaced by native species. Invasive species such as these and Japanese knotweed are one of the biggest threats to Exmoor and I compliment the National Park Authority on their programme to remove such species.

A lot has been done for the habitat since the Biodiversity Action Plan was drafted. It is good to see that it is indeed resulting in so much action to preserve the species and habitats of Exmoor. Congratulations to the managers of this important ecosystem. I will certainly continue to be a frequent visitor to the National Park."

(This is an extract from Sir Ghilleen Prance's remarks, the full article can be found at www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/index/news_2008.htm)

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Exmoor's Farming Future

A recent conference on Exmoor's Farming Future hosted by Exmoor National Park Authority and the Exmoor Society attracted a capacity audience of farmers, landowners and organisations. Eminent speakers included Helen Phillips, Chief Executive of Natural England, Dr Janet Dwyer, an independent expert on European Rural Policy, John Waldon of the South West Uplands Federation and local farmer Guy Everard.

In opening the conference, Rachel Thomas chairman of the Exmoor Society, set the scene by giving the National Park context. She emphasised the special qualities of Exmoor, including its outstanding landscape, wildlife and record of human history stretching back 5000 years. Most of these qualities were dependent on farming systems, farming decisions and the received wisdom of the special skills of the farming community honed through generations of managing Exmoor.

Lively questions and sometimes angry statements from delegates covered such matters as TB, the need to identify more clearly the benefits produced by farming, the need for local abattoirs, the time spent on the amount of bureaucracy and paperwork and how much funding actually reached the farmers, rather than lost on red tape. Several farmers spoke with great passion about the lack of consultation over farming practices.

"The National Park Authority takes the future of Exmoor's farmers very seriously"

Commenting after the conference, chief executive of Exmoor National Park Authority Dr Nigel

Stone said: "It was gratifying to see so many of the people that care for Exmoor's landscape at the conference and to be able to listen to such interesting and thought provoking speeches.

"The National Park Authority takes the future of Exmoor's farmers very seriously. Livestock grazing on Exmoor has created a landscape of extraordinary beauty, a unique cultural heritage, rich biodiversity, and a wealth of environmental goods. Farming is a way of life on Exmoor, and we are doing all we can to ensure that farming has a prosperous future in the National Park. Later this month, for example we will be meeting with a European agricultural advisor from Brussels on the opportunities for additional funding support through the Common Agricultural Policy.

On the 27th June at Dartington Hall, the National Park Authority is supporting a South West Regional Conference on farming in the SW Uplands. This event will to seek cross-regional support for action to improve the prospects for livestock farming in Bodmin, Dartmoor and Exmoor.

The National Park Authority is also working closely with Defra to ensure that the new Upland Entry Level Scheme, which will replace the current Hill Farming Allowance, is appropriate for Exmoor. It is also making sure that the environmental benefits provided by Exmoor are fully recognised in the targeting by Natural England of funding through the Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment scheme."

New outdoor group for Exmoor



From the left at the launch, Rachel Hayes, Katrina Allin and Mike Bishop from Active Exmoor, West Somerset Council leader Cllr Keith Ross and Dan French from Active Exmoor

Photo: Heather Lovther/ENPA

In April Active Exmoor hosted a triple launch at Wimbleball Lake, unveiling the Exmoor Outdoor Group, the new Active Exmoor 36 page full colour magazine and the new look website, the one stop portal for activities on Exmoor.

The day showcased everything that Exmoor has to offer with activities from archery to windsurfing available for attendees to try with everyone getting involved.

The Exmoor Outdoor Group aims to encourage adults to get out on Exmoor over the summer weekends whilst providing the opportunity for people to try something new, meet like-minded people and see the best that Exmoor has to offer.

All necessary kit is provided and expert tuition and support is always on hand to help you learn new skills and techniques. All you need to do is book and turn up!

Dan French, Club Development Officer, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for those people who are unsure about trying something new.

We are here to make sure you have a great time and you want to come back to Exmoor".

Everyone's welcome whether you fancy a pleasant walk on the moors, a first time experience of rowing on Wimbleball Lake or an adrenaline fuelled experience coasting the stunning Exmoor coastline.

A selection of activities and dates for this summer includes:

Multi Activity Day - Saturday 21 June; High Ropes - Saturday 28 June; Rock Climbing - Saturday 5 July; Coastal Walk - Saturday 12 July; Canadian canoeing - Saturday 19 July; Water sports activity day - Saturday 26 July; Surfing - Saturday 2 August; Windsurfing - Saturday 17 August.

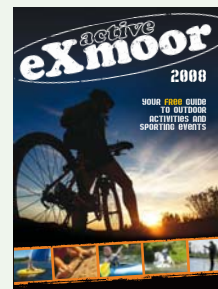
There are also more events in August and September so if you would like to find out more contact Dan French on 01398 324599 or visit www.activeexmoor.com.

Copies of the Active Exmoor magazine (pictured) are available at sporting retail outlets across the South West and in Tourist Information Centres.

On the website you can sign up for the regular e-newsletter and be in for a chance to win a mountain bike, a stay in at Simonsbath House hotel or a Garmin hand held GPS device.

Active Exmoor is a sports tourism project funded by Sport England, Somerset County Council, Devon County Council, Somerset Rural Renaissance, Dulverton Town Council and the Exmoor National Park Sustainable Development Fund.

For further information on any of the above ring 01398 324599 or visit www.activeexmoor.com.



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'Fit for the future'

THE past twelve months has been a period of change within the National Park Authority.

We have adopted a new five year plan for Exmoor with an ambitious range of targets to be achieved by 2012. The Authority has a central role in leading and supporting delivery of the plan and we have reviewed our staffing levels and roles to ensure that we are well placed to focus on the plan priorities.

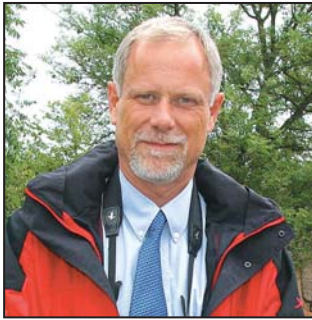
Any major transition places a period of uncertainty and disruption in the day-to-day work of the organisation and we have not been at full strength for the past eight months while staff changes have taken place.

Despite these pressures, staff have responded brilliantly and we can point to a great deal of achievement during the past year – much of which is reflected within this issue of Park Life.

We are now in a period when new staff are joining us and we will soon be close to full strength.

Exmoor's Special Qualities

The focus of the Plan is on enhancing the qualities that make Exmoor special (see pages 6 and 7) the distinct, diverse and inspiring Exmoor landscape of rounded hills and ridges; the spectacular coastline; the open moorlands free from intrusive development; the mosaic of habitats and diversity of wildlife, including the majestic red deer; the complex and rich historic environment tracing the activity of people over the past 8,000 years; the deeply rural community with



close links to the land and strong local traditions; the vital contribution of livestock farming, and the exceptional opportunities for access, recreation, enjoyment and learning.

Exmoor faces considerable challenges in enhancing these qualities that come together to make the National Park such a special place, and the plan has identified four overarching challenges and fourteen priorities for action.

Responding to climate change

The launch of the Plan coincides with a period of considerable concern about the degree to which human activities are adversely affecting the global environment and major economic uncertainty arising from rising food and fuel prices.

These global pressures and more specific

changes in the Common Agricultural Policy and UK economy mean very uncertain times for farming and tourism, in particular – the very activities that underpin livelihoods for the majority of people living and working in the National Park.

The Authority is determined to play its role not only in conserving and enhancing the National Park landscape, wildlife and historic environment of Exmoor but also in responding to climate change and meeting the needs of local communities.

Of the fourteen priorities for action, six specifically address economic and community needs:

- ❑ Properly rewarding livestock grazing
- ❑ Becoming a carbon-neutral National Park
- ❑ Developing the economy in ways that benefit from and enhance Exmoor's special qualities
- ❑ Improving economic prospects for young people
- ❑ Active promotion of Exmoor as a sustainable tourism destination
- ❑ Enhancing the stock of more affordable housing

The Authority has established a new Sustainability and Economy Unit whose main role will be to work with local councils, businesses and communities to work together to address these vital local priorities and accessing additional funding from regional and national sources.

*Dr Nigel Stone
Chief Executive,
Exmoor National Park Authority*

National Parks Week July 28 to August 3

“Who likes burgers, kebabs, shepherd's pie and Sunday roast?” we ask. “We do!” cry the children. “Where do they come from?” we ask. “The shops!” the youngsters reply.

2008 is the year of Food and Farming, and the theme of this year's National Parks Week from July 28th to August 3rd is “National Parks – Your Countryside on a Plate”.

National Parks all over the UK are backing the movement by encouraging farmers who embrace environmentally-friendly farming practices to open their farm gates to school children, especially from the towns and help them understand the connection between good practice and good food.

National Park Authorities are also encouraging residents and visitors to think about and buy local food and drink whenever possible.

Your support will benefit your local economy on Exmoor and if you travel to other National Parks please think about seeking out locally produced food and drink.

Shop from wherever you are

Many Exmoor items are now available to buy online by visiting www.nationalparks.gov.uk/exshp

Choose from publications about Exmoor, walking guides, cycle leaflets including the new graded mountain bike map and maps of the area. Items can be posted throughout the country.

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Survey reveals that tourism contributes £80m to local economy

Visitors to Exmoor National Park spend £80 million a year in the local economy, an economic activity monitor commissioned by Exmoor National Park Authority reveals.

This money contributes to the success of businesses in the accommodation, retail, food and drink, recreation and transport sectors and supports over 2000 jobs.

There are over 400 accommodation businesses alone relying on visitor spend for their income in Exmoor National Park.

Global Tourism Solutions (UK) Ltd used base data compiled by the Exmoor National Park Authority QUEST Project in their calculations of the value of the tourism industry on Exmoor in 2005 to 2007.

These estimates provide an indicative base for monitoring trends and have shown that the level of tourism expenditure has increased during this time.

In January 2008, accommodation businesses were asked to contribute to a local occupancy levels survey in order to provide more robust data to feed into the monitor than was currently available.

Julie Lovett from the National Park Authority said: “Statistics gathered regionally and nationally use a very small sample of businesses within the National Park and, although this is sufficient to provide an estimate for the region, it is not enough to provide a reliable estimate for this much smaller area.

“We were delighted with the response to the survey which



Photo: Heather Lowther/ENPA

was excellent and the exercise will be repeated over the next three years to feed into future research.”

This survey showed annual occupancy levels in the National Park to be 57% for self-catering accommodation and 48% for serviced accommodation (bed and breakfasts, guest houses, hotels and inns). Levels were much higher during the busiest times of year, from April to October.

A National Parks awareness survey carried out in 2007 showed that awareness of

Exmoor had considerably increased since the last survey was conducted, with 13% of those interviewed naming Exmoor when asked to list the National Parks in the country.

This was the fifth highest awareness among the 12 National Parks in England and Wales.

A survey of visitors to Exmoor in 2005 showed the top six aspects important to visitors when deciding to visit the Exmoor area were scenery, tranquility, Exmoor National Park, outdoor activities (especially walking), coastline and wildlife.

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Photo: David Lloyd

The state of farming on Exmoor

Farming has never been easy on Exmoor, and the challenges are recognised in 1947 the Hill Farming Act and by the designation of much of Exmoor as a Severely Disadvantaged Area with regard to agriculture.

The ability to farm profitably has only been possible for many because of the input of public funding through agriculture and environmental payments such as the Hill Farm Allowance and Environmentally Sensitive Area programme.

A recent survey by University of Exeter based on detailed accounts from a sample of Exmoor and Dartmoor SDA farms indicates that public funding in 2006 made up 45% of farm income, on average.

Over recent years this funding support has been moving from encouragement to produce food towards greater recognition of the role farming plays in a range of other public benefits including landscape management, wildlife conservation, public access and water quality.

However, the changes in funding regimes are having an adverse effect on farm incomes in Exmoor and the other uplands of the South West while, in effect, moving funding support 'down the hill' to areas which arguably provide far lower levels of public benefit.

Costs increasing

Future prospects are being

made considerably worse by massive rises in many farm costs including fuel, feed and fertilisers, due to considerable increases in global oil and food prices.

And, as if that weren't problem enough, farms face more and more regulation, increasing incidence of bovine TB and the new threat of Bluetongue disease.

One of the few glimmers of hope has been a small increase in livestock prices in recent months.

More hope is provided by the growing recognition of the particular problems being faced by upland farmers in the region.

Last year, a survey by the newly-formed South West Uplands Federation brought together data from Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor and began to raise awareness of the issues.

Of particular concern is that there are now few incentives to maintain livestock grazing in some of the less productive areas, particularly the important moorland areas of all three moors.

The result of less grazing, particularly by cattle, will be a substantial change in moorland character including increased gorse and scrub.

New Task Force

Last December, an initiative of the National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA), Dartmoor and Exmoor National

Park Authorities and Duchy of Cornwall took up the concerns raised by the SW Uplands Federation to bring together a new South West Uplands Task Force.

As well as the previously named organisations, the task force includes representatives of Defra, Rural Payments Agency, Government Office South West, South West Regional Development Agency, Natural England, Environment Agency, South West Tourism and Royal Society for Protection of Birds as well as farming representatives from the three moors.

The principal aims of the Task Force are to raise awareness of the problems of upland farming in the region, to influence national agricultural policy and secure additional support.

A regional conference is being arranged at Dartington Hall on 27 June to bring together farmers and landowners, regional and national organisations to sign up to a range of measures to help secure a more certain future for upland farming in the region.

Exmoor National Park Authority and local farming and landowning representatives are actively involved in the task force and ensuring that our particular concerns are being communicated to as wide an audience as possible.

Exmoor Ancient Woodland Project

June 2007 saw the launch of an exciting new partnership between Exmoor National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission.

The Exmoor Ancient Woodland Project has been set up to enhance the quality of Exmoor's ancient semi-natural woodlands, expand the resource of native woodland and increase sustainable timber production.

The project area covers all of Exmoor and neighbouring parts of North Devon, Mid Devon and West Somerset. Landowners are being offered a premium package of Forestry Commission woodland grants as well as free help and advice to help target areas for improvement.

Over the last 9 months the Project has worked with over 35 landowners and woodland businesses across the Priority Area on a range of improvement measures.

During the next year, the Project team are keen to work with landowners who want to plant new areas of native woodland.

Ben Philipps, Ancient Woodland Project Officer, said: "Over the last century many ancient woodlands have become isolated and fragmented, which means the wildlife within them has little chance to move or adapt.

"One of our key priorities is to extend, buffer and link existing ancient woodlands with areas of new woodland planting. Helping to ensure these habitats and species are resilient to climate change in this way will become increasingly important.

"Planting new woodlands can be incredibly rewarding. In a fairly short time period the trees will establish and new woodland species will colonise. Woodlands are our richest terrestrial habitat and can also provide an incredibly important source of local timber".

One landowner who will see these benefits is Oliver Edwards, who with the support of Exmoor National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission, planted 18,500 trees at his farm near Exford.

Mr Edwards is clearly pleased with the results: "We planted the woodland in 2004 because we wanted to do our bit for the environment. We also have a campsite and thought our guests would enjoy spending time in the woodland.

"It took a lot of hard work to ensure the woodland was properly planted, protected and weeded but the effort is paying off. Many of the trees are over 6 feet tall already."

As well as working with landowners to improve existing woodland and plant new native woodlands, the Exmoor Ancient Woodland Project team are also eager to promote the use of local timber across Exmoor. In particular the woodfuel market



Farmer Oliver Edwards has planted 18,500 trees at his farm

is being heavily promoted.

Exmoor is well placed for developing a woodfuel industry because it has a considerable woodland area, a favourable climate for growing trees, and a growing expertise in this area.

Ben Philipps believes that woodfuel is an important future market for local timber: "I strongly believe that with rapidly rising oil prices, more people will turn to wood as a source of energy.

"We will be working closely with our Sustainability and Economy team to ensure that residents of Exmoor are aware of the benefits of woodfuel. We can help co-ordinate the supply of woodfuel, and can advise landowners on the different types of installations available".

Many of Exmoor's broadleaved woodlands have been neglected, and are in need of management to diversify their structure and increase light levels. Many conifer woodlands are also suffering a lack of management because there are not many markets for small diameter softwoods.

By creating a demand for timber, through the increased use of woodfuel, the Project hopes to give landowners an economic incentive to manage their woodlands. This has significant benefits for the region's wildlife, as well as the local economy.

If you would like more information on the Exmoor Ancient Woodland Project, the use of woodfuel in the region, or on planting new woodlands, please contact Ben Philipps, at Exmoor National Park Authority, on 01398 322267.

Exmoor eco project schools' logo competition winner

Exmoor Red – an eco-project which uses harvested bracken as a new 100% peat free Exmoor soil conditioner – was launched in April this year.

At the launch the winner of the partnership logo competition was announced at St Michael's C of E School in Minehead.

Partnership working lies at the heart of the 'Exmoor Red' – with Wiveliscombe-based environmental consultants Aardvark EM Ltd and Exmoor National Park Authority working together through the Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund.

A competition was run with schools in and around Exmoor, whereby children were invited to design a logo, which will now be used on the Exmoor Red product to symbolise this collaboration.

The winner of the competition, Michael Ward (8), from St Michael's School, incorporated a stag in his eye-catching logo and will receive a family day out at Dunster Castle, together with £50 spending money and £100 for his school to use in an environmentally-based project.

St Michael's Headmistress Mrs Boulton said: "I am absolutely delighted with Michael's achievement and am very proud of him.

"It is also superb timing as we are taking part in the Eco Schools Quality Mark this year and we can use the

prize money in our associated work. It is a wonderful way to get the children focused and interested in environmentally-driven projects".

Exmoor Red is a soil conditioner created from bracken harvested and composted in the heart of the National Park. It is environmentally-friendly, 100% peat-free and great news for everyone concerned with preserving the National Park's unique habitat.

2008 is the pilot year for the product which will be trialled and tested in a number of National Trust and private commercial gardens around the county before its launch to the market in spring 2009.


Mark Clayton, MD at Aardvark EM Limited, said: "We wanted to get local children involved in Exmoor Red from the start as the project supports a sustainable future for their landscape.

"They will hopefully want to be involved in future educational programmes around the bracken on Exmoor and a contribution from every bag of compost sold will be given to CareMoor, the National Park's environmental support scheme."

Farmer Alan Collins, who is also a member of Exmoor National Park Authority, said: "The vegetation of the moor is changing year by year due to decreased grazing and the effects of climate change. As a result, the bracken is spreading and needs to be



managed. "Exmoor Red plays a valuable role in this at the same time as providing an additional income to local farmers and supporting agribusiness on Exmoor with a number of local partners."



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Pinkery Centre: 'The Exmoor Classroom'

As part of the Education Service, Pinkery is the Exmoor National Park Authority's residential Centre for Outdoor Education and provides a unique environment in which to study.

Our aim is to foster awareness of, and concern for, the environment and we see fun and enjoyment as an important element in this process.

As well as facilities for environmental study we can offer a range of outdoor activities, mainly at an introductory level.

Orienteering, problem-solving activities, shelter-building and camping can all take place on-site, and we can also provide equipment and instruction for novice canoeing, rock climbing and abseiling, and mountain biking.

The Centre stands in a superb isolated setting on the southern side of The Chains, the high spine of Exmoor. At over 400

metres above sea level some claim that it may be the highest education establishment in the country.

The Centre's immediate environment offers a wealth of opportunities for exploration and discovery in a wide range of subjects, with groups of all ages, and its location also allows easy access to the vast variety of habitats and landscapes of Exmoor.

The Centre began life as one of the farmsteads created in the 19th century by John and Frederick Knight, and worked as a farm until 1969, when it was purchased by Somerset County Council.

Since 1994, it has been owned and managed by the National Park Authority and has developed into a comfortable, secure and flexible base from which groups can enjoy the opportunities that Exmoor offers.

Pinkery accommodates groups of 32, plus staff, in mod-

ern bedrooms, the majority of which have an en-suite shower and toilet. It also offers a teaching room, two lounge areas, drying facilities, and a separate dining area.

Most visiting groups prefer to do their own catering, finding that not only is this cost-effective, but also gives maximum flexibility.

Our well equipped kitchen makes this a relatively simple task. However, if self-catering is not appropriate to your needs it is often possible to provide a fully catered course - please feel free to ask.

Our programmes are normally created by the staff who are bringing the group, with assistance from the full-time Centre Manager. This ensures that the experiences offered are relevant to the particular needs of the visiting group.

Users range from primary schools, where emphasis is often on a wide range of experiences, some directly related to



Pinkery Centre for Outdoor Education

Photo: Heather Lowther/ENPA

the curriculum, others more generally concerned with personal development, through secondary groups, including A level field study, and Duke of Edinburgh Award training, through to higher education establishments, and a wide range of community-

based groups - in short any group who can benefit from the opportunities that Exmoor offers.

If you are a teacher or a group leader looking for a fantastic residential opportunity, why not contact us to discuss ways in

which we can help you to get the best of your time on Exmoor.

Dave Huxtable,
Pinkery Centre Manager
Tel: 01643 831437
FAX: 01598 741149

Education – at the heart of learning

THE National Park Authority's Education Team has a new look but is led by a face familiar to many.

Dave Gurnett, who has been with the Authority for 19 years, is now the Education Manager and his unbounded enthusiasm for, and commitment to, Exmoor represents the key to learning. 'Awe and wonder' are his watch words. Once

we have sparked that emotional response we can lead young people on a voyage of discovery and delight.

The Team also undertake activities beyond 'formal' education. Working with two Education Support Officers, Simon Avison and Patrick Watts-Mabbott, a wide range of programmes is offered to help people learn about, enjoy and experience Exmoor.

Simon has particular responsibility for 'social inclusion and outreach' - working with people who may not have had the opportunity or even thought about visiting Exmoor before; or live here and don't have the same opportunities as those of us who take Exmoor for granted.

However, there are thousands of people who find it difficult to have an 'Exmoor Experience' - Simon has worked with groups from Bridgewater, Taunton and also with local youngsters from Exmoor parishes to try and make Exmoor accessible to everyone.

Patrick has particular responsibility for coordinating the Exmoor Conservation Volunteer Partnership (working with the Crown Estate, National Trust, South West Lakes Trust and Somerset Wildlife Trust), to enable people to put something back in to the environment they value - enhancing the qualities that make Exmoor special.

Projects range from scrub bashing (clearance) and footpath maintenance to dormouse and habitat surveys.

And it's goodbye from him . . .

After 21 years, Alan Bailey has retired as Head of Pinkery Centre.

Alan's enthusiasm has made Pinkery a special place with a million memories for thousands of children, particularly from Devon and Somerset, but also from further afield.

In fact, Pinkery has hosted groups from all over the world - with everyone getting their own, unique Pinkery experience.

David Huxtable joins the Education Team and takes over from Alan as the Centre Manager.



Alan Bailey has helped tens of thousands of children understand and enjoy Exmoor

Photo: Heather Lowther/ENPA

One of the greatest challenges for planners and land owners is trying to accommodate new farm buildings on agricultural holdings whilst ensuring that the landscape of the National Park is protected.

The nature of farming on many holdings is changing with the use of larger equipment, the amalgamation of farm holdings and the need to house cattle due to TB restrictions. This has led to planning applications for large farm buildings often on sloping sites, so typical of Exmoor.

In simple terms the continued extensive farming of the land helps to maintain the special and distinctive landscape of the National Park. Yet to enable this farming to successfully take place there is often the requirements for large modern farm buildings, which in themselves can potentially have a significant landscape impact. There is no easy answer.

Over the last five years there have been 17 applications for large farm buildings (more than 450 sqm) across the National Park, of which 16 have been permitted.

Most applications have been successful because of the success of pre-application discussions between land owners and planners.

Finding the most appropriate site is the key. Generally new buildings should be grouped with others, set down in the site if possible, the roof line stepped, external materials of timber boarded elevations and

anthracite cement fibre roof and with extensive landscaping, often in the form of hedgebanks and tree planting.

On some sites the land is too prominent or sensitive to accommodate a building but usually with careful planning an appropriate solution can be found which allows the development of the farm business and the protection of the landscape.

If you are considering the erection of a farm building and

wish to receive the advice of planning officers then either an e-mail to plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk or a letter to Exmoor House will help start the process prior to a planning application.

Including a sketch of the proposed barn and siting together with details of the land holding and present farm activity will allow planning officers to examine the proposals before meeting you on site.

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Consultation on Blackpitts options

TOWARDS the end of 2006 the National Park Authority acquired the isolated dwelling in the centre of the Exmoor Forest 'grass moor' at Blackpitts.

At its meeting in February of this year, the Authority agreed two objectives for the future of this area:

- To enhance the naturalness and the open moorland character as viewed from the B3223 road corridor between Brendon Two Gates and Prayway Head and from the major recreational walking routes in the area - Two Moors Way and MacMillan Way

West

- To enable the provision of a suitable dwelling for a person solely or mainly working, or last working, in the locality in agriculture (as defined in Section 336 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990), or in forestry, or a widow or widower of such a person, and to any resident dependants.

How best to achieve these objectives is a matter of considerable local debate. The key decision will be whether they can be best achieved by retaining a dwelling at

Blackpitts location or seeking an alternative location for a new dwelling closer to Simonsbath or other nearby settlement.

A series of potential options or scenarios have been proposed and these will be the subject of public consultation during June and July this year.

If you would like to see the alternatives and express your views please access the Authority website and follow the links to consultation, write to the Authority or look out for news of consultation events in the local newspapers. Website: www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/consultation



Exmoor's special qualities

Exmoor's special qualities are central to helping us decide what is most important about Exmoor that we should seek to conserve and enhance for the benefit of people today and for future generations living in and visiting the National Park. There is considerable agreement on the qualities that make Exmoor special amongst people who know and love Exmoor:

A complex and rich historic landscape that reflects how people have lived in, exploited and enjoyed Exmoor over the past 8000 years, including burial mounds on ridges, discrete stone settings, ancient farmsteads and settlements, picturesque villages and historic estates

A distinct and diverse landscape of softly rounded hills and ridges, with heather and grass moors, spectacular coastal views, deeply incised wooded valleys, high sea cliffs, fast flowing streams, traditional upland farms and characteristic beech hedgebanks

A deeply rural community closely linked to the land with strong local traditions and ways of life



Large areas of open moorland providing a sense of remoteness, wildness and tranquillity rare in southern Britain

A mosaic of habitats supporting a great diversity of wildlife including herds of wild red deer, rich lichen communities, rare fritillary butterflies, bats, and other species uncommon in southern Britain

A landscape that provides inspiration and enjoyment to visitors and residents alike

A farmed landscape with locally distinctive breeds such as Red Devon cattle, Devon Closewool, and Exmoor Horn sheep, and herds of free living Exmoor ponies

A landscape mostly free from intrusive development such as major roads, power lines, military activities, quarrying, mining, large scale developments, light pollution and clutter

An exceptional rights of way network and extensive areas of open country, providing superb opportunities for walking, riding and cycling

Enhancing the qualities that make Exmoor special



Out and about on Exmoor



The National Park Authority has a target to make sure that 95% of the rights of way network is open and easy to use to a National standard by March 2011.

A full network survey in 2006 showed that only 43% met that standard and the Access and Recreation Team, working with the Field Services Team, have prioritised their work based on this information.

An annual random survey in 2008 showed that work undertaken had improved the network to 88.5% open and easy to use.

The National Park Authority sees the public rights of way network as the backbone to getting out and about on Exmoor to enjoy the special qualities of the area. These routes also make critical links to the more than 18,000 hectares of open countryside that the public can explore on foot.

When you are out and about on Exmoor keep an eye open for our Rangers who are also members of the Access and Recreation Team. They play an important role in looking after the National Park as well as acting as a point of contact between residents, visitors and the National Park Authority.

It's their job to try and balance the conservation of Exmoor with recreational activities whilst bearing in mind the needs of the local community. National Park Rangers are always happy to offer help and guidance to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable time.

Between them, the Rangers and the Field Services Team look after the more than 1,000km of paths in the National

Park.

Next time you come upon a small wooden sign which points towards your destination along a path, spare a thought for the story that lies behind that fingerpost. Every year tons of timber is produced from the National Park Authority's woodlands as a bi-product of conservation management work undertaken by the woodland team at field services depot based at Exford.

Some of the wood is left on the ground to form dead wood habitats to encourage invertebrates and the remainder is then either sold as firewood.

The better quality timber is carefully seasoned and stored and then milled at the Authority's historic sawmill at Simonsbath. The various sizes and lengths of wood then go back to the workshop where the Field Services Team transforms it into the distinctive signposts, bridges, gates and seats that you see throughout the National Park. A routing machine, guided freehand, is used to write the lettering on the wooden signposts.

The finished articles are then taken out and put in place where needed. The Field Services Team is also responsible for cutting back and clearing the vegetation along the paths, many of which would be impenetrable without this vital service.

● Pictured top, the Access and Recreation Team - from the left, Public Rights of Way and Access Officer Abbie Keeper, Ranger Richard Eales, Ranger Team Leader Matt Wilson, Rangers Ione Willcock and Tim Parish, and Access and Recreation Manager Paul Hawkins



Left, Pete Norrish, Brian Retallick and Paul Iles from the Field Services Team erecting fencing at Winsford, and right, Brian clearing a fallen tree



Photos: Brian Pearce

Controlling invasive Rhododendron

CULBONE woods have long suffered from the steady spread of invasive Rhododendron ponticum, but now the National Park Authority has secured a substantial grant from the Forestry Commission to reverse this and allow native vegetation to recover.

Rhododendron ponticum is a successful invader as it casts a dense shade that only it can regenerate under, it changes the soil conditions so that other things cannot grow, it grows vigorously and readily, and it takes many years of continued treatment to eradicate.

In its native Asia it grows in balance with other similar species, but here in the UK it has no competitors and so can spread rapidly.

In recent years, large areas of the 180ha Exmoor National Park Authority owned woodland at Culbone, near Porlock, have become infested with dense stands of rhododendron.

This is threatening the regeneration of native species, including the 3 endemic species of whitebeam that exist nowhere else in the world but this stretch of coastline.

The National Park Authority has now managed to secure funding over the next four years from the Forestry Commission's

Woodland Improvement Grant. This will be used to employ local contractors, who will work through Culbone using a range of techniques, and in some areas specialist climbing equipment, beginning this summer.

Andy Player, Conservation Advisor (Trees and Woodlands) said: "We understand that rhododendron is an attractive part of the Exmoor landscape at times, particularly when in flower, but in Culbone it is beginning to cause a major threat to the native species that characterise the woodland.

"The terrain here is steep, and in places the rhododendron is very dense, so this grant from the Forestry Commission will be put to good use in employing specialist contractors who will firstly stop any further spread, and then will set about controlling the regeneration of saplings. "Hopefully in five years time the woodland will be pretty much free from rhododendron."

These works will, in combination with further thinning, coppicing, and continued monitoring of success, improve the condition of these magnificent woods so that they can be home to an even more diverse range of species and so that they are more robust in the face of future climate change.



Japanese knotweed a threat too

JAPANESE knotweed has recently been classified as one of the top ten threats to our native terrestrial flora.

As you may know there is a big problem with this highly invasive species within the National Park.

For a number of years the Exmoor Knotweed Control Project (a partnership between the Environment Agency, Exmoor National Park Authority, Natural England and the National Trust) has been tackling the problem.

Many of the sites which were first treated through the project 7 or 8 years ago are now much reduced; in fact at some of these sites it is now hard to find any evidence of these pests.

Thanks are due to all those who have helped us with this project to date. We would certainly not be seeing such success without the essential input of those who have reported sites to us so that they can be treated through the project.

But, despite this initial success, we still have a long way to go before we can feel confident that knotweed is no longer posing a threat to our native wildlife.

Japanese is the most abundant knotweed within the National Park, but Himalayan and giant knotweed are also invasive aliens targeted through the project.

The successful eradication of these alien species depends on us knowing where all occurrences of knotweed are located. And for this we continue to need your help.

Let us know
If you see any knotweed we would be grateful if you could please let us know. We may know about it already, and if you have access to the internet you can check our online map to see whether it is a known site or not.

Alternatively if you pop along to any of our National Park Centres or Porlock Tourist Information Centre you will be able to view a map of the area showing known knotweed sites. If you know of a new one simply stick a pin in the map!

All your records are incredibly valuable to us, so if in doubt please, please get in touch. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Exmoor's past - an aerial perspective

The work of the National Mapping Programme on Exmoor

The English Heritage National Mapping Programme (NMP) collates and interprets information contained on air photographs in order to produce a map of England's archaeology from the Neolithic period to the twentieth century.

NMP projects typically contribute to understanding in two ways, through the discovery of new sites or better understanding of known sites, but equally importantly, by providing an overview of the archaeology of landscapes.

During the 20th century, most aerial archaeological survey was devoted to taking aerial photographs and building collections of them.

Millions of these aerial photographs have been archived by the National Monuments Record, local collections usually in Historic Environment Records (HERs) and the Cambridge University collection.

Although many exciting archaeological discoveries have been made from aerial photographs, the majority of the archaeological sites on the photographs have either never been looked at or considered in any detail – in other words, exciting discoveries are still to be made on existing aerial photographs.

Archaeology which is visible on an aerial photograph needs to be interpreted by a specialist and it is usually the case that many photographs are needed to build up a picture of an archaeological site or landscape. This picture is developed by the accurate mapping of the information to provide interpretations of the sites and landscapes.

The NMP survey of Exmoor National Park is one of several surveys in the south west of England, including the Mendip Hills and the Quantock Hills.

Helen Winton
Senior Investigator,
Aerial Survey and
Investigation,
English Heritage

Work is underway

Work began on the Exmoor National Park National Mapping Programme survey in April 2007 and over the next two years the Exmoor NMP team, based in the English Heritage Office in Exeter, will analyse over 15,000 aerial photographs to produce the first detailed archaeological landscape map of Exmoor National Park.

The survey will cover 809 square kilometres (over 300 square miles), including a small area outside the National Park.

Along Exmoor's coast the survey has recorded evidence of human activity from the Neolithic period to the twentieth century. Some sites are enigmatic, some mundane, but all add to the growing picture of Exmoor's historic landscape.

Changing perceptions – more Exmoor enigmas

Exmoor NMP has identified a previously unrecognised monument which is not only of national significance but also of a type not previously recognised on Exmoor.



Local knowledge can be vital to archaeological research. This "landscape graffiti" can be seen on photographs of 1979. Are you JW or SC?

Photo: Crown copyright. Ordnance Survey OS79/013 198 17 April 1979

This enigmatic site, perched above the precipitous coastal cliffs of Combe Martin, encloses the summit of Little Hangman. It is also visible only on a single air photograph.

The site is reminiscent of a tor cairn, as found on Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor, but is significantly different in construction and setting – neither Dartmoor nor Bodmin have a coastline!

Its precarious location perched at the top of a 1000 ft cliff seems to have held special significance and is a good example of how the work of NMP is changing perceptions about Exmoor's past.

Keeping you up to date

Once completed, the survey's results will be deposited in Exmoor National Park Authority's Historic Environment Record at Dulverton and English Heritage's National Monument Record in Swindon, and as such will be available to everyone.

However, it is the nature of aerial survey that the work is never truly finished and there will always be questions that cannot be answered from the photographs alone.

Future work will build upon our findings, adding to the bigger picture or providing dating evidence to confirm or disprove our interpretations; either way our knowledge will improve.

We will be holding a number of events during 2008-9 to raise awareness of the survey, including showing Exmoor school children what aerial photographs can teach them about their local heritage and, in September 2008, the annual Exmoor Archaeology Forum will focus on the National Mapping Programme and the issues it raises.

Until then, you can read about the survey's latest discoveries and see the progress of this, and other National Mapping Programme projects on the English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.11316



Many years of service to Exmoor and the National Park Authority by Member John Edwards has been marked by the erection of a waymarker known as 'Edwards Post'. The post, which is 2.5 metres tall, is at grid reference S580824300 a mile from Larkbarrow down Long Combe. The Authority has written to Ordnance Survey to request that the post be marked on future OS maps. John and his wife Jackie are pictured at the post's unveiling.

The Old Mineral Line
- a hidden heritage



Supported by **The National Lottery** through the Heritage Lottery Fund



In December 2007 work began on the conservation and interpretation of structures associated with the West Somerset Mineral Railway and the iron mining landscape of the Brendon Hills in eastern Exmoor.

This work follows on from nearly four years of project planning and development and has been the subject of a grant of £603,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project will lead to the conservation of three industrial structures which are central to the iron mining landscape of the WSMR. Physical access to these three sites will be created, as well as improvements to access arrangements in and around the harbour town of Watchet.

The repair and conservation of Bearland Ventilation Chimney is nearly complete and work is now underway on the remains of a nearby Cornish engine house. Work to conserve the Incline at Brendon Hill will begin at the end of the summer.

The conservation work is being carried out by Corbel Conservation Ltd under the supervision of Jonathan Rhind Architects.

The project also includes a range of interpretation initiatives - the development of a website, the publication of a detailed account of the railway and its associated mining landscape as well as a popular publication, improvements at Watchet Market House Museum, leaflets and guides as well as guidance and information for schools, and some on-site interpretation.

To achieve all of this, the project is being guided by a group of dedicated partners led by Exmoor National Park Authority – the partners include the Forestry Commission, Somerset County Council, West Somerset Council, Watchet Town Council, Watchet Market House Museum and English Heritage, as well as local groups including the Somerset Rural Youth Group and the Exmoor Mines Research Group.

As well, there is the expertise of key individuals such as Mike Jones, David Dawson, Eric Robinson and Linda la Valle.

Together the partners encompass an invaluable reservoir of talents, knowledge and experience.

New Heritage Education Officer

Mary Olszewska has just started work as Heritage Education Officer on the West Somerset Mineral Railway Heritage Project.

Mary will be co-ordinating the interpretation work and developing an education programme in schools and for the wider community.

Mary joins Exmoor National Park Authority from the National Trust where she was Assistant Visitor Services Manager in the busy National Trust property Stourhead in Wiltshire.

Commenting on her new role, Mary said: "I'm really looking forward to getting my teeth into this challenging and exciting project and meeting all the different partners and community members involved."

Mary's contact details are: molszewska@exmoor-national-park.gov.uk



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Children plant trees on Hollerday Hill



AROUND thirty children and their teachers from Years 5 and 6 from Lynton School North Devon together with Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council (LLTC) estate staff, Exmoor National Park Ranger Ione Willcock and Exmoor Conservation Volunteers joined forces recently to plant around 50 trees on Hollerday Hill above Lynmouth.

The project also received support from the Exmoor Woodland Conservation Fund and a donation of young trees.

The site is included within the Heritage Coast boundary and part lies within the West Exmoor Coast and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The area was originally planted up as a landscape in the 1890s by Sir George Newnes when he built his mansion which is now ruins.

Ranger Ione Willcock said: "The children were all delighted to be out of the classroom and seemed genuinely excited about

choosing which tree to plant and competing with each other about how many they had planted.

"It had taken a lot of behind the scenes work, but both the volunteers and the children enjoyed themselves on the day and had plans to bring their families and friends back up to see what they've done."

Lynton Town Council has been working in partnership with Exmoor National Parks Authority to follow the objectives laid out in a Management Plan for the area and LLTC estate staff, Ione Willcock and Exmoor Conservation Volunteers have been carrying out practical conservation tasks each year, the latest being to prepare areas for tree planting by coppicing, thinning and clearing scrub from areas that have not been previously managed.

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer should contact Patrick Watts-Mabbott at Exmoor National Park Authority.

Summer fruits of their labours

In the latter part of 2006, Exmoor National Park Authority together with Somerset Rural Youth Project (funded through the Sustainable Development Fund) invited "the Parishes of Exmoor" to identify small, practical projects which would, when complete, "enrich their community".

By the start of 2007, a number of possible tasks were in the pipeline:

□ The dry-stone wall at the village church in Winsford was in a sorry state of repair. Together, Madi Robinson (SRYP), Cathy Nicholls (clerk to the parish council) and 9 young people aged 12 – 14yrs (1 girl and 8 boys) under the watchful eye of Trent Moreton (professional stone waller) have created a masterpiece.

Fully equipped with steel toe-capped boots, pick axes, shovels, loppers and buckets (supplied by SRYPs Exmoor Rural Skills Workshop) the team chopped down and cleared the vegetation, prepared the site and then learnt from the expert (Trent) how to re-construct the dry stone wall.

Not only did the young people have a great deal of fun but they all acquired new skills – two of the boys, Malcolm and David, are seriously considering going on to train properly with a view to working in this field.

□ In Porlock, as part of their centenary celebration, the Scouts decided to re-construct an old path called Sparkhayes Lane, which leads down to the beach.

A mixed group of seven youngsters, aged between 12 and 16, have thoroughly enjoyed getting stuck in with some impressive results.

"Much better fun than I thought it was going to be," said one of the girls and "Can we do it again?" - sentiments which were echoed on the other two projects which have already been completed.

□ Jude Atkins, the worker in charge at the Riverside Youth Club, helped us find young people in Dulverton where the Parish Council selected a number of projects which fit the criteria set down by the Exmoor National Park Authority (who financed all the works) and the Somerset Rural Youth Project (who co-ordinated the works).

Madi Robinson (youth worker with SRYP) and Patrick (Ranger with ENPA) did a walk-around and having discussed the various possibilities chose the clearing of the Weir Cleeve Path and the Leat.

This involved chopping away undergrowth, debris, rotting leaves and timber which were making the path hazardous and therefore dangerous, particularly for the elderly people of Dulverton.

The geography of this site made the work difficult, so it was only possible to clear about 30 feet each visit. Having cleared the path, the enthusiastic team of 14 (4 boys and 10 girls aged 10yrs – 13yrs, most of whom live in Dulverton and Brushford) set about clearing the Leat which runs close to the centre of Dulverton.



Youngsters at work on the projects at Porlock (above) and Winsford



This task was not quite so arduous but resulted in the youngsters filling bin-bags full of rubbish including a mobile phone and a frightening amount of plastic.

When asked to sum up their work the Dulverton Youth Club gave it "100/100!" and "It was Da best totally." They all had fun and as with the Porlock group, are keen to do more.

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A journey to a carbon neutral and sustainable National Park

The Sustainability and Economy Unit is a new cross cutting team within the Authority tasked with leading the response to two of the four key challenges set out in the 2007-2012 National Park Management Plan - 'Responding to Climate Change' and 'Achieving a Sustainable Economy and Community'.

Making the links

The unit is concerned with making the links between the Authority's statutory purposes of conserving the landscape of Exmoor and promoting public enjoyment and understanding with the duty to seek to foster social and economic well being.

It is recognition from the Authority that the environment and economy are inextricably linked.

Working closely with partners within the Authority and the wider community the Sustainability and Economy Unit is in a strong position to lead the way in finding, supporting, and implementing, innovative initiatives for the benefit of all.

Sustainable Development Fund

The journey started in 2002 with the launch of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), an annual sum of £180,000 a year from the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to fund new and innovative ways of working on Exmoor.

To date over 130 projects have received nearly £1.5m, helping nearly 2,000 young people, over 200 businesses and more than 50 community groups. Defra has recently confirmed that the fund will run for at least another three years to 2011/12.

Recent projects that have successfully gained grants include the establishment of an Exmoor Orchards Group, feasibility studies for 3 micro-hydro sites, research into salmon genetics and associated education work in schools, the development of www.carboninvest.com (a website offering the opportunity for people to offset their carbon emissions by investing in local carbon reduction projects, such as discreet solar panels on

Dunster Castle) and work to produce energy plans for six exmoor settlements.

A carbon neutral National Park

The unit is responsible for helping to meet the ambitious target of making Exmoor National Park (the area and not just the Authority!) Carbon Neutral by 2025.

With funding from the SDF, Forum 21 (a local community group promoting environmental sustainability through community action) will be working on a strategy for meeting the target, which it is hoped will be published by the end of the year as a 'first step' paving the way for further action.

Plugging a leak economy

Last year saw the publication of the New Economics Foundation report 'A Sustainable Economic Development Strategy for Greater Exmoor' identifying over 50 actions and ideas to secure a sustainable economy for Exmoor, where current leakages from the local economy are 'plugged'.

Taking this work forwards the unit is also responsible for making tourism on Exmoor more sustainable, securing further funding to support the local economy, and supporting training initiatives for diverse activities from construction to adventure tourism.

New faces

Heading up the unit is Sustainability and Economy Manager Tim Stokes, responsible for leading on issues such as climate change and the Carbon Neutral National Park. Tim has previously been the SW Director for ENCAMS (who run the Keep Britain Tidy campaign) and has also worked as an environmental consultant.

Dan James joins the unit as Sustainable Economy Officer, having previously worked as Operations Director of the Snowdonia Society in N Wales. Dan's main responsibilities include co-ordinating the Sustainable Development Fund and Sustainable Tourism initiatives, as well as overseeing the CareMoor fundraising scheme.

Renewable energy

PLANNING legislation was amended on 6 April 2008 to assist homeowners to install some forms of small-scale renewable energy technologies to their properties.

It may not now be necessary to apply for planning permission to install solar panels or photo-voltaic cells to the roof of houses and flats as well as the incorporation of ground source heat pumps or flues in connection with biomass heating systems.

All these types of technologies can assist with not only reducing heating and/or electricity bills but also with the aim of achieving a carbon neutral National Park.

The National Park Authority is supportive of the principle of home owners installing such technology and is happy to advise on the planning issues, along with specialist contractors, on the best approach.

Not all technologies will be appropriate to all locations and some technologies, such as solar panels, require sensitive siting to ensure

that the visual impact upon the National Park is not affected.

The planners have successfully worked with many residents and other land owners within the Park to ensure that where ever possible renewable technology can be added to sites.

For instance, photo-voltaic cells have recently been added by the National Trust to the Grade I Listed Dunster Castle (pictured) and this helps to demonstrate that with a careful approach even the most sensitive sites can incorporate some form of renewable technology.

At the present time the legislation has not been amended on small-scale wind generation but this is expected later this year.

If you wish to add some form of renewable energy to your property then Planning Officers are happy to advise on whether there is a need for planning permission. A sketch and/or details can be sent to plan@exmoornationalpark.gov.uk or in the post to Exmoor House.



Rural Housing Project on Exmoor making progress

IN the last couple of years 23 new affordable homes have been built and occupied within Exmoor National Park.

There are another 6 with planning permission and 5 awaiting planning decisions, so the future is looking good for local people in housing need.

These homes have been provided through the partnership of the Rural Housing Project, Exmoor National Park Authority, District Councils, Housing Associations and Parishes amongst others.

That's a potential total of 34 new affordable homes in Exmoor National Park within a few years, with at least another 37 at an early stage of discussion.

The Rural Housing Project was set up to cover West Somerset and North Devon districts in 2002. The aims were to identify housing need in parishes, encourage people to register, if in housing need, and to help provide more affordable homes.

The types of affordable housing offered are low cost rented homes, usually through housing associations, with rents set by the Housing Corporation at levels well below open market rents.

For people on slightly higher incomes, there can be the opportunity to provide low cost home ownership or possibly self-built homes.

With the average house price in the area being £250,000, with £150,000 being the cheapest, the opportunity to buy on the open market is limited. Therefore it is important that these homes are only available to local people, so strict rules are applied and planning restrictions are included to ensure this is in perpetuity.

Colin Savage, the Rural Housing Enabler, said: "Sometimes local people get concerned that these homes will be occupied by people from outside the area, not used

to living in the country.

"They have nothing to fear as any new homes will only be built where there is an identified need locally and there are strong planning and housing controls in place to ensure that these homes are allocated to local people, normally people already living in the community needing better housing that they can afford."

Have your say

Since the start, a total of 11 Parish Housing needs surveys have been completed in the National Park, with 144 households being identified as in housing need.

This summer the Project will be completing a National Park-wide housing survey as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework. These will involve visits to the parish councils, affordable housing open evenings and postal surveys.

You can help by attending the meetings and completing the surveys, it is your opportunity to say what you think is needed or what you want.

A need has been identified in every parish surveyed to date and more households have come forward when there is a likelihood of affordable homes being provided.

Project Assistant Jo Nash said: "For anyone in housing need, and that includes people living in private rented accommodation, it is important that they complete the survey forms and register on the West Somerset or North Devon housing lists, otherwise we may not be able to provide for all those in need in the future."

If anybody wants help or advice the Rural Housing Project Housing Enabler, Colin Savage, can be contacted on 01398 32249 and the Project Assistant, Jo Nash, on 01398 32245.

● Pictured are new affordable homes in Amory Road, Dulverton

Tour of Britain returns to Exmoor

● Continued from Page 1

"The event will be an economic boost to the region, and an opportunity to showcase the South West's natural assets and ability to manage major sporting competitions."

An independent survey conducted by SQW Consulting found that Somerset benefited to the tune of £500,000 in additional visitor spend within the county as a result of visitors attending the Tour of Britain on Tuesday 11 September 2007.

John Dyke, Chairman of Exmoor National Park Authority, said: "It's great news that the Tour of Britain is returning to Exmoor. Last year the event produced a carnival atmosphere and the riders can once again be assured of a warm Exmoor welcome."

Graham Jones, Route Director of the Tour of Britain, said: "In 2007 the South West stage of the Tour of Britain proved to be a decisive moment in the race and whilst it didn't decide the

overall winner it certainly put an end to the aspirations of a large proportion of the field.

"I think that our visit to the South West on 9th September could have a similar effect. There are three classified King of the Mountains climbs, the first after only a handful of miles, and that sets the tone for the day.

"With 30km from the summit of the last climb to the finish there may be an opportunity for a small regrouping, but for many riders it may be too late to salvage their hopes of winning the 2008 Tour of Britain."

New permanent cycle route

Following the success of the Tour of Britain in 2007 and the return of the race in 2008, the Tour of Britain is set to become a permanent fixture on the sporting calendar for Exmoor.

Partners Active Exmoor, Somerset County Council, Exmoor National Park Authority and event organiser Steve Crossman have collaborated to develop a permanent Tour of Britain cycle route on Exmoor following the 56 mile route taken by the 2007 race.

The Exmoor Sustainable Development Fund has financially supported the venture to help to encourage cycle tourism on Exmoor.

The route will work with local transport links and accommodation providers to entice cyclists into the region.

Rachel Hayes, Tour of Britain Project Assistant, will be managing the project and is looking for interested parties and local businesses who would like to become involved in developing Exmoor's cycle tourism industry.

She said: "The Tour of Britain in 2007 presented the region with a fantastic opportunity to show off the areas beauty and also its suitability for cycling. To build on this will provide lasting economic gain for the region".

Over the coming months the route will be published on www.activeexmoor.com and will be promoted nationally and launched in time for the Tour of Britain 2008.

Exmoor Explorer

The Exmoor Explorer Mountain Bike Marathon – the annual long-stance off-road reliability mountain bike trial across Exmoor's challenging terrain – takes place on Sunday August 3rd, with people coming from all over the country to take part.

This year's event starts and finishes at Wheddon Cross.

It offers a challenge and enjoyment for experienced bikers with two different length routes to choose from.

Booking is essential, and more information and a downloadable entry form are available at www.exmoorexplorer.com



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Your chance to help to shape future development and land use

Responding to the challenges of climate change, affordable housing, a global economy, access to rural areas and a thriving community – you identified these issues as major challenges facing Exmoor National Park in consultations on the Management Plan last year.

How can we meet these challenges and are there other issues that we need to be aware of?

These are the questions facing the Planning and Community Team who are currently reviewing the

National Park's Local Plan.

The Team is gathering evidence to help inform such issues and is looking to draw up options for development and use of land within the National Park.

This will inform the new Plan now called the Local Development Framework. The Local Development Framework is a suite of documents which will guide development and use of the land within the National Park from 2011 - 2026.

An important part of the process will be the views of local residents and other local bodies. In the autumn we will be inviting stakeholders to an

event to gather their views on issues facing the National Park area and the options available.

This will be followed by a series of consultation events in the settlements of the National Park to feedback on what has been done since the 'Planning for Real' events which informed the current Local Plan, to update on changes since then and to gain your views on the key issues and options for land use and development within your communities and Exmoor National Park as a whole.

This may involve looking at options for renewable energy, affordable housing, alternative means of access and changes in farming.

This is an important process which will influence future development for all communities, businesses and visitors to the National Park until 2026.

We would welcome your views and involvement so please look out for further information over the coming months.

For further information please contact Jo Symons, Ruth McArthur or Tess Saunders on 01398 323665 or email jsymons@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk, rmccarthur@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk or tsaunders@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Bringing back past management techniques in one of Exmoor's historic woodlands



Did you know that many of the upland oakwoods which appear to be untouched by man and characterise Exmoor today were once actually intensively managed as oak coppice for tanbark and charcoal?

Hawkcombe Wood near Porlock, which is a now a National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest, was one of these and would have looked very different 100 years ago.

Picture a hive of activity, with horses and carts transporting coppice products, gangs of people working the coppice stools over a large area, and charcoal kilns burning all day long.

The wood would have been much more open, and this would have been the scene from Roman times, until the demand dropped for charcoal around the time of the First World War.

Exmoor National Park Authority undertook works during the winter to expand upon a previously coppiced area in Hawkcombe in order to resurrect these past systems of woodland management.

The many benefits of undertaking this work



include the creation of a habitat that will benefit species that rely on these specific conditions, such as the wood warbler, heath fritillary butterfly (pictured) and wood ant.

Coppicing will also break up the previously uniform structure of the woodland, and has generated around 60 tonnes of firewood, which will be going out into the local firewood market.

Exmoor teams up with Dartmoor and Northumberland

Artists Harald Smykla and Karen Gurthrie (pictured), from London and the Lake District respectively, have been chosen to take part in the Exmoor arm of an exciting new arts project known as Tri-Parks, funded by the Arts Council England and supported by Exmoor National Park Authority.

Tri-Parks aims to explore and highlight the differences and commonalities between three English National Parks - Exmoor, Dartmoor and Northumberland - with a pair of artists being chosen to work in each for a series of residencies during 2008.

Harald and Karen will engage with and learn from the community around Wheddon Cross in order to inform new contemporary artwork about Exmoor.

It is hoped that the project will help bring the three parks together to share aspirations and build new relationships.

Somerset Art Week Ltd (SAW) is running the Exmoor arm of the Tri-Parks - which is headed up overall by Dartmoor's Aune Head Arts, a not-for-profit rural arts organisation making and commissioning contemporary arts projects.

SAW's project manager, Carol Carey, said: "I am very excited about the potential of Tri-Parks to help show some of the roles which the arts can play in shaping sustainability, community networks and interpretation within the National Parks."

Mid-April saw Harald and Karen heading down to Exmoor for the first of their residencies when they spent five days here exploring the landscape and meeting people in and around Wheddon Cross.

Said Karen: "I live in a National Park which is what drew me to apply for the project - I was very keen to compare Exmoor with home. I love it here and have been very impressed because it is how I imagine The Lakes might have been 40-50 years ago before tourism consumed it."

"It still feels like an agricultural landscape on Exmoor; it is great to have the privilege to come to a place where everyone just seems to be getting on with the business of living and working in the landscape instead of simply looking the part for the benefit of a postcard."

"Exmoor impresses me deeply - it doesn't seem



jaded by tourism and I hope it stays that way. It is undeniably beautiful and I really hope that the work Harald and I produce will have some interest for the local population."

Karen is a collaborative artist whose work is guided by a fascination with people and what sustains their communities and networks.

She has worked as a Fine Art lecturer, an art consultant, and last year on leading the 'Creative Egremont' public art programme in West Cumbria.

Harald, a German artist living in London, has become known for his ephemeral, cross-discipline and often collaborative work. He has performed and exhibited across the UK and internationally.

Last year, he was one of the six UK artists to present work in Israel and Croatia during the MAP Live 2007 Performance Art Exchange programme. Most recently, he performed as part of 'East Wing Collection VIII' at London's Courtauld Institute.

The work developed through Tri-Parks is planned to be on view at Dunster Show on 15 August 2008.

Thanks are due to The Exmoor Trust who agreed to make a rare grant of £200 to SAW to help with the expenses of the two artists undertaking the Exmoor Park part of the Tri Parks Project. The project is funded by Arts Council England SW and supported by Exmoor National Park Authority.

Latching on to the right idea

In September 2006, Exmoor National Park Authority set up a long-term test of a few of the many different designs of gate latches available to determine the pros and cons of each.

The bridleway from Court Farm to Room Hill (SS856379) in the Exford area has eight gates within one mile, making it the ideal test location.

As the route is popular with riders, walkers and cyclists, we anticipated a wide range of feedback. Each gate had a different latch installed and a box was installed at the bottom of the route with questionnaires for people to fill in and return.

The latches installed were:

- Fortescue Latch (a local design)
- Standard latch (at top of gate - easier for users, not so good for stock)
- Standard autolatch with wire hook
- Two-way gate with 'Easylatch'
- Chain loop
- Cattle proof 'Easylatch'
- Standard latch (lower down gate - better for stock, not so good for users)
- Trombone latch

The trombone latch was removed within six months as the stock had taken to rubbing the latch and so opening the gate. The rest of the latches are still going strong; the cattle proof 'Easylatch' has needed some adjustment.

We have had a fair few comments; it gives local people and visitors something to think about when out and about. So far the feedback can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The Fortescue latch is the most popular, especially for horse riders. It is not as stock proof as a standard latch; stock can twist the bottom more easily. Exmoor National Park Authority is working on a better copy of the original design.
- 2) The more complicated the latch, the less popular. The complex (and expensive!) two way 'easylatch' was too urban and fiddly for most. It also seems to put the gate under huge strain as it closes.

The main lesson is that there never will be the perfect latch; there is always a compromise between stock proofing, ease of use and cost.

For more information, contact the Exmoor National Park Authority Access and Recreation Team on 01398 323665 or visit the test area.

New Landscape Officer

Emma Dennis joins us from Jacobs in Kent and is delighted to be returning to the Westcountry. She was brought up in Devon and her parents still farm near Dartmoor.

As well as working closely with the development control planners, Emma will be helping the National Park Authority to take forward a range of landscape projects including a landscape strategy, moorland conservation and enhancement, reduction in roadside clutter, producing a tranquillity map, identifying and monitoring important views

and working with the public on their perceptions of landscape.

Emma is also available to give advice and information to members of the public, Parish Councils, and other groups interested in looking after the beautiful landscapes of Exmoor.

Emma said: "I'm really excited about the opportunities that this new post offers. I am passionate about rural landscapes, communities and environments and hope I can help to conserve and enhance this very special place."