

Recreational Use of Exmoor's Moorlands – a study for the Exmoor National Park Authority by Ruth Puttick under the Shell Training and Enterprise Programme – Summer 2004

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Main Aim:

To collect a body of data assessing the recreational use and value of Exmoor's moorland

Research Objectives:

1. To explore the influences on people's decision to visit Exmoor's open moorland.
2. To assess how much recreational use is made of the Exmoor's moorland.
3. To examine what could be done to make Exmoor's moorland more attractive to people
4. To examine conflicts between recreational users and other activities or interests, or between different recreational users.
5. To assess how the recreational use of Exmoor's moorland contributes to the social and economic well being of the area.

Abstract – Attachment to a place, such as moorland, varies across society due to a number of factors. It subsequently influences people's decision to visit and what recreational activity they partake in. The varying recreational activities undertaken have the possibility to affect the levels of enjoyment that others may experience. These issues have been researched through a literature review, qualitative interviews and questionnaires. Recommendations have been made which could enhance some people's enjoyment of the moorlands of Exmoor.

Definitions:

Recreation: "*Enjoyable leisure activity*" (Pearsall, 2001)

Introduction

Exmoor was designated National Park status fifty years ago, and to mark the anniversary a comprehensive review of the moorlands is being undertaken which will help develop an action plan for the future. This paper will aim to discover why people visit Exmoor National Park moorland and how much recreational use is made of the moorland areas. It will show how recreational activity contributes to the local social and economic well being of the area. It will also outline any conflicts that recreational users may experience, or any problems that may be encountered when using Exmoor's moorland. The paper will then proceed to show what could be done to make the moorland areas more attractive to more people. The paper will conclude with suggestions that could be considered to enhance or improve people's enjoyment of Exmoor's open moorland.

Research Methodology

The research has been undertaken during a five-week period, which commenced mid-way through July 2004. The first stage of the research process was a literature review. This was difficult to perform because there does not seem to be much literature available on the recreational uses of moorland, even though a literature review was undertaken electronically on the Internet and sought as published reports. This meant that the other research methods were heavily relied upon to volunteer themes and uncover possible issues that could be tackled in the report. The main research methods were site survey questionnaires and longer, open-ended interviews.

The interviews were conducted with fourteen participants using a Dictaphone. Eyles (1995) described an interview as a “conversation with a purpose” (cited in Valentine, 1997:111). Although cue questions had been created, the interview remained fairly unstructured. The interviews were undertaken with fourteen participants; including local residents, tenant farmers, Exmoor National Park employees and individuals involved with the tourism and recreation sector on and around Exmoor’s moorland (See Figure 1 in appendix). The participants gave their account in their own language within a conversational format, allowing them to give a personal account of their association with Exmoor National Park. The qualitative interview method allowed the participant to contribute fresh ideas and issues that might not have been previously considered, and which may not have been able to be incorporated within the more rigid format of a shorter questionnaire. This is because people construct their attachments to place over time and to uncover the reasons why people visit Exmoor’s moorland may not be comprehensively possible within a structured, short question format questionnaire. One of the draw backs of using this method is that the interviewing procedure and the processing of the data is fairly time consuming, with interviews being able to last between 30 minutes to sometimes over an hour. With the project being concerned with recreation a number of people contacted were involved with tourism and due to the summer season being their busiest period, they were not always available for interviews. However, this problem was not too serious as most people were fairly flexible and could accommodate the time to participate at some stage.

Questionnaires proved to be an invaluable tool when needing to sample visitors to the moorland of Exmoor National Park. This method is extremely quick and easy to use, allowing many people to be interviewed in a relatively short space of time. It can provide a ‘snapshot’ overview of visitor opinion and allows a number of issues to be tackled relatively quickly. It is probably the best method of contacting visitors to the park who are on holiday as these individuals may not otherwise be available for interview. The questionnaire was structured in a way that allowed the participant to comment quite openly and freely about certain topics, so it was another method of introducing new concepts, ideas and themes to the project that might not have otherwise of been considered.

Two questionnaires were devised and executed. The first questionnaire (Figure 2) was administrated at Dunkery Beacon and Tarr Steps, and good results were gained, with a response rate of 25 people per site. As the research stage progressed, it was realised that there were other questions which needed addressing. This prompted the creation of a second questionnaire (Figure 3). The most useful addition were questions five

and six which asked visitors to the moorland if they would like to participate in more activities on the moorland, and if so what 'barriers' were preventing them. The data collected from this was useful in answering research aim three (details of which will be outlined further in the report). This questionnaire was used at Dunkery Beacon and obtained a response rate of forty-five people. One of the main problems with research of this kind is that the response rate is determined greatly by the weather. Due to the poor conditions experienced over the research period, the amount of time to undertake site surveys was affected.

As with all research projects of this kind there are limitations that must be acknowledged. The most obvious of these is that the research has been undertaken in an extremely narrow time frame. This means that visitor's to the moorland during other times of the year have not been included, which could subsequently mean that a whole set of issues that are associated with the winter and spring season may not have been tackled. This is something that is not possible to rectify within this project, but could be tackled with future research. Another issue that arises is due to the choice of survey sites and the number of people contacted. The number of people contacted is quite small but to have increased this in order to reduce bias was not possible in the allocated time. Again, this could be addressed with further research.

Analysis

Research Objective 1: To explore the influences on people's decision to visit Exmoor's open moorland

Why people visit Exmoor is a question that produces complex, multi-stranded forms of interpretation and response. Exploring the relationship between people and place is far from straightforward, but it is extremely fascinating, as analysis of existing literature revealed. Many people visit the countryside as a spontaneous decision, but for some the countryside carries profound meaning that is related to personal experience or common cultural heritage. The attachment to the countryside landscape is created from individual and social experiences, and is especially forged from childhood experiences (Glyptis, 1991). With moorland, people rarely leave indications to show that an area is specifically meaningful to them. The term 'fields of care' has been coined to denote that these places are recognised and cared for within a particular individual (Tuan, 1974). Many individuals have an emotional desire to identify with intimate and personal places and can construct these attachments with repeated visitation. The term '*Topophilia*' expresses this phenomenon. The Greek can be translated to produce the phrase 'Love of Place' (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). People's individual constructions of nature are crucially important in determining how they will interact and engage with the physical environment, and if they will subsequently enjoy the moorland for recreational activities.

The research shows that people feel strongly about Exmoor's moorland with 100% of people saying when asked in the site surveys, that moorland is one of Exmoor's special features. But it has been apparent throughout all the data collection process that most people don't come specifically for one area of Exmoor but enjoy the great diversity that Exmoor has to offer; with the contrasting landscapes of the coastline, moorland and woods. John Pugsley, a tenant farmer on Exmoor, explains this attraction by saying, Exmoor is "...a mosaic of agricultural land and green fields, and

then you can go over a hedge and you're into moorland". Brian Martin, a local holiday accommodation provider and Co-chairman of the 'Visit Exmoor Forum' asserts, "Most people don't come for one aspect of it, but enjoy a lot of the diverse opportunities that Exmoor National Park offers...because the park is fairly small, you can always get to any part of it easily". The diversity that Exmoor offers is succinctly described by Alan Bailey, an employee of Exmoor National Park, when he says, "Britain's great because it's got all this diversity of landscape, and if you want to encapsulate that then Exmoor's got it all. The British Isles were Gods' textbook of landscapes because you've got such diversity in such a small acreage, and within that Exmoor is a sampler of it all". This diversity is an attraction to people for recreational activity as Mike Knight, an Exmoor National Park member said, "The variety of walks that you can do on Exmoor probably surpass that which you can do on any other moor in the country".

There is a range of recreational activities undertaken on the moorlands of Exmoor, including horse riding, walking and cycling. Individual people will determine how attractive a site is for their recreational interest. The opportunities and choice available is aided by the diversity of landscape. When the questionnaire asked what would put them off from visiting the moorlands, the majority, 72% of people said 'nothing'. The most common answer given was 'bad weather', with 12% of respondents citing this as a reason not to visit the open moorland. But, the aforementioned diversity of Exmoor's landscape may mean that they decide to visit another aspect of Exmoor National Park instead. Pat Bowden, a local resident and regular visitor to Exmoor National Park, admitted this, "...you can pick the walks to suit the weather...like Brendon down to Watersmeet where you're walking through the woods so you're less likely to get blasted off the moor if the weather is bad", which may aid Exmoor's attraction to the visitor.

In the 1994 edition of the 'All Parks Visitor Survey' (Volume 6), the most common reason for visiting the park was the 'scenery'/'landscape'. This trend is still seen today as throughout the interviews and questionnaires the most common reason for visiting the moorlands was because of the beauty and the views. Another common reason offered throughout the questionnaires and interviews for visiting Exmoor is the desire to 'get away from it all'. The 'getting away from it all' is a desire becoming more prevalent in today's fast paced world (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). Other attractions that people cited as reasons for visiting the Exmoor moorland include the calm, peace and freedom that it offers. As the manager of County Gate visitor centre, Ruth Hyett, noted that, people "...like it because they don't meet other people". Which is something Pat Bowden also commented on, "A lot of people who are attracted to Exmoor are the people who don't want theme parks and come to Exmoor for peace and solitude".

Alison Waller believes that "...the words 'National Park' are very important" in influencing people's decision to visit Exmoor's open moorland. Other people mentioned the importance of Exmoor's National Park status when discussing what attracts people to the moorland of Exmoor. David Lloyd, an ecologist employed by Exmoor National Park Authority, asserted the importance of this by saying "... 'National Park' helps to brand it for tourism so people have the perception that there will be opportunities to walk and at least get into wilder areas where it's protected and has lovely views". David also said that some people visit the moorland

of Exmoor because, "...it offers a variety of wildlife and because it's had a low-key management programme has retained many of its historical features".

As already outlined, people can be attracted to the moorland of Exmoor because of its physical characteristics but many people also commented on the 'atmosphere' of the moorland as one of its positive attributes. The Latin phrase *Genius Loci* can be adopted, which literally means 'the spirit of place' (Peet, 1998). As Pat Bowden said, "I feel the moor has different feelings in different places". To suggest that certain places have their own unique 'spirit and personality' may mean that they command awe in particular individuals (Tuan, 1974), which will obviously influence people's decision to visit. This is because it can increase people's attachment to a certain place, as shown by Pat Bowden when she says, "I like the moor because I like peace and find the area extremely relaxing. I think, like with anything, having an attachment to a place is extremely personal and I also think that applies to not finding somewhere particularly compelling. When you drive up and see it in front of you, it's really lovely". The moor's 'atmosphere' is commented about by Richard Benn, the owner of Tarr Farm, who said one of the strongest influences on people's decision to visit Exmoor's open moorland "...is purely the enchantment of the area" He believes that people visit Exmoor's moorland, "...whether on horseback, walking, mountain biking...to purely take on board the natural beauty of the place".

Research Objective 2: To assess how much recreational use is made of the moorlands of Exmoor

The second research aim examines how much recreational use is made of the moorlands of Exmoor. There is a range of recreational activities undertaken on the moorlands of Exmoor, including horse riding, walking and cycling. As already outlined, individual people determine how attractive a site is for recreational activity. The resource, in this instance the open moorland, will be rated in accordance with their own experiences, expectations, aesthetic preferences and recreational interests (Glyptis, 1991). It's difficult to assess the amount of recreational use made of the moorlands of Exmoor. There are ways of measuring this, such as by using counters at access points or employing people to physically count the number of people at various points. The latter is obviously not particularly practical, but generally it is not a task that can be readily undertaken due to the vast number of access points onto Exmoor's moorland. Subsequently, there does not appear to be any such data available.

When asked if they would like to participate in more recreational activities on Exmoor's moorland, 50% of people surveyed on Dunkery Beacon said 'yes' with 17% saying 'maybe', and 33% of people saying that they are not interested in participating in any other activities on Exmoor. This differs to the 1994 All Parks Visitor Survey that found that 71% of respondents considered 'sport and outdoor pursuits' not to be important in contributing to their enjoyment of their visit. Although this includes visitation to all aspects of the park, it could be indicative of an alteration in the favourability of recreational activities. It has been suggested by a number of individuals that more recreational activities could be offered on the moorland of Exmoor National Park. Brian Martin would like to see more activity lead breaks that would attract more people in the 20-30 years of age bracket.

The manager of Dulverton Visitor Centre, Anne Weaver, commented on this when she said, “If you don’t like walking, fishing or horse riding there isn’t that much within Exmoor to do unless you go to the coast... and then the National Park has to ask itself do we want them to stay on Exmoor? If we want them to stay on Exmoor we won’t have to slacken the planning but just be a little more compliant”. But she does go onto say, “...saying that, do you actually want that because it could be out of balance with what we’re trying to achieve, such as conservation and quiet enjoyment”. David Lloyd said that “...there certainly is more capacity in places...some places obviously do take a hammering, like Dunkery Beacon, but most of Exmoor could take more people”. Although he does add that people should be discouraged during bird nesting season, but “...in terms of quiet enjoyment over Exmoor, then Exmoor could definitely take more”.

The general consensus among the interviewees is that the use rate and pattern varies greatly. David Lloyd said that the moorlands of Exmoor are fairly accessible, “...whereas Dartmoor has a central chunk of moorland with fewer roads crossing it and in some areas you have to walk across considerable distances to get to places...that’s not true of Exmoor”. “The use rate varies enormously”, says Ruth Hyett, “you can go out all day on the moorland and not meet anyone but there are people who use it”. This is echoed by David Lloyd, who says, “My experience of Exmoor’s moorland is that as soon as you get 100 metres from the road the likelihood of seeing anyone is almost none”. And Mike Knight adds that, “it’s not over-utilised”. The lack of public transport has focused attention on the car, which has called for more circular walks. Mike Knight would like to see more cycle buses, “cycling is quiet enjoyment in the countryside and it’s a good activity for getting people out into the countryside and it would open up a potential market that we don’t exploit”. The cycle bus system may allow people to access remoter areas of the moorland.

It has been suggested that many people don’t always find moorland that welcoming because of being uncertain about their rights. The small amount of use being made of Exmoor’s open moorland had been attributed to a lack of understanding among some people about where or where not they are entitled to be whilst on moorland. Anne Weaver has said, “A lot of people aren’t bold enough to venture off the beaten track” and says that some people become “nervous”. Brian Martin has attributed this to “...some people not being used to using maps and not everyone is confident in adventuring out into the lesser-marked areas of the moorland”. Pat Bowden also states that some people are worried about getting lost but sympathises and says, “...unless you’ve stuck to paths alongside the rivers it is easy to get lost”.

Research Objective 3: To examine what could be done to make Exmoor's moorland more attractive to people

The third research question examines how moorland areas could be made more attractive. The usage of moor may be embedded in people's pattern of behaviour, if this is the case then, as Pat Bowden says, "it may not be possible to change people". David Lloyd has agreed and says, "You can always do more to increase people's enjoyment of Exmoor...but I'm not sure that you'll significantly change people's habits...I don't envisage the CRoW Act (Countryside Rights of Way Act) will have much impact on changing people's habits...it may do over two or three generations but I think there is a wariness in people about what they can do when they're in the countryside. If they feel a little a bit uncertain they probably won't venture very far...when it gets into the culture of the country that moorland is a place that they can go by right then maybe things will gradually change. I think people are interested in knowing whether they can be there or not and I think that the CRoW Act will help that...but it will take a few generations to infiltrate the culture so people think that moorland areas are places in which you can go".

To make the moorland more attractive to disabled visitors is a widely debated and high profile topic. There are currently three trails specifically designed for wheelchairs, at Bossington Hill, Webber's Post and Robber's Bridge. One lady from Scotland said that Exmoor National Park shouldn't "forget that everyone can't walk". She said that there is "nothing at Tarr Steps to indicate there is parking available at the bottom to accommodate disabled or less-able people, more provision is needed. It means that it is cut off from people and although the area needs protecting there should be a certain amount of access". There is in fact a sign on the road side to indicate that there are parking bays in the bottom car park allocated for disabled visitors, but the sign could be updated and more attention drawn to this, perhaps by indicating that this provision is available on the information board in the top car park.

Alan Bailey said that wheelchair access isn't easy because, "...unfortunately by its very nature, most working upland areas are fairly inaccessible" David Lloyd thinks that technology will "come along" by saying, "...I think the way to help people get out into the wild would be to improve technology of wheelchairs and then to do minor things like removing obstructions subtly". He admits that, "...it is an issue that we probably haven't dealt with very well but where we have been to get advice they tend to be geared towards engineering solutions and I don't feel that's the only option...fortunately we're not talking about huge numbers of people and we could accommodate them and give them much better access". He added, "In the sense that Exmoor's moorlands have road access into their heart...there is probably better visual access for people with limited mobility than some other areas". "I don't see how wheel chairs will ever navigate the moor" said Pat Bowden, but she added that "...there are lots of pretty villages where it is possible to get wheelchairs around so the options are there".

The focus shouldn't purely be centred on wheelchair access. There is literature available in alternative formats, such as Braille and larger print leaflets on request and Exmoor National Park has close ties with a number of organisations to aid social inclusion. A man from Taunton who completed a questionnaire at Tarr Steps said that the moorlands of Exmoor National Park should be made more attractive to youth

groups. He believes that this should be through making Exmoor's moorland, "more accessible to young people in the right ways, such as having more 'wild sites' for camping". He works with a Devon Youth Service organisation and would like to see them forge closer ties with National Parks. Exmoor National Park does have close ties with a number of organisations of this kind and to increase these is a matter of improving communications between them. There are no homogenous public perceptions of the countryside and childhood experiences can be a critical influence and 'lay the ground' for adult attachment. It is vital that people value National Parks for their preservation and therefore having a strong early experience with the countryside could be a strong influence (Miller & Tranter, 1988).

To help answer the third research aim, people were asked at Tarr Steps and Dunkery Beacon what puts them off visiting Exmoor's moorland. 80% of people said 'Nothing' and the other reasons given were not due to attributes of the moorland. Instead people said they were dissuaded from visiting because of a lack of time available for recreational activity or because the weather wasn't that which they desired in order to enjoy the moorland. When the moorland questionnaire asked what problems were experienced on moorland only eight areas of concern were highlighted and only a very small number of respondents actually said that they experienced any problems. For example, out of 95 respondents only 6 said that they felt car parking was an issue on open moorland. 7% of people experienced a problem due to a perceived lack of signage on open moorland. Ruth Hyett disagrees and says that "Exmoor is the best way marked National Park". David Lloyd admitted Exmoor National Park Authority has "...tended to keep a fairly low key way marking policy on open moorland with key places marked but so you're not always in sight of a marker". He describes this as "reasonable", and says it "...annoys those seeking wilder areas". And only 4% of people said that they felt there was a lack of bridleways and footpaths.

This means that 68% of people reported that they experienced no problems whilst using the moorland of Exmoor. Anne Weaver commented that complaints being reported had decreased and said it was attributable to either "...people just not complaining any more or we've finally got it right", she goes on to say, "...I think that we've finally got it right because our Fields Service Team work really hard on upkeep". Another reason for this could be because people approach the moorland in the same way Pat Bowden does and "...accepts it for what it is".

One problem that was reported at Dunkery Beacon is that there should be warning signs by pull-in parking bays at the roadside to alert drivers attention to them so that they decrease their speed past accordingly, as one man commented "people (who use the parking bays) think they're safe just wandering out into the road". One area in particular that this could be enforced would be at Dunkery Beacon where there are no such signs drawing motorists attention to the presence of pedestrians, and in particular small children, as motorists passing over the cattle grid at Dunkery Gate may have their vision of this impaired by the hedgerows on either side. Two respondents to the Dunkery Beacon survey said that there should be more speed control measures on open moorland. This was also raised by Anne Weaver who said, "One of my pet hates, and I don't know what you could do to stop it, is people who speed across open moorland with livestock grazing without a thought that a sheep may just decide to walk across the road". One way in which this could be tackled is in the same way in

which it has been approached in parts of Dartmoor, and that would involve reducing the speed limit to 40mph.

Lorraine Hazel, Manager of Dulverton Caravan Site, said “people with big motor vans are reluctant to get out onto the moor because of the size of their vehicles”. The roads restrict other people because, “Some people are genuinely frightened of driving on little steep roads” said Ruth Hyett, “and they will avoid that”. And this isn’t helped by the lack of buses that go inland. But as John Pugsley said, “Public transport is abysmal” and unless it was “heavily subsidised it certainly wouldn’t be an exercise that would be sustainable”. Alison Waller runs the Barle Valley Safari Company, and she believes that her service is utilised by a lot of people because they “...aren’t keen to drive on narrow lanes...the fact that they are tarmac roads is immaterial”. She claims that people feel ‘intimidated’ by the width of lanes. But nothing can really be done to overcome this, as many people find the lanes one of the attractions to the area, commenting on their quaintness and charm.

One issue that was raised a number of times by people in the questionnaires and interviews are the problem of tics on moorland. It was raised by three questionnaire respondents and in the interviews. Mike Knight commented, “There’s a real tic problem not just for humans but also for dogs”. David Lloyd said one of the main problems with tics is that people get “frightened” because of a lot of scaremongering that goes on. He says, “...it’s very difficult to get the balance right between making people aware that there is an issue and it is a small problem, but it is a real problem”. He believes that it is important to make people aware of the risks so if they are bitten they can consult their doctor while not going “...too far so people will be too frightened to go onto the moor”.

The report has already stated that the moorland has not reached its visitor carrying capacity limit. People being attracted to National Parks in general are important for their preservation. A number of people have suggested ideas to make the moorland more attractive to people who haven’t visited. Pat Bowden doesn’t think that moorland will ever appeal to everyone and believes that “A lot of people think that there is nothing here except moorland and countryside, and they need a different form of stimulus”. But Richard Benn does not think that the moorland itself needs modifying because, if “...people take the trouble to come into the park it clearly demonstrates its natural beauty and its natural attractions”. So in that case it would seem that it’s the marketing of the moorland that needs altering. Alison Waller states, “I don’t think that Exmoor National Park does enough to advertise that it is a National Park”. She believes that there is a “need to increase people’s awareness”.

It has already been mentioned that the ‘brand’ of ‘National Park’ is very well recognised and does a great deal to attract people to the park, as David Lloyd commented, “it’s a very strong brand for tourism for the marketing side”. One of the most practical solutions to this that has been suggested is updating signs on the M5 motorway. Ruth Hyett commented on this when she said, “Most people have gone on down to Cornwall for holidays and seen Dartmoor and never realised that Exmoor is here” and the signs need updating because, “They don’t tell you what Exmoor is or why you should go there”. This is also mentioned by Richard Benn who believes the updating of signposts would attract more people because, “‘Exmoor’ doesn’t mean

diddly squat to a lot of people. But if it said 'Exmoor National Park' it might just trigger that inquisitiveness in people to come and have a look to see what it is".

Brian Martin has said that the best thing to make the moorlands more attractive would be the adoption of a "unified marketing campaign". He believes that it's a common misconception among people as to what Exmoor is that is one of the main reasons that people don't visit. He claims, "Many people say Exmoor is bleak, like the Yorkshire Moors...people think of the bleakness of Heathcliffe country or the swirling mists of Lorna Doone...people's imagination of what a moor is like can be quite gloomy; we need to dispel that myth to show it has a variety of scenery". And the alleviation of this could be helped if there is consistency in the message about what Exmoor is. Brian Martin has said that this could be helped by capturing the variety of scenery that Exmoor offers in a number of images that retain a constant theme, as a "unified marketing campaign". He believes the main way to make the moorland of Exmoor more attractive to people could occur by being more "consistent in our messages and getting our message out there more". In order to make the moorland area more attractive to people, many have raised concerns about the increased visitor numbers, as Richard Benn advised that, "...you've got to be careful where you're directing people and whether it's going to have an adverse effect on the landscape".

Research Objective 4: To examine the conflicts between recreational users and other activities or interests, or between different recreational users

The fourth research aim examines conflicts that occur between different recreational users and other activities or interests, or between recreational users. To answer this, people were asked in both the questionnaires and interviews if they experienced any form of conflict whilst on the moorland, and very few were reported. One source of conflict is between some landowners, in this instance John Pugsley, and certain members of the public who use the moorland for dog walking. John Pugsley said, "...one thing that annoys me is the number of people who bring out several dogs and run about the moor...they disturb grazing animals and ground nesting birds...we're becoming a dog exercise area rather than an area of quiet enjoyment". Another issue that was raised twice, once at Tarr Steps and once at Dunkery Beacon by two different individuals, is that cyclists are apparently damaging footpaths. Conflicts between certain recreational groups and cyclists were also mentioned in the interviews. Anne Weaver said off-roaders, horses and cyclist sometimes conflict because they're all using the same track. Diana Scott, Hunt master and proprietor of Brendon Hill Stallion, said that cyclists are "...a little bit worrying when you're on horse back because they're very silent and colourful".

The problem of erosion by certain recreational users who use quad bikes, trail bikes and four wheel drives seems to produce a certain amount of conflict. A man at Dunkery Beacon said that the erosion on tracks caused by vehicles following the Hunt caused problems whilst walking. Anne Weaver has also mentioned receiving feedback on this whilst working in the Visitor Centre she says, people complain about "four wheel drives and the damage they do to the tracks". She goes on to say that she "would like to see people better educated so they understand when they wreck these tracks that they have to be put right because they're not just for them". These vehicles also appear at the route of conflicts reported by other people. Ruth Hyett said a source of conflict she has observed and hears feedback about are, "quad bikes

following the hunt because they think that they can go anywhere and do what they like". She goes on to say that "...quad bikes and trail bikes should be carefully controlled". Alison Waller believes that "...trail bike riders shouldn't be allowed into National Parks...I don't think there's any place for them. The noise, the speed, the damage they do to the tracks...there should be places for them but National Parks are not one of them".

When asked what future improvements could be made to Exmoor one man from Bishops Tawton said that Exmoor National Park should "designate areas for quad bikes and have better enforcements because at the present time people are taking liberties". This has been echoed by Brian Martin who says that people need to be attracted but the activities on offer are "restricted", so certain areas could be "...designated for those activities that could clash with other recreational activities, so you could start to serve a variety of interests and try and preserve the landscape". Designating areas for certain recreational activities could help to protect some areas from noise pollution and soil erosion, but designating certain areas could prove to be extremely problematic. This is because a 'NIMBY' ('Not In My Backyard') reaction could be induced. In order to serve a variety of interests, Richard Benn believes that "It's a question of live and let live...you've got to be a little bit tolerant". Mike Knight adds, "...to be fair everyone needs to be able to enjoy the moor if they can...noisy intrusion can be a problem but it is only for a short period".

Research Objective 5: To assess how the recreational use of moorland contributes to the social and economic well being of the area.

The fifth research aim examines how the recreational use of moorland contributes to the social and economic well being of the area. The social aspect of this seems to be very important to the area and wider a field. This was shown by the CNP founders when they published their case for National Parks in Great Britain in 1938. The foreword by G.M Trevelyan said, "*And it is not a question of physical exercise only, it is also a question of spiritual enjoyment. It is a question of spiritual values. Without sight of the beauty of nature the spiritual power of the British people will be atrophied*". The profound attachments that people have to place have already been outlined along with the increasing desire within people to 'get away from it all', both of which show that moorland is important to people. This was also shown in the results gained from the questionnaires (Figure 2 & 3), where 100% of people said that moorland is one of Exmoor's special features. People don't need to have strong attachments to the moorland to value it, as Glyptis (1991:25) explains, "People may not want to visit the countryside, may not want to visit regularly or even infrequently, but they need to know that the possibility exists".

David Lloyd believes that this aids the preservation of National Parks along with the situation where "...fortunately people are fond of National Parks in a general, rosy glow sort of way without really knowing what that means on the ground". David Lloyd asserts himself as someone who, "... believes that people should be encouraged to enjoy the moorland because it's very important to get people out into the countryside if you want the political support to get resources to do these things, so we've got to get the mainstream population on our side" He goes on to say that "...it's essential that we do get people out into the wilder areas on a fairly wild day so they realise why it's important to keep it...". He believes that "we shouldn't be worried

about the quantity of the people because if it's properly managed we won't have to compromise the quality of the wildlife".

There does not seem to be data available to show what recreational use of the moorland contributes to the economic well being of the area. Visitors to the moorland were not asked about their daily expenditure whilst in the area because of people normally being uncertain of the value. Estimates have been made by other surveys. According to the Somerset Visitors Survey, tourists spent £39.52 million and contributed an income of £15.34 million to the Exmoor economy in 2000. This is obviously a large amount and proves tourism is a major contributor to the economic well being of the area, especially when the subsequent multiplier is considered. But it must be noted that this is the expenditure across Exmoor National Park as a whole. This means that the contribution recreational activity on moorland makes is uncertain. Almost everyone during the interview procedure said that they feel recreational use of moorland is a vital contribution to the local economic well-being of the area. John Pugsley believes that recreation "...must be very important because with a little town like Dulverton...if they can make a lot of money from the tourists in the summer then they keep it open for locals in the winter". Ruth Hyett said that it is "absolutely vital now hill farming is such a struggle".

It has already been outlined that there is the option to expand the amount and range of recreational activities on Exmoor. This could obviously increase the contribution that recreational use on the moorland contributes to the local economy by attracting visitors to the area, and could also attract people who already live in the area to utilise the moorland. Mike Knight believes that there is room for expansion because the moorland could "cope", and he goes on to say that he feels that "we're a bit parochial about the activities on the moorland". This "parochial" attitude could be generated because as Anne Weaver explains, "We need people but we don't need people because they're the ones causing the problems but they're the ones who generate the income". Brian Martin agrees and says that a balance needs to be struck between "...helping the local economies and maintaining a beautiful landscape...you want people here for the economies but you don't want them eroding the moorland pathways or abusing rights of way...It needs managing in such a way that the area is looked after but the local economies are allowed to prosper, we need to look after the countryside, but must also look after the local communities".

Conclusion:

This report has aimed to discover why people visit the moorland of the Exmoor National Park, and it has subsequently shown that this is subject to an array of influences. Some people visit the moorland because of an appreciation of the physical characteristics, such as the scenery, landscape and peacefulness of the area. The decision to visit is also dependent on the conditions being suitable for the recreational activity. The 'National Park' status of Exmoor is an important attraction for many people; this could be more extensively used in place promotion. The report has also outlined the profound attachment to place that some people foster through repeated visitation to areas that hold deep significance to them. These elements should not be taken as independent influences, but realised that they combine to produce a complex matrix of overlapping attributes that can attract a visitor, or possibly repel them.

The report has tackled the issue of how much recreational use is made of Exmoor's moorland. The main recreational uses that utilise the open moorland are walking, cycling, horse riding and picnicking. The general consensus is that there is uneven usage across the moorland and during the year, with some areas being 'honey pot' sites, while other areas not attracting very many people. This has been attributed to an uncertainty among some people about their rights of way. It has been suggested that the CRoW Act will help clarify to people where they're allowed to use but some people believe that this uncertainty is embedded in the culture and so usage will not rapidly alter. It has also been said that in order to increase the number of people who visit Exmoor's open moorland there will need to be a greater diversity of activities available.

The report has outlined possible ways to make the moorland more attractive to people. This has been tackled in two ways; firstly looking at how the area could be made more attractive to people who utilise it now for recreational activity and secondly, the report has looked at how people who don't visit could be attracted to the moorlands of Exmoor. The ways in which the moorland could be made more attractive to current recreational users included the aforementioned need to inform people of the rights of access on open moorland and also to increase the opportunities for disabled individuals to access the open moorland of Exmoor. There are almost inevitably going to be conflicts between different recreational user groups, but fortunately few were reported. The main source of angst seemed to be generated from the usage of quad bikes, trail bikes and four by four on open moorlands.

The recreational use of open moorland appears to be vital to the local economy because of the revenue that is brought into the area. Although it must be said that it may not just be the moorland per se that is a large contributor to the economy because, as already mentioned, it appears that people don't visit Exmoor National Park purely because of the moorland but because of the diversity of landscapes in which the moorland plays a role. Recreational use on the moorland of Exmoor is also important to the local society and wider population because of people's profound affection for National Parks and the countryside.

In conclusion, the task of assessing why people enjoy the moorland is far from straightforward. And trying to maximise people's enjoyment of the moorland can lead

Recreational Use of Moorland

to conflict and disenchantment among other individuals or groups. But as Alan Bailey says "...that's what is great about it: it's all problems with no finite answers".

Recommendations

The report will now outline any recommendations that have been generated from the research to show how people's enjoyment of the moorland could be improved or enhanced.

- Dog friendly stiles – To allow dogs to easily pass through gateways but prevent sheep from escaping.
- Research into the possibility of cycle buses. Well implemented they could provide a sustainable way of getting people out into remoter areas of the moorland, whilst reducing the dependency on the car. This could help 'disperse' people to reduce the pressures that people can exert in well utilised areas and could also help distribute the benefits of tourism.
- Update some footpaths to bridleways to allow more opportunities for cycling.
- **Marketing:**

Positive images of moorland to be used in marketing literature to help to "dispel the myth". This could include the use of people visibly enjoying the moorland of Exmoor.

Promotion of Exmoor's 'National Park' status

- * The 'brand' could be exploited further in publications and on road signs (such as those on the M5 motorway).
- * Advertising the diversity of the National Park landscape and the special qualities associated with it.

- **Information Provision:**

- * Update website and literature to increase people's awareness of their rights and access when on Exmoor's open moorland. This could also help 'disperse' people to reduce pressures on certain areas.
- * Improve information provision at Tarr Steps to promote the availability of disabled parking at the bottom car park.
- * Promote the ability of Exmoor's diverse landscape enabling the recreational user to be able to enjoy it in almost any weather. This could be achieved through marketing schemes and Visitor Centre literature.
- * Examination of signage around pull-in parking bays on open moorland

- **Social Inclusion**

- * Improve moorland accessibility for certain groups, such as those individuals who are deaf or blind. This could include tailoring guided walks to meet individual needs and staff training.
- * Update the 'Accessible Exmoor Guide'.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1 (List of Interviewees)

All interviews conducted during the months of July and August 2004.

1. Bailey, A. Pinkery Centre manager.
2. Barbee, R. Member of Porlock Tourist Association, Visit Exmoor Forum and Exmoor Tourist Association. Also involved with Exmoor Awareness Training Programme.
3. Benn, R. Owner of Tarr Farm Restaurant and Residential property.
4. Bowden, P. Local North Devon resident.
5. Eales, R. Exmoor National Park Authority ranger.
6. Hazel, L. Dulverton Caravan Site manager.
7. Hyett, R. County Gate Visitor Centre assistant manager.
8. Knight, M. Member of the Exmoor National Park Authority and local resident.
9. Lloyd, D. Ecologist employed by Exmoor National Park Authority.
10. Martin, B. Owns Riscombe Farm self-catering cottages and is involved with Exmoor Farm Group and Co-Chairman of Visit Exmoor Forum.
11. Pugsley, J. Exmoor National Park Authority tenant farmer.
12. Scott, D. Huntmaster and proprietor of Brendon Hill Stallions.
13. Waller, A. Owns Barle Valley Safaris on Exmoor.
14. Weaver, A. Manager of Dulverton Visitor Centre.

Figure 2: Questionnaire 1

Enjoying Open Moorland in Exmoor National Park

1. Age- _____ Gender- _____
2. Where do you live?
3. How often do you visit Exmoor National Park?
.....
4. What is the average length of each visit?.....
5. What do you think is special about Exmoor National Park?
.....
6. For you, what is special about the open Exmoor moorland?
.....
7. What do you do on Exmoor's open moorland?
 - a) Walking
 - b) Horse Riding
 - c) Cycling
 - d) Hunting
 - e) 'Picnic'
 - f) 'Drive'
 - g) Other
8. What puts you off visiting our moorlands?
.....
9. What problems do you experience when using Exmoor's open moorland? (Please tick)
 - a) Car Parking
 - b) Congestion
 - c) Lack of Public Transport
 - d) Lack of Information
 - e) Lack of Signposts
 - f) Lack of Bridleways/Footpaths
 - g) Conflict with other users
 - h) Other
10. How important is open moorland to you?

| | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Very Important | Not at all Important |
| 5 | 1 |
11. If you managed the moorlands of Exmoor, what would you do to improve it?
-
-

