

A Vision for moorland Dartmoor



This is an environmental Vision for Dartmoor's moorland. It is what the above statutory agencies with direct responsibilities for Dartmoor's environment want to see Dartmoor look like in 2030. The Vision is for Dartmoor's moorland to remain the largest open space in southern England; for its rich archaeological remains to be protected and made available to be appreciated, and its wonderful wildlife to be conserved and enhanced. The landscape and associated ecological and cultural resources will be managed by farming systems that not only provide environmental benefits but also maintain the farming communities so essential for Dartmoor's future.



Good quality **blanket bog** will be found on all areas of deep peat (over 0.5m) on the high moor. The extent of this internationally important habitat will be similar to what it is today. Areas in good condition will have been maintained and areas that had been degraded, due to over grazing and inappropriate burning, will have been restored. The vegetation will be dominated by a mix of Cotton Grass, Cross-leaved Heath, Ling and various bog mosses. Other characteristic plants including Purple Moor Grass, Bog Asphodel and Round Leaved Sundew will be abundant. There will be a high water table with bog pools with breeding Golden Plover and Dunlin. Some areas of blanket bog may have evolved into wet heathland as a consequence of changes in climate. However, the blanket bog will remain as a major resource for retaining water on the moor and will buffer the impacts of climate change on streams, water supplies and associated habitats.



There will be extensive areas of **heather moorland**, dominated by heather, particularly Ling. Other plants will include Bilberry, Cross-leaved Heath, Purple Moor Grass and some Western Gorse. There will be variety in the height and density of the vegetation including some areas of short grass/turf and tall mature heather particularly on the valley slopes and gullies. Existing areas of heather will be maintained and other areas, including land formerly under forestry plantations, which had the potential soils and seed bank, will have been restored to this internationally important habitat.

On the lower slopes the dominant habitat will be **Western heath**. It will be a mosaic of heathers, gorse, grassland and patches of scrub on the fringes of the moor. The vegetation will vary between wet and dry heath each with characteristic plants including Western Gorse, Bell Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Bristle Bent Grass and Ling. There will be considerable variation in the height of the vegetation including areas of close-cropped grassland/lawns. Western heath will have expanded onto areas of poor grassland where the seed bank existed. Western heath and heather moorland are largely confined to Western Europe and the extensive areas on Dartmoor are of international importance.

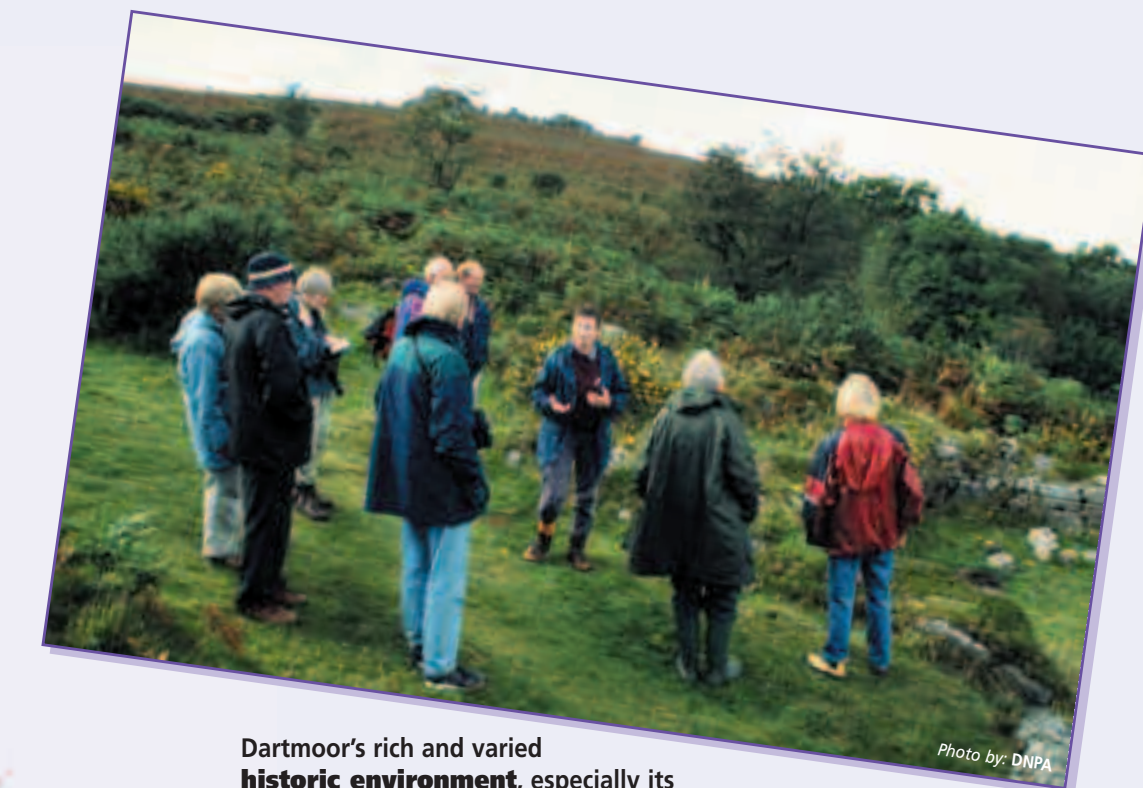
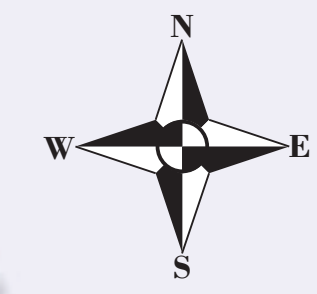
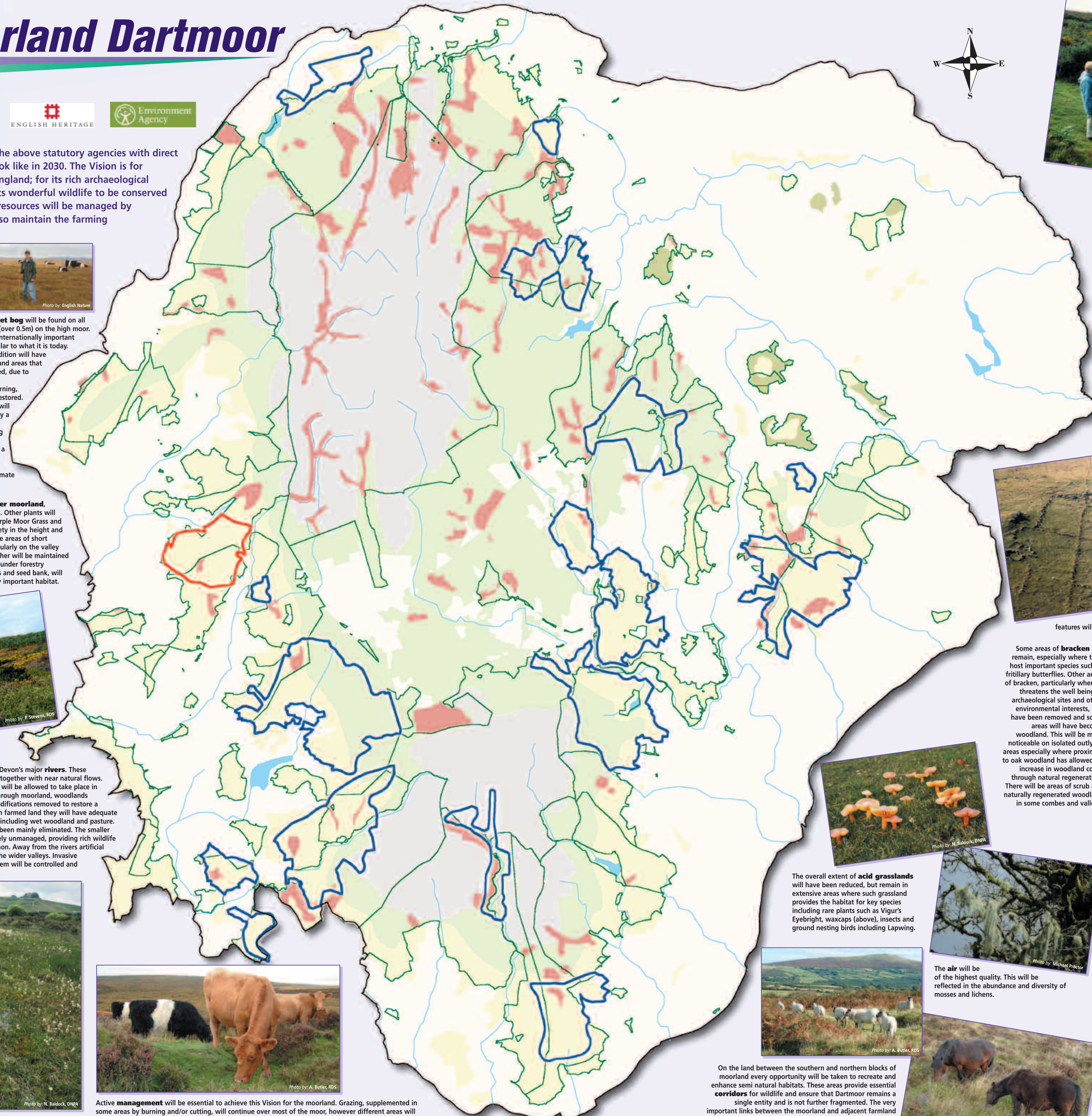
The high moor is the source for most of Devon's major **rivers**. These rivers will have very good water quality together with near natural flows. Processes such as erosion and deposition will be allowed to take place in a natural way. They will flow naturally through moorland, woodlands and floodplains with some man made modifications removed to restore a more natural course. As they pass through farmed land they will have adequate buffer zones with a variety of vegetation including wet woodland and pasture. Activities that destabilise banks will have been mainly eliminated. The smaller rivers, streams and tributaries will be largely unmanaged, providing rich wildlife habitats for species such as Otter and Salmon. Away from the rivers artificial pools and ponds will be a feature only in the wider valleys. Invasive species in the watercourses or alongside them will be controlled and where practical eliminated.



The **valley mires** will continue to be an internationally important habitat on Dartmoor, existing on areas of waterlogged deep peat in valley bottoms. The characteristic plants will be Cotton Grass, Cross-leaved Heath, Bog Asphodel, Bog Bean, sundews and sedges. The mires will provide nesting habitat for wading birds such as Snipe and Curlew. This habitat will support a number of rare insects including Bog Hoversly and Keeled Skimmer. The majority of the mires (approximately 90%) will be kept open by grazing and management, others will have begun to evolve into wet woodland and scrub (c10%). Birch and other native trees will have spread onto moorland areas adjacent to some of the scrubbed up mires.



Active **management** will be essential to achieve this Vision for the moorland. Grazing, supplemented in some areas by burning and/or cutting, will continue over most of the moor, however different areas will require different levels of grazing. Farming systems will provide this essential management as well as providing a sustainable future for those engaged in hill farming. In some areas natural processes will have the greatest impact on the landscape and very extensive grazing, without burning, will create valuable habitats and landscapes.



Dartmoor's rich and varied **historic environment**, especially its archaeological and historic features, will be protected and managed to ensure vegetation does not damage this internationally renowned resource and, where appropriate, does not hide the upstanding remains. The most significant archaeological landscapes (PALs) are identified on the vision map. Other important **archaeological sites** (including those qualifying for national designation) will be managed on a site by site basis to ensure their preservation and to ensure they remain accessible.

Important **geological and geomorphological features** will remain visible and in good condition and may require management similar to the PALs.



The Premier Archaeological Landscapes
The historic environment on Dartmoor is of great importance and value. Much of it is recognised as having international significance and there are archaeological landscapes which rank amongst the finest in Europe. Fourteen such areas, described as Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs) have been identified. These will need to be protected and kept available to be appreciated in their entirety and will require appropriate extensive land management. Generally, within the PALs the management requirements of the historically important features will, where necessary, take precedence over that required for their ecology.



Some areas of **bracken** will remain, especially where they host important species such as fritillary butterflies. Other areas of bracken, particularly where it threatens the well being of archaeological sites and other environmental interests, will have been removed and some areas will have become woodland. This will be more noticeable on isolated outlying areas especially where proximity to oak woodland has allowed an increase in woodland cover through natural regeneration. There will be areas of scrub and naturally regenerated woodland in some combs and valleys.



The overall extent of **acid grasslands** will have been reduced, but remain in extensive areas where such grassland provides the habitat for key species including rare plants such as Vigor's Eyebright, waxcaps (above), insects and ground nesting birds including Lapwing.



Woodland will have expanded in some moorland valleys through natural regeneration and as a result of lower grazing pressure. There will be more trees around the fringes of the moor with Birch, Rowan and other native species common on some valley sides. Small woods, isolated in the past, may have become part of bigger woodland blocks as a result of natural regeneration.

The **air** will be of the highest quality. This will be reflected in the abundance and diversity of mosses and lichens.



On the land between the southern and northern blocks of moorland every opportunity will be taken to recreate and enhance semi natural habitats. These areas provide essential **corridors** for wildlife and ensure that Dartmoor remains a single entity and is not further fragmented. The very important links between the moorland and adjacent farmland will be maintained and strengthened by appropriate management, including habitat restoration, where necessary. This will apply particularly to the valleys. Here mires and moorland can link to Rhos pasture, scrub and woodland.

Dartmoor in 2030

A Vision of what the statutory agencies would like the moorland parts of Dartmoor to look like

Blanket Bog	Mires of high ecological quality Note: not all mires are shown
Heather Moorland	Natural Regenerated Woodland
Western Heath	Premier Archaeological Landscape (PALs)
Geographical Landscape	Boundary of Commons

Scale 1:76,000

Note: This map is intended to guide local land management decisions. It shows the broad vegetation types relevant to moorland. It is recognised that land within the moorland boundary may be in private ownership where management remains to be discussed and agreed with all relevant parties.

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