



Dartmoor SWOT Analysis

A summary of key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting Dartmoor to help inform the Local Plan 2026 Scoping Consultation. These have been summarised from the State of the Park report 2025, Local Plan monitoring and background papers for Partnership Plan workshops. Links to these documents can be found at www.dartmoor.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan

Strengths

- Dartmoor is of significant biological importance and is internationally recognised for its variety of habitats including blanket bogs, valley mires, wet and dry heaths, ancient oak woods, lowland pastures and rhôs pastures which provide home to a range of rare and common plant and animal species.
- Health on Dartmoor is consistent with national figures, with 80% of residents reporting good or very good health.
- Dartmoor is home to many high-quality food and drink producers, and a large accommodation and local food sector, which reduces food miles and supports the circular economy.

Weaknesses

- Public transport within the National Park is very limited which results in communities and businesses being heavily reliant on private vehicles to access employment, education and other services and produces higher levels of emissions.
- Distance, undulating topography and high elevations significantly inhibits active travel from outside of the park
- Broadband connectivity is poor across the majority of Dartmoor when compared with the rest of the UK both regarding the average download speeds and the percentage of premises unable to receive superfast broadband.
- There are significant gaps in mobile phone coverage, with many ‘not-spots’ in communities across the moor.
- The median work-based earnings for Dartmoor are much lower than the national average (in 2023 the median for Dartmoor was £29,071 compared with £35,004 nationally) and high property prices are out of step with local earnings making it increasingly difficult for local people and workers to live inside the National Park.
- There are still key areas of Dartmoor’s historic environment that are inadequately understood.

Opportunities

- Opportunities for local renewable energy networks and partnerships, to adapt and mitigate to climate change by producing electricity with a lower impact.
- Development of regenerative tourism has the potential to create positive social and economic opportunities, benefitting businesses and communities.
- New developments outside the National Park could lead to greater access to workforce within the National Park, opening up opportunities for business growth.
- Production and professional, scientific and technical sectors in Dartmoor (along with construction) produce the highest comparative turnover per employee.
- Green Social Prescribing helps improve quality of life for those with physical and mental health needs.
- 3 Landscape Recovery Areas have been identified which will each provide long-term, sustainable benefits for ecosystem functions, water quality and food resilience, farming and climate change.

Threats

- Available data demonstrates that rainfall patterns, temperature and growing patterns of vegetation are being affected by climate change. Impacts are likely to include hotter summers, more extreme weather patterns and flooding, greater risk of wildlife. Poses threat to ecological processes and communities and visitors of Dartmoor.
- Dartmoor’s overall population has been relatively stable over the past 20 years, but within that period the proportion of people over 65 is increasing while the working age population is decreasing.
- The surrounding areas are subject to significant growth, which in addition to increasing tourist numbers and recreational use result in additional pressure and disturbance to the moor, land management and biodiversity.
- Upland farming has shaped the special qualities of the National Park and its communities. The farming population is shrinking and ageing with multiple barriers impacting succession and new entrants. This erosion of identity will impact culture, landscape and tourism as well as intangible cultural heritage associated with traditions such as commoning