



NPA/25/001

Dartmoor National Park Authority

10 January 2025

Closure of National Park Visitor Centre, Princetown

Report of the Chief Executive (National Park Officer)

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) **Note the financial circumstances that have led to the proposal to close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown, feedback from staff and UNISON about the potential closure; and**
- (ii) **Determine when to formally close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown and agree to use reserves (if required) to meet any additional cost.**

1 Background

- 1.1 This report deals with the future of the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown. The Visitor Centre is accommodated in the Duchy Hotel building which is leased from the Duchy of Cornwall. The lease expires March 2026 and Members have determined not to seek an extension or renewal due to financial constraints (NPA/24/040).
- 1.2 The annual rent payable to the Duchy of Cornwall is £100 per annum. The lease is full repairing which means the Authority is responsible for all management, maintenance and insurance costs. The net cost of operating the building (not the Visitor Centre) in 2022/23 was £72,917 and in 2023/24 £63,694.
- 1.3 Over a number of years we have explored options, with the Duchy of Cornwall, to develop income from the building in a manner that does not negatively impact adjoining businesses. The extensive first floor is not fully utilised but demand for office or storage space is limited in Princetown and would likely require significant modernisation. First floor office space is sub-let to the Dartmoor Preservation Association. The Duchy also rent two rooms back from the Authority on terms that reflect total costs of operating the building and not just the lease. We have also discussed the potential for a café on the ground floor – as a way of generating income to help subsidise the cost of operating the Visitor Centre – but at the scale needed to materially impact income, the Duchy have been concerned that this might take trade away from existing local businesses.
- 1.4 Since 2021/22 we have worked with the Duchy of Cornwall to explore a number of options aimed at securing and/or extending the operation of the Visitor Centre or

providing a new use for the building which would support the local economy. One option remains live and is subject to ongoing discussions between the Duchy of Cornwall and a third party. This could develop an income in a way which would help to sustain some form of reduced scale visitor offer on the ground floor. This option is commercially sensitive and thus further details cannot be provided at this stage. The Authority has indicated that should the Visitor Centre close, and this option come to fruition, it would support a visitor offer through gifting relevant interpretation and display material. The Authority would also look to support a visitor offer through appropriate training for any staff employed as part of the new operation.

2 Financial Context

- 2.1 The Authority has had to live with continued austerity since 2010/11. Our core income is via National Park Grant (NPG) from Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). We received a NPG of £3.8m in 2024/25 plus a £500,000 uplift. If NPG had kept pace with inflation (Consumer Price Index), it would now be worth more than £7.3m. If the Retail Price Index is used as the measure of inflation our core grant would now be worth £8.5m. In percentage terms, this is a real-terms cut of over 55% since 2010/11.
- 2.2 At the time of writing this report we have no indication of the amount of NPG that we will receive in 2025/26, or beyond, which makes financial planning difficult. Nor do we have a timeline for an announcement of NPG for 2025/26. We have received an indication from officials that the additional grant received in 2024/25 (£500,000) has not been included in our baseline for 2025/26 – an effective cut of 12%.
- 2.3 The Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/25 - 2026/27 (MTFP), which was approved by Members in March 2024 (NPA/24/13), forecast a budget gap of £510,000 in 2025/26. This figure assumed that NPG will remain at £3.8m and that the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown would close in March 2025. Since the MTFP for 2024/25 - 2026/27 was approved there have been changes to employer National Insurance contributions. The changes announced in the October 2024 Budget will add another £90,000 to the deficit unless the Government funds this (we have had no clarity from Defra about this issue).
- 2.4 The Chair/Deputy Chair of the Authority and the Chief Executive (National Park Officer) were due to meet with Mary Creagh MP (Minister with responsibility for National Parks) on 17 December 2024. The agenda provided an opportunity to discuss future funding and seek some certainty to enable future planning. Unfortunately, the meeting was postponed, at short notice, because the Minister had other urgent business to attend to. The meeting is re-arranged for 23 January 2025.
- 2.5 If Members determine not to close the National Park Visitor Centre in March 2025 (see options below) then the costs of keeping it open will be an additional draw on reserves.

3 Issues arising from the consultation with Staff and UNISON about potential closure of the National Park Visitor Centre, Princetown

- 3.1 Leadership Team met with all Visitor Centre staff on 4 November 2024 to outline, in person, the proposal to close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown. A formal consultation paper was sent to all staff and UNISON (the recognised trade union) on 11 November 2024. This paper set out the reasons for proposing the potential closure; options that have been considered to keep the centre open and/or develop a different form of visitor offer; implications of closure for staff; and process for engaging with staff. The consultation period closed on 9 December 2024. There was a special meeting of the Joint Staff Forum (a formal meeting between the Authority and UNISON representatives) during the consultation period to consider questions and issues.
- 3.2 Individual consultation meetings were held with 11 directly affected staff involving the Head of Communications and Engagement with support from Human Resources. We received six formal responses to the consultation paper. All of these were from staff working in this service area and UNISON. There was no response from staff outside of the affected service area.
- 3.3 Key issues raised through the staff consultation include:

1. Process

Questions regarding; what constitutes 'suitable alternative employment' with regards to hours and location; whether we would consider requests for voluntary redundancy; could staff who are made redundant join the casual pool for Visitor Centre staff; and why were staff from all Centres included in the proposed pool for redundancy?

2. Effects of closing the Princetown Visitor Centre on other Visitor Centres

Concerns that the potential closure of Princetown Visitor Centre could have consequential implications for the remaining two centres in terms of staff workload and a request that we consider double staffing Haytor and Postbridge for a longer period of time and extend opening hours. There was also a concern that the closure of Princetown Visitor Centre could have a negative effect on the service offered at Haytor and Postbridge Centres. It was also noted that staff working in the Visitor Centres are a key means of delivering our second purpose (promoting the understanding and enjoyment of the National Park).

3. Other issues

There was widespread understanding and support for the decision not to renew the lease for the Duchy Hotel but a concern that we were considering closing the Authority's biggest visitor centre and that this could have a negative impact on Princetown and its surrounds. There were questions about whether we would consider a different location for a visitor centre in Princetown in the future and if we would consider keeping the Visitor Centre open until the end of October 2025 and/or until the end of March 2026 perhaps on a reduced footprint that might facilitate single staffing (the Centre is currently double staffed). There was also a question about the impact on the businesses and wider economy of Princetown.

- 3.4 A response to the specific questions regarding the process and potential impacts on other Visitor Centres has been provided to staff. The issues raised under 3 above are addressed below.

Options regarding closure date for the National Park Visitor Centre, Princetown

- 3.5 Following discussion with Members in November 2024, we consulted staff on closing the Visitor Centre with effect from end of March 2025. This is '**Option A**'. We have outlined below further options regarding the date when the Visitor Centre will formally close (noting the decision already taken by Members not to seek renewal/extension of the lease when it ends in March 2026):

Option B: Centre remains open based on 2024/25 opening hours until end of March 2026. The staffing cost would be circa £80,000. The Centre may need to close earlier than March 2026 to allow for the building to be passed back to the Duchy at the end of March 2026.

Option C. Centre remains open until end of October 2025 based on 2024/25 opening hours. The staffing cost would be circa £50,000.

- 3.6 The costs identified above are for staffing the Visitor Centre. They do not factor in electricity, maintenance and other service costs. These 'service' costs are obviously linked to the wider building (refer to NPA/24/040). Nor do these costs consider implications for the workload of other staff. Also, the figures do not include potential income from retail sales. In 2023/24 'profit' from retail sales attributable to the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown was circa £16,000 (for the full year).
- 3.7 We have also looked at the potential to reduce the size of the Visitor Centre, by closing the exhibition space and gallery areas, to facilitate single staffing but do not believe that this is a viable option for a number of reasons including staff welfare.

Longer-term visitor offer in Princetown

- 3.8 The Authority has been exploring options for the future use of Duchy Hotel in partnership with the Duchy of Cornwall. If the Visitor Centre were to close, we would look to deploy the outreach vehicle in Princetown at key times subject to budget for 2025/26.
- 3.9 Members will be aware that the Authority is the lead partner for a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid called Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes. Princetown is one of three 'hubs' for a number of activities (the other hubs are Ivybridge and Okehampton). If Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes is successful it will provide funding for engagement activities. The bid submitted to NLHF did not include any direct support to the Visitor Centre at Princetown as ongoing support for an existing visitor centre would not meet the investment criteria for NLHF.
- 3.10 Consideration of alternative locations for a future visitor centre/facility in Princetown will depend on future funding for the Authority. This is not something that the Authority is likely to be in a position to afford in the near or medium term unless additional funding is forthcoming.

Impact on wider economy

- 3.11 We recognise that the proposed closure of the National Park Visitor Centre will have a knock-on impact for local businesses. We have worked with partners on a potential longer-term vision for Princetown. In response, West Devon Borough Council is prepared to develop this, in partnership with businesses, stakeholders and residents, to create a community economic plan for Princetown. This work will be considered as part of the Council's wider delivery plan. It will be setting that programme in early 2025 for the 25/26 financial year. The Authority would look to engage with and support this work subject to budget constraints.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The MTFP for 2024/25 to 2027/28 was based on the assumption that the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown would close in March 2025. The plan projected a deficit of £510,000 if the additional £500,000 received as part of NPG for 2024/25 was a one-off payment and not consolidated into the baseline. Members approved use of reserves (up to £510,000) to balance the revenue budget for 2025/26 (NPA/24/039) given the current uncertainty and the probability that we would not get a grant announcement in time to make any necessary cuts to set a balanced budget.
- 4.2 The changes to employer National Insurance contributions announced in the October 2024 budget are a further potential draw on reserves of circa £90,000 – we have had no clarity from Defra as to whether the Government will reimburse this increase.
- 4.3 There will be redundancy costs associated with closing the Visitor Centre. These are estimated to be in the region of £10,000 - £50,000 (the variation is due to length of service and age of the staff who may be made redundant and potential pension strain costs).
- 4.4 If Members determine to keep the Visitor Centre open beyond March 2025, then the cost would have to be met from reserves (i.e. a further draw on reserves).
- 4.5 Assuming that £510,000 is taken from reserves to balance the 2025/26 revenue budget this would leave £2.4m in reserves. It should be noted that most of this is earmarked for particular or potential uses (e.g. match funding for external grants, potential legal costs etc.). Leadership Team are in the process of 'building' the revenue budget for 2025/26 and an up-dated MTFP. We zero-base the budget (i.e. scrutinise all expenditure) and are looking for savings to reduce the call from reserves.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 5.1 The decision not to seek an extension or renewal of the Duchy Hotel lease and to close the National Park Visitor Centre at Princetown is driven by financial necessity.
- 5.2 The Authority has had to live with continued reductions in core grant since 2010/11 save for a one-off payment in 2021/22 and another additional payment in 2024/25. The MTFP for 2024/25 - 2027/28 forecast a £510,000 deficit in the revenue budget for 2025/26 which Members have agreed would be met from the reserves. The

MTFP for 2024/25 – 2027/28 assumed that the Visitor Centre would close at the end of March 2025.

- 5.3 Members need to determine whether to close the Visitor Centre at the end of March 2025 (Option A); at the end of March 2026 (Option B) or at the end of October 2025 (Option C). Options B or C would be a further call on reserves.

KEVIN BISHOP



NPA/25/002

Dartmoor National Park Authority

10 January 2025

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

Report of the Senior Planning Policy Officer and Director of Spatial Planning

Recommendation: **That Members adopt the Local Development Scheme**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a public statement setting out the milestones for the preparation and adoption or publication of planning documents including the Dartmoor National Park Authority's Local Plan review programme.
- 1.2 The LDS must publicly set out which local development documents we are to prepare, which of these are development plan documents, which area they cover, whether they are to be prepared with another authority and the timetable against which they will be prepared.
- 1.3 Although not a statutory requirement, the Dartmoor LDS also sets out the indicative timescale for the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

2 Background

- 2.1 The Dartmoor Local Plan was adopted in December 2021 and must be reviewed within 5 years of adoption (by December 2026). The review process comprises an assessment as to whether the current Local Plan is still fit for purpose taking into account monitoring of Local Plan outcomes, demographic or other changes to the plan area and legislative or policy changes. The outcome of the review is a decision to either retain the Local Plan without any changes, undertake a partial update of the Local Plan or prepare a new Local Plan.
- 2.2 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 makes provision for changes to the plan making process, including the potential for further regulations to specify the timescale for plan preparation and the introduction of National Development Management Policy. The Government have advised these changes will be implemented in summer or autumn 2025 and if some or all of these are implemented, they would very likely impact on the outcome of the local plan review. In addition, the proposed changes may impact on the process of the review and the type of evidence needed to support the review process.

3 Updating the LDS

- 3.1 It is important that the LDS remains up to date and clearly reflects the programme of document preparation and consultation. The current LDS sets out a timetable for reviewing the Local Plan as well as the Statement of Community Involvement and updating the Design Guidance SPD but due to a lack of capacity these works have not commenced in line with the published timescales.
- 3.2 In addition, the review of the Local Plan was intended to commence in the summer of 2024 and conclude in the summer of 2026. This is an onerous timescale for a review process, particularly when the Local Plan itself would only have been adopted for 2.5 years when the review process would begin. The current LDS timescales are:

| Local Development Document | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Local Plan (DPD) review | - | - | - Call for evidence - Scoping paper - Evidence review - Draft Report | - Final Report (summer 2026) |
| Statement of Community Involvement | | - Consultation - Adoption | | |
| Housing SPD | - Consultation - Adoption | | - | - |
| Design Guidance SPD | - Consultation | - Adoption | - | - |

- 3.3 Given that the current LDS timetable has been delayed due to staff capacity (lack of) a new updated LDS is required and this provides an opportunity to schedule a more focused and condensed Local Plan review which could align with proposed legislative changes and work being undertaken for the Partnership Plan (also known as the Management Plan). The proposed timetable is shown below:

| Local Development Document | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Local Plan (DPD) review | | - Evidence review - Consultation | - Final report |
| Statement of Community Involvement | - Consultation | - Adoption | |
| Design Guidance SPD | | - Consultation - Adoption | |

- 3.4 This condensed process still ensures the review is completed by December 2026 and provides time for public consultation at a meaningful stage in the process when sufficient evidence is available to comment on. During the Local Plan review process

the Planning and Sustainability Panel would convene quarterly to allow regular updates to Members:

Summer- Autumn 2025 (July - Dec 2025)

- Commission technical reports
- Planning and Sustainability Panel Update September 2025
- Draft Interim Statement and Topic papers
- Planning and Sustainability Panel Update December 2025

Winter 2026 (Jan – Feb 2026)

- Authority Update on interim statements and consultation – January 2026 (*subject to confirmation by Members*)
- Public Consultation on interim statement

Spring – Summer 2026 (May - July 2026)

- Planning and Sustainability Panel Update – May 2026
- Summary Report and Topic Papers
- Adoption – by Authority July 2026.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The adoption of the LDS sets a timetable for plan review. The delivery of this scheme therefore has resource implications for the Authority in respect of staff resource (principally forward planning) for document preparation, consultation; staff resources relating to specialist input; specific research or appraisal requirements; publicity and publication.
- 4.2 Given that the LDS review covers more than one financial year and has links to the review of the National Park Management Plan (Dartmoor Partnership Plan) and work on Race to Zero, Currently there are a number of ring-fenced reserves totalling £95,000 allocated for the National Park Management Plan, Local Plan, Race to Zero and the Authority's Climate Action Plan. Money can be drawn down as required to support these programmes of work. It is estimated that these reserves will adequately address the financial impacts of the p

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework, together with recent appeal decisions nationally, highlights the importance of maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan and evidence base.
- 5.2 This LDS establishes an important continued commitment from the Authority to maintain a robust and up to date Local Plan, giving it the ability to make clear, justified and defensible decisions on planning applications within the National Park.

LIZ PAYNE &
DEAN KINSELLA

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Local Development Scheme January 2025

20250110 LP/DK – Local Development Scheme (LDS)



Local Development Scheme (LDS)

January 2024



1. Introduction

- 1.1. Under section 67(1) of the Environment Act 1995, Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for the entire area of Dartmoor National Park. Those responsibilities include the mineral and waste planning functions for the area. The Authority also prepares the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan (also known as the Management Plan); these are the over-arching strategic documents for the National Park and set the vision and objectives to guide the future of the National Park over a 10 to 20 year period. The current Partnership Plan was adopted in 2021, there is a consistent vision for Dartmoor's future in the Partnership Plan and Local Plan.
- 1.2. Preparation of a Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a requirement of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (as amended by the 2011 Localism Act). The LDS must publicly set out which local development documents we are to prepare, which of these are development plan documents, which area they cover, whether they are to be prepared with another authority and the timetable against which they will be prepared. The LDS must be formally adopted.
- 1.3. This LDS is a public statement of the programme for preparing and reviewing the formal planning documents for Dartmoor National Park.

This includes:

- Development Plan Documents (identifying strategic priorities and containing policies to address these, for example the Local Plan)
- Supplementary Planning Documents (detailed advice and guidance which adds to adopted policy, such as Design Guidance)
- Other documents, including Local Development Documents (including 'procedural' documents such as the Local Development Scheme or Statement of Community Involvement)

2. Current plans in Dartmoor National Park

- 2.1. The Dartmoor Local Plan (2018-2036) for Dartmoor National Park was adopted in December 2021. It is a comprehensive Local Plan containing strategic policies, development management policies, site allocations, and minerals and waste policies. It is supported by the extant Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Housing SPD.

| Document name | Current status |
|---|------------------------|
| <p>Local Plan (DPD - Development Plan Document)</p> <p>Sets out the vision, aims and strategy for spatial development in the Dartmoor National Park, provides detailed development management policies, allocates sites for housing and other development, sets out policies for Minerals and Waste development.</p> | Adopted (2021) |
| <p>Design Guidance (SPD - Supplementary Planning Document)</p> <p>Guidance to encourage a high standard of design in Dartmoor National Park</p> | Adopted (2011) |
| <p>Housing (SPD - Supplementary Planning Document)</p> <p>Guidance to support the delivery of housing in Dartmoor National Park.</p> | Adopted (2023) |
| <p>Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)</p> <p>Sets out the scope and arrangements for consultation and participation for each local development document</p> | Adopted (Revised 2018) |
| <p>Local Development Scheme (LDS)</p> <p>The timetable for preparation of local development documents (e.g. Local Plan) and Supplementary Planning Guidance</p> | Current (Revised 2024) |

Table 1. Current local planning documents

3. Local Development Scheme

- 3.1. This document will include commentary on the complete range of documents the Authority intends to prepare and review. However, the required scope of the LDS is the preparation of DPDs only; Statements of Community Involvement and Supplementary Planning Documents do not need to be included but are here, for completeness.
- 3.2. The Authority intends to prepare or review the following documents within the timeframe of this LDS. Key milestones for their preparation/review are set out in Table 2.

3.3. Local Plan Review (Development Plan Document)

- 3.4. The Local Plan was prepared from 2016, including informal and formal consultation stages and public examination in early 2021. The Inspector's Report was received in November 2021 and the Local Plan was adopted in December 2021 at which point the previous DPDs were deleted.

- 3.5. The National Planning Policy Framework states:

“Policies in local plans and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary¹⁹. Reviews should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of a plan, and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy. Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly; and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the near future.”
(NPPF para 34)

[Footnote 19 states: Reviews at least every five years are a legal requirement for all local plans (Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012).]

- 3.6. A revised timetable for the review of the Local Plan has been proposed which begins later than previously intended. This condensed process still ensures the review is completed by December 2026 and provides time for public consultation, which the Authority considers is important to the review process. The timescales are shown in table 2 and paragraph 3.20.
- 3.7. Importantly, the LDS sets out a process for reviewing the policies in the adopted Local Plan. It does not set a process or timescale for the updating of those policies, which the review process may identify as in need of updating. This process would take place after the conclusion of the review. If issues emerge during the review process which alter the anticipated timescale below this LDS would be revised to reflect those new timescales.
- 3.8. The scope of the Local Plan review will be that of the entire Local Plan; it will include the whole area of Dartmoor National Park, and include consideration of strategic policies, development management policies, allocations, and minerals and waste policies. Where the review finds that only part of the Local Plan requires updating, only these policy areas will be subject to an update.

3.9. **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**

3.10. The Authority has two adopted SPDs, the Housing SPD (2023) and the Design Guide (2011). Whilst outside the necessary scope of this LDS it is helpful to set out the Authority's intentions regarding the review of these SPDs, as follows.

3.11. The Authority adopted the Housing SPD in 2023 and offers additional guidance to the Local Plan policies on affordable and market housing, custom and self-build homes, rural workers housing, and the delivery of housing sites.

3.12. The Authority intends to review the Design Guide SPD. This will ensure the guidance is up to date and aligns with Local Plan policies, for example on sustainable construction and space and accessibility standards. The scope of the Design Guide SPD may also include a design code dimension in order to reflect emerging government policy in that area.

3.13. The Authority also has additional guidance which has been prepared jointly with partners. This has not been adopted as SPD. The South Hams SAC guidance was prepared in partnership and was endorsed by the Authority in October 2019. Joint Biodiversity Net Gain guidance was first published in 2021 as technical guidance and was updated in April 2024 to align with legislation.

3.14. **Statement of Community Involvement**

3.15. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that LPAs produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The Authority prepared and adopted a SCI, *Planning: Having Your Say*, in November 2018. It is considered necessary to review the SCI prior to the review of the Local Plan in order to ensure that the consultation and engagement process meets the latest requirements and best practice.

3.16. **Joint working and other plans**

3.17. Although joint development plan documents can be prepared with other planning authorities, there is no intention to prepare joint planning documents. In April 2016 the Authority agreed¹ not to enter formally into joint local plan arrangements with Plymouth, West Devon and South Hams; or with Exeter, Teignbridge, Mid-Devon and East Devon. It has committed to work closely with both groups in respect to evidence gathering and meeting the Duty to Co-operate for both the Dartmoor Local Plan, and the respective plans of other LPAs.

3.18. The Authority maintains close liaison with Devon County Council, which is the mineral planning authority for the rest of Devon outside Plymouth and Torbay (and Dartmoor) in preparing evidence and monitoring to inform and support minerals policies.

¹ Authority Report April 2016 http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/739609/20160401-Authority-Reports.pdf

| Local Development Document | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Local Plan (DPD) review | | - Evidence review - Consultation | - Final report |
| Statement of Community Involvement | - Consultation | - Adoption | |
| Design Guidance SPD | | - Consultation - Adoption | |

Table 2. Dartmoor National Park Authority Local Development Scheme – Programme 2024-2028

3.19. With reference to the above formal LDS timescales, it is anticipated that the review of the local plan will take place as follows.

Phase 1 Review of evidence

This phase will include:

- Collection of evidence
- Drafting of an interim paper and Topic Papers

This phase is planned to start in summer 2025

Phase 2 Consultation

This phase will provide the opportunity for public consultation on the interim paper and Topic Papers.

This phase is planned to start in early 2026.

Phase 3 Final Report

The interim report will be revised to take into account stakeholder views on the conclusions and recommendations made. The final report will be considered formally by the Authority.

This phase is planned to conclude in summer 2026.

4. Monitoring and review

4.1. Legislation requires local planning authorities to produce an Authority Monitoring Report to assess progress on the implementation of the LDS. The Authority also maintains and publishes other monitoring and reports, including the Brownfield Register, the Self-Build Register, and the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement.

4.2. Monitoring systems should assess:

- whether policies in local development documents are being implemented effectively, and whether targets and/or milestones are being met
- the impact of the policies with regard to national, regional and local targets
- the effectiveness of the policies and proposals with regard to the achievement of strategic objectives, and whether modification or replacement is required.

Where policies or proposals need to be changed, the annual review should indicate how that will be achieved.

4.3. A robust monitoring framework is now set out in the Authority's Annual Monitoring Report published each year. The review and monitoring of the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan and its associated State of the Park Report also provides evidence and material for assessing the documents in the Local Plan.



NPA/25/003

Dartmoor National Park Authority

10 January 2025

Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy and Local Government Discretionary Compensation Policies

Report of the Head of Organisational Development

Recommendation: **That Members:**

- (i) approve the updated Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employer Pensions Discretions Policy; and**
- (ii) approve the updated Employer Discretionary Policies relating to the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a public service pension scheme and its rules are made with the approval of Parliament.
- 1.2 Dartmoor National Park Authority participate in the LGPS which is administered by Peninsula Pensions.
- 1.3 While the LGPS is a statutory pension scheme, the scheme's regulations allow an employer some flexibility to enhance members' benefits. These typically involve early access to benefits or improving the benefits received by members (employees and former employees).
- 1.4 All employers participating in the LGPS in England or Wales must formulate and publish a 'statement of policy' regarding the discretions they have the power to exercise, confirming how they will handle these discretions and any associated costs.
- 1.5 All employers should regularly review their discretions policy to ensure its relevance to the organisation and scheme members.

2 LGPS Employer Pensions Discretions Policy

- 2.1 There are numerous discretions in the regulations; however, only a few require the employer to have a written policy statement. This is because exercising these discretions could result in costs for the employer when enhancing the benefits received by members.
- 2.2 The Authority approved the current policy discretions in 2014 (NPA/14/033) when the scheme changed from a final salary scheme to a career average scheme.
- 2.3 The proposed Employer Pensions Discretions Policy, provided at Appendix 1, is based on a recommended template provided to employers by Peninsula Pensions that includes mandatory and recommended discretions.
- 2.4 The policy document sets out the discretionary powers concerned, identifies the relevant regulation and the proposed policy decision (i.e. how the discretion will be exercised).
- 2.5 There are no changes to the policy decisions that were agreed in 2014. Some policy decisions have been removed where the regulations do not apply to the Authority. The policy decisions relating to flexible retirement included in the policy document mean that a separate flexible retirement policy is not necessary.
- 2.6 The format and content of the policy document has been considered by Peninsula Pensions as acceptable to meet our responsibilities under the regulations. The proposed policy document was approved by Leadership Team on 26 November 2024, following consultation with UNISON and the Authority's Section 151 Officer.

3 Local Government (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations Policies

- 3.1 The Authority is also required to have a written policy in relation to:
 - *the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 (as amended); and*
 - *the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 (as amended);*
- 3.2 For the purposes of the above regulations 'local government' means employment with an employer who offers membership of the LGPS to its employees, regardless of whether or not the employee chooses to join the LGPS.
- 3.3 The proposed Employer Discretionary Policies, provided at Appendix 2, are unchanged from those approved by the Authority in 2014 (NPA/14/033).

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Members will see from this report and the appendices that the Authority is continuing to adopt a flexible but robust approach, bearing in mind the general overall cost of the scheme, and with the intention of not adding to this further.

- 4.2 There are no immediate costs at this stage and any decisions relating to these policies taken under delegated powers will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 4.3 Where a decision taken under these policies would result in a cost exceeding £30,000, approval from the Authority would be required in accordance with Financial Regulations.

5 Equality and Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The policies presented for approval are legally compliant and designed to ensure equality of opportunity for all employees and former employees of the Authority.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The policy decisions proposed are considered appropriate to provide flexibility when managing organisational change, in particular regarding retirement and redundancy, at a time of significant financial constraint in the public sector.
- 6.2 Subject to Authority approval, these policies will be published on the Authority's website and a copy provided to Peninsula Pensions as the Administering Authority.

NEIL WHITE

Background Papers: NPA/14/033

Attachments: Appendix 1 - Employer Pensions Discretions Policy
Appendix 2 - Employer Discretionary Policies relating to Local Government (Early Termination of Employment (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations

20250110 NW LGPS Discretions



Employer Pensions Discretions Policy

The LGPS Regulations 2013

and

The LGPS Regulations 2014

(Transitional Provisions and Savings)

and

The LGPS Regulations 2008

(Benefits, Membership and Contributions)

(as at 14th May 2018)

Employer name: Dartmoor National Park Authority

Policy effective from: 10 January 2025

These policies may be subject to review from time to time. Affected employees will be notified of any subsequent change to this Policy Statement.

Print name of authorised officer:

Neil White

Job title:

Head of Organisational Development

Signature of authorised officer:

Neil White

Date: 10 January 2025

Mandatory LGPS 2013 & 2014 discretions

Discretionary policies from 1 April 2014 in relation to post 31 March 2014 active members and post 31 March 2014 leavers (excluding councillor members)

Power of employing authority to grant additional pension (Reg 31)

An employer can choose to grant extra annual pension* (at full cost to themselves) to:

- an active member; or
- to a member, within 6 months of leaving, whose employment was terminated on the grounds of redundancy or business efficiency

**(Please see [Peninsula Pensions website](#) for the current years maximum additional pension purchase limit)*

Policy Decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to grant additional pension in exceptional cases where there is a business benefit.

Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution

(Reg 16(2)(e) & Reg 16(4)(d))

Where an active member wishes to purchase extra annual pension by making additional pension contributions (APCs)*, an employer can choose to voluntarily contribute towards the cost of purchasing that extra pension through a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC).

**(Please see [Peninsula Pensions website](#) for the current years maximum additional pension purchase limit)*

Note: this discretion does not relate to cases where a member has a period of authorised unpaid leave of absence and elects within 30 days of return to work (or a longer period if the employer allows) to pay a SCAPC to cover the amount of pension 'lost' during that period of absence. In those cases, the employer must contribute 2/3rds of the cost to a SCAPC; there is no discretion (regulation 15(5) of the LGPS Regulations 2013).

Policy Decision:

DNPA will not contribute towards a shared cost APC scheme (except where required to under the Regulations).

‘Switch on’ the 85-year rule
TPSch 2, para 1(2) & 1(1)(c)

The 85-year rule does not automatically fully apply to members who would have had the protection under old regulations, and who choose to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60. An employer can decide to switch the 85-year rule back on in full for such members.

Where the Scheme employer does not switch back on the 85-year rule, the member’s benefits will be actuarially reduced. However, the Scheme employer can exercise a discretion to waive any actuarial reductions (at cost to the Scheme employer).

Flexible Retirement (R30(6) & TP11(2))

An employer can decide whether to permit flexible retirement for staff aged 55 or over who reduce their working hours and/or grade and wish to access their pension benefits.

In such cases, pension benefits may be reduced in accordance with actuarial tables unless the employer waives reduction on compassionate grounds.

The employee must reduce either their hours, and/or their grade and the employer must agree to the release of the pension.

You will need to consider:

- The minimum reduction in hours or grade required.

(The specific reduction required is not set out in the regulations, but instead must be determined by the employer and specified in this flexible retirement policy).

- Whether the employee should commit to a reduction in hours or grade for a minimum period.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to “switch on” the 85 year rule in exceptional cases where there is a business benefit.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will consider each case on its merits having regard to financial and service delivery considerations.

DNPA will only consider whether to waive the actuarial reduction in exceptional cases on compassionate grounds.

The minimum reduction in hours is 20% and/or one salary grade (e.g. reducing from 1.0 FTE to 0.8FTE and/or from Grade 7 to Grade 6).

DNPA employees are required to commit to the reduction in hours and/or grade for a minimum of 12 months.

- Whether the employee should commit to remaining in employment with the employer for a minimum period

You must also state whether, in addition to the benefits the member has accrued prior to 1st April 2008 (which the member must draw), you permit the member to choose to draw:

- All, part, or none of the benefits they accrued after 31st March 2008 and before 1st April 2014 and/or,
- All, part, or none of the benefits accrued after 31st March 2014, and,
- Whether to waive, on compassionate grounds, the actuarial reduction (in whole or part) applied to members' benefits paid on the grounds of flexible retirement before normal retirement age (R30(8)).

Note: If flexible retirement is agreed for a member aged between 55 and 60, there could be a Strain cost to be paid to the Pension Fund by the employer in respect of the pension benefits paid. There would also be a Strain cost payable by the employer where you have waived any actuarial reduction, in whole or in part.

Waive actuarial reductions to members benefits

TP3(1) & TP3(5), TPSch 2 (para 2(1), 3(1), 3(2) & 9) B30(5) & B30A(5)

An employer can decide whether to waive in whole or in part any actuarial reduction for a member voluntarily drawing benefits before normal pension age other than on the grounds of flexible retirement

This applies to:

DNPA employees are required to commit to remain in the Authority's employment for a minimum of 12 months.

DNPA permits employees to choose all, part or none of the benefits they accrued after 31 March 2008 and before 1 April 2014.

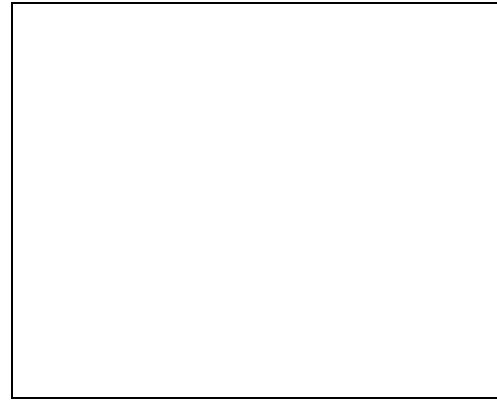
DNPA permits employees to choose all, part or none of the benefits accrued after 31 March 2014.

DNPA will only consider whether to waive the actuarial reduction in exceptional cases on compassionate grounds.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to waive the actuarial reduction in exceptional cases on compassionate grounds.

- active members voluntarily retiring on or after age 55 and before Normal Pension Age, who elect to immediately draw benefits, and
- deferred members and suspended tier 3 ill health pensioners who elect to draw benefits (other than on ill health grounds) on or after age 55 and before Normal Pension Age.



Recommended LGPS 2013 & 2014 discretions (non mandatory)

There is no requirement to have a written policy in respect of non-mandatory discretions. However, there are some non-mandatory discretions where it is recommended for Scheme employers to have a written policy so that both members and the Pension Fund administering authority can be clear on the employer's policy on these matters.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution Arrangement (SCAVC) R17 (1) and TP15 (2A) and A25 (3) and definition of SCAVC in RSch 1</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> |
| <p>An employer can choose to pay for or contribute towards a member's Additional Voluntary Contribution through a shared cost arrangement (SCAVC).</p> <p>An employer will also need to decide how much, and in what circumstances to contribute to a SCAVC arrangement.</p> | <p>DNPA will not contribute towards a shared cost AVC arrangement (except where required to under the Regulations).</p> |
| <p>Extend the time limit for member to elect for a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (R16(16))</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> |
| <p>An employer can decide to extend the 30 day deadline for a member to elect to purchase additional pension by way of a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC) upon return from a period of unpaid absence (other than because of illness or injury, relevant child-related leave or reserve forces service leave).</p> | <p>DNPA will not extend the normal time limit beyond 30 days.</p> |
| <p>Extend the 12-month time limit for transfer of pension rights (R100(6))</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> |
| <p>An employer can decide to extend the 12-month time limit for a member to elect to transfer pension rights from another registered pension scheme into the LGPS, if an election has not been made within 12 months of joining the LGPS in that employment.</p> | <p>DNPA will not extend the normal time limit beyond 12 months.</p> |
| <p>Extend the 12-month time limit for a member to elect not to aggregate Post 31 March 2014 deferred benefits</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> |

(R22(7) and (8))

An employer can extend the 12 month time limit for a member to elect **not** to aggregate their Post 31 March 2014 (or combinations of Pre & Post 2014) deferred benefits with their new LGPS employment (or ongoing concurrent LGPS employment), if an election has not been made within 12 months of joining the LGPS in that employment (or within 12 months of ceasing the concurrent membership).

DNPA will not extend the 12 month time limit for a member to elect **not** to aggregate their benefits.

Extend the 12-month time limit for a member to elect to aggregate Pre 1 April 2014 deferred benefits
(TP 10(6) as amended by A27 (2018))

Employers can decide whether to extend the 12-month time limit for a member to elect to aggregate their Pre 1 April 2014 deferred benefits with their new LGPS employment that commenced on or after 14 May 2018 in order to purchase earned pension.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will not extend the 12 month time limit for a member to elect to aggregate their deferred benefits.

How an employee's contribution band will be initially determined and thereafter reviewed
(R9 and R10)

Employers must decide how the pension contribution band to which an employee is to be allocated on joining the Scheme will be determined and reviewed at each subsequent April.

Circumstances in which the employer will review the pension contribution band will also need to be determined. For example, following a material change which affects the member's pensionable pay during the Scheme year (1 April to 31 March)

Policy Decision:

DNPA will determine how the pension contribution bands are allocated to employees in accordance with its separate Employee Contribution Bands Policy.

Whether to include a regular lump sum payment when calculating assumed pensionable pay (APP)
(Reg 21(4)(a)(iv), 21(4)(b)(iv) and 21(5))

Policy Decision:

When calculating assumed pensionable pay, employers can decide to include the amount of any 'regular lump sum payment' received by the member in the 12 months preceding the date the absence began or the ill health retirement or death occurred.

A 'regular lump sum payment' is a payment for which the employer determines there is a reasonable expectation that such a payment would be paid on a regular basis.

Whether to substitute a higher level of pensionable pay when calculating assumed pensionable pay
(R21(5A) and 21(5B) backdated to 1 April 2014 by A7 2018)

When calculating assumed pensionable pay (APP), an employer can decide to substitute a higher level of pensionable pay if, in their opinion, the pensionable pay received in the 3 months/12 weeks before the commencement of APP, is materially lower than the level of pensionable pay the member would have normally received.

DNPA will only consider whether to include the amount of any 'regular lump sum payment' in exceptional cases where there is a business benefit.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to substitute a higher level of pensionable pay in exceptional cases where there is a business benefit.

Pre LGPS 2014 discretions

Discretions to be exercised on and after 1 April 2014 in relation to scheme members who ceased active membership between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2014.

'Switch on' the 85-year rule
TPSch 2, para 1(1)(c) & 1(2)

The 85-year rule does not automatically fully apply to members who would have had the protection under old regulations, and who choose to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60. An employer can decide to switch the 85-year rule back on in full for such members.

This also applies to members with deferred benefits or a suspended tier 3 ill health

Policy decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to "switch on" the 85 year rule in exceptional cases where there is a business benefit.

pension who choose to voluntarily draw their deferred benefits (on or after 14 May 2018) on or after age 55 and before age 60.

Waive actuarial reductions to members benefits

B30(5), TPSch 2, para 2(1) B30A(5)

An employer can decide whether, on compassionate grounds, to waive any actuarial reduction that would normally be applied to deferred benefits which are paid before age 65.

Policy decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to waive the actuarial reduction in exceptional cases on compassionate grounds.

Discretions to be exercised on and after 1 April 2014 in relation to scheme members who ceased active membership between 1 April 1998 and 31 March 2008.

Grant application for early payment of deferred benefits

R31(2) LGPS Regulations 1997

Employers can decide whether to grant applications for the early payment of pension benefits on or after age 50 and before age 55

Policy decision:

DNPA will only consider applications in exceptional cases on compassionate grounds.

'Switch on' the 85-year rule upon the voluntary early payment of deferred benefits

TPSch 2, para 1(2) & 1(1)(f) & R60

The 85-year rule does not automatically fully apply to members who would have had the protection under old regulations. An employer can decide to "switch on" the 85-year rule in full for a member with deferred benefits voluntarily drawing benefits (on or after 14 May 2018) on or after age 55 and before age 60.

Policy decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to "switch on" the 85 year rule in exceptional cases where there is a business benefit.

Waive actuarial reductions to members benefits

(R31(5) 1997 & TPSch 2, para 2(1)

An employer can decide whether, on compassionate grounds, to waive any

Policy decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to waive the actuarial

actuarial reduction that would normally be applied to benefits which are paid before age 65.

reduction in exceptional cases on compassionate grounds.

Discretions to be exercised on and after 1 April 2014 in relation to members who ceased active membership before 1 April 1998.

Grant application for early payment of deferred benefits
(TP3(5A)(vi), TL4, L106(1) 1997 Transitional & D11(2)(c) 1995 Regs)

Employers can decide whether to grant applications early payment of deferred pension benefits on or after age 50 and before normal retirement age on compassionate grounds.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to waive the actuarial reduction in exceptional cases on compassionate grounds.



Employer Discretionary Policies

The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

and

The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 (as amended)

Employer name: Dartmoor National Park Authority

Policy effective from: 10 January 2025

These policies may be subject to review from time to time. Affected employees will be notified of any subsequent change to this Policy Statement.

Print name of authorised officer:

Neil White

Job title:

Head of Organisational Development

Signature of authorised officer:

Neil White

Date: 10 January 2025

The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

Regulation 5

To base redundancy payments on an actual week's pay where this exceeds the statutory week's pay limit.

Policy Decision:

DNPA bases redundancy payments on an actual weeks pay where this exceeds the statutory week's pay limit.

Regulation 6

To award lump sum compensation of up to 104 week's pay in cases of redundancy, termination of employment on efficiency grounds, or cessation of a joint appointment.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will only consider whether to award lump sum compensation in exceptional cases where there is a business benefit.

The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 (as amended)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Regulation 21(4)</p> <p>How to apportion any surviving spouses or civil partner's annual compensatory added years' payment where the deceased person is survived by more than one spouse or civil partner.</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> <p>To consider each case on its merits having regard to financial considerations.</p> |
| <p>Regulation 25(2)</p> <p>How it will decide to whom any children's annual compensatory added years payments are to be paid where children's pensions are not payable under the LGPS (because the employee had not joined the LGPS) and, in such a case, how the annual added years will be apportioned amongst the eligible children.</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> <p>To consider each case on its merits having regard to financial considerations.</p> |
| <p>Regulation 21(7)</p> <p>Whether, in respect of the spouse of a person who ceased employment before 1 April 1998 and where the spouse or civil partner remarries, enters into a new civil partnership or cohabits after 1 April 1998, the normal pension suspension rules should be disapplied i.e. whether the spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added years payments should continue to be paid.</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> <p>To consider each case on its merits having regard to financial considerations.</p> |
| <p>Regulation 21(5)</p> <p>If, under the preceding decision, the authority's policy is to apply the normal suspension rules, whether the spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added years payment should be reinstated after the end of the remarriage, new civil partnership or cohabitation.</p> | <p>Policy Decision:</p> <p>If DNPA determined to suspend such payment, it will reinstate after the end of the remarriage, new civil partnership or cohabitation.</p> |

Regulation 21(7)

Whether, in respect of the spouse or civil partner of a person who ceased employment before 1 April 1998 and where the spouse or civil partner remarries or cohabits or enters into a civil partnership on or after 1 April 1998 with another person who is also entitled to a spouse's or civil partners annual CAY payment, the normal rule requiring one of them to forego payment whilst the period of marriage, civil partnership or cohabitation lasts, should be disapplied i.e. whether the spouses' or civil partners' annual CAY payments should continue to be paid to both of them.

Policy Decision:

To consider each case on its merits having regard to financial considerations.

Regulation 17

To what extent to reduce or suspend the member's annual compensatory added year's payment during any period of re-employment in local government.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will make a determination after consultation with the Administering Authority and having regard to the date of original award

Regulation 19

How to reduce the member's annual compensatory added year's payment following the cessation of a period of re-employment in local government.

Policy Decision:

DNPA will make a determination after consultation with the Administering Authority and having regard to the date of original award



NPA/25/004

Dartmoor National Park Authority

10 January 2025

Draft State of the Park Report 2024

Report of the Partnership Plan and Climate Officer and the Director of Spatial Planning

Recommendation: **That Members note and comment on the draft State of the Park Report 2024**

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of the State of the Park report is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the condition of Dartmoor National Park. The State of the Park report is normally produced every five years to support the review of the Partnership Plan (also known as the Management Plan). The report is an important evidence base for the review process. The last State of the Park report, published in 2017, informed the review of the current National Park Management Plan (Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-26). In preparation for the review of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-26 an updated State of the Park report has been prepared to ensure that the review is guided by the latest data and trends.

2 Draft State of the Park Report 2024

2.1 The draft 2024 report is structured around the seven themes of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan.

- A Better Response to Climate Change
- Better for the Next Generation
- Better for Nature and Natural Beauty
- Better for Cultural Heritage
- Better for People
- Better for Farming and Forestry
- Better for Business and Community

2.2 The report draws on a combination of open data, data owned by Dartmoor National Park Authority and data and research provided by our partners. Where data is available and relevant, the report highlights specific projects to demonstrate their

impact and contributions towards delivering the Dartmoor Partnership Plan and the Vision for Dartmoor.

- 2.3 Trend data has been incorporated throughout the report, where available, to illustrate long term patterns and changes in key indicators. However, certain data sources, such as census data, are updated less frequently and, in some cases, methodologies have changed, or specific data is no longer collected. The most recent data available has been used throughout.
- 2.4 The report summarises a wide range of data and research and will play an important role in informing the review of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-2026.

3 Key Findings

- 3.1 The draft State of the Park report can be found at Appendix 1. We have highlighted below some of the key findings and issues under the seven themes.

A Better Response to Climate Change

The data on climate change suggests that the Dartmoor climate is becoming warmer and wetter. Average temperatures have risen by 1.2C in Princetown reflecting the broader warmer trend. Additionally, winter rainfall has increased by 108mm, indicating a shift towards wetter conditions. These trends are already having an impact on the biodiversity of Dartmoor, the Pied Flycatcher, for example are adapting their laying date by nearly two weeks. Further research is needed to understand the risks that climate change poses to habitats, species, infrastructure, and communities.

In 2022, Dartmoor's baseline greenhouse gas emissions were estimated to be 692,697 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e). However, with land-based sequestration the net emissions were reduced to 633,439 tCO₂e. The major sources of these emissions were:

- Energy: 36%
- Agriculture: 26%
- Food and drink: 23%

Better for the Next Generation

The Next Generation Vision is a call to action from the Next Generation to influence how the organisations shape the future of Dartmoor. The report indicates progress towards achieving the Next Generation Vision but highlights ongoing challenges and areas needing improvement. The focus remains on providing reliable jobs, diverse career opportunities and ensuring that young people can thrive on Dartmoor.

Better for Nature

Several key indicators are used to support our understanding of the environmental change across Dartmoor. The data shows a mixed picture and highlights the need to address the gaps in data, particularly data on the condition of habitats and species to better understand the impact of our work and areas to prioritise.

- In 2023, 59.2% of the SSSIs on Dartmoor are in 'Favourable' or Unfavourable (recovering) condition. This is a significant change compared to 2016 where 98% of SSSIs were in 'Favourable' or Unfavourable (recovering) condition. This significant reduction is a result of SSSI reassessment on Dartmoor.

- 85% of the 550km of watercourses on Dartmoor achieved moderate or good status.
- Bird populations show mixed trends: breeding Dunlin pairs have increased with peatland restoration, Ringed Plover wintering flocks were recorded for the first time in 2023/24, and Firecrest breeding territories have risen. However, Whinchat locations have dropped from 164 to 60, and Ring Ouzel numbers have fallen to a single breeding pair.
- Invertebrate populations are showing positive trends, with increases in species like the Southern Damselfly and Marsh Fritillary, though stability across all monitored sites remains a challenge
- Since 2009, a total of 1,210 hectares of peatland has been bought under restoration, with 947ha of this carried out between 2020 and 2024.

Better for Cultural Heritage

355 scheduled monuments are at risk, there has been no significant change in the number of scheduled monuments at risk since 2016. 30 listed buildings are at risk, a 16% reduction since 2016. The number of listed buildings has increased by 1%.

Better for Farming and Forestry

75% of Dartmoor farms are beef and sheep enterprises. However, the economic viability of farming on Dartmoor is challenging, figures from the Cost of Commoning Survey show an annual net loss from Commoning. There has been an increase in people employed within farming businesses on Dartmoor between 2010 and 2021. In 2021, nationally, 42% of farmers were aged 60 or older and 11% aged under 30 years. A decrease in the number of young people looking to enter farming as a profession risks the loss of knowledge and skills on Dartmoor.

Better for People

The report highlights the increasing number of visitors to Dartmoor and raises concerns about the impact of this growth. However, there are a number of projects that are improving accessibility and helping people engage with and better understand the National Park.

- Visitor numbers (based on the STEAM model) have been steadily increasing, rising from 2.63 million in 2018 to 3.09 million in 2023, the number of overnight visitors has remained relatively stable.
- The 3.09 million visitors in 2023 contributed to a visitor spend on Dartmoor of £293 million, a 37% increase from 2018.
- 75% of respondents to the 2023 Visitor survey stated the National Park designation was an important factor to their visit, however, respondents also had concerns about the deterioration of some of the special qualities of the National Park.
- 12 Miles without Stiles routes have been created across Dartmoor since 2020, providing 38km of easy access routes.
- 5% of visitors that responded to the 2023 visitor survey were from a minority ethnic group.

Better for Business and Communities

Dartmoor faces significant demographic and economic challenges, including an aging population and a declining working-age demographic. The report highlights that:

- The proportion of Dartmoor’s population aged 65+ has increased over time from 19.8% in 2001 to 29% in 2021. Alongside the increase in older residents, the proportion of working age people (those aged 16-64) living within Dartmoor has decreased over time. 56.4% of Dartmoor’s population was of working age in 2021, compared to 61.5% in 2001.
- House prices have risen nationally, however, properties within the National Park have remained 11% to 26% more expensive than the national average over the previous 9 years. Within Dartmoor, the 2023 median house price was £355,000, £25,000 higher than the median for Devon and £55,000 higher than the median for England and Wales.
- In the five years between April 2018 and March 2024, 398 homes were completed with 158 of these being affordable homes for local people. Currently, the delivery of affordable housing is slightly under the indicative level set by the Local Plan.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The State of the Park report is prepared and produced through a consultant or by Officers. Both approaches require significant officer time and there is a cost associated with using a consultant. The 2024 report, produced by a consultant at a cost of approximately £13,000 and does not account for officer time. We are exploring options to improve our data management and quality to reduce resources required to produce future State of the Park reports.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The draft State of the Park 2024 Report provides a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the National Park and how this has changed over time. It is an important evidence base for the forthcoming review of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan, providing essential data and insights that will guide the Authority, our partners and all those interested in Dartmoor in shaping the revised Partnership Plan. The report is also an important evidence base for the Local Plan.

- 4.2 The Dartmoor Land Use Management Group which is in the process of being established will be developing a Dartmoor Observatory for data pertaining to Dartmoor. This facility could make preparing future State of the Park Reports much more efficient and also help identify data gaps and, hopefully, ways to fill these gaps.

JEN MANNING &
DEAN KINSELLA

Background Papers: State of the Park Report 2017 (NPA/17/022)

Attachments : Appendix 1 – Draft 2024 State of the Park Report

20250125 JM/DK Draft 2024 State of the Park



State of the Park Report 2024

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

INTRODUCTION

Dartmoor National Park has witnessed some significant challenges over the past five years, each leaving its mark on this special place. This State of the Park Report is a comprehensive assessment of Dartmoor's current condition, and highlights both the successes and the vulnerabilities that lie within this landscape.

It is important that we monitor the condition of Dartmoor over time. The State of the Park report's purpose is to provide as good a picture as possible, particularly in relation to the special qualities of the National Park Δ. It contains information from a range of sources. However, it is important to understand that we cannot measure everything.

The State of the Park report provides important evidence which influences and informs the preparation of the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan (Management Plan) Δ. The Partnership Plan sets out the long-term vision for Dartmoor and the outcomes that National Park Authority and stakeholders will work towards to deliver the Vision for Dartmoor and National Park purposes Δ.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

The chapters relate to the Dartmoor Partnership Plan and each chapter starts with the Vision for 2045 for that theme.

This report is interactive, when read as a PDF. Each chapter can be accessed at any time by clicking on the links to the left. These will take you the start of that chapter. You will always know which chapter you are in as there will be a coloured box beside the link on the left. The report also contains some clickable links which will take you to other parts of the report. Links will look like this Δ.

All the chapters have been designed with a consistent format. The first page of each is an infographic highlighting key data. Each image has an interactive link to the relevant parts of the chapter. The second page includes a list of the contents of that chapter, where the issues are explored in more detail.

For ease of reading, any notes have been created as endnotes which will be found at the end of the report, grouped under the themes. We have also offered a set of links to other relevant reports and sources of information. The data within the initial infographics is not attributed. However this can be accessed by clicking on the graphic which will take you to the part of the chapter where the data is referenced.

Unless otherwise stated, data used has been the latest available up to April 2024.

CONTENTS

BETTER RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE Δ

Global emissions and impacts, changes to Dartmoor climate, greenhouse gas emissions on Dartmoor, mitigation on Dartmoor

BETTER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION Δ

Next Generation Manifesto

BETTER FOR NATURE AND NATURAL BEAUTY Δ

Environmental designations, habitats, woodlands, landscape character, water, biodiversity, peat, air quality and dark skies, special qualities

BETTER FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE Δ

Listed buildings, archaeology and scheduled monuments, military ranges

BETTER FOR PEOPLE Δ

Access, recreation, outreach

BETTER FOR FARMING Δ

Farming on Dartmoor, farm incomes, agri-environment schemes, farm holdings, common land, farming entrants, farming in protected landscapes

BETTER FOR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITIES Δ

Population, qualifications, health and disability, deprivation, housing, economic activity, employment, economic sectors, tourism, business impact of Covid, development, infrastructure

LINKS Δ

ENDNOTES Δ

CREDITS

This report has been prepared by Dartmoor National Park Authority in collaboration with Ash Futures (www.ashfutures.co.uk)

Thanks especially to:

Jen Manning, Partnership Plan and Climate Officer, DNPA

David Boocock, Projects Officer, DNPA

Greg Driver, GIS Officer, DNPA

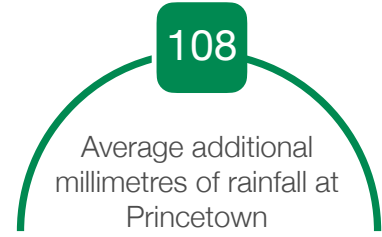
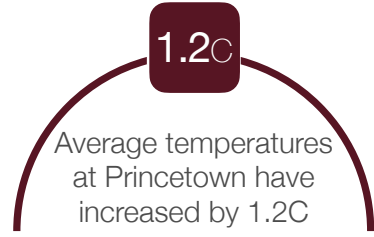
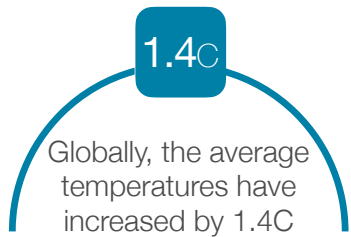
Dean Kinsella, Director of Spatial Planning, DNPA

Simon Hooton, Director, Ash Futures

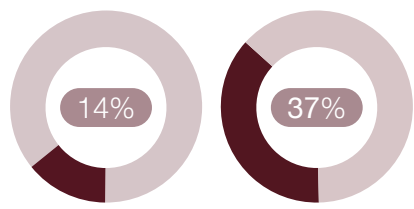
A BETTER RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

VISION FOR 2045

Dartmoor will have met the vision to be carbon negative. The National Park will play a significant role as a carbon sink through peatland restoration, woodland management and creation, with sustainable farming and land management practices to increase soil carbon. The successful impacts of mitigating climate change that cut-across all aspects of the Partnership Plan and the Local Plan, will be realised.

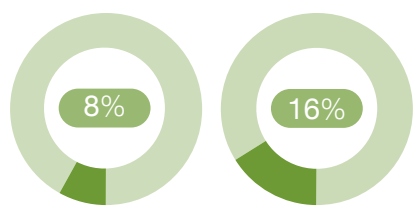


HALF A DEGREE MATTERS - THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 1.5C AND 2C OF WARMING



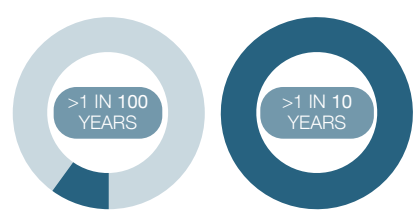
2.6x worse EXTREME HEAT

Global population exposed to severe heat at least once every five years.



2x worse SPECIES LOSS

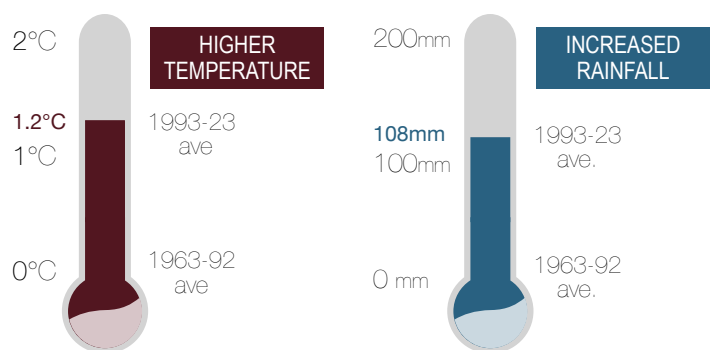
Plants that lose at least half of their range



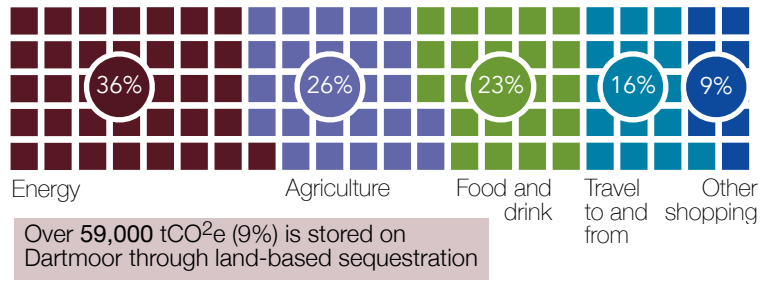
10x worse ARCTIC SEA ICE

Number of ice free summers in the Arctic Ocean

CHANGES TO CLIMATE IN PRINCETOWN



BREAKDOWN OF DARTMOOR EMISSIONS (2022)



633,439
tCO₂e



TOTAL NET GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FOR DARTMOOR

PEATLAND RESTORATION

TOTAL PEATLAND RESTORED OR UNDER RESTORATION (SINCE 2009)
1,210 ha

947 ha UNDER RESTORATION (AUGUST 2020 - MARCH 2024)

A BETTER RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

This section contains information on:

- [Global and national emissions](#) Δ.
- [Changes to Dartmoor climate](#) Δ.
- [Greenhouse gas emissions on Dartmoor](#) Δ.
- [Mitigation and adaptation on Dartmoor](#) Δ.
- [Farming in Protected Landscapes](#) Δ.

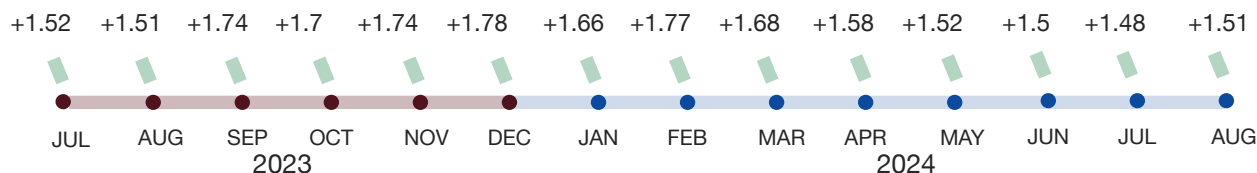
Global and national emission

The Paris Agreement of 2015¹ set out a series of global and national plans to reduce greenhouse gases by 2050 in order to be able to stay within a limit of 1.5C average global temperature increase.

Since then, the world has actually increased its overall levels of greenhouse gases. Although the 1.5C assessment is made over a period of a decade, **we have now at passed that 1.5C limit for a full year² - 25 years earlier than planned.³**

GLOBAL AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURES

- above pre-industrial average (°C)



UK emissions

The UK annual average temperature was 9.97C for 2023, which is just 0.06C below the record high of 10.03C in 2022. This continues an observed warming of the UK climate since the 1960s.⁴

So far in the 21st century, in the UK, **13 years have exceeded what was the hottest year of the 20th century.** Human-caused climate change is estimated to have **increased the likelihood of a year as warm as 2023 by a factor of more than 150.⁵**

Changes to Dartmoor climate

Dartmoor plays a crucial role in delivering national and international climate commitments. It has rich carbon stores, including peatlands, woodlands and hedgerows, that are crucial carbon sinks for achieving net zero targets.

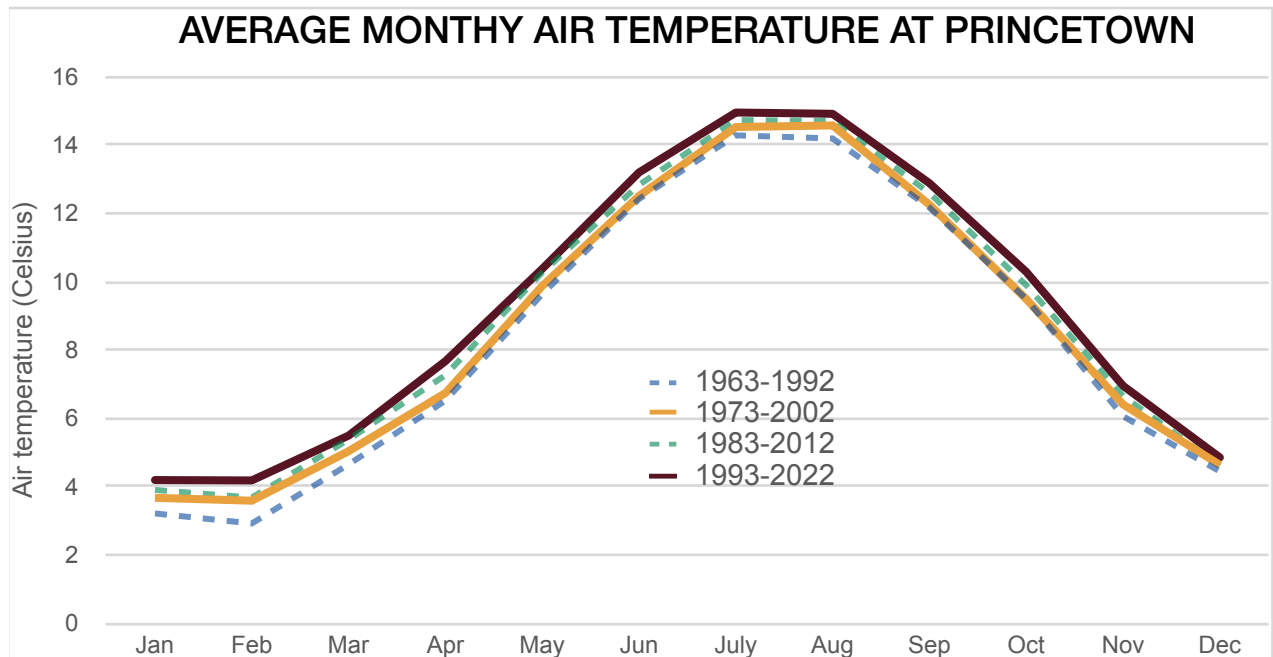
Developing a Dartmoor wide response to Climate Change will be shaped by key policies and research, including:

- DEFRA's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies

- 30 by 30 commitment to protect 30% of the UK's land for nature by 2030
- Research carried out by Small World Consulting that provides an evidence-based pathway for National Parks to become net carbon sinks by 2050.

The evidence and key policy drivers will guide how Dartmoor should be managed for climate mitigation and adaptation and the development of its net zero pathway.

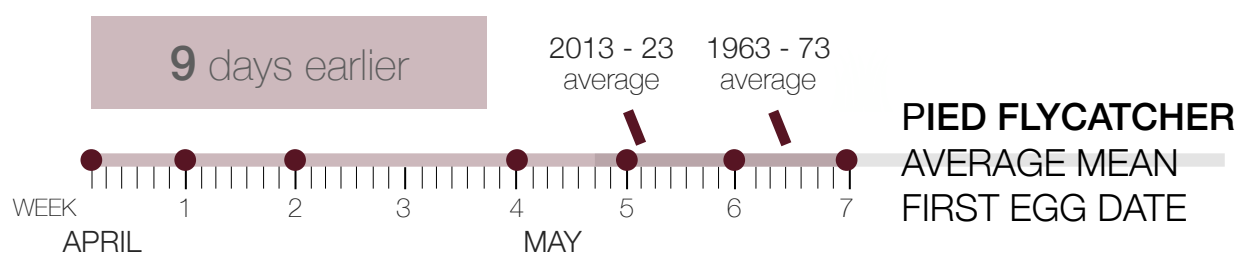
Available trend data for Princetown shows that Dartmoor is experiencing moderate climate change impacts. The average monthly air temperature at Princetown has increased, particularly during the Spring months. The air temperature for April has been an average of 1.2 degrees Celsius higher in the years between 1993 and 2022 than between 1963 and 1992.



uk climate projections user interface

Similar data shows average rainfall in Princetown has also increased over time in both winter and summer months. Between 1993 and 2002 Princetown experienced an average of 108mm more rain in December, January and February than between 1963 and 1992.

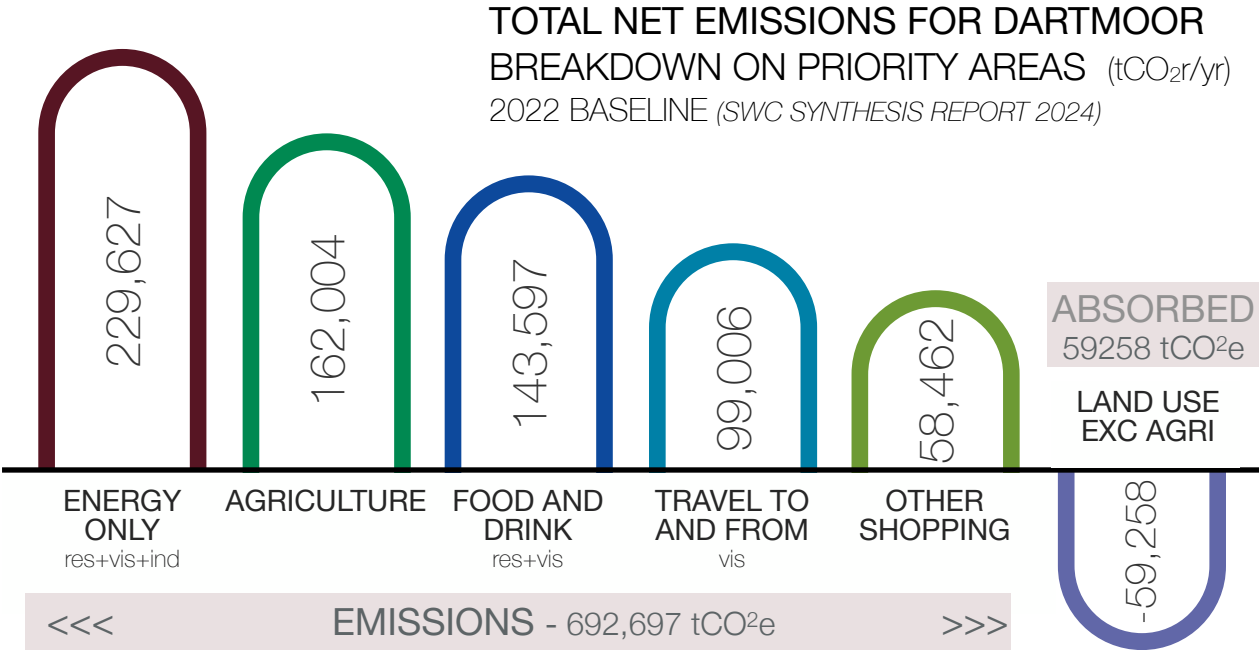
Changes in the climate can have profound impacts on the behaviour of species and ecosystems, with research indicating that the ongoing rising temperature is causing some bird species to lay eggs earlier in the year.⁶ Although there is variation in how early the first egg is laid, the nesting season for the Pied Flycatcher is advancing to earlier in the year, with the average mean first egg date for 2013-2023 being 9 days earlier than the average for 1963-1973. This is largely attributed to these birds adapting to the higher spring temperatures.



Greenhouse gas emissions on Dartmoor

Research carried out by Small World Consulting has provided Dartmoor with a carbon baseline and emissions breakdown.⁷ The greenhouse gas (GHG) assessment focuses on six priority areas using a consumption-based model: what residents and visitors buy and do within the National Park and how visitors travel to and from Dartmoor.

In 2022, the greenhouse gas emissions baseline for Dartmoor was estimated to be 692,697 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e). However, land management can form part of the solution to reaching net zero as carbon can be sequestered (absorbed) by trees, hedgerows, grasslands and other healthy soils. It is estimated that 59,257 tonnes CO₂e is stored on Dartmoor through land-based sequestration - **bringing the net figure to 633,439 tCO₂e**. The largest emissions categories on Dartmoor are energy, agriculture and food and drink. Detailed results and a technical explanation of the calculation can be found in the full report by SWC.⁸



Mitigation and adaptation on Dartmoor

Land-based carbon stores - peat

The natural environment plays a vital role in tackling the climate crisis, as **healthy ecosystems take up and store significant amounts of carbon in soils, sediments and vegetation**.⁹ Peatlands are areas of land with a naturally accumulated layer of carbon rich, partially decayed vegetation or organic matter and are formed under waterlogged conditions.¹⁰ Their high carbon density means peatlands are significant carbon stores. However, as damaged and degraded peatlands are major sources of CO₂ emissions,¹¹ it is imperative that peatlands are appropriately restored and managed. **Research has found that less than 1% of Dartmoor’s peatlands are intact**.¹² Restoration is hugely important in protecting the existing carbon store and to promote carbon sequestration.

1,210 hectares of peatland has been under restoration since 2009.¹³

Land-based carbon stores - headwaters

Improving natural flood management provides a range of benefits in combating climate change. It can help restore peatland, manage flooding from more intense rainfall and provide drought resilience during drier summers.

In the five years between 2018 and 2023, the Dartmoor Headwaters Pilot has delivered, in partnership, a range of improvements to manage water levels and river flows on the Mardle, Dean Burn, Colly Brook, Black Brook and Hanger Down. The project trialled the use of different materials for creating small dams, alongside a series of tree planting schemes.

DARTMOOR HEADWATERS PILOT ACHIEVEMENTS (2023)



Dartmoor Headwaters NFM

Land-based carbon stores - woodland

Trees are important in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and they are a key part of offsetting emissions from other activities on Dartmoor. Approximately, 15% of Dartmoor is under tree cover (15,481 ha).

TREE COVER ON DARTMOOR



National Forestry Inventory, Forestry Commission

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is a grant scheme for National Parks and National Landscapes supporting projects that enhance the natural environment, mitigate climate change, support nature-friendly farm businesses, improve access opportunities and protect the quality and character of the area.¹⁴

On Dartmoor, up to March 2024, the **Climate** strand delivered a number of outputs.

FIPL - CLIMATE

- 01) **46 hectares**
of new woodland created
- 02) **69 hectares**
of existing woodland managed
- 03) **21 hectares**
of newly planted orchards and fruit trees
- 04) **5 projects**
to reduce the risk of wildfire
- 05) **7.5 hectares**
of new wetland created
- 06) **2 hectares**
of existing wetland managed
- 07) **2,096 hectares**
of land under regenerative farming techniques
- 08) **15 projects**
to improve soil health
- 09) **23 projects**
to reduce potential risk of flooding
- 10) **37 projects**
to improve understanding of climate and carbon emission

BETTER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

VISION FOR 2045

The National Park will be a place that the next generation can thrive in: a place to call home, a place to work, a place to explore and a place to protect and understand. The next generation will be supported on Dartmoor through reliable infrastructure and services, viable jobs and diverse career opportunities. Communities will thrive, traditions will be alive and there will be widespread recognition of the rural skills on offer.

There will also be a future for the environment and heritage of Dartmoor, it will be protected, enhanced and understood by all. Everyone will have the opportunity to visit and experience Dartmoor and it will remain one of Britain's breathing spaces.

7%

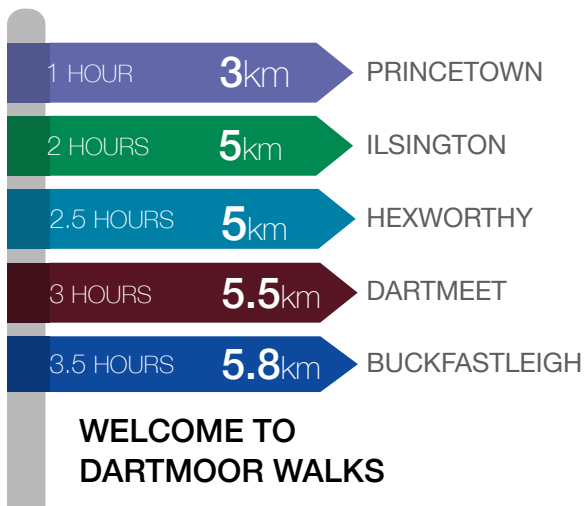
More people on Dartmoor will be over 65 in 2035 than in 2021

1.2°C

1.2°C average temperature increase at Princetown

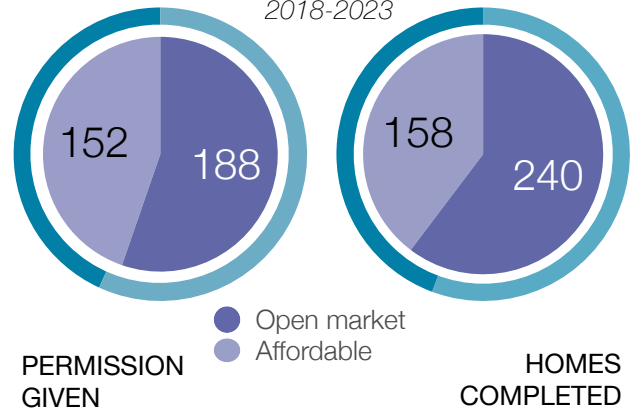
65

65 new homes are needed on Dartmoor each year until 2036



MORE AFFORDABLE HOMES

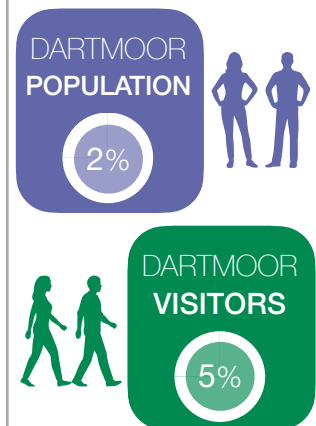
2018-2023



COMMUNITY WORKSPACES - IN AND AROUND DARTMOOR



PEOPLE FROM MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS ON DARTMOOR



LEARNING ABOUT DARTMOOR - FIPL PROJECTS 2019-24



Within the Partnership Plan, the Next Generation Manifesto lists a number of calls to action. It is recognised that due to capacity and resources some of these sections don't have clear data supporting the work that has taken place. Data will be linked to relevant part of the report where possible but more robust monitoring is required to recognise the work taking place to deliver for this Partnership Plan and any new iteration.

Infrastructure and Services

- Digital connectivity is essential for local residents, businesses and visitors. Improve mobile phone coverage, internet / broadband reliability and speed;
- Provide good public transport throughout the year, connecting settlements within the National Park and surrounding areas.

Communities

- Digital connectivity can only go so far. Young people need activities and social opportunities to help them feel part of the community, as well as avoiding feelings of isolation and issues with mental health.

Housing

- Many young people are finding it difficult to stay in their communities. There needs to be a better understanding of young people's housing needs and support / signposting to how to access housing.

Job Opportunities and Skills

- Develop a Dartmoor scheme linking local schools and colleges to local employers to provide opportunities for young people through apprenticeships, internships and work experience;
- Ensure that traditional skills and knowledge are passed on to the next generation and there are opportunities for young people that want to get into hill farming.

Businesses

- Promote a spirit of entrepreneurship on Dartmoor with funding and support to encourage young people to start their own businesses;
- Provide community workspaces and hubs that are desirable to work in, connected, and encourage creativity, innovation and collaboration.

Dartmoor's Natural and Cultural Heritage

- Help us (young people) to learn about what is special about Dartmoor and how we can help to conserve and enhance it;
- Be bold and innovative to conserve and enhance the National Park for the next generation, to ensure that it is in better condition;
- Provide opportunities for us (young people) to get involved with conservation projects.

Opportunities to Experience Dartmoor

- Use social media to improve communication about how we (young people and users) can access and enjoy the National Park responsibly;
- Develop a Dartmoor Ranger App with information about the local area, projects, routes and sensitivities that gives people the confidence to visit Dartmoor and use it in the right way;
- Create a series of waymarked routes to help people to feel more confident exploring Dartmoor, and to make it more accessible.

Understanding and Respect

- Provide opportunities for shared understanding between different groups and with local communities;
- Identify ways to help visitors and user groups to understand the role farming plays in managing the landscape.

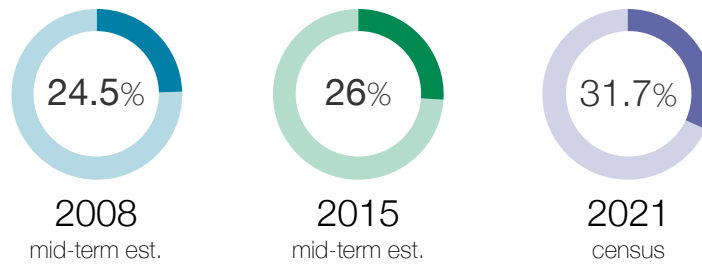
Infrastructure and Services

Digital connectivity is improving all the time with better 4G and 5G mobile signals and gigabit capable broadband being delivered by private companies, with support from Building Digital UK Δ.

Public transport into and across Dartmoor is very limited and unsuitable for most commuting purposes Δ. Improvements to coverage and frequency will require public subsidy and innovative alternatives.

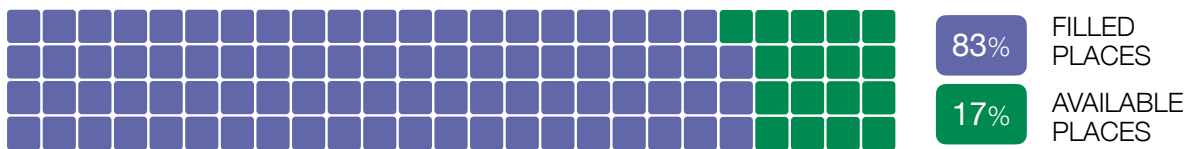
Communities

In 2021, 31.7% of residents were retired, compared with 21.6% in England as a whole Δ. This is a significant increase since 2008 and 2015.



Primary and secondary education is available in and around Dartmoor, with schools having capacity to take more young people (83%). Given the aged demographic of Dartmoor it is important that opportunities are provided for young people to learn, enjoy and understand the special qualities of Dartmoor.

AVAILABLE SCHOOL PLACES ON DARTMOOR

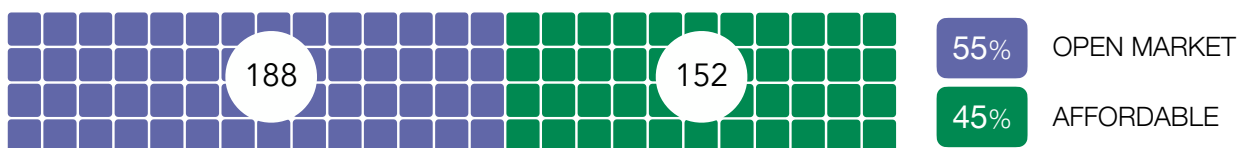


In 2023/24, in partnership, DNPA provided a range of outreach activities for 5 – 17 year olds. The outreach activities facilitated 6,256 days of engagement with young people Δ.

Housing

Housing affordability ratios are very high on Dartmoor - at 12.3 (it costs, on average, 12.3 times the median salary to buy a house at median prices) Δ. Between 2018 and 2023, DNPA had given permission for 340 new homes, of which 152 are designated affordable Δ. This should enable more local young people to stay living within the National Park if they wish.

PLANNING PERMISSIONS GRANTED FOR NEW HOMES (2018-2023)



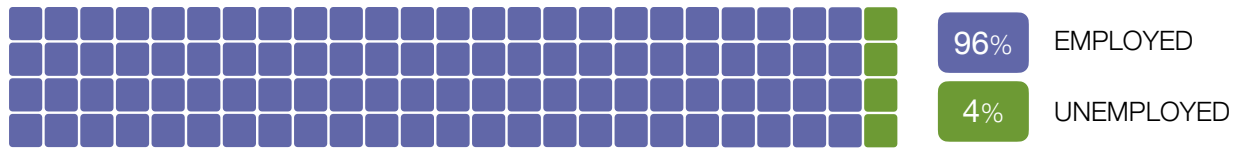
PLANNING PERMISSIONS GRANTED FOR NEW HOMES (2011-2016)



Job Opportunities and Skills

Dartmoor has high levels of working age employment, at 96%. Of these only 32.5% are employed full time; and 16.3% are self employed Δ . Job opportunities are most likely within the biggest sectors on Dartmoor - tourism, farming, retail, education and care services.

WORKING AGE EMPLOYMENT ON DARTMOOR



Businesses

Co-working space is available within and close to Dartmoor. Members of Devon Work Hubs network¹⁵ include Tavistock, Ivybridge and Buckfastleigh; while other spaces are available at Okehampton, Moretonhampstead and Ashburton. The Local Plan forecast that around 7,800m², or 430m² per year, of replacement and additional employment floorspace is needed for future employment needs.

COMMUNITY WORKSPACES AND HUBS - IN AND AROUND DARTMOOR



Dartmoor's Natural and Cultural Heritage

The Farming in Protected Landscapes funding has enabled a number of projects which aim to help Dartmoor's special qualities be understood and protected by more people. These help improve understanding, increase engagement and educate young people and visitors.



To ensure that the National Park is left in better condition, partners are working on key activities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In particular, working on Restoring the deep peatland, planting new woodland where appropriate and encouraging a more climate friendly approach to land management on Dartmoor.

Opportunities to Experience Dartmoor

A number of projects have been delivered that are making Dartmoor more accessible, encouraging people to explore further afield. In the 2023 visitor survey (409 responses) 56% of visitors Δ said they would welcome a smart phone app to help inform and guide them about what Dartmoor has to offer.¹⁶

DNPA has developed an erosion monitoring app, providing a citizen science approach to monitoring key erosion sites. It has also developed a walking app for Dartmoor, providing information on walking routes and responsible access. The app will be publicly available by the end of 2024 and can be expanded to include other activities.



Understanding and Respect

2.2% of the Dartmoor population are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 19.1% for England as a whole.¹⁷ According to the 2023 visitor survey, 5% of the 409 respondents visiting Dartmoor were from minority ethnic communities Δ .

PEOPLE FROM MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS ON DARTMOOR

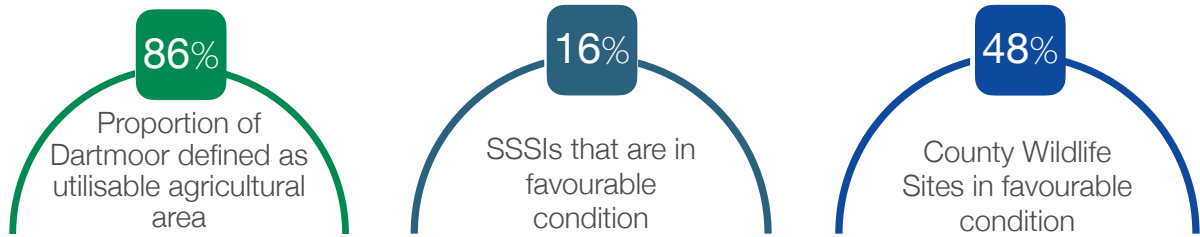


Our Upland Commons is running from 2021-2025 to help secure the future of upland commons on Dartmoor. Over 2,500 young people have engaged in educational events and activities through the project.

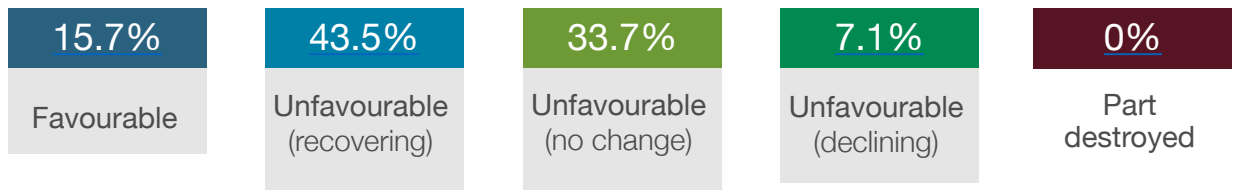
BETTER FOR NATURE AND NATURAL BEAUTY

VISION FOR 2045

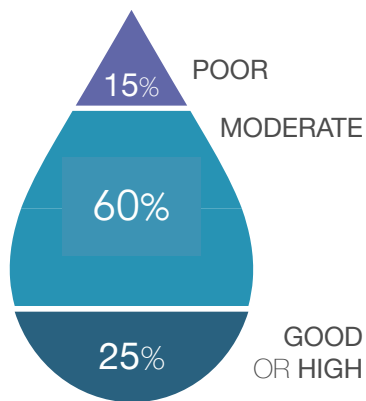
Dartmoor will continue to change at a landscape scale, with the abundance, diversity and distribution of biodiversity on Dartmoor adapting and evolving in response to climate change and the recovery of natural processes. Good land management and natural capital investment ensures habitats are protected, restored, maintained, cared for, expanded and connected; some areas becoming wilder as nature is allowed to take its course.



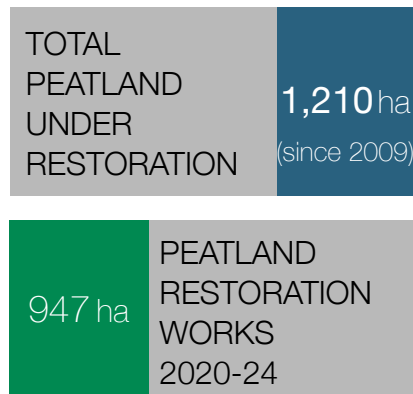
THE CONDITION OF SSSIs ON DARTMOOR (2023)



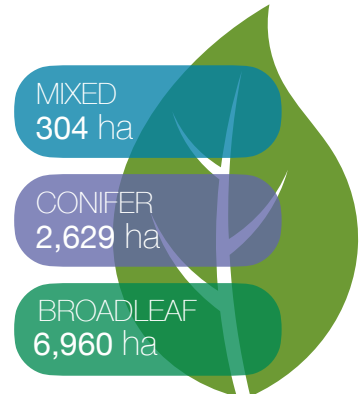
CONDITION OF RIVERS (2022)



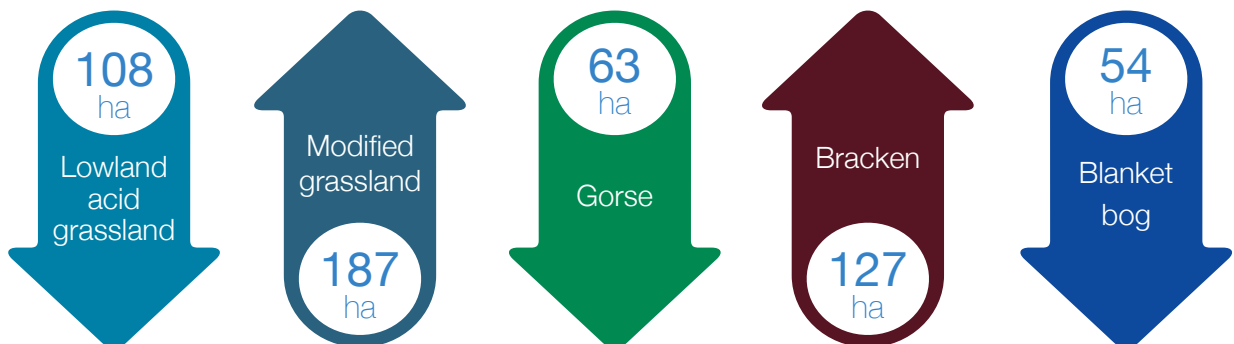
PEATLAND RESTORATION (2023/24)



WOODLAND TYPES (2022)



CHANGES TO EXTENT OF HABITATS PREDICTED NET CHANGE (2023)



BETTER FOR NATURE AND NATURAL BEAUTY

This section contains information on:

- Environmental designations [Δ](#)
- Habitats [Δ](#)
- Woodlands [Δ](#)
- Landscape character [Δ](#)
- Water [Δ](#)
- Biodiversity [Δ](#)
- Peat [Δ](#)
- Air quality and dark skies [Δ](#)
- Special qualities [Δ](#)
- Farming in Protected Landscapes [Δ](#)

Environmental designations

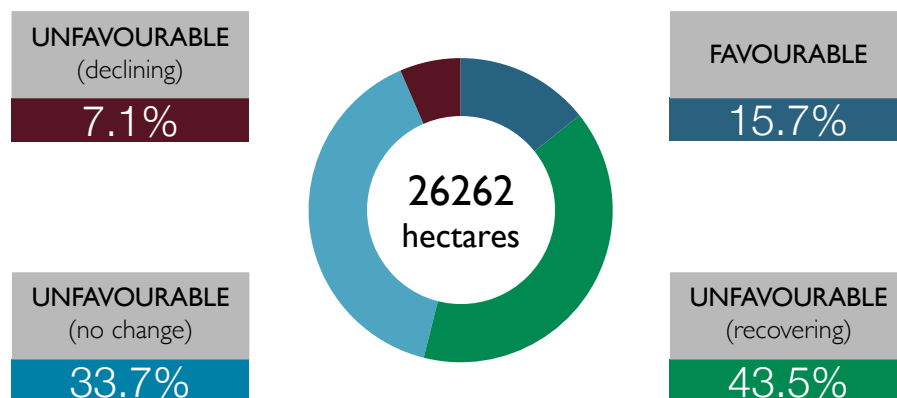
Apart from Dartmoor being a National Park, it has many areas within it that are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and County Wildlife Sites.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

SSSIs are areas of land which are of particular interest to science due to their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features. A SSSI is a formal conservation designation with legislative protection which means landowners must appropriately manage those sites in order to conserve their special features. In the 1980s, large areas of Dartmoor's open moorland were designated as SSSIs, reflecting the importance of Dartmoor's moorland landscape.

In 2023, 26,262 ha of Dartmoor National Park was designated as a SSSI (27.6% of the total land area).¹⁸ In 2023, 59.2% of the SSSIs on Dartmoor were assessed as in 'Favourable' or Unfavourable (recovering) condition. In 2016, 98% of the SSSI area was assessed as in either Favourable or Unfavourable (recovering) condition. The significant changes reflect a reassessment of SSSIs on Dartmoor.

CONDITION OF SSSI's ON DARTMOOR 2023



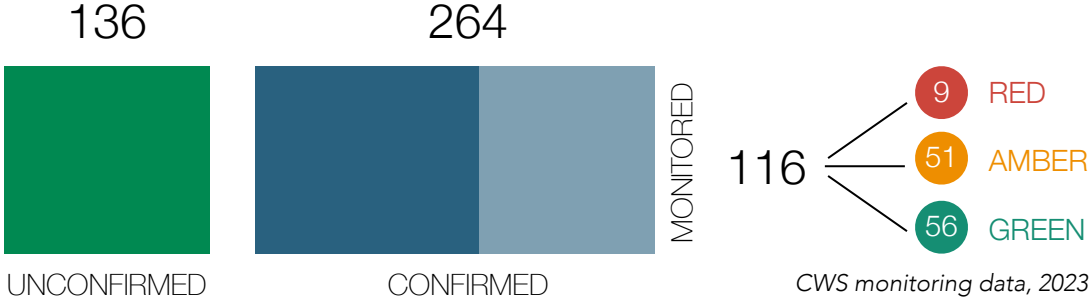
Natural England. National Park Family indicators 2023

There are six notified SSSIs within Dartmoor comprising 64 sub units.¹⁹ These are North Dartmoor (18), South Dartmoor (14), East Dartmoor (22), Dendles Wood (4), Tor Royal Bog (2) and Wistmans Wood (4).

County Wildlife Sites

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are non-statutory designations which identify areas of land that are significant for wildlife and have high nature conservation importance. Unlike SSSIs, County Wildlife Sites are not legally protected, however they generally complement SSSIs by acting as buffer zones and wildlife corridors. **Dartmoor National Park contains 264 confirmed county wildlife sites totalling 2,759 ha of land.** There are a further 136 unconfirmed sites totalling 1,073 hectares. The habitat condition of a sample of confirmed CWS is assessed each year which gives an indication of whether past management has made a positive impact on the habitats. **Of the 116 sites monitored since 2009, 56 were found to be in favourable condition ('green'), 51 were in fair condition ('amber') and 9 were in declining condition ('red').**

CONDITION OF COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES



Habitats

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. These special habitats are the result of Dartmoor’s natural geology and the influence of human settlement on Dartmoor over thousands of years.

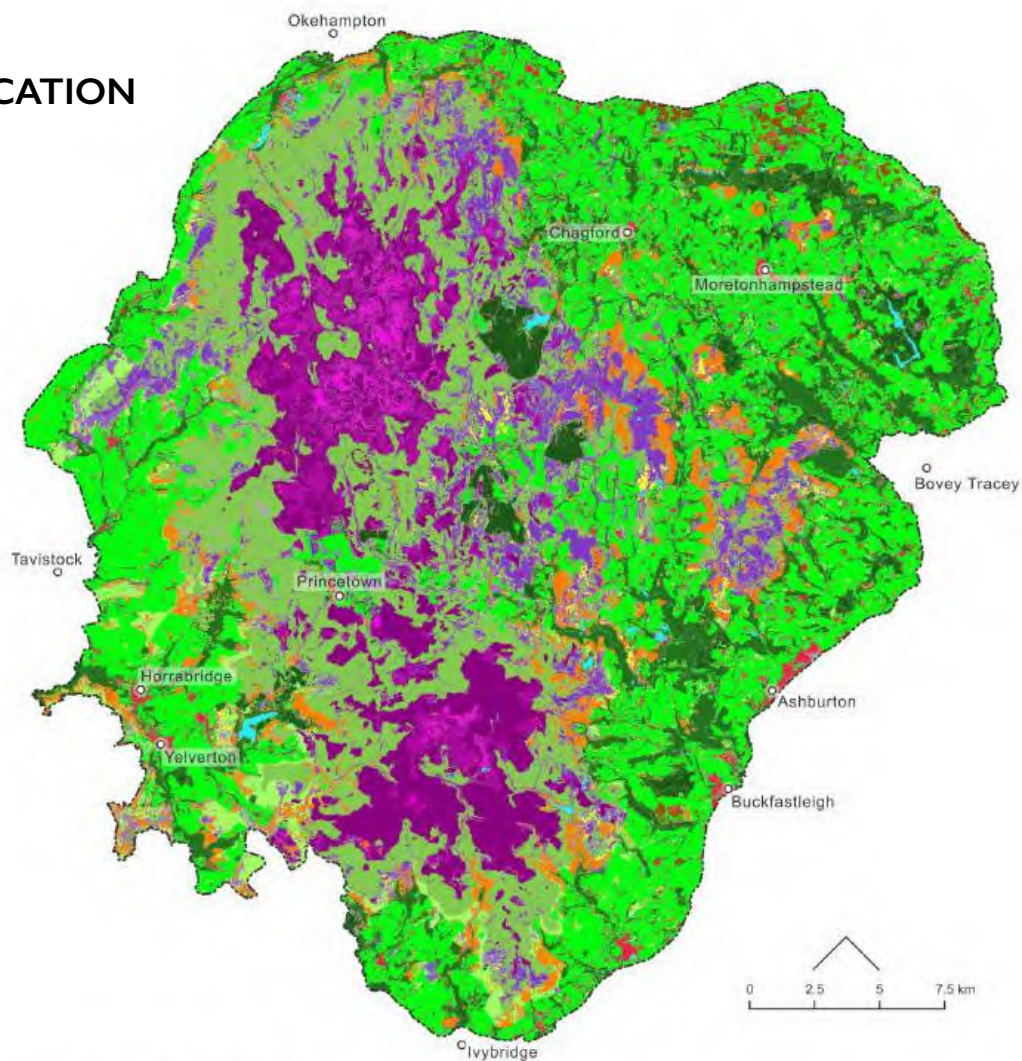
Habitats provide the building blocks of a functioning ecosystem and supply essential public goods including clean air and water. Dartmoor’s key habitats include:

- Upland heathland – covers most of the open moor which is not covered in deep peat. Characterised by dwarf shrubs, particularly heather and western gorse.
- Blanket bog – areas of peatland formed above 400m on the open moor which are important in storing carbon
- Valley mire – areas of water-logged deep peat in valley bottoms and natural basins
- Grass moor and bracken – grasses which grow over mineral soil or shallow peat which is frequently invaded by bracken
- Rocky outcrops – rocks, tors and boulders dominate the landscape and form important wildlife habitats

- Caves and mines – caves and abandoned mines provide important habitats to species including greater horseshoe bats and blind shrimps
- Lowland heath – characterised by heathers, gorse and grasses and lie below 250m usually in low-nutrient soils.
- Rhos pasture – species-rich moor grass and rush pastures away from the open moor.

Of particular importance are the internationally recognised peat blanket bogs, valley mires and wet heathland. They provide conditions for key plants, birds and insects species - such as sphagnum moss, sundew, dunlin and dragonflies. Equally importantly, they are capable of locking away large quantities of carbon, acting as a carbon sink.²⁰ However, many of these habitats on Dartmoor are in poor condition and need extensive work to restore them.

HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SWEEP 2023



SWEEP Habitat Classification 2023

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| ■ Lowland acid grassland | ■ Coniferous woodland | ■ Purple moor grass and rush pastures |
| ■ Upland acid grassland | ■ Lowland Heathland | ■ Flushes, fens, marsh and swamp |
| ■ Bracken | ■ Upland Heathland | ■ Cropland |
| ■ Lowland meadows | ■ Gorse scrub | ■ Urban |
| ■ Upland hay meadows | ■ Blanket bog (H7130) | ■ Inland rock |
| ■ Modified grassland | ■ Acid grass over degraded blanket bog | ■ Rivers and lakes |
| ■ Upland oakwood | ■ Heathland over degraded blanket bog | |
| ■ Other broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland | ■ Unvegetated degraded blanket bog | |

Dartmoor National Park Authority have worked in partnership with South West Partnership for Environmental and Economic Prosperity (SWEEP) to develop a Habitat Classification tool for Dartmoor. The tool uses satellite imagery combined with LiDAR data to predict the most likely habitat classification for every 100m² of the Dartmoor National Park area. The tool is run annually and allows for change to be monitored over a much larger area than otherwise could be achieved manually. Ground truthing of the mapping imagery is also being carried out.

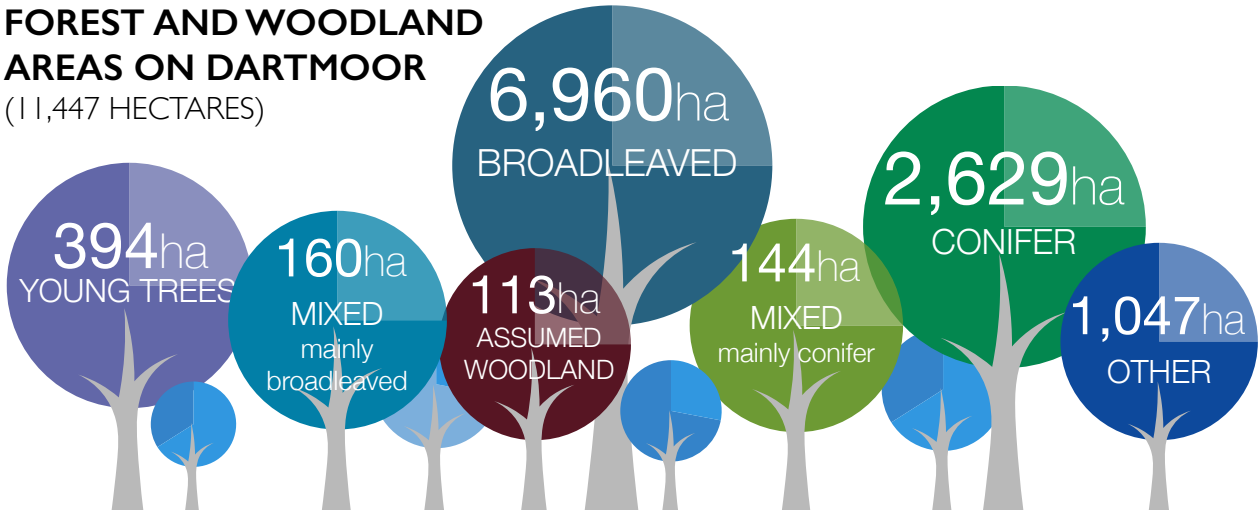
NET HABITAT CHANGE ON DARTMOOR between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022

| Habitat class | Net change Ha | Habitat class | Net change Ha |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Lowland acid grassland | -107.79 | Upland heathland | -38.81 |
| Bracken | 127.32 | Gorse | -62.73 |
| Upland acid grassland | -41.76 | Blanket bog | -54.16 |
| Lowland meadows | -0.3 | Purple moor grass and rush pastures | -38.42 |
| Upland hay meadows | -6.77 | Flushes, fens, marsh and swamp | -9.74 |
| Modified grassland | 186.77 | Cropland | 32.99 |
| Upland oakwood | 0.23 | Acid grass over degraded blanket bog | -0.45 |
| Other broadleaved, mixed, yew woodland | 48.07 | Heathland over degraded blanket bog | 33.64 |
| Coniferous woodland | 22.94 | Unvegetated degraded blanket bog | 14.46 |
| Lowland heathland | -37.64 | | |

Woodlands

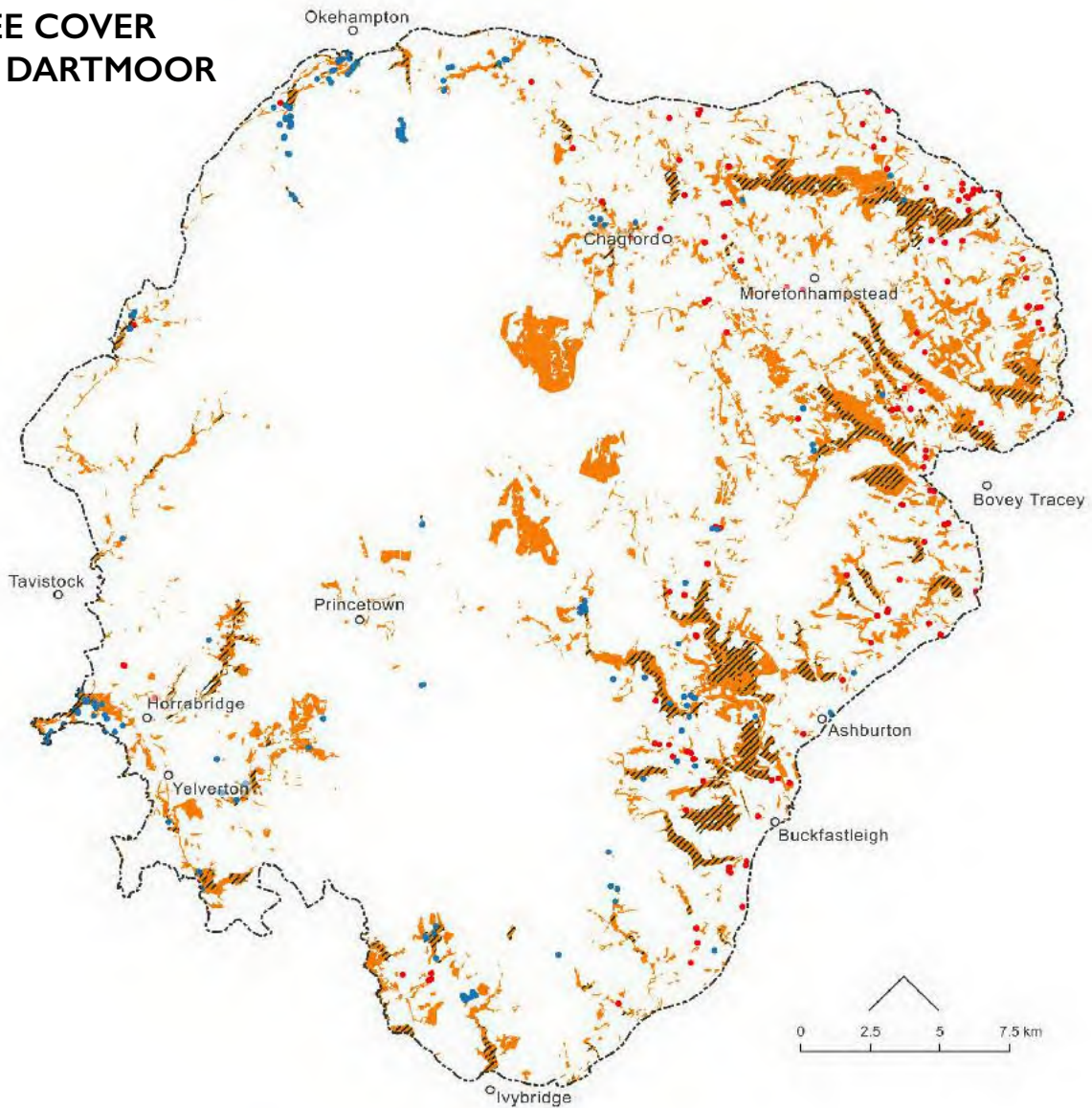
Forests and woodland areas on Dartmoor cover a total of 11,447 hectares, or 12% of the total area of the National Park; and including trees outside of designated woodland brings the total to 15,481 hectares. For context, moorland covers 46,000 hectares. A proportion of the total woodland area is classed as ancient semi-natural woodland (2,206 hectares) or plantations on ancient woodland sites (750 hectares) - totalling 3.1% of the National Park area.

FOREST AND WOODLAND AREAS ON DARTMOOR (11,447 HECTARES)



National Forestry Inventory, Forestry Commission 2022

TREE COVER ON DARTMOOR 2022



Woodland

- Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory
- Natural England Priority Habitats Inventory - Traditional Orchards
- ▨ Natural England Ancient Woodland Inventory
- Forestry Commission National Forest Inventory England 2022
All Woodland (excluding Felled/Ground Prep)

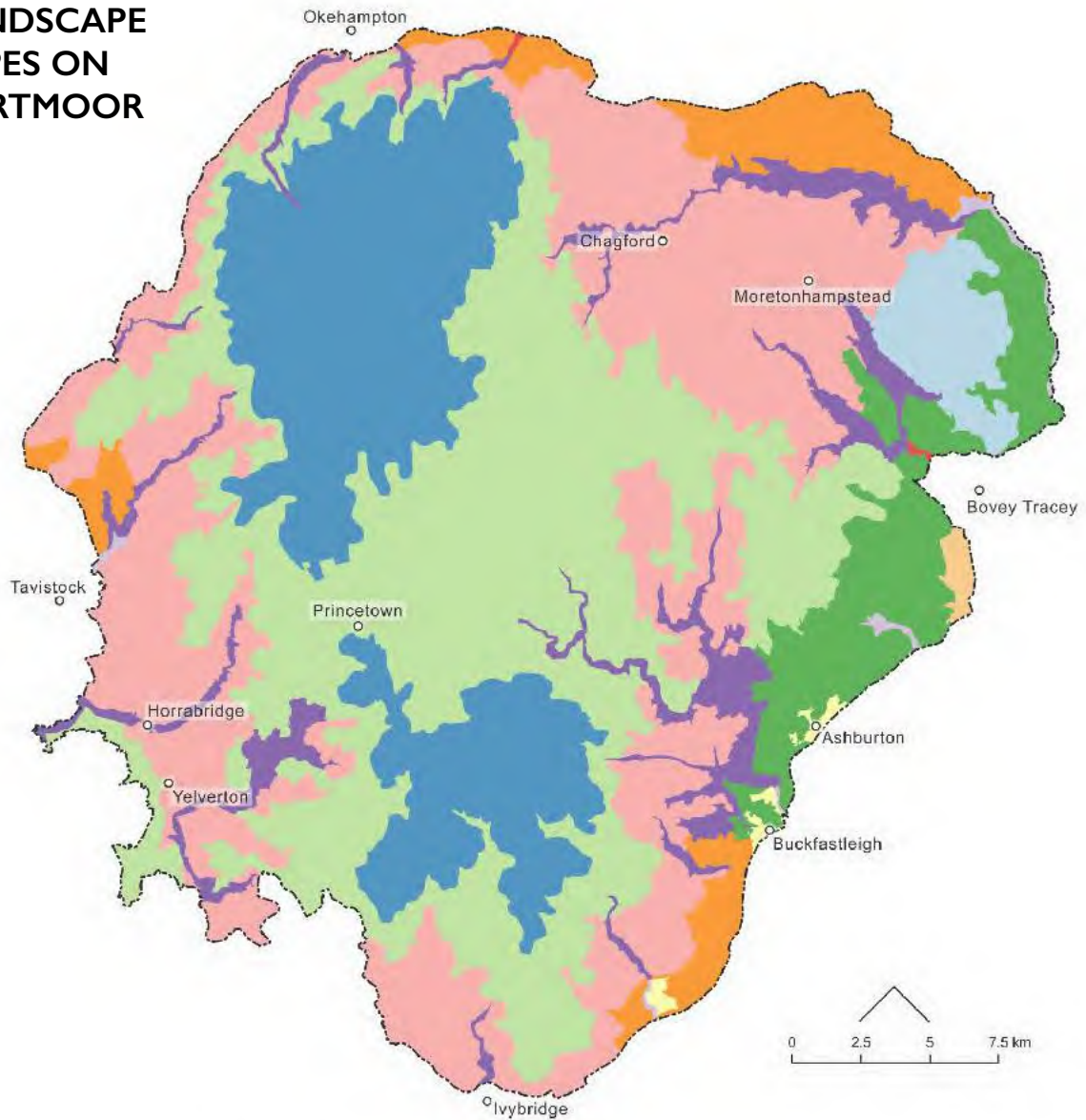
There are 129 orchards registered, covering a total area of 60 hectares. Orchards can support a wide range of wildlife as well as a diverse mosaic of habitats including fruit trees, scrub, hedgerows, hedgerow trees, orchard floor habitats, fallen deadwood and other habitats such as ponds.²¹ Although once a common feature across lowland Dartmoor, traditional orchards have become increasingly rare largely due to a lack of demand for cider apples leading to neglect and abandonment.

Dartmoor’s woodland provides a range of important public goods including biodiversity, flood mitigation and carbon storage. However, they are threatened by a number of pests and diseases. The main threats are physical damage from deer and squirrels and tree disease from *Phytophthora ramorum* in larch, ash dieback, acute oak decline and sweet chestnut blight.

Dartmoor National Park is the largest upland area in southern England and is recognised as one of the UK’s finest landscapes. Dartmoor’s landscape has been shaped by human activity over thousands of years leaving a rich cultural heritage, distinct flora, fauna, and geology of international conservation importance.

Dartmoor’s 2017 Landscape Character Assessment breaks down the National Park’s landscape into distinct landscape character types.²²

LANDSCAPE TYPES ON DARTMOOR 2017



Landscape Character Types

- 1J: Farmed and Forested Plateau
 - 1K: Unsettled High Upland Moorland
 - 1L: Upland Moorland with Tors
 - 2D: Moorland Edge Slopes
 - 3A: Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes
 - 3C: Sparsely Settled Farmed Valley Floors
- 3D: Upland River Valleys
 - 3E: Lowland Plains
 - 3F: Settled Valley Floors
 - 5A: Inland Elevated Undulating Land
 - U: Urban

Dartmoor has a number of Special Qualities of which Dartmoor’s landscapes are one.²³ At the highest level, they include:

- open, windswept upland moors with far reaching views and a sense of remoteness and wildness, distinctive granite tors surrounded by loose rock or ‘clitter’, and large expanses of grass and heather moorland, blanket bogs, and valley mires providing habitats for rarities including Vigur’s eyebright and southern damselfly;
- sheltered valleys with upland oak woodland, rhôs pasture and fast-flowing boulder-strewn rivers, home to characteristic wildlife including the pied flycatcher and salmon, and rare species such as the marsh fritillary butterfly; and
- enclosed farmland with small irregular pasture fields bounded by dry stone walls and hedge banks providing a mosaic of different wildlife habitats, including hay meadows and species rich dry grasslands with wildlife such as the greater butterfly orchid.

A number of trends and pressures are likely to impact on Dartmoor’s landscape character in the future.

Water

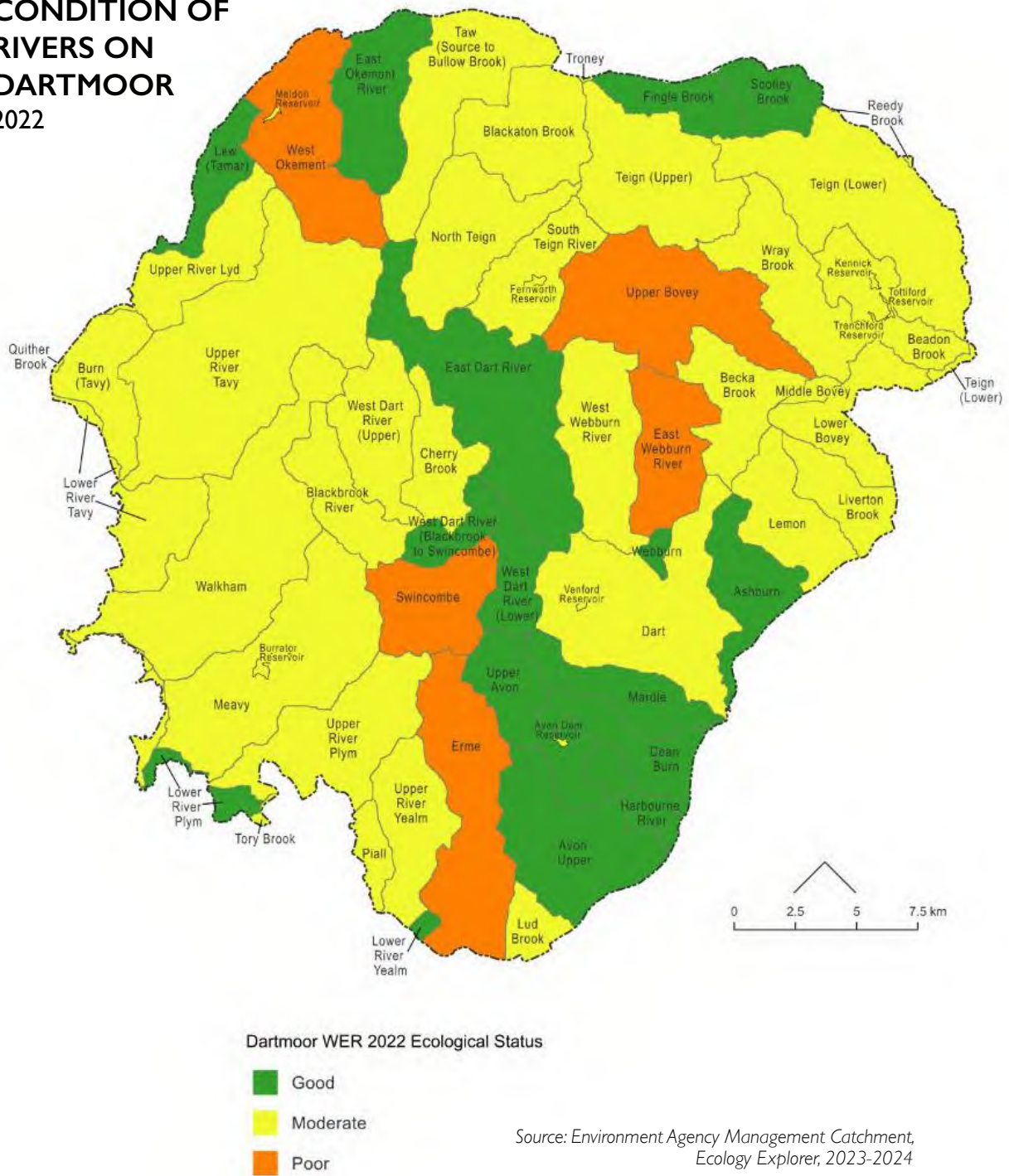
The water sources of Dartmoor are of huge regional importance, providing 45% of South West Water’s daily water supply to domestic and business customers across Devon and Cornwall and small parts of Dorset and Somerset. Most of Devon’s rivers rise in the high moorland and Dartmoor is also criss-crossed by leats that divert and manage the flow of water across parts of the Moor.

In total there are **550 kilometres of water courses on Dartmoor**. Data is collected from over 100 extraction points by the Environment Agency as part of its obligations under the Water Environment Regulations (WER).²⁴ Its Ecology Explorer tool allows the selection of sections of rivers that are in the National Park, offering a clearer picture of the health of Dartmoor waterways and bodies. The rating categories are: Poor, Moderate, Good and High. **About 25% of water courses have a good or better ecological status; 60% have a moderate ecological status and about 15% are rated as poor.** Water quality data is being collected for a variety of purposes, including environmental surveillance, discharge compliance, WER classifications and investigations, and ground water quality.

| Water Body | Ecological Status | Invertebrates |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Avon Dam Reservoir | Moderate | Moderate |
| Burrator Reservoir | Moderate | Moderate |
| Fernworthy Reservoir | Moderate | Good |
| Kennick Reservoir | Moderate | Moderate |
| Meldon Reservoir | Moderate | No data |
| Tottiford Reservoir | Moderate | No data |
| Trenchford Reservoir | Moderate | No data |
| Venford Reservoir | Moderate | Moderate |

| River and length examined | Ecological Status | Invertebrates |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Ashburn 18.0 km | Good | High |
| Dart 38.7 km | Moderate | High |
| Dean Burn 8.6 km | Good | High |
| East Dart 26.6 km | Good | High |
| East Webburn 8.0 km | Poor | High |
| Erme 18.9 km | Poor | Good |
| Erme (Lower) 2.06 km | Moderate | High |
| Fingle Brook 7.6 km | Good | High |
| Harbourne 21.4 km | Good | High |
| Mardle 10.8 km | Good | Good |
| Meavy 15.9 km | Moderate | High |
| Plym (Upper) 14.2 km | Moderate | Moderate |
| Scotley Brook 6.7 km | Good | Good |
| Swincombe 9.6 km | Poor | Moderate |
| Tavy (Lower) 28.6 km | Moderate | Good |
| Tavy (Upper) 28.7 km | Moderate | Good |
| Teign (Lower) 36.3 km | Moderate | Good |
| Teign (Upper) 8.4 km | Moderate | High |
| Upper Avon 29.9 km | Good | High |
| Upper Bovey 16.9 km | Poor | High |
| Walkham 22.6 km | Moderate | Good |
| Webburn 2.2 km | Good | Good |
| West Dart 4.8 km | Good | High |
| West Okement 21.1 km | Poor | Good |
| West Webburn 11.0 km | Moderate | Good |
| Yealm (Upper) 9.7 km | Moderate | High |

CONDITION OF RIVERS ON DARTMOOR 2022



Biodiversity

It has been widely acknowledged that the UK is in a state of ecological crisis and is considered one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Since 1970, the UK has experienced a 38% decline in species abundance, 54% decline in flowering plant species distribution, 29% decline in small mammal species distribution, 16% of species are threatened with extinction and 2% have become extinct.²⁵ This overall decline in biodiversity is predominantly attributed to human activities, particularly land use and climate change.

Wildlife on Dartmoor

Dartmoor encompasses vast expanses of wildlife-rich habitat, yet **longstanding concerns remain over the poor ecological condition of many of these areas and the declining populations of key species**. Once a stronghold for diverse wildlife, Dartmoor now faces the loss or near loss of several important breeding populations, including golden plover, red grouse, and ring ouzels. These declines reflect that Dartmoor is not immune to the wider ecological crisis.

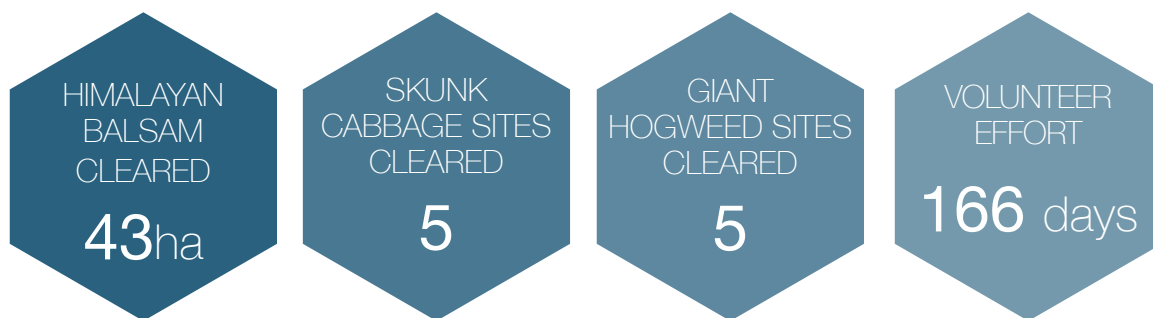
Invasive species

Invasive non-native species are a threat to Dartmoor's wildlife and habitats as they displace plants and disrupt ecosystems by out-competing native flora and fauna.²⁶

The Dartmoor Invasives Project, in its sixth year, has been dealing with Himalayan balsam, Giant Hogweed and American skunk cabbage in three separate catchments. These are the West Dart headwaters around Princetown, the River Avon at South Brent and the Wray Brook at Lustleigh. This project, which benefitted from partnership funding, has made good progress with the help of local volunteers.

As well as helping directly to reduce the impact of these invasive plants in these areas of the National Park, the Project has also encouraged landowners to carry out their own control in places with some able to get FiPL grants to help pay for this work. **Between 2019 and 2023, 586,417 plants of the three target species have been removed** within the focused catchments.

INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL



DIP Year 5 report, 2023

Bird populations

Reporting on bird numbers relies on both formal and casual surveys and observations. The most comprehensive review is from Devon Birds who prepare an annual report covering Dartmoor.²⁷

Dartmoor's wildlife and, in particular, the bird populations have been impacted by air pollution, land use demands and climate change. For example, **the number of breeding Dunlin pairs on Dartmoor has shown a positive response following peatland restoration**; wintering flock of Ringed Plover have been recorded for the first time in 2023/24 and Firecrest breeding territories have increased substantially.

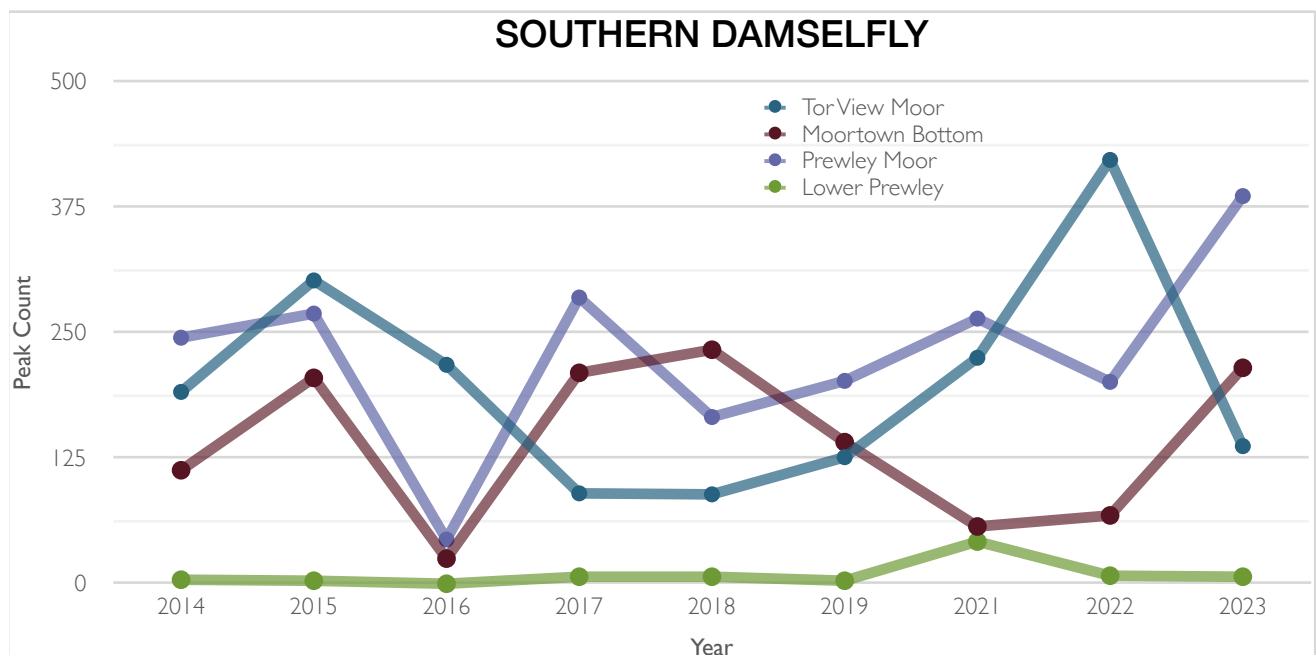
However, some species have suffered. For example, despite Dartmoor being a stronghold in the South West, **Whinchat locations have reduced from 164 to 60**,²⁸ echoing the national decline of 57% between 1995 and 2020. There has been **a severe decline in Ring Ouzel numbers, from over 20 breeding pairs to a single breeding pair** in three of the last four years.²⁹

Invertebrate populations

Southern Damselfly

In 2023, the Southern Damselfly was present in good numbers at three out of the four monitored sites; Tor View Moor, Moortown Bottom and Prewley Moor. Numbers remain low at Lower Prewley however, at an average of 11, and have not exceeded the peak count of 42 in 2021 since monitoring began. Despite being in good management, this site appears to only be utilised by strays from the preferred nearby site of Prewley Moor.

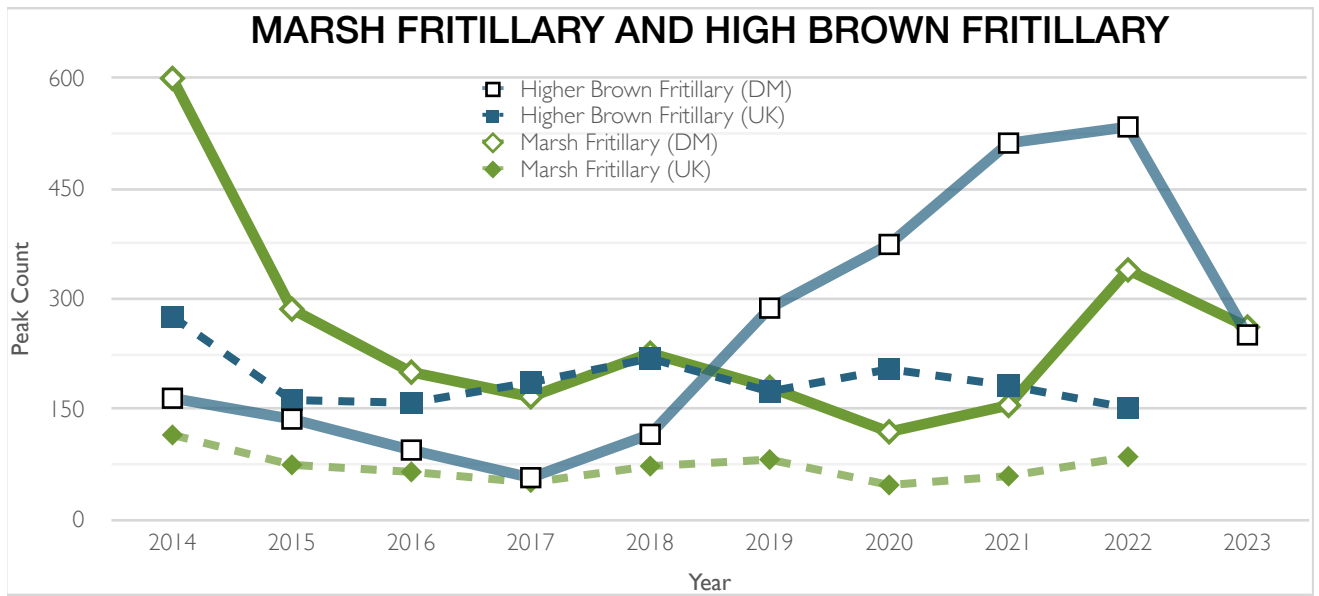
After a record count at Tor View Moor in 2022, numbers were down in 2023. However, this does not appear to be a cause for concern - 2023 figures still fall within the annual fluctuation recorded over the monitoring period (although are below the average), and invertebrate populations often experience a reduction in numbers after bumper years. Both Moortown Bottom and Prewley Moor demonstrate an increase on the previous year, with the latter having the highest number recorded at that site to date.



Marsh Fritillary and High Brown Fritillary

Marsh Fritillary continues to be recorded across four metapopulation networks, although numbers at two of the networks, in the Tor Valley and Tavy Valley, are currently at a low ebb. The other two networks, the Fernworthy-Long Lane and Postbridge-West Webburn, have well connected habitat patches and numbers are currently strong. Adult butterflies and/or larval webs were recorded at thirty sites in 2023. The long term trend for Marsh Fritillary in Dartmoor is positive - an increase of 503%, compared with 16% decline nationally (2005-2022).

High Brown Fritillary numbers remain buoyant, although in 2023 the butterfly did not fare as well as in recent years. The butterfly is regularly recorded in two networks, in the Dart Valley (nine sites) and in the Walkham Valley (three sites), and it is occasionally recorded in the Haytor network, as in 2023 with sightings from Hisley Wood and Pinchaford Common. The long term population trend shows a Moderate 181% increase since 2002, compared with 39% increase nationally.



Peat

It is estimated that **Dartmoor National Park has about 15800 ha of peat, over 0.4m deep**,³⁰ storing 13.1 megatonnes of carbon. An area of 2900 ha or 9.2% of the peat extent was identified as significantly and directly ecohydrologically degraded by erosional gullies, peat cuttings, drainage ditches and bare peat. Functionally intact blanket bog covers 360 ha or 0.8%, however, it is fragmented and often surrounded by ecohydrologically degraded peat.

There is considerable work being done to restore and improve the area of deep peat, with **1,205 hectares under restoration since 2009. 947 hectares of restoration works have taken place between 2020 and 2024.**

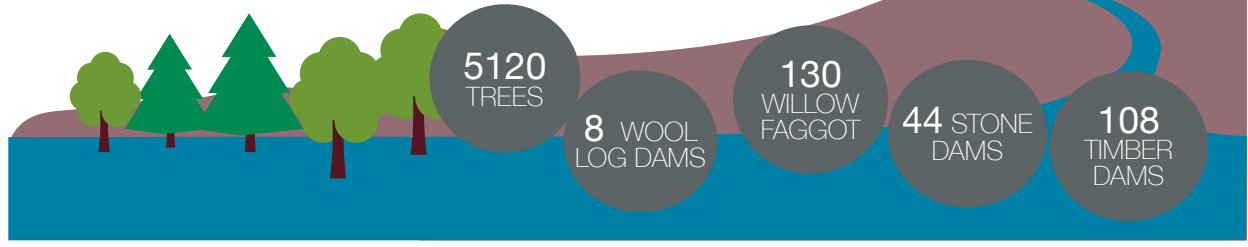
PEATLAND ON DARTMOOR (2020)



Dartmoor Deep Peat Extent and Condition Mapping

Work has also taken place at the headwaters of several rivers and streams to maintain moisture and improve drainage in ways that are more beneficial to improving the peat reserves.

DARTMOOR HEADWATERS IMPROVEMENTS



One of the important features of Dartmoor is the quality of the air. In general, once up onto the high Moor, the air quality improves. Around the periphery of the National Park, the proximity of the trunk roads and major settlements (Plymouth, Exeter, Tavistock and Okehampton) have a greater impact.

The main air quality testing point on Dartmoor is at Yarner Wood - where they have been sampling hourly since 1987. **On every measure, in 2022, except Ozone, Dartmoor has significantly cleaner air than either Exeter or Plymouth.**

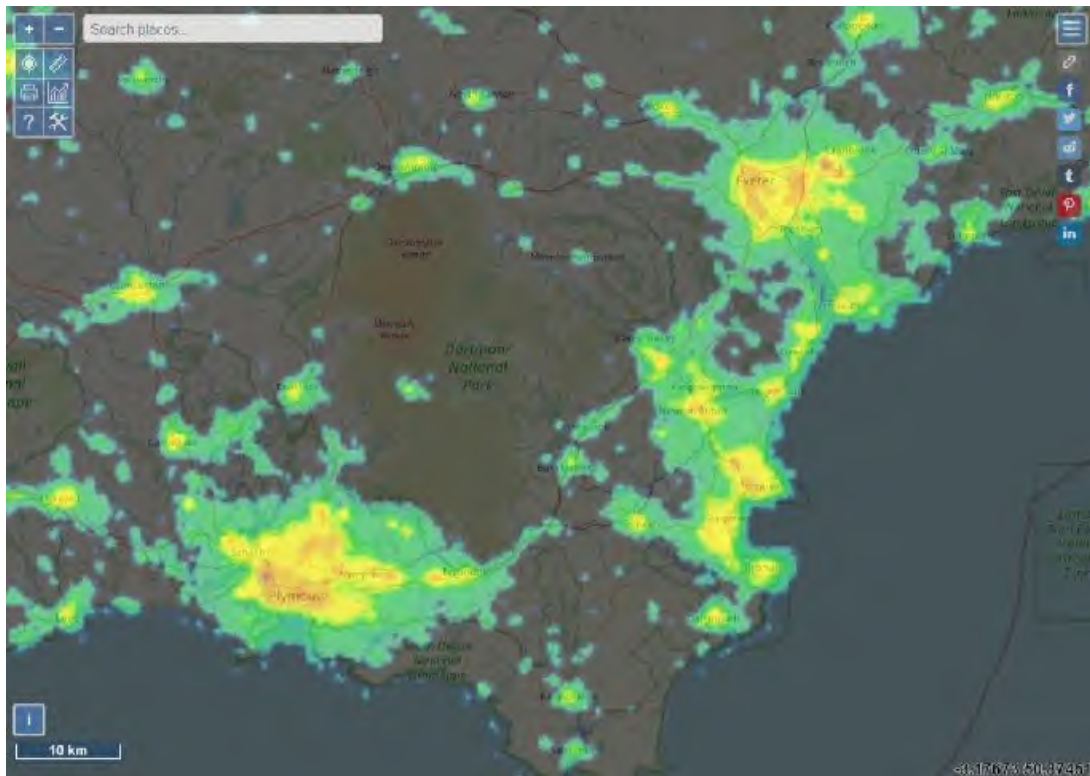
ANNUAL MEAN BACKGROUND POLLUTION LEVELS

| DARTMOOR Yarner Wood | | PLYMOUTH Centre | | AIR QUALITY MONITORING | EXETER Centre | |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|--|------------------|-------|
| Nitrogen dioxide | 3.18 | Nitrogen dioxide | 10.74 | ($\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$) | Nitrogen dioxide | 8.21 |
| Nitrous Oxide | 4.02 | Nitrous Oxide | 14.59 | ($\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$) | Nitrous Oxide | 10.88 |
| PM 10 | 4.73 | PM 10 | 7.98 | (Particulate Matter > 10 microns) | PM 10 | 7.61 |
| PM 2.5 | 2.49 | PM 2.5 | 4.17 | (Particulate Matter > 2.5 microns) | PM 2.5 | 4.10 |
| Benzene | 0.15 | Benzene | 0.28 | ($\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$) | Benzene | 0.24 |
| Sulphur Dioxide | 0.50 | Sulphur Dioxide | 1.72 | ($\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$) | Sulphur Dioxide | 1.05 |
| Arsenic | 0.29 | Arsenic | 0.35 | ($\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$) | Arsenic | 0.43 |
| Lead | 1.47 | Lead | 2.71 | ($\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$) | Lead | 3.30 |
| Ozone | 10.71 | Ozone | 8.21 | (Days above 120 $\mu\text{g}/\text{M}^3$) | Ozone | 9.13 |

DEFRA, UK Air Information Resource, Ambient Air Quality Map

Dartmoor’s dark night skies (areas where light pollution does not noticeably disturb the view of the stars at night) are central to the National Park’s sense of tranquillity and wildness. Dark night skies can easily be diminished by intrusive development and light pollution within Dartmoor and beyond its boundaries.

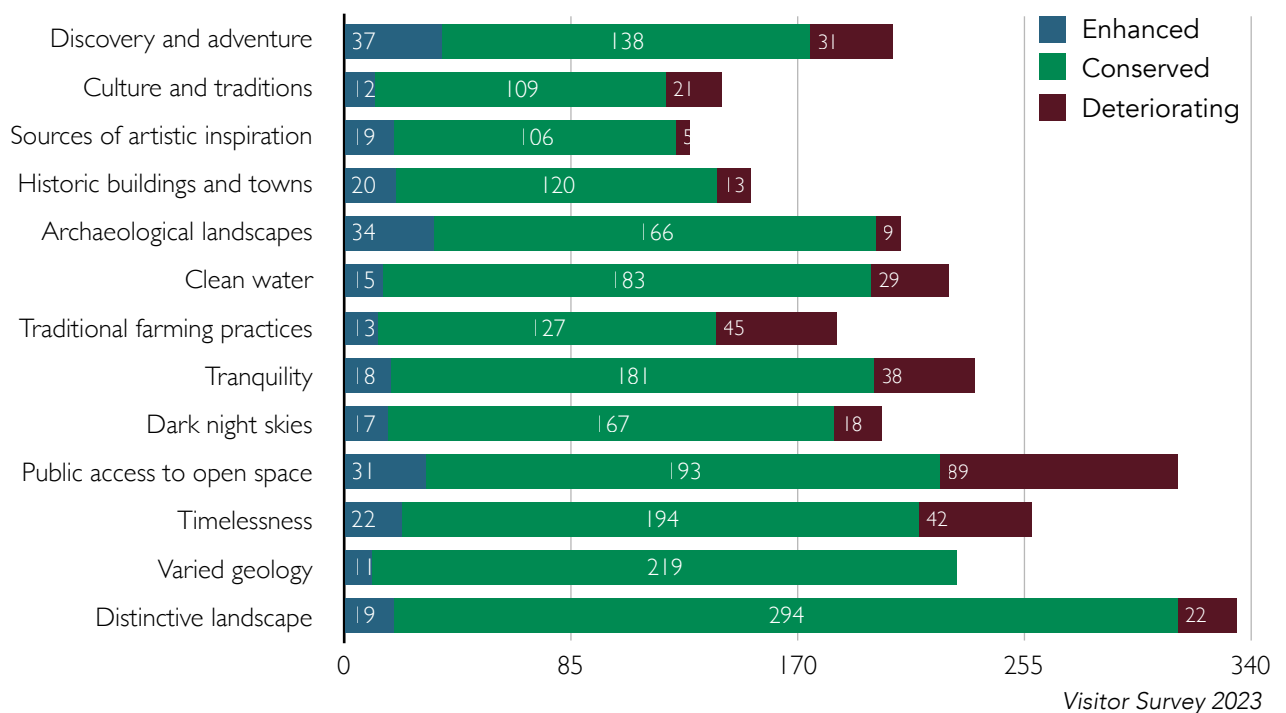
The level of light pollution within Dartmoor is generally low, with pockets primarily concentrated at HM Prison Dartmoor in Princetown and larger settlements, particularly around the periphery of Dartmoor, such as Tavistock and Okehampton. The impact of light pollution from nearby urban centres of Plymouth, Exeter and Newton Abbot is also shown on the map below.



Special qualities

Dartmoor’s special qualities are critically important, not just for their own sakes, but to attract visitors and strengthen the local economy. When asked, **most visitors felt that Dartmoor’s distinctive landscape is being conserved**. However there are concerns about aspects of Dartmoor’s special qualities - public access to open space, farming practices, the sense of timelessness, tranquility, and a sense of discovery and adventure.

ISSUES IMPACTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE (2023)



Farming in Protected Landscapes

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is a grant scheme for National Parks and National Landscapes supporting projects that enhance the natural environment, mitigate climate change, support nature-friendly farm businesses, improve access opportunities and protect the quality and character of the area.³¹

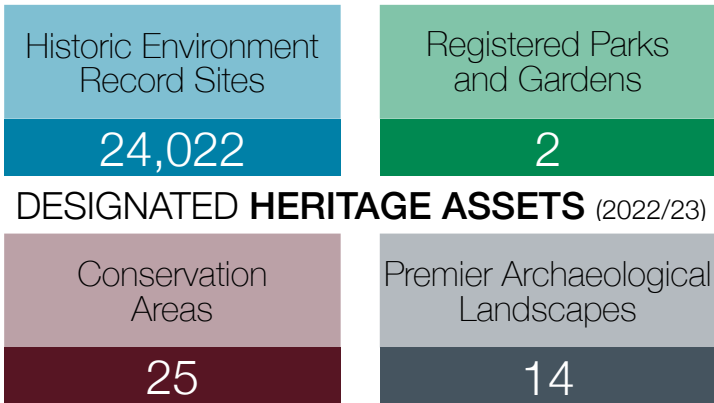
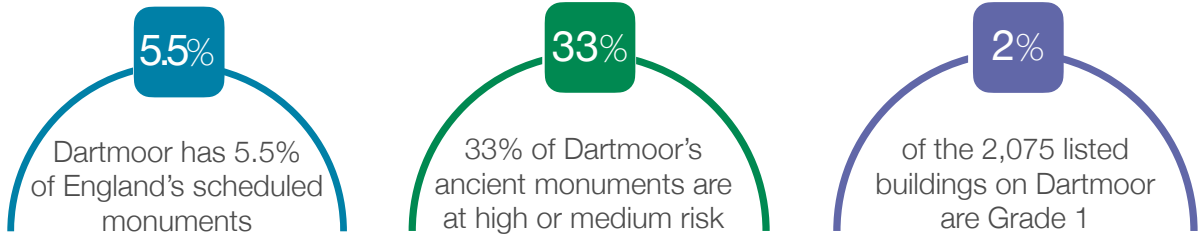
On Dartmoor, up to 2024, the **Nature** strand delivered a number of outputs.

- FIPL - NATURE
- 01) **2,581 m** of hedgerows planted
 - 02) **2,045 m** of existing hedgerow restored
 - 03) **4,167** new trees planted
 - 04) **5 projects** to protect and enhance rivers
 - 05) **66 ha** of new habitat created for biodiversity
 - 06) **3,339 ha** of habitat managed for biodiversity (exc.SSSIs)
 - 07) **1.2 ha** of land managed for invasive species
 - 08) **16** ponds created or restored

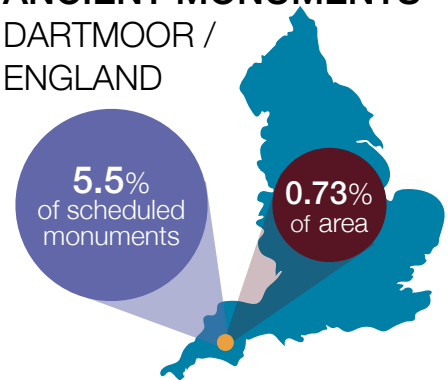
BETTER FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

VISION FOR 2045

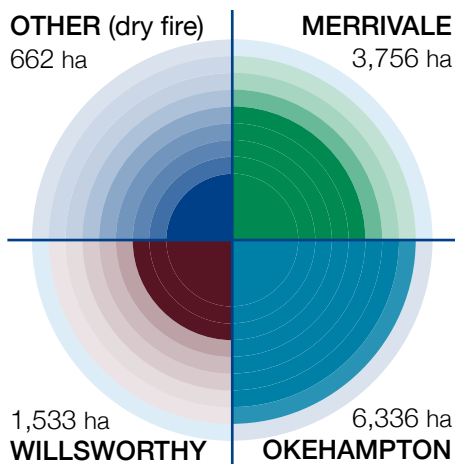
Dartmoor's cultural heritage is protected, well managed and in good condition. It is actively researched, and local communities, visitors and other stakeholders' value, understand and are engaged with Dartmoor's rich cultural history which contributes to the sense of place. Dartmoor's historic built environment, areas of high significance are managed as a priority concern, but elsewhere the management of the historic environment will be carefully integrated into other conservation projects and concerns.



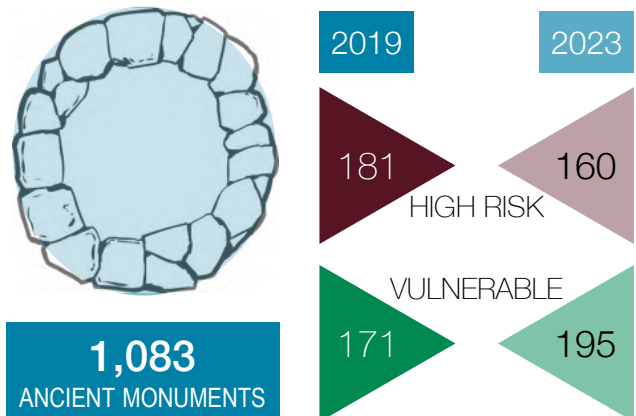
ANCIENT MONUMENTS DARTMOOR / ENGLAND



MILITARY TRAINING AREAS



SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AT RISK



LISTED BUILDINGS ON DARTMOOR



INTRODUCTION
CLIMATE
NEXT GEN
NATURE
HERITAGE
PEOPLE
FARMING
COMMUNITY
LINKS
ENDNOTES

BETTER FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

This section contains information on:

- Listed buildings Δ
- Archaeology and scheduled monuments Δ
- Farming in Protected Landscapes Δ
- Military ranges Δ

Local heritage plays an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment.³² The UK's National Parks are home to some of the most important historic buildings and archaeological sites which contribute greatly to the UK's rich cultural history.

Listed buildings

Conservation Areas are well-established Designations employed to manage areas of special architectural or historic interest. **Dartmoor contains 25 Conservation Areas**, for which Conservation Area Character Appraisals identify and define the special interests of each area and help to identify ways in which the character can be preserved or enhanced. Dartmoor's conservation areas underwent a process of review in 2023.

Listing buildings are those with special architectural or historical interest.³³ Listing covers a wide variety of buildings including vernacular, religious and industrial structures. Not all listed buildings are centuries old and many are still in use, but they are generally over 30 years old.

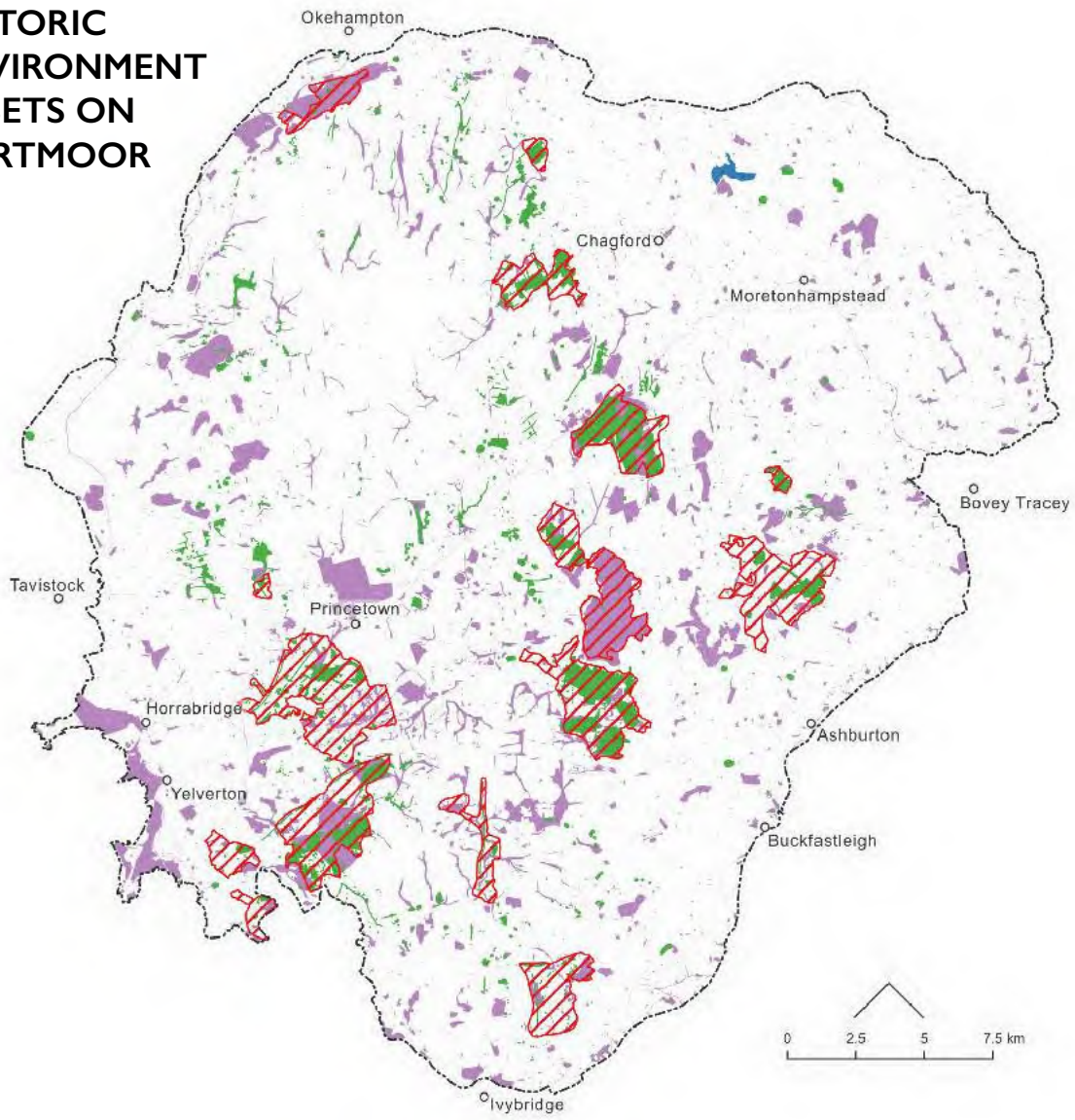


Of the 2,075 listed buildings in Dartmoor National Park, 92% are grade II, 6% grade II* and 2% are grade I structures. The process of listing provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, or enhanced, in a way which is consistent with their significance.³⁴

Archaeology

The National Park's archaeological remains range from Mesolithic flint scatters, Bronze Age cists, stone rows and hut circles to deserted medieval settlement and field systems and the remains of the tin mining industry. These well-conserved historical features give the National Park strong links to its past human settlement. Scheduling is the process through which nationally important sites or monuments are given statutory protection. **Dartmoor National Park contains 5.5% of all England's scheduled monuments** in 0.7% of England's area and contains more scheduled monuments than any other National Park in England, demonstrating the density and wealth of Dartmoor's archaeology.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ASSETS ON DARTMOOR 2023

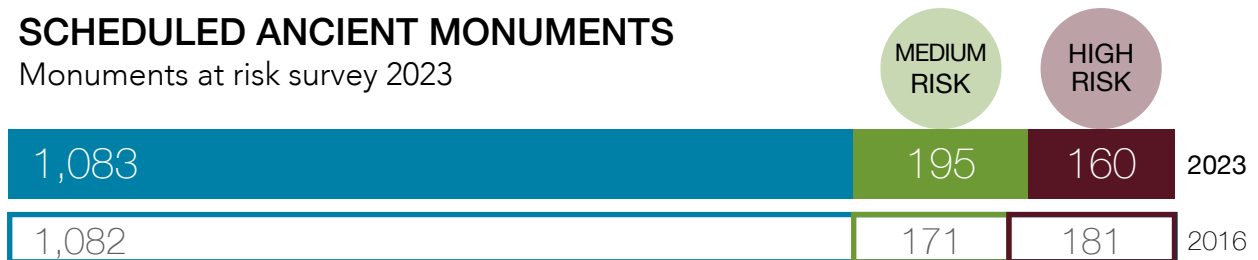


- Historic Environment
- Premier Archaeological Landscapes
 - Historic England Registered Parks and Gardens
 - Historic England Scheduled Monuments
 - Historic Environment Records

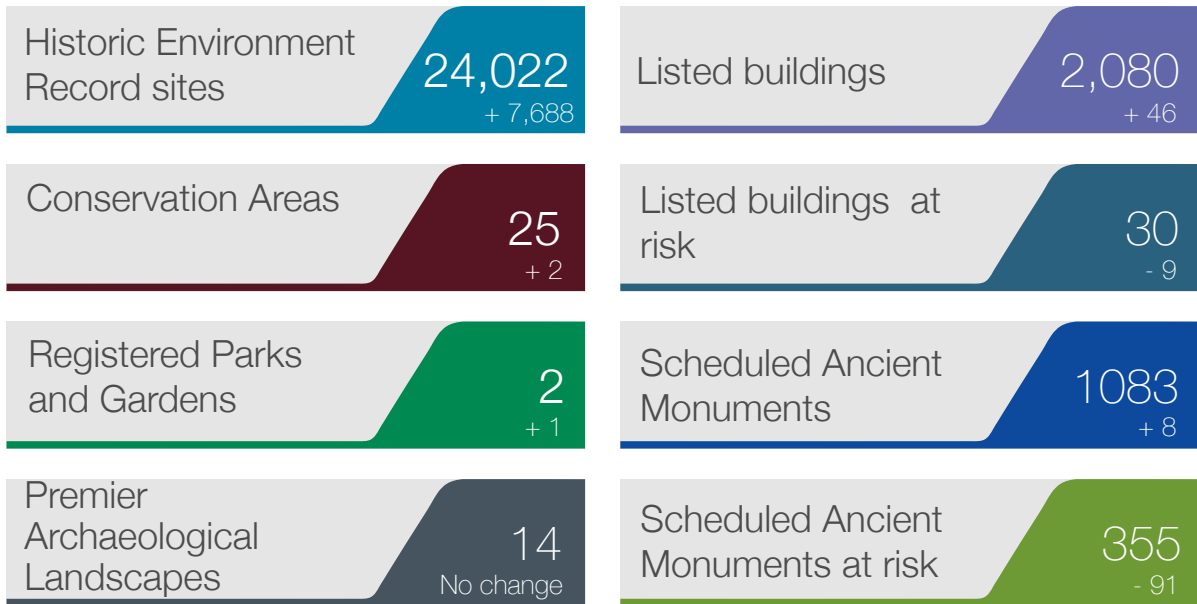
The condition of scheduled monuments is monitored through a 'Monuments at Risk Survey'. **Of Dartmoor's 1,083 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 160 are at high risk and 195 are vulnerable** (medium risk). DNPA Archaeologists have identified vegetation encroachment as one of the main threats. Of the scheduled monuments at 'medium to high risk', **12 have been conserved during the last 3 years**.

SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS

Monuments at risk survey 2023



DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS (2022/23) CHANGE SINCE 2010

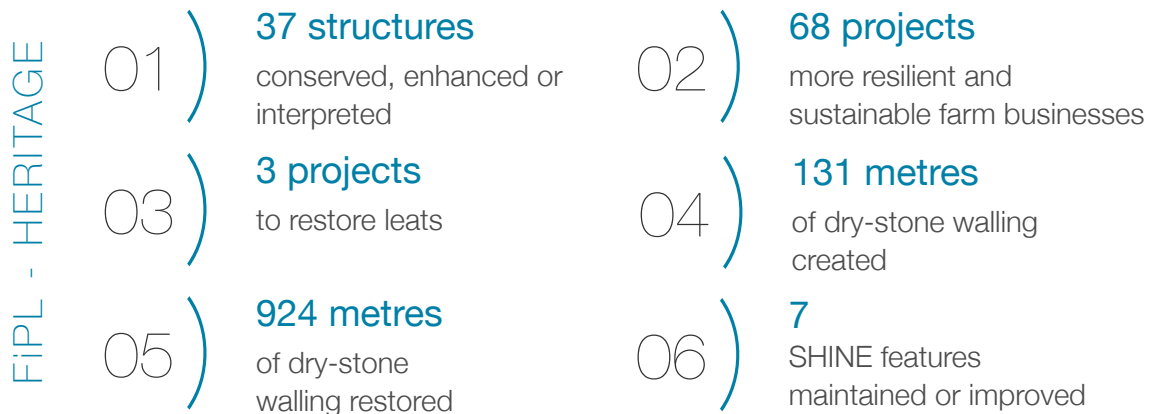


DNPA Annual Monitoring Report 2022/23

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is a grant scheme for National Parks and National Landscapes supporting projects that enhance the natural environment, mitigate climate change, support nature-friendly farm businesses, improve access opportunities and protect the quality and character of the area.³⁵

On Dartmoor, up to 2024, the **Heritage and Place** strand delivered a number of outputs.



SHINE - Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England

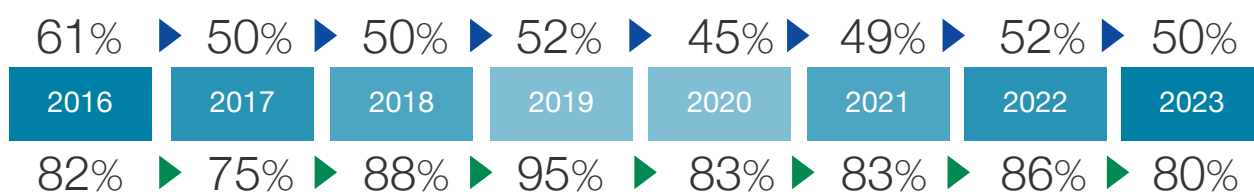
Military ranges

Dartmoor has been a key location for military training since the early 19th century. **The Dartmoor Training Area comprises of a total of 11,667 ha.** However, with attached areas such as encampments, the total MoD area on Dartmoor is 13,198 ha. Approximately 88% is owned by the Ministry of Defence, with the remaining training area used under the licenses and tenancies from the respective landowners, the largest of which is the Duchy of Cornwall. This is a slight reduction following the expiry of the lease for Cramber Tor in February 2024.

| Training Area Name | Size (ha) | Other training / transport areas | Size (ha) |
|--------------------------------|------------------|---|------------------|
| Okehampton – Live Firing Area | 6,336 ha | Areas attached to but outside live firing including encampments | 1,521 ha |
| Merrivale – Live Firing Area | 3,756 ha | | |
| Willsworthy – Live Firing Area | 1,533 ha | Total MOD areas on Dartmoor | 13,198 ha |
| Ringmoor – Dry Training Area | 610 ha | | |
| Sheepstor – Dry Training Area | 52 ha | | |
| Total | 11,677 ha | | |

Dartmoor’s training area at present is predominantly used by personnel from all services on foot with portable weapons and equipment.

ACTUAL FIRING AS % OF DAYS LICENSED FOR LIVE FIRING



ACTUAL FIRING AS % OF DAYS PUBLISHED

Ministry of Defence

The MoD is licenced for a certain number of live firing days. It only uses a proportion of these. The MoD publishes all the days that it intends to ‘live fire’ - not all of these are taken up.

Live firing takes place within three training ranges on the north moor (Okehampton, Merrivale and Willsworthy). For safety purposes, these areas are closed to the public when live firing is programmed. When not in use, live firing ranges can be used for Dry Training which has no impact on public access.

Military training can be divided into Live Firing (which on Dartmoor consists of light arms firing live projectiles) and Dry Training which incorporates all types of other training including the use of blank ammunition and pyrotechnics (but excluding live projectiles).

Since 2017, the level of use of the days licensed for live firing has remained broadly the same on Dartmoor, at about 50%.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO MILITARY RANGES ON DARTMOOR

In all cases, it is advised to check in advance on the MoD website or BBC Radio Devon

WILLSWORTHY RANGE

All weekends, except 2nd weekend of each month.
All of August.

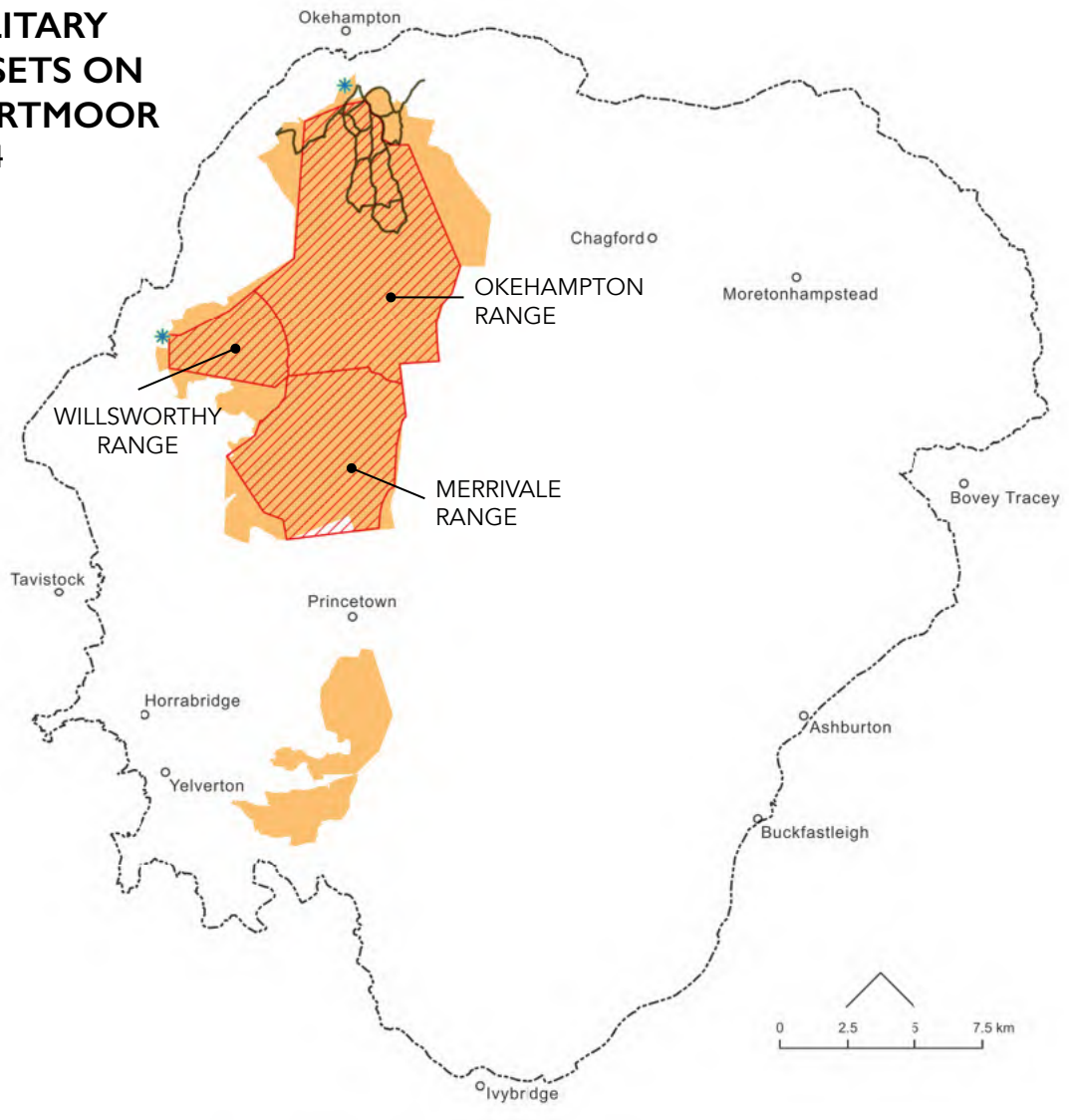
OKEHAMPTON RANGE

All weekends.
All Mondays.
All of April, May, July and August.

MERRIVALE RANGE

All weekends.
All Mondays.
All of August.

MILITARY ASSETS ON DARTMOOR 2024

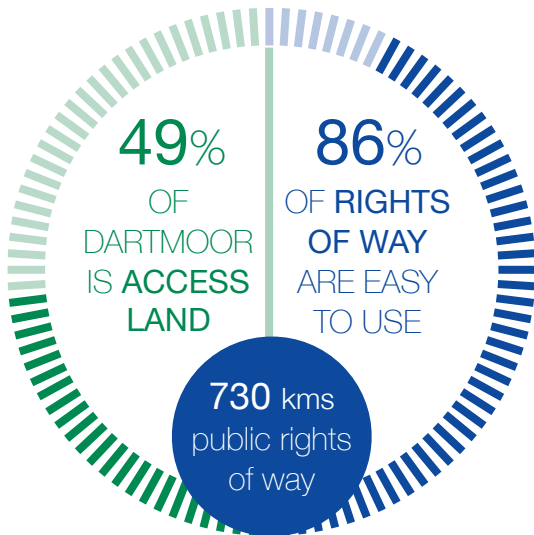


- Military Infrastructure**
- Camps
 - Military Ring Road
 - Military Danger Area
 - Training Areas

BETTER FOR PEOPLE

VISION FOR 2045

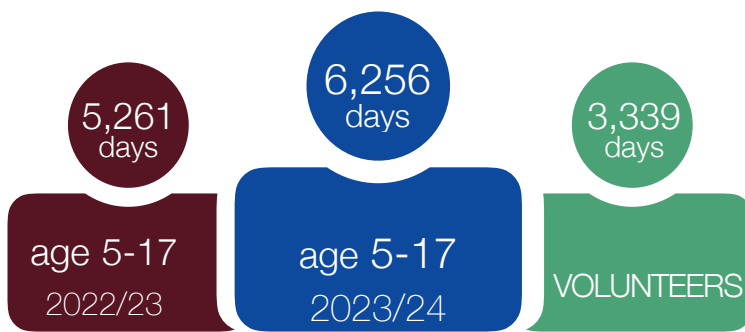
People from all backgrounds and ages are enjoying the National Park. They undertake activities of their choice consistent with Dartmoor's Special Qualities and benefitting their health and well-being. Visitors are spread out through time and space and arriving by sustainable transport. Everyone is able to find peace and solitude and some areas are quiet, as sanctuaries for nature. Visitors leave no trace; they understand and respect the environment, each other and the people living and working here.



DARTMOOR'S SPECIAL QUALITIES SEEN AS DETERIORATING

Visitor survey

- Public access to open space
- Traditional farming practices
- Sense of tranquility
- Water quality and cleanliness
- Sense of timelessness
- Adventure and discovery



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



TOP 5 ISSUES IMPACTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Visitor survey

INTRODUCTION
CLIMATE
NEXT GEN
NATURE
HERITAGE
PEOPLE
FARMING
COMMUNITY
LINKS
ENDNOTES

This section contains information on:

- access Δ
- recreation Δ
- community outreach Δ
- Farming in Protected Landscapes Δ

Access

Much of Dartmoor is wild and rugged terrain. It is important that everybody who wants to visit Dartmoor is able to do so and can enjoy the benefits that a visit to this special landscape can offer, including benefits to people's health and well-being. **Around 49% (or 46,666 ha) of the National Park is designated Access Land**, of this 35,301 ha are common land and 11,365 ha are open country.³⁶ The National Park also has **733 kms of Public Rights of Way - with 89% being surveyed as 'easy to use'**.³⁷ This includes 354 kms of footpaths, 360 kms of bridleways and 19 kms of byways.

In order to improve the accessibility of Dartmoor National Park to people of all physical abilities, a project called Miles Without Stiles has been developed. **This project provides easy-access routes in locations across the National Park** allowing exploration for people with limited mobility of some of Dartmoor's hidden gems and wide-open vistas. **12 routes have been successfully established within Dartmoor since 2020**. All routes are without steps, stiles or steep gradients.

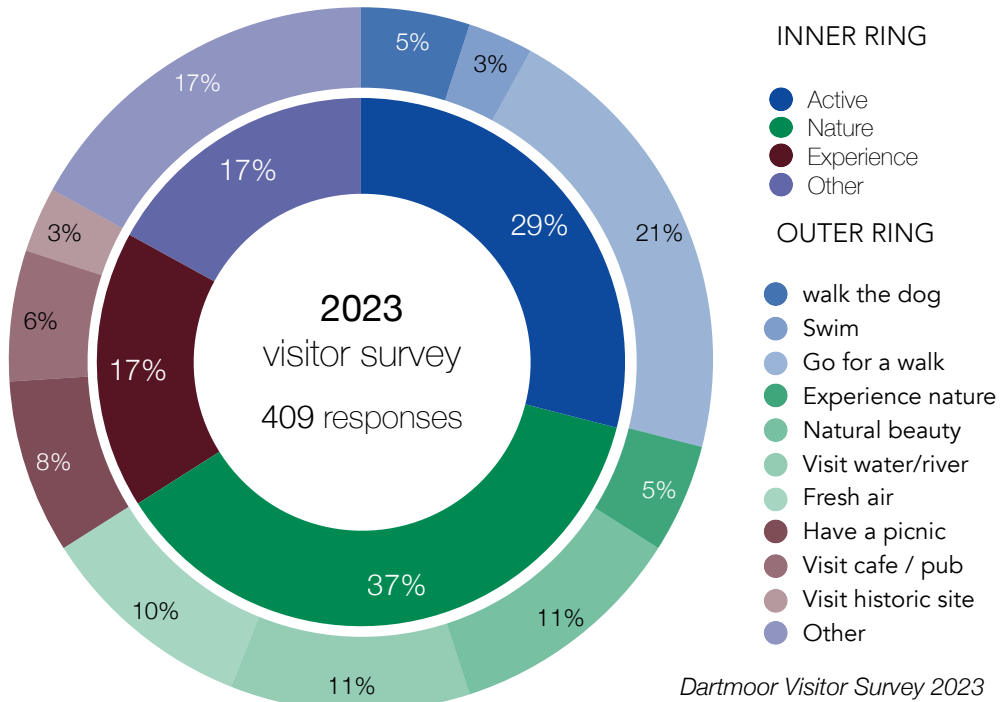
ACCESSIBLE ROUTES (Miles without Stiles) 2024

| Kms | LOCATION |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 2 | YARNER WOOD |
| 1 | BRENT ISLAND |
| 1 | BURRATOR ARBORETUM |
| 2 | NORSWORTHY BRIDGE TO DEANSCOMBE |
| 4 | SHIPLEY BRIDGE TO AVON DAM |
| 2 | LONGTIMBER WOODS |
| 8 | PRINCETOWN TO NUN'S CROSS |
| 4.5 | BELLEVER FOREST |
| 2 | HAYTOR QUARRY |
| 10 | OKEHAMPTON MILITARY RING ROAD |
| 1 | FERNWORTHY RESERVOIR |
| 0.5 | BLACKINGSTONE ROCK |
| 38 | |

Visitors and locals have a great affinity with the natural environment on the Moor.

When asked what activities they had or would undertake during their visit,³⁸ 37% were engaging with nature; 29% were engaging in physical activity (often in nature); 16% were involved with a more organised activity; and the rest (17%) were undertaking a range of other recreational activities.

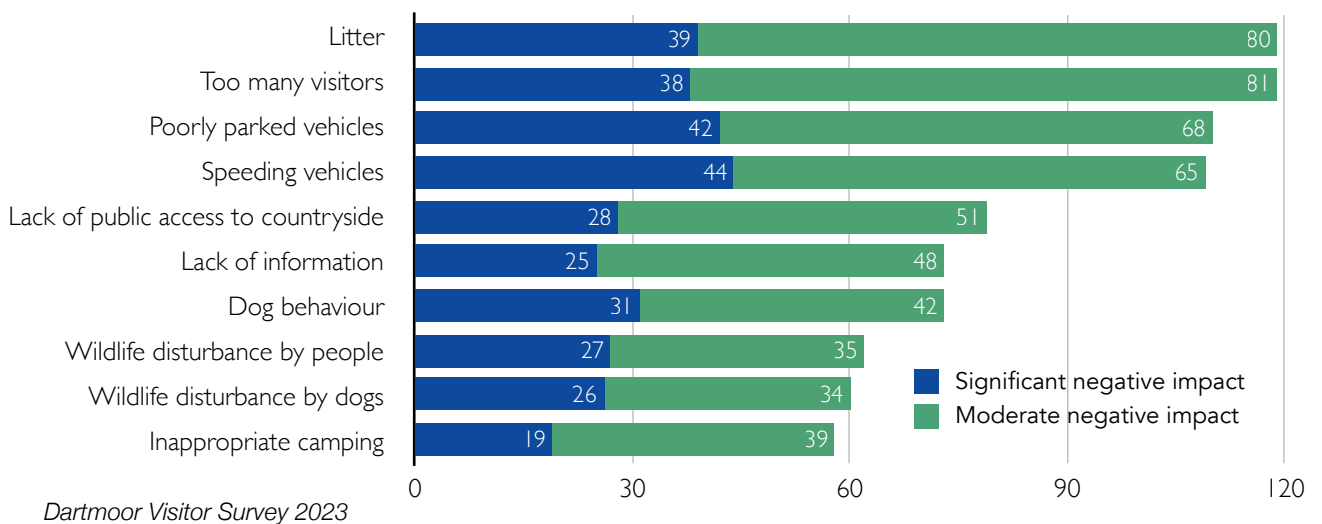
RECREATION ACTIVITIES



Most people living in and visiting the National Park feel that Dartmoor’s special qualities are being conserved. However there are concerns, in particular, about a deterioration of access to open space; traditional farming practices; tranquility; a sense of timelessness and clean water.

The top ten issues which impact on the visitor experience are shown in the graph below.

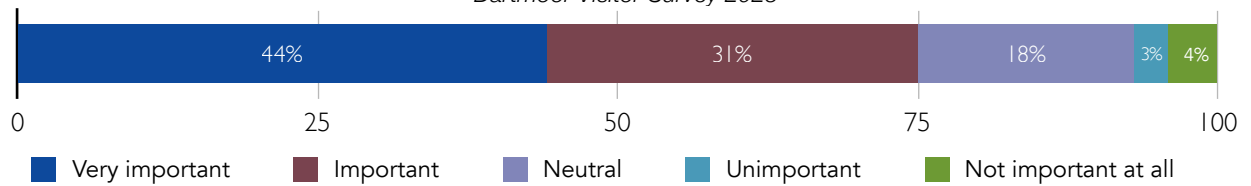
ISSUES IMPACTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE (2023)



Most people felt that Dartmoor’s special designation as a National Park was an important factor in deciding to visit the area.

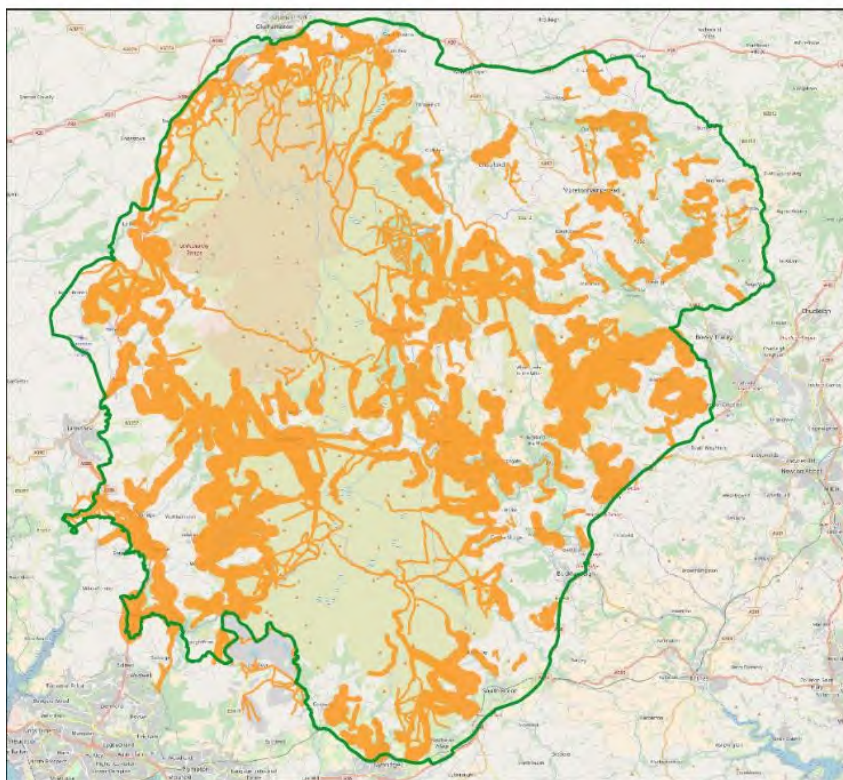
IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION

Dartmoor Visitor Survey 2023



There remains a risk that the popularity of the National Park will undermine its special qualities. In work conducted by the University of Exeter,³⁹ the estimated increase in footfall across key locations. Burrator, Haytor and Princetown stand out as high intensity locations. By 2039, fairly substantial increases in footfall intensity are expected in several locations across the National Park with peak increases of around 25 persons per hour at peak times. Not surprisingly, the locations attracting the largest increases in footfall are those that are also currently most attractive to visitors.

ESTIMATED GROWTH IN FOOTFALL 2019 TO 2039



Legend



SWEEP report 2018

Community outreach

It is widely recognised that childrens’ experience with the natural environment changes with age,⁴⁰ with nature experience changes being identified across four age groups summarised as:

- Early childhood: age of wonder
- Middle childhood: age of physical engagement
- Adolescent/teenage years: age of detachment because of increasing socialisation; and
- Post 19 years old: age of re-engagement, leading to adult values, attitudes, and actions.⁴¹

DNPA's outreach and engagement team seek to offer different learning experiences in order to improve understanding of the National Park's Special Qualities and establish a connection with nature for children at a young age. They do this through visiting local schools on Dartmoor, running family friendly events and supporting community partners. The team offers opportunities for young people to get more involved through the Ranger Ralph Club for 5-11 year olds and the Dartmoor Youth Rangers which offers practical conservation tasks for 12-17 year olds. They also run specialist projects including Girls Do Dartmoor which helps teenage girls develop their self confidence and resilience through connection to the outdoors.

The number of activity days for participants overall has varied between 693 (during Covid) and over 9,500. **In 2023/24, the team had 6,256 days engaging with young people.**



ENGAGEMENT WITH 5-17 YEAR OLDS 2023/24

| | | Community events | School engagement | Total |
|--------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| aged 5 - 11 | events | 13 | 69 | 82 |
| | person days | 251 | 5,091 | 5,342 |
| aged 12 - 17 | events | 45 | 17 | 62 |
| | person days | 665 | 249 | 914 |

Many local people also participate in the management of the Moor by offering their services as volunteers. The number of **volunteering days the Authority organised / supported was 3,339 for 2023/24.**

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is a grant scheme for National Parks and National Landscapes supporting projects that enhance the natural environment, mitigate climate change, support nature-friendly farm businesses, improve access opportunities and protect the quality and character of the area.⁴²

On Dartmoor, up to 2024, the **People** strand delivered a number of outputs.

- FiPL - PEOPLE**
- 01) **700 metres** of existing permissive path improved or better managed
 - 02) **17 projects** delivering educational visits
 - 03) **20 projects** to make the landscape more inclusive for visitors
 - 04) **40 projects** supporting greater public engagement in land management
 - 05) **145 volunteers** engaged through the FiPL programme
 - 06) **150 days** for educational visits, visitor days and open days

BETTER FOR FARMING

VISION FOR 2045

Farming and forestry systems will sustain a high-quality natural environment; they will store and sequester carbon, produce healthy food, high quality fibre and other products, be economically viable and deliver a wide range of public goods. Visitors, policy makers and local communities will understand the central role that farming, and forestry play in producing food and a range of environmental goods, including landscape character and that this relationship between people and the land is a rich and valuable part of our cultural heritage. Better understanding and appreciation has led to valuing Dartmoor, and a desire to buy and invest locally.

86%

86.3% of Dartmoor is defined as utilisable agricultural area

75%

Three quarters of Dartmoor farms are beef and sheep enterprises

37%

37% of Dartmoor is designated as Common land

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

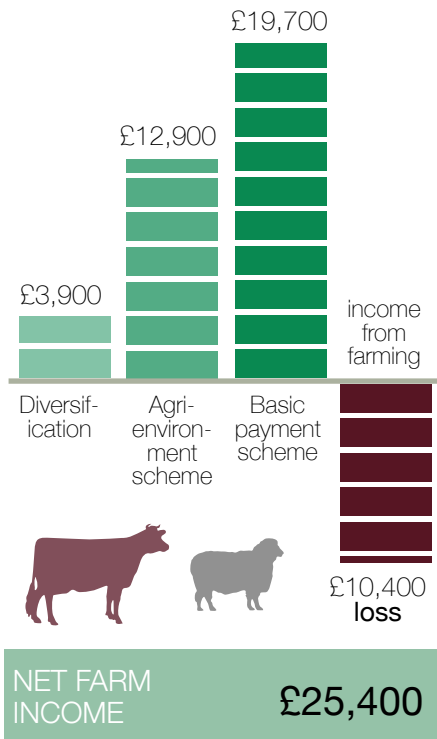
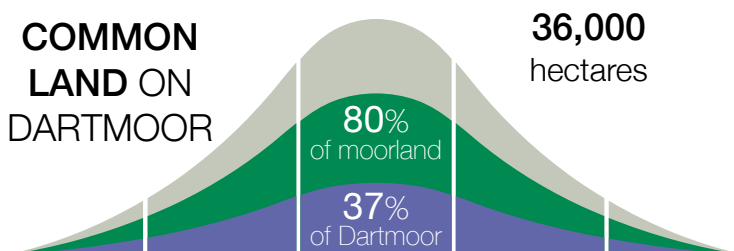
achievements to April 2024



COMMONERS ON DARTMOOR

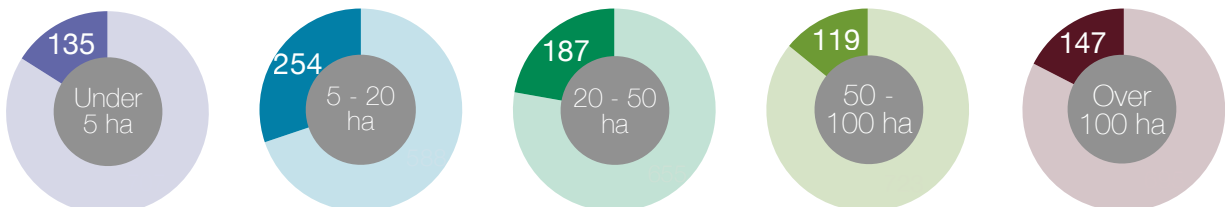


COMMON LAND ON DARTMOOR



LESS FAVOURED AREAS FARM BUSINESS INCOME
(UK wide 2022/23)

FARM HOLDINGS ON DARTMOOR, BY SIZE (2021)



BETTER FOR FARMING

This section contains information on:

- Farming on Dartmoor Δ
- Farm incomes Δ
- Agri-environment schemes Δ
- Farm holdings Δ
- Common land Δ
- Farming entrants Δ
- Farming in Protected Landscapes Δ

Farming on Dartmoor

Farming has shaped the landscape, culture and heritage of Dartmoor over hundreds of years. Of Dartmoor's 95,500ha area, **86% of the National Park is defined as utilisable agricultural area.**⁴³ A majority of the utilisable agricultural area is unenclosed moorland and rough grazing (49% of the National Park) and the remaining 37% is enclosed farmland, mostly permanent pasture. Sustaining traditional pastoral systems is a key component in maintaining Dartmoor's Special Qualities. It can provide:

- a local food source reared to high welfare standards
- natural services such as water provision, water storage flood mitigation, carbon storage to mitigate climate change and valuable habitats to support priority species
- extensive grazing of the commons, which manages large areas of open access land, mitigates fire risk and helps conserve archaeological landmarks in a cost-effective way
- maintained public access to large tracts of Dartmoor
- locally distinctive and traditional breeds

Most farming on Dartmoor is centred around livestock production and pastoralism as naturally poor land grade, altitude and conditions are not able to support other options. Moorland grazing on common land and newtakes is often supplemented by the use of better pastures on home farms and inbye land. **Cattle, sheep and ponies dominate the grazing on Dartmoor.** As they each graze differently, they can coexist and complement each other. **75% of Dartmoor's farm holdings are beef and sheep enterprises, or mixed.**⁴⁴

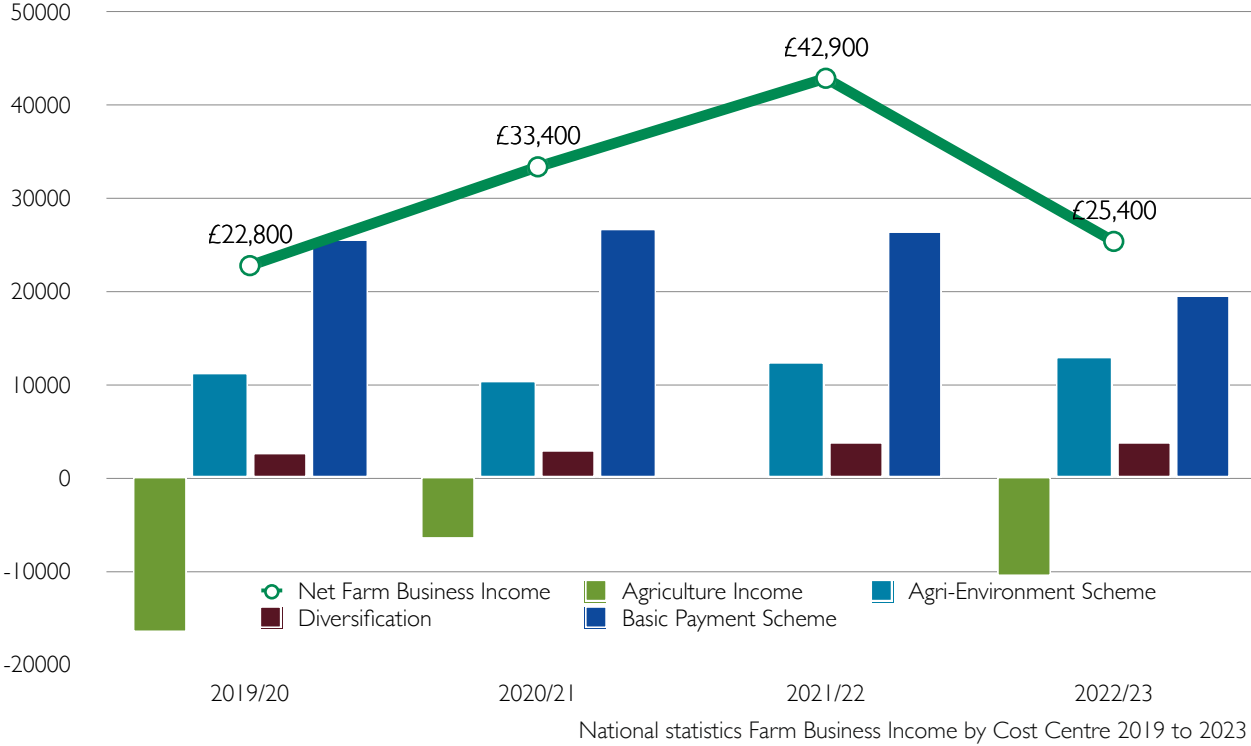
Farm incomes

The economics of farming on Dartmoor are extremely marginal. Defra publishes national figures on Farm Business Incomes in England (the amount which must provide a return for unpaid family labour and the farmer's own capital).⁴⁵

In 2021/22, Less Favoured Area (LFA) grazing livestock farms benefitted from very high output prices for both sheep and cattle, yet the average direct agricultural income for these farms was still only £200 for the year. Income from agri-environmental activities was £12,300. The Basic Payments Scheme (BPS) contributed £26,500 and diversified

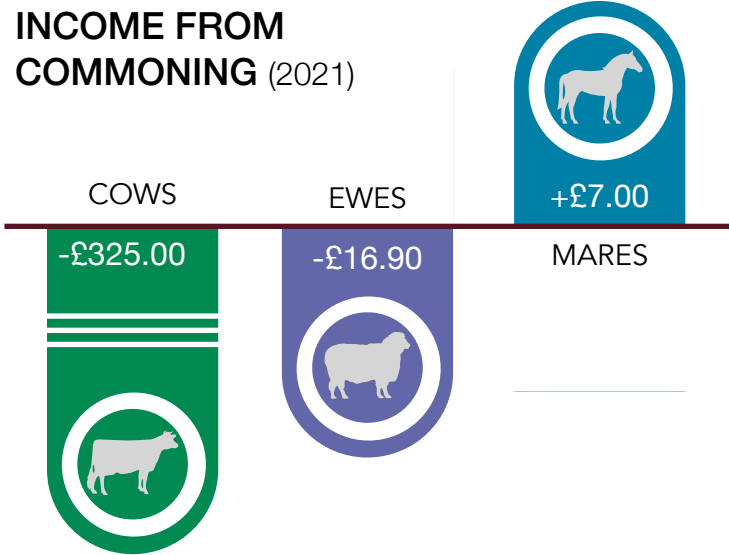
income £3,900, giving a total average income of £42,900. For 2022/23, the figures show a net loss of £10,400 from agricultural activities. Basic Payment Scheme income fell by just under a quarter from 2021/22 to £19,700, diversified income was £3,300 and income from agri-environmental activities rose slightly to £12,900. Average total farm business income was £25,400, down 41% on 2021/22.

LESS FAVOURED AREAS FARM BUSINESS INCOME



Our Upland Commons Project commissioned the Duchy Rural Business School and the Vice Chair Dartmoor Commoners Council to carry out the Cost of Commoning Survey.⁴⁶ Data was collected over three years, 2021 - 2023 from fifteen farms who graze livestock on Dartmoor common land. The aim was to highlight the true cost of grazing livestock on the common and inform future Agri-environment intervention rates. These figures (which included a cost for the farmer's own labour) showed an annual net loss of £325.00 per cow and £16.90 per ewe. Mares made a small positive return of £7.00.

AGRICULTURAL INCOME FROM COMMONING (2021)

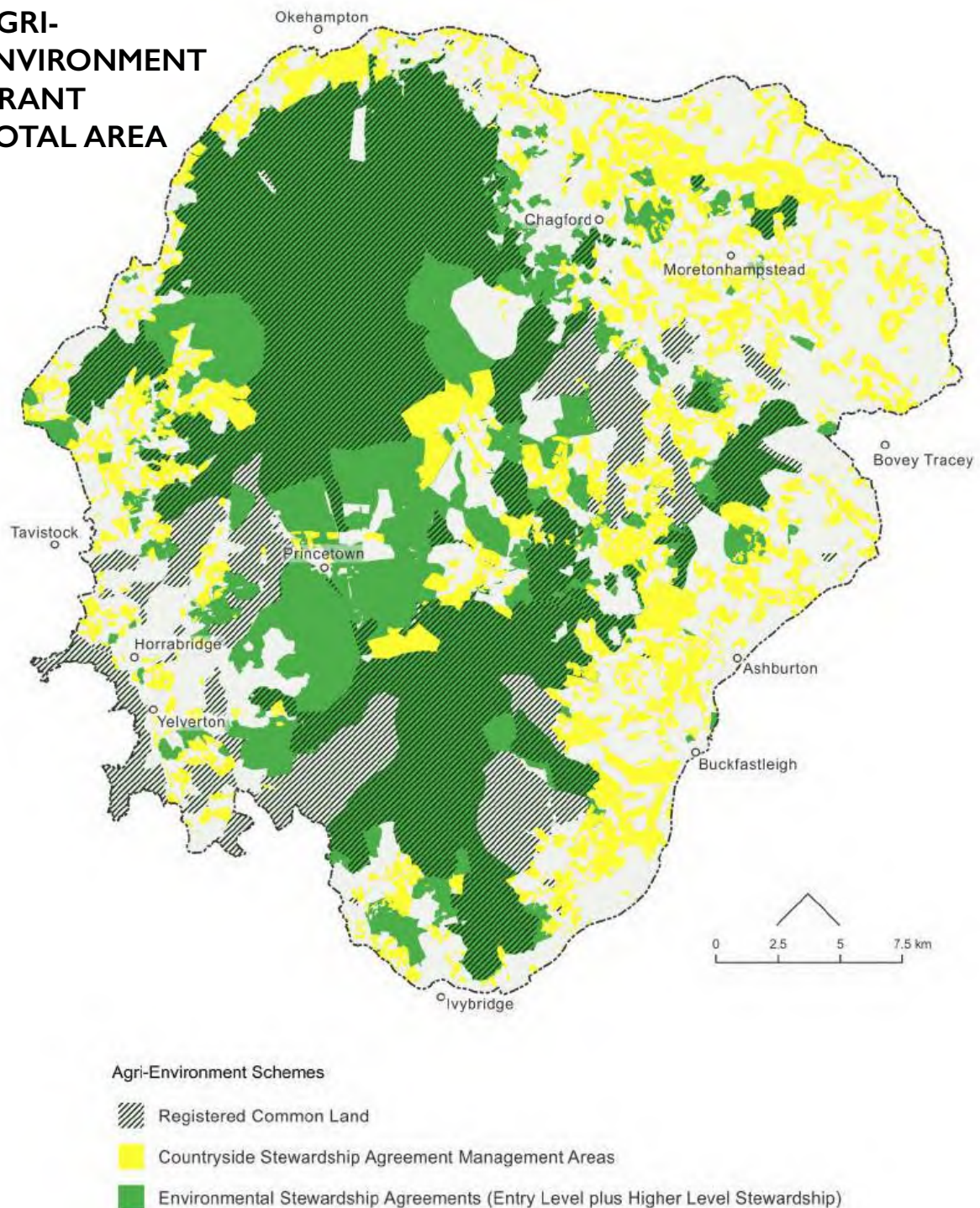


Agri-environment schemes

Agri-environment schemes (AES) are optional Government programmes established alongside the BPS to encourage agricultural sustainability through enabling farmers to manage their land in environmentally sustainable ways.⁴⁷ Existing AES options either fall within Environmental Stewardship (ES) or Countryside Stewardship (CS).

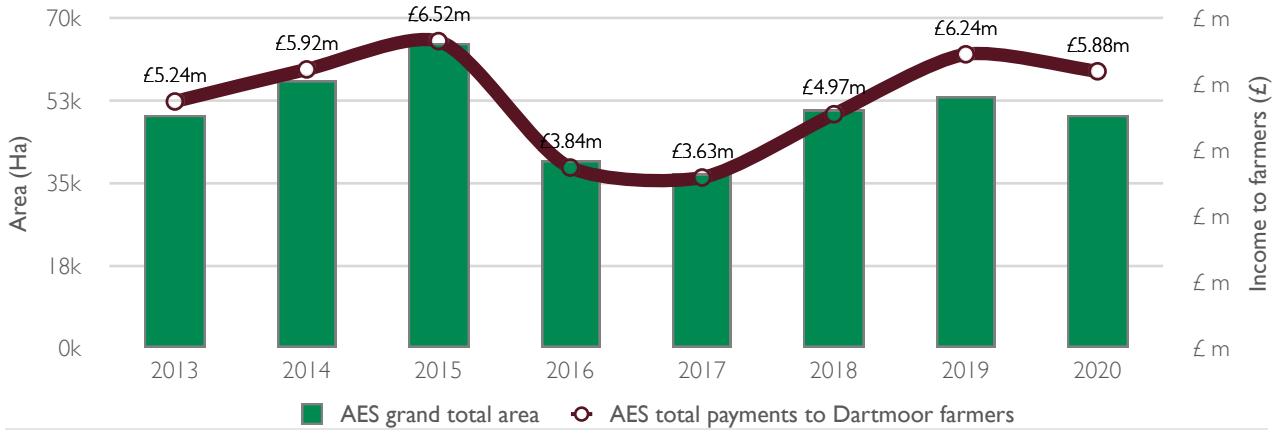
The areas of Dartmoor National Park within the multiple tiers of ES and CS are highlighted on the map below. **The extent of Dartmoor National Park's land area within AES agreements has significantly decreased over time, as have the costs for AES, particularly since 2019.**

AGRI-ENVIRONMENT GRANT TOTAL AREA



89% of Dartmoor National Park is classed as a Severely Disadvantaged Less Favoured Area (SDA) for farming,⁴⁸ areas where conditions such as altitude, high rainfall, steep slopes and poor soils severely limit productivity. 34% of Dartmoor farms are tenanted,⁴⁹ reflecting the national average. 37% of Dartmoor's area comprises common land, privately owned land where "commoners", have rights over the land predominantly for grazing animals.⁵⁰

AES TOTAL AREA / INCOME TO DARTMOOR FARMERS



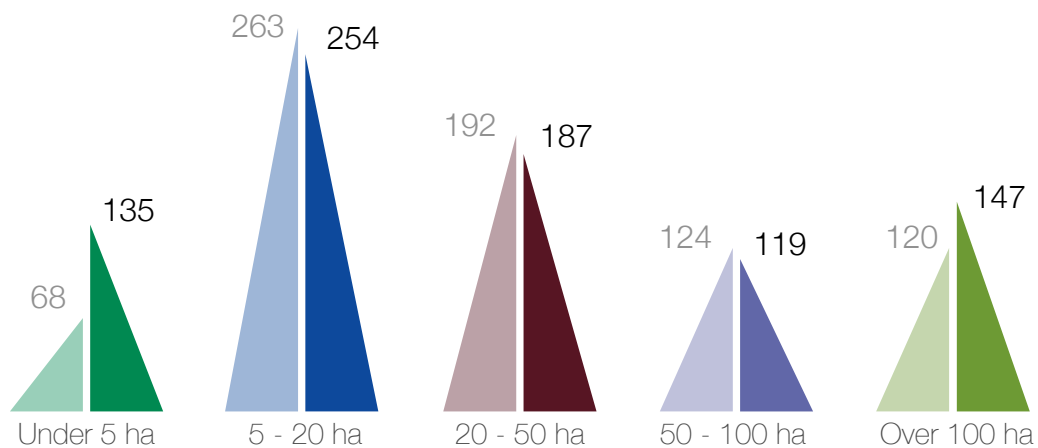
Defra, Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes

Farm holdings

The trend of increasing farm holding sizes and reduction in smaller holdings between 2009 and 2016 changed abruptly in 2021 as some larger holdings were split up - boosting the number of smaller holdings. The reasons for this are unknown but could be fuelled by uncertainty as well as an increasing number of landowners seeking maximum sale price for agricultural land. Sub-division of holdings into smaller agricultural units could have contributed towards the rise in agricultural workforce on Dartmoor. However, it may also have been driven by the availability of grant programmes to complete, for instance, fencing or walling. In 2010 there were 1,547 people employed within farming businesses on Dartmoor; and this increased to 1,892 by 2021.

FARM HOLDINGS ON DARTMOOR, BY SIZE

(L) 2010 (R) 2021



Defra, Structure of the agricultural industry in England and the UK at June 2023

Common land

37% of Dartmoor National Park's total land area, and 80% of the moorland, is common land,⁵¹ subdivided into 90 Home Commons and the Forest of Dartmoor.⁵² The Forest is the largest common on Dartmoor, encompassing the highest parts of the moorland and covering 11,000ha.⁵³ Many of these commons have no physical boundary between them and they are generally managed by grazing animals (cattle, sheep and ponies) provided by the commoners.

Grazing on Dartmoor commons is an important land management technique with a rich cultural heritage. Recent years have seen a decline in the number of active graziers on Dartmoor commons. **Of 850 registered commoners with grazing and other rights on Dartmoor, it is estimated only 130 are actively using these rights.**⁵⁴

COMMONERS ON DARTMOOR



DNPA (2019) Farming and Forestry Review Paper

Fewer active graziers on Dartmoor commons will make it more challenging to manage these areas in the future. Common land is a significant source of archaeological remains and biodiversity as well as being an important grazing resource for many upland and tenant farms on Dartmoor, particularly on the high moor.

Farming entrants

The UK farming sector is experiencing a decline in the number of young people seeking a career in farming and agriculture.⁵⁵ **In 2021, nationally, 42% of farmers were aged 60 or older and 11% aged under 30 years.**⁵⁶

A decrease in the number of young people looking to enter farming as a profession risks loss of knowledge and skills on Dartmoor.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding

The Defra-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme is a grant scheme for National Parks and National Landscapes that will run until March 2025. It supports projects that enhance the natural environment, mitigate climate change, support nature-friendly farm businesses and farm diversification, provide public access opportunities and protect the quality and character of the area.⁵⁷ The designation of our protected landscapes recognises their exceptional value for landscape, nature and cultural heritage. They have been shaped by generations of farmers and a resilient, sustainable approach to land management sits at the heart of their future.

The FiPL programme approach blends national and local priorities. Contributions to nature recovery and climate resilient businesses, heritage conservation and better access for people to enjoy our protected landscapes all feature in programme delivery.

Progress made with FiPL funding is shown in the relevant parts of the report: **Better response to climate change** Δ; **Better for nature and natural beauty** Δ; **Better for cultural heritage** Δ and **Better for people** Δ.

The outcomes highlighted below are totals for the whole programme to the end of 2023/24.

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Management improvement on SSSIs | New wetland created | Soil health projects | Hedgerows planted | Projects reducing flood risk |
| 6,273 ha | 7.5 ha | 15 | 2,581 m | 23 |
| New trees planted | Projects reducing wildfire risk | Biodiversity enhancement | Woodland created | Dry stone walling restored |
| 4,167 | 5 | 3,339 ha | 46 ha | 1,055 m |
| Farmers engaged in programme | Volunteers within programme | Total projects supported | Total projects completed | Area of land supported |
| 129 | 145 | 117 | 71 | 25,869 ha |

BETTER FOR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITIES

VISION FOR 2045

Dartmoor's communities are thriving and engaged in caring for the National Park, they have ready access to quality affordable housing, and the services and facilities they need, and are able to make sustainable travel choices. New development in the National Park is of the highest quality, efficient, and conserves and enhances natural and heritage assets. Dartmoor's diverse economy fosters traditional sectors and productive, innovative and resilient enterprise. Dartmoor's outstanding natural and cultural capital acts as a catalyst for inward investment and prosperity, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship.

29%

of the population of Dartmoor is over 65

81%

of the population of Dartmoor are in good health

91%

of businesses on Dartmoor have fewer than 10 employees

QUALIFICATIONS ON DARTMOOR 2021



LEVEL 4 DEGREE AND ABOVE



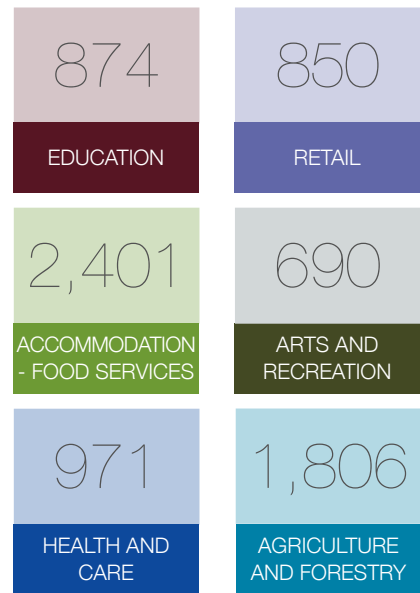
DARTMOOR DEVON

WHERE VISITORS TRAVELLED FROM



Dartmoor Devon South West UK

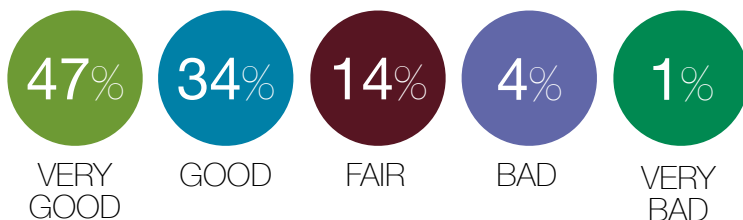
EMPLOYEES IN SIX KEY SECTORS



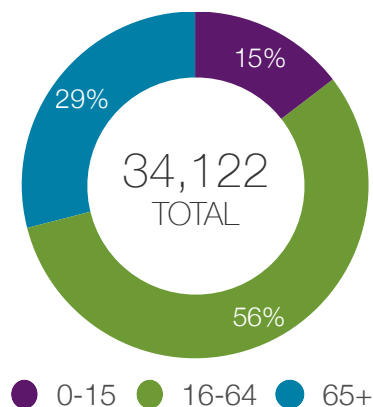
MEDIAN HOUSE PRICES 2023



HEALTH ON DARTMOOR 2021



DARTMOOR'S POPULATION 2021



This section contains information on:

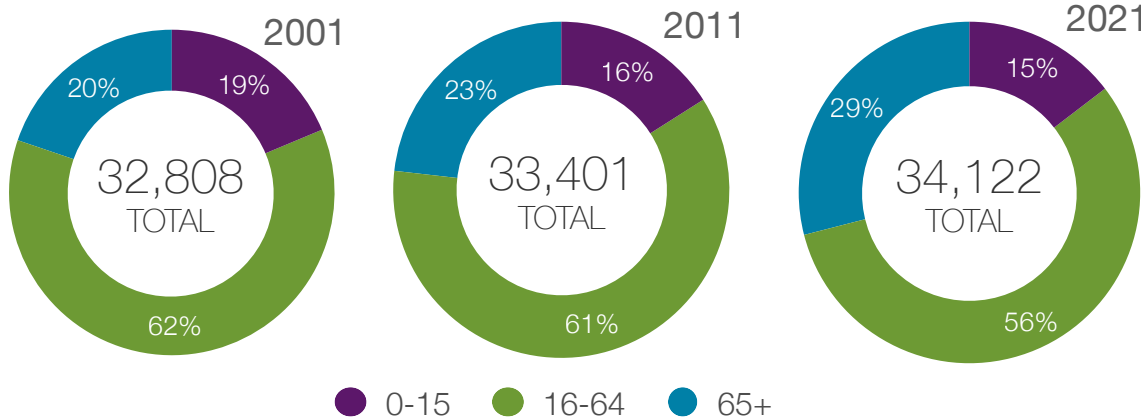
- population Δ
- qualifications Δ
- health and disability Δ
- deprivation Δ
- housing Δ
- economic activity Δ
- business size Δ
- economic sectors Δ
- tourism Δ
- the impact of Covid-19 Δ
- development Δ
- infrastructure Δ

Resident population

The 2021 Census⁵⁸ indicated there are an estimated **34,122 people living within Dartmoor National Park**. This number has slightly increased since 2011 (33,401). **The average age is 48**, compared with 41 across England as a whole.⁵⁹

The proportion of people aged over 65 in England and Wales increased from 16.4% in 2011 to 18.6% in 2021 indicating that nationally, the population is ageing.⁶⁰ National Parks are generally characterised by an older age structure than the wider population, meaning the issue of an ageing population is particularly acute in these locations. Overall, the proportion of **Dartmoor's population aged 65+ has increased over time from 19.8% in 2001 to 23.2% in 2011 and 29% in 2021**. Alongside the increase in older residents, the proportion of working age people (those aged 16-64) living within Dartmoor has decreased over time. **56.4% of Dartmoor's population was of working age in 2021**, compared to 60.8% in 2011 and 61.5% in 2001.

DARTMOOR'S GROWING AND AGEING POPULATION 2021 census



This reduction of working age residents leads to shortages in labour and skills making it challenging for Dartmoor's businesses to recruit staff and continue to grow and prosper.

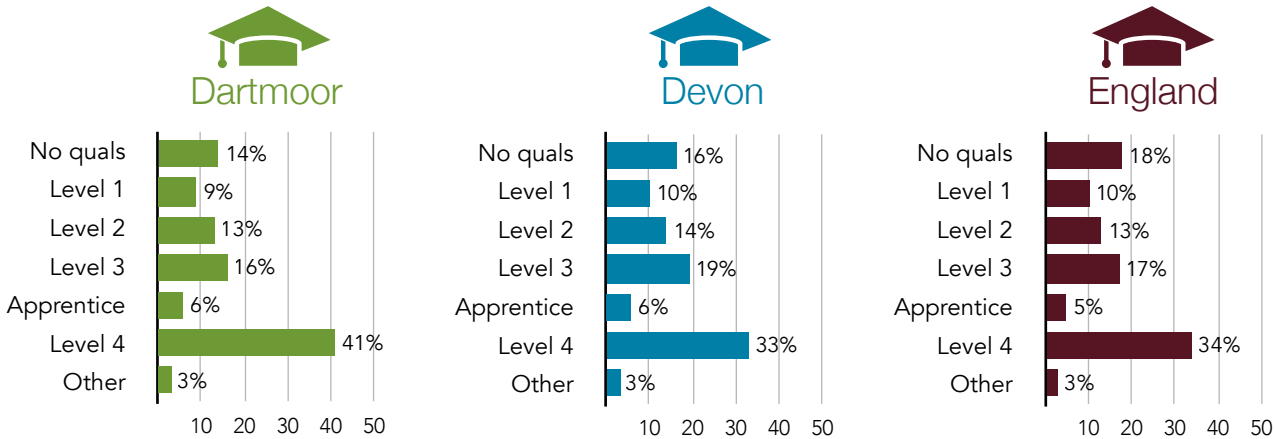
A changing age profile additionally influences the types of businesses and services in demand within Dartmoor, with an older population creating extra demand for services such as residential care and assisted living. These services can be particularly difficult to deliver in deeply rural locations. The high proportion of over 65s in the Dartmoor population looks set to continue.

Qualifications

Overall, **Dartmoor is characterised by a well-qualified local resident base.**⁶¹ The proportion of residents with qualifications of level 4 (degree level) and above is 8% higher in Dartmoor compared to Devon and the South West and 7% higher than that for England. As well as this, the proportion of the population with no qualifications or qualifications lower than level 1 (GCSEs) is less than the regional and national figures.

Dartmoor schools are at 83% capacity.⁶²

QUALIFICATION LEVELS ONS 2021 census

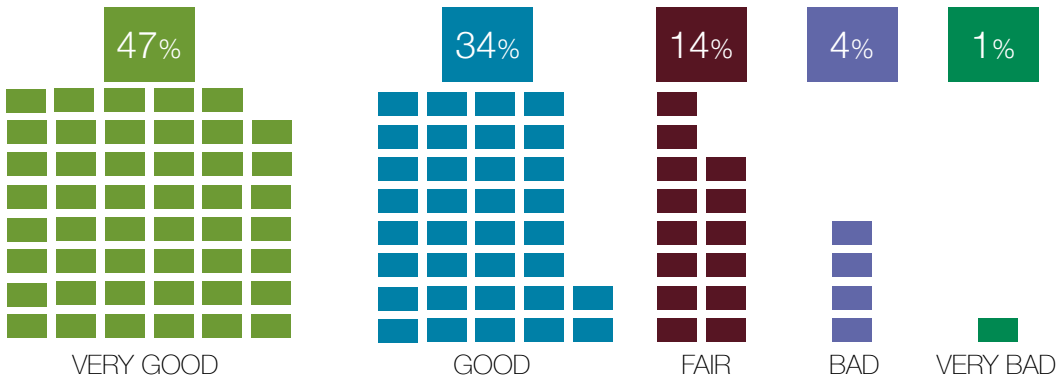


Health and disability

Health on Dartmoor is consistent with national figures, with over **80% of Dartmoor residents reporting good or very good health**, and just over 5% reporting bad or very bad health.⁶³

Just over 20% of Dartmoor residents are registered as 'disabled' under the Equality Act.⁶⁴ 79.5% are not registered as disabled, though 8.5% of those have a long-term mental or physical condition which does not have a major impact day to day.

HEALTH OF DARTMOOR RESIDENTS ONS 2021 census

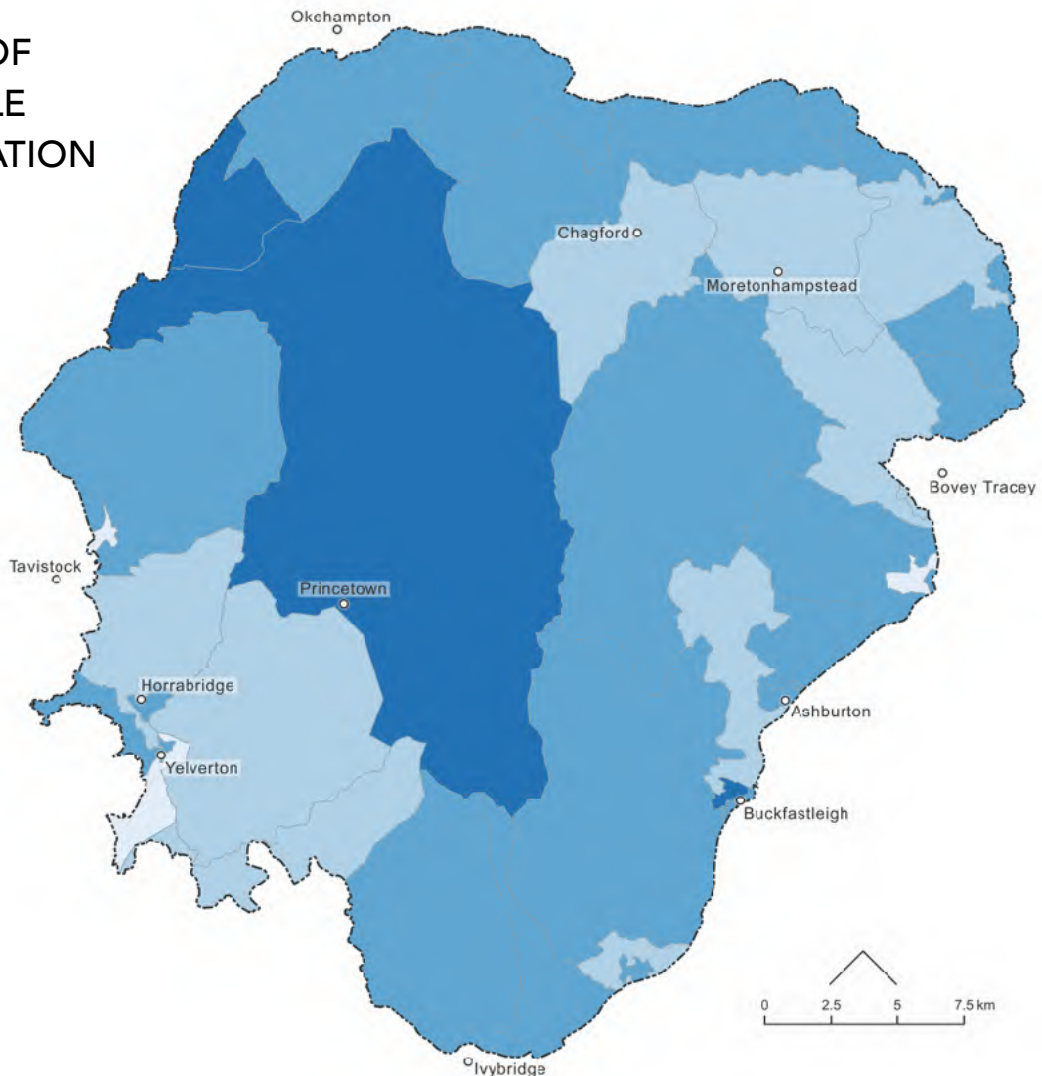


Deprivation

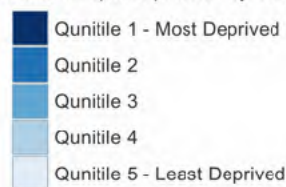
The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) provides an overall measure of relative deprivation for each Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in England. IMD is based on 39 separate indicators organised across seven distinct domains: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment.

INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION (IMD)

by quintiles
2019



Index of Multiple Deprivation by LSOA 2019

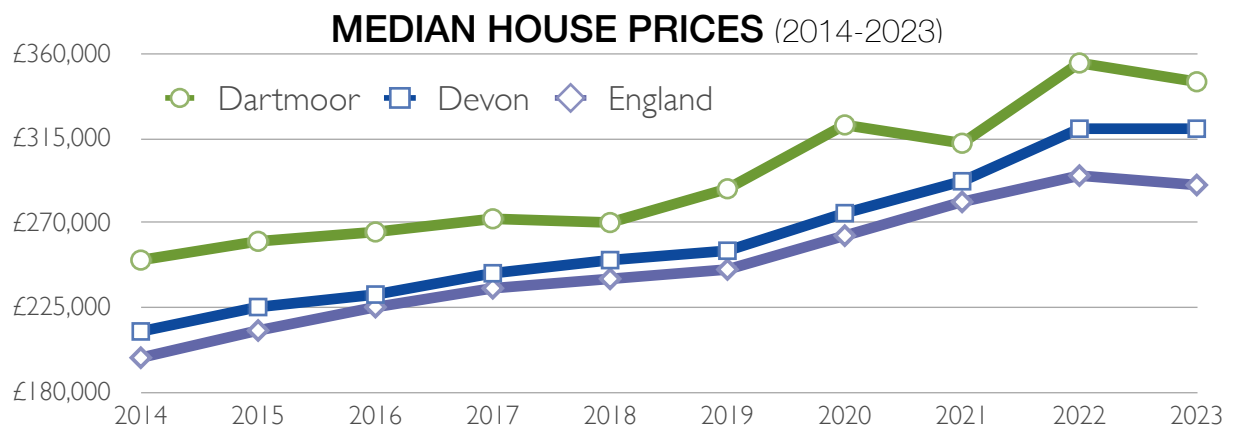
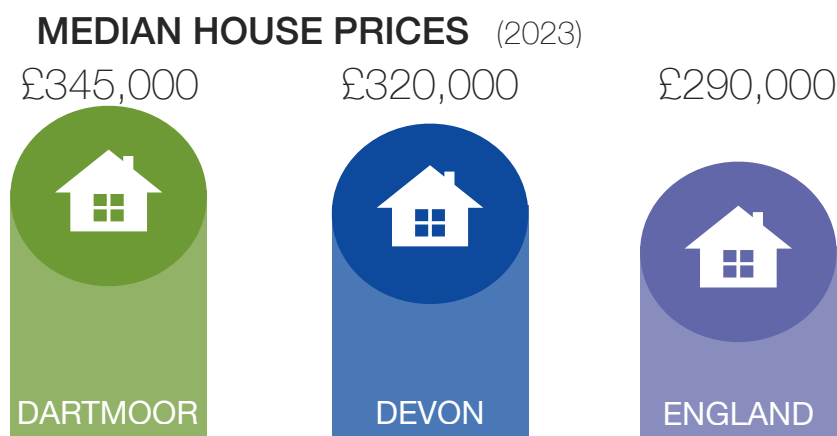


The average Index of Multiple Deprivation score for Dartmoor is 18.2 which is lower than that for England as a whole, at 21.7. The IMD score increased slightly from 2017 (when it was 17.1). However, there is some variation across the Park with 8% of Dartmoor LSOAs within the second most deprived quintile - covering the Buckfastleigh and Princetown (rural) areas. Rural areas, like Dartmoor, tend to score most highly on deprivation indicators such as income, access to services and employment.

Housing

Dartmoor is additionally characterised by under-occupied housing stock. **Almost half of Dartmoor's housing stock has an occupancy rating of 2+** (2 or more bedrooms than is recommended for the number and composition of occupants) compared to 36% for England⁶⁵. This means that housing within Dartmoor is being less effectively used.

Houses within the English National Parks tend to attract a premium and, although house prices have risen nationally, **properties within Dartmoor have remained 11% to 26% more expensive than the national average over the previous 9 years.**⁶⁶ Within Dartmoor, the 2023 median house price was £355,000, £25,000 higher than the median for Devon and £55,000 higher than the median for England and Wales.⁶⁷ High property prices out of step with local earnings make it increasingly difficult for local people and workers to live inside the National Park and makes the delivery of affordable housing a high priority for Dartmoor.

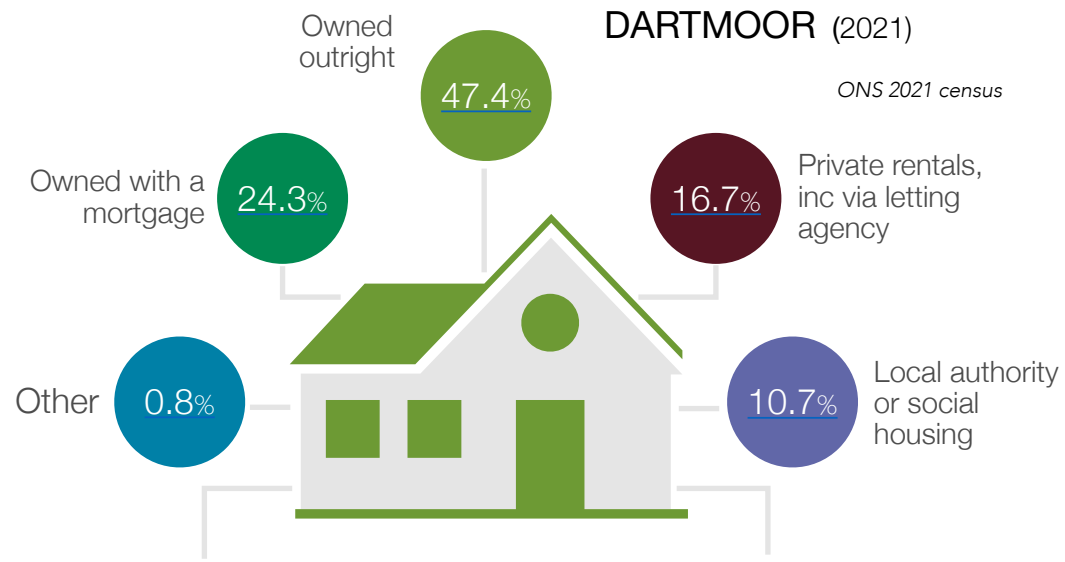


High property prices out of step with local earnings make it increasingly difficult for local people and workers to live inside the National Park and makes the delivery of affordable housing a high priority for Dartmoor. In 2023, the median workplace-based earnings were £29,071 resulting in **an affordability ratio (house price to earnings) of 11.87 in Dartmoor, compared with 10.22 for Devon and 8.26 for England.**

Most homes on Dartmoor are owned outright, or with a mortgage. This is probably a reflection of the relatively large share of the population that is over 65 or retired Δ . Most homes on Dartmoor are houses, with **a higher than average number of detached homes - 48.3%**. Semi-detached (24.3%) and terraced (22.4%) make up most of the rest, with the remaining being purpose-built flats or converted buildings.

HOUSEHOLD TENURE ON DARTMOOR (2021)

ONS 2021 census



Economic activity of residents

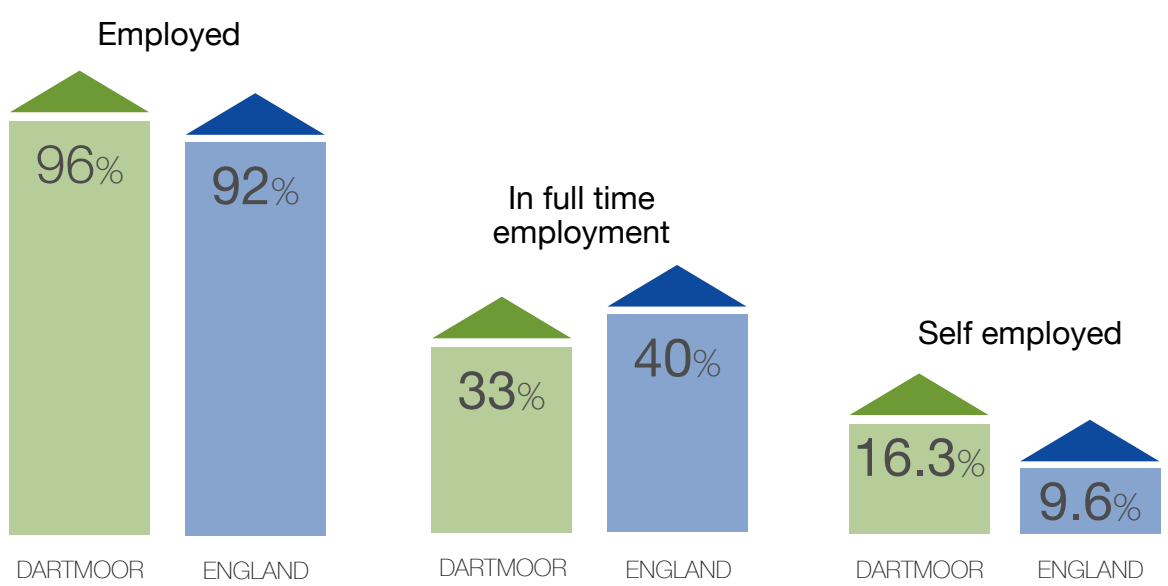
The proportion of Dartmoor’s population who are economically active (those aged over 16 who are working or looking for work) is lower than both regional and national figures. This can largely be attributed to Dartmoor’s ageing population, but can also be a consequence of long-term ill health, being a student or homemaker. However, **Dartmoor is also characterised by high employment rates, at 96%.**

Dartmoor’s economic profile is characterised by a high level of self-employment, with the 2021 Census indicating that 16.3% of the population are self-employed.⁶⁸ Dartmoor has a lower level of full-time employment (32.5% of economically active population) compared with that of England (40.3% of economically active population).

DARTMOOR’S ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION

as a proportion of the economically active population

ONS 2021 census



Business size

ONS data shows that there were **2,115 PAYE registered businesses operating in Dartmoor in 2022**. Many micro or sole trader enterprises are not included in this total.

In Dartmoor National Park, between 2016 and 2022, the number of registered businesses decreased by 55 and the number of establishments increased by 20. The majority (91%) of registered businesses in 2022 were micro businesses, with between 0-9 employees, which represents a slight reduction (3%) since 2016. The high prevalence of smaller businesses within Dartmoor reflects national rural trends, with data indicating that **28.1% of people were employed in micro businesses in rural areas in 2022**, compared with 19.4% in urban areas.⁶⁹ Challenges within rural locations including a more limited labour market supply and sparsity in business networking can make it difficult for businesses to grow in scale.⁷⁰ **Only 1% of registered businesses within Dartmoor had over 50 employees, which is a 25% reduction since 2016**, and no registered businesses had over 250 employees in 2022.

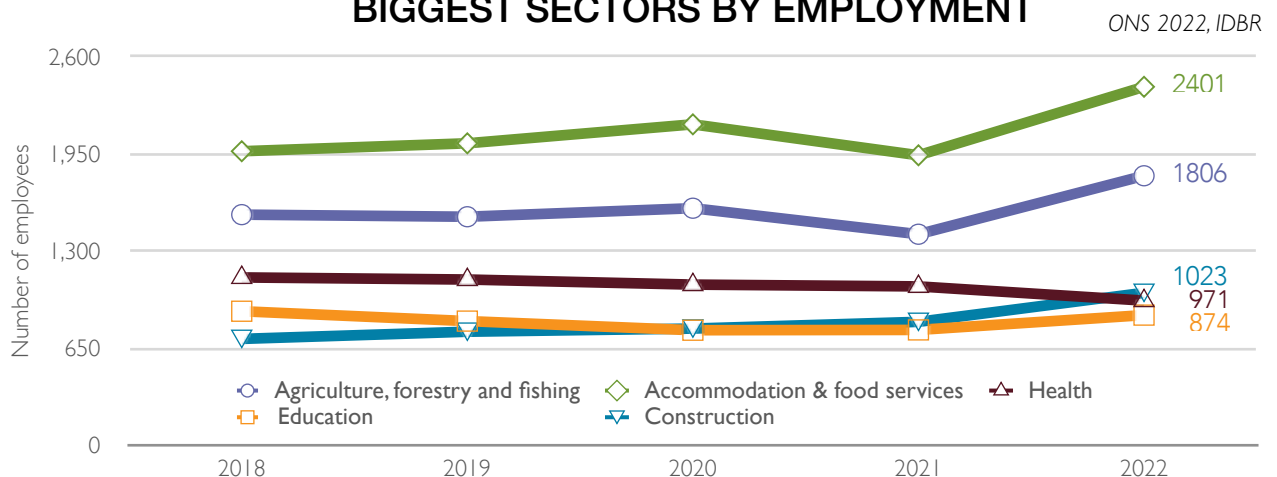
BUSINESS SIZE



Economic sectors

Dartmoor is characterised by a relatively diverse economy. Several sectors have experienced economic growth including traditional agriculture and tourism alongside a strong creative sector and a growing number of technical and IT businesses.⁷¹ The top five sectors for employment numbers within Dartmoor are shown below. It should be noted that self-employed workers are not included.

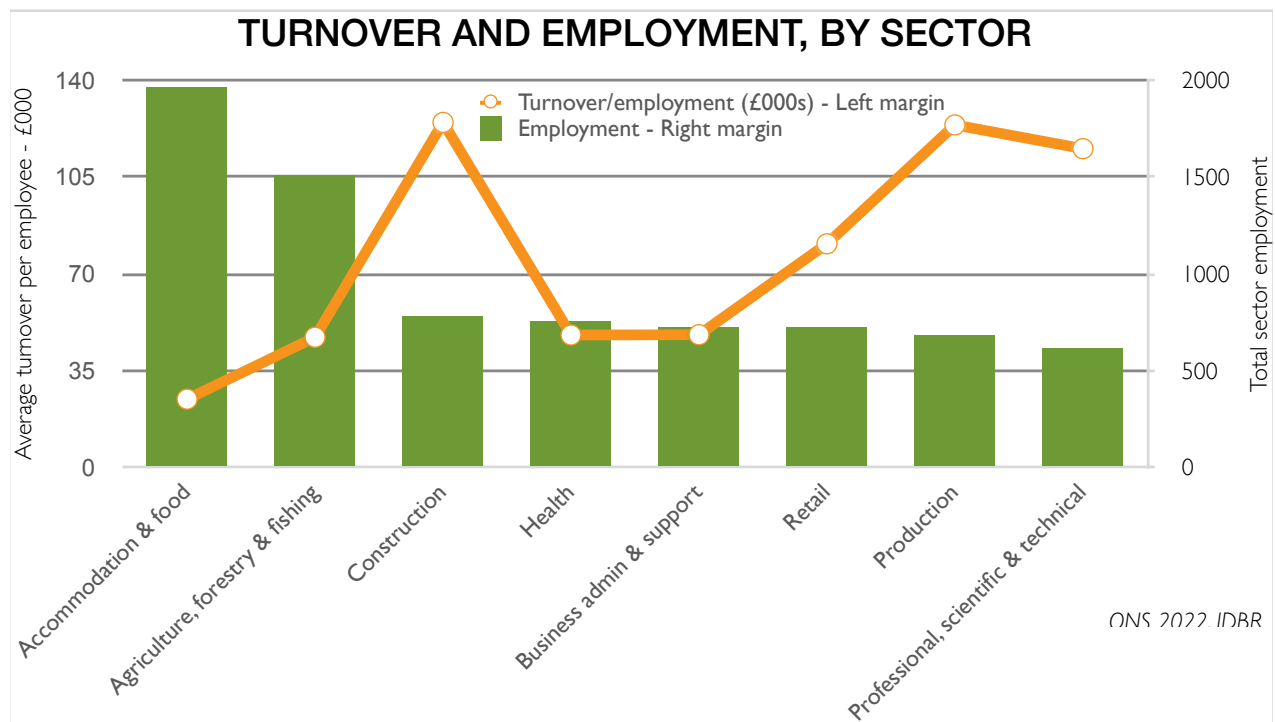
BIGGEST SECTORS BY EMPLOYMENT



The number of employees and businesses within each sector largely remained the same between 2018-2020, before an overall reduction in employees and businesses was experienced between 2020 and 2021. Due to the restrictions in place during the pandemic, the hospitality sector experienced the largest economic decline of all sectors in the UK during this period.⁷² **Dartmoor's accommodation and food services (hospitality) sector followed this trend and experienced the largest overall decline in employees (-9.7%)** of all sectors within Dartmoor between 2020 and 2021. However, 77% of sectors within Dartmoor experienced growth in employee and business numbers between 2021 and 2022, indicating that Dartmoor's economy was continuing to grow following the pandemic.

There are variations in turnover between sectors and variations in average turnover per job within Dartmoor. Many of the National Park's sectors with the highest number of jobs including agriculture and accommodation are those with the lowest average turnover per employee.

The three sectors with the highest average turnover per employee (construction, production and professional, scientific and technical) only account for 19% of jobs, yet account for 34% of total turnover.



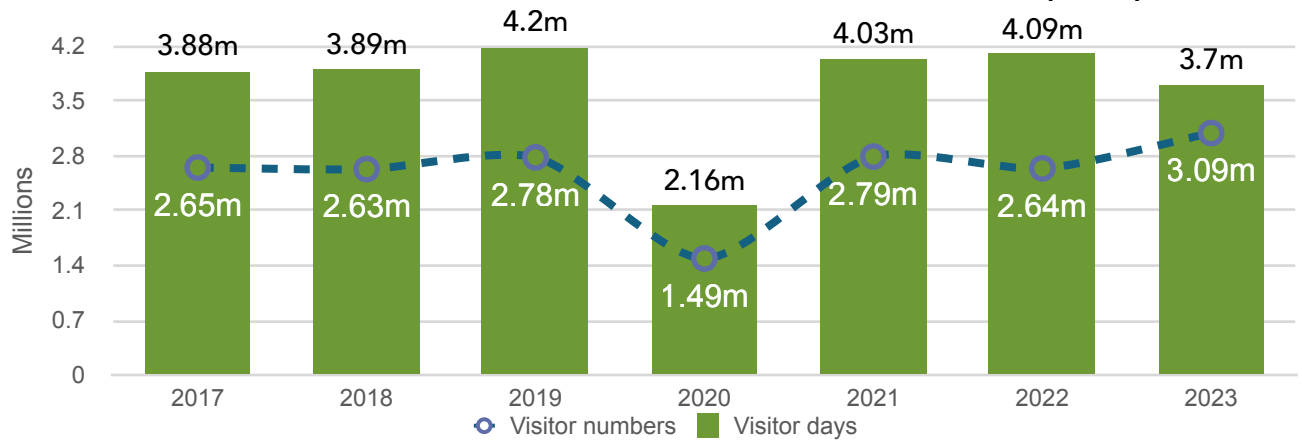
The high proportion of low-value sectors such as agriculture and hospitality within the National Park is reflective of rural economies nationally. Although rural areas contain a wide range of businesses, the constraints of geography and scale along with lack of affordable housing and limited transport networks mean **many rural economies face significant productivity challenges.**⁷³

Tourism

In 2023, there were **2.9 million people who visited Dartmoor National Park**,⁷⁴ attracted by the area's wildlife, natural beauty, tranquillity and cultural heritage. According to the STEAM data, the tourism sector employs 2,691 people - more than any other sector

within the National Park. The economy on Dartmoor is heavily reliant on the tourism industry and it is important that tourism can help to increase understanding of the National Park without causing damage to its special qualities.

VISITORS TO DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK (2023)

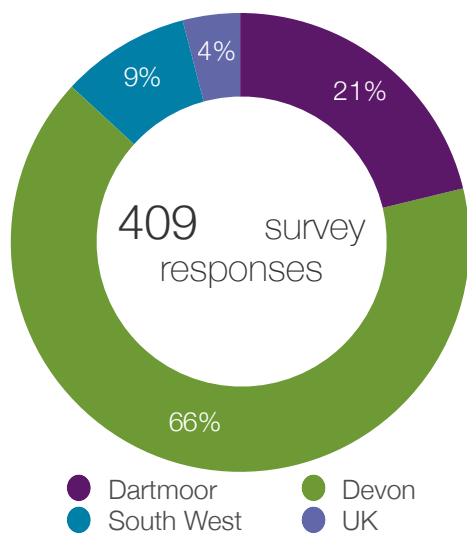


STEAM data for Tourism 2023

The 3.09 million visitors in 2023 were an increase from 2.64 million total visitors in 2022; and those people spent nearly four million days in the National Park. Importantly for the local economy, 460,000 people stayed overnight in hotels, campsites, bed and breakfast establishments and self catering properties. This contributed to a visitor spend on Dartmoor of £293 million.⁷⁵ The number of staying visitors to Dartmoor National Park has remained relatively consistent between 2016 and 2023, with a decline in 2020 due to the pandemic.

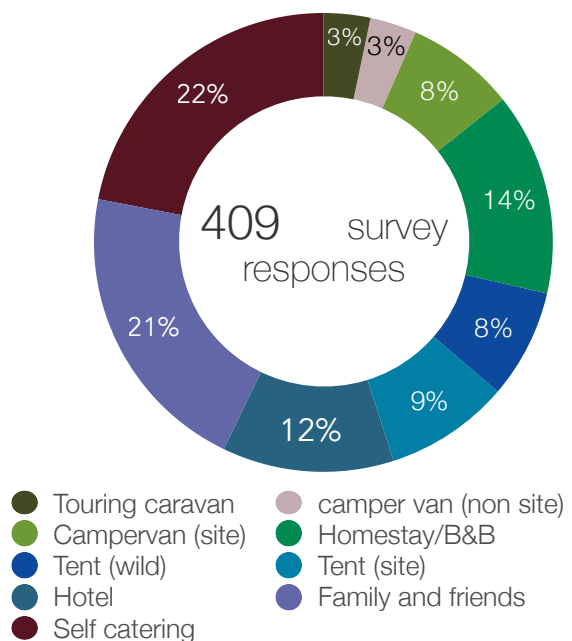
The DNPA Visitor Survey 2023 provides a rich source of information but on a relatively small base of respondents. The survey indicates that 5% of visitors were from a minority ethnic group.

WHERE VISITORS TRAVELLED FROM



DNPA Visitor survey 2023

WHERE VISITORS STAYED



The impact of Covid 19 on business

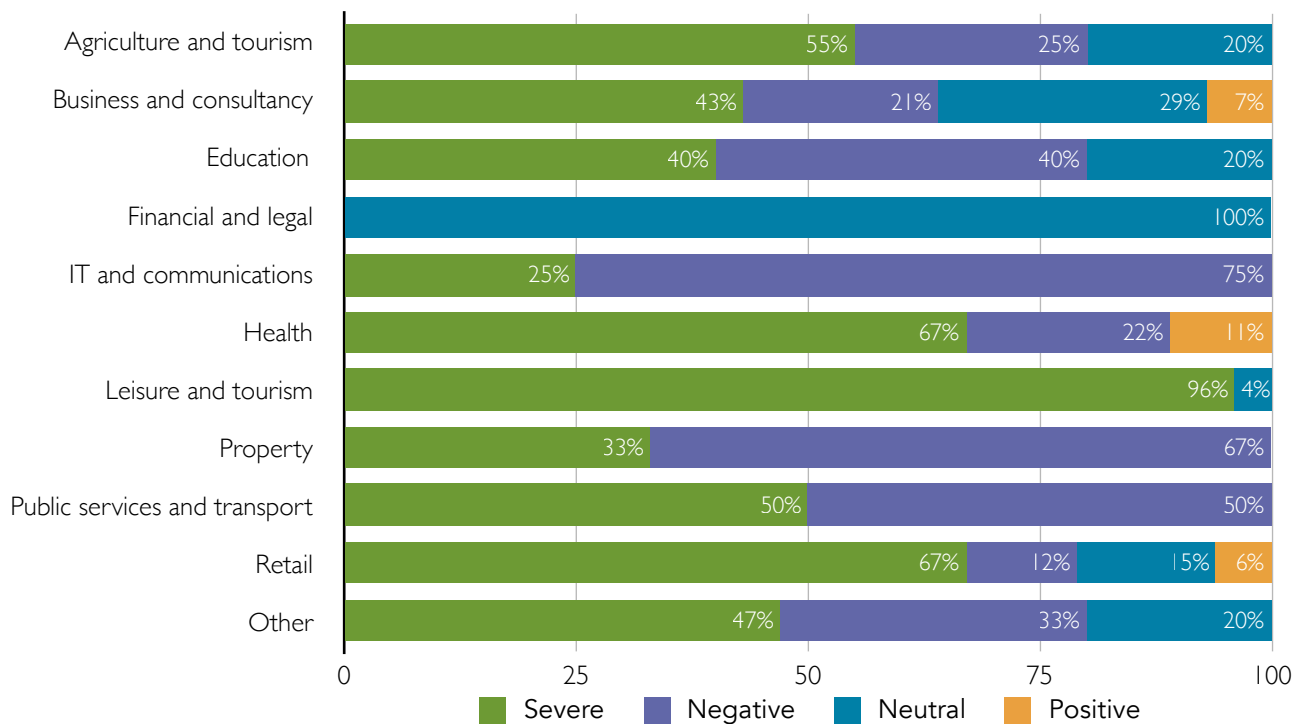
Business surveys showed that the most impacted sectors during the first 6 months of Covid were Leisure and Tourism, and Health and Retail.⁷⁶ **About a third of businesses on Dartmoor had to close for a time during the lockdown periods.** Some of those were able to re-open immediately, for many it took three months or more to reopen. **Business sentiment improved significantly during 2020.**

Businesses that continued to stay open during lockdown were primarily outdoor based, for example farming or tree surgery. Some businesses operating face-to-face pre-Covid (eg private teaching classes) moved online. Most hospitality and accommodation establishments opened as soon as permitted to do so.

By October 2020, a number of improvements were noted. **Most business have seen a same or better summer seasons than in 2019.** Businesses were attracting more local customers, domestic visitors and 'staycationers'. Interaction with the public on online platforms during lockdown has increased business since restrictions were lifted. The main issues faced by Dartmoor businesses during this time were: a loss of orders, customers and contracts; finance and cash flow; staffing and supply chain problems.

The disproportionate impact of Covid on different sectors is seen in the chart below.

SELF-ASSESSED BUSINESSES IMPACT (05 2020)



DNPA Covid Business surveys 2020

Analysis of the October 2021 survey suggests **Dartmoor businesses saw an increase in prosperity compared to the twelve months previous.**⁷⁷ In terms of economic development, a clear focus from business owners has been on the advancement and development of their businesses. Other key finds from the survey include a perceived lack of public transport and provision for green transport across Dartmoor, and a desire to reduce the environmental impact of their businesses.

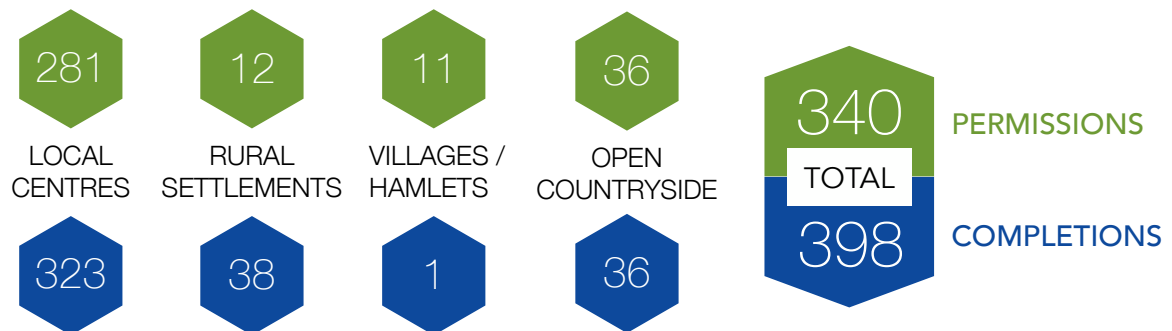
Development

Given the designation of Dartmoor as a National Park, development within the Park boundaries is relatively limited. Most building, whether housing or commercial, takes place in or close to the small towns on Dartmoor.

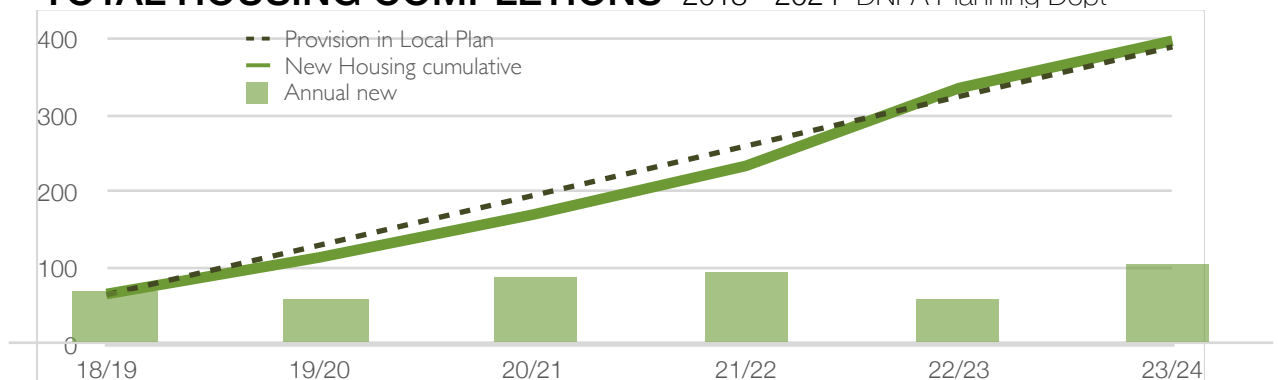
The Local Plan covers the period 2018 to 2036 and sets out what development can and cannot occur within the National Park. The Local Plan is the starting point for making decisions on all planning applications in the National Park.

The Local Plan makes provision for 65 dwellings per year and requires that 45% of these are affordable housing. In the five years between April 2018 and March 2024, **398 homes were completed with 158 of these being affordable homes for local people**. The level of affordable housing delivered fluctuates year by year due to the small number of sites which are developed in the National Park and the impact that the larger sites have on overall numbers. Currently, the delivery of affordable housing is slightly under the indicative level set by the Local Plan.

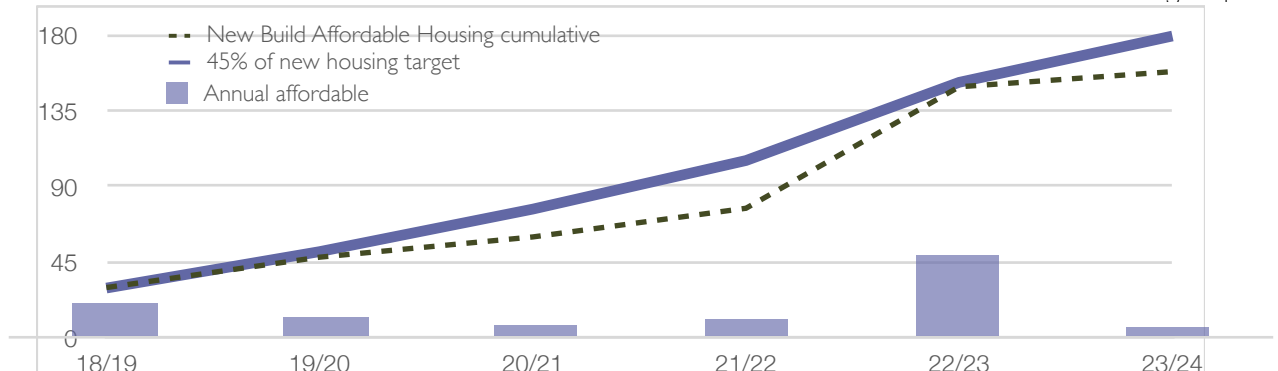
HEADLINE HOUSING FIGURES 2018 - 2024 DNPA Planning Dept



TOTAL HOUSING COMPLETIONS 2018 - 2024 DNPA Planning Dept



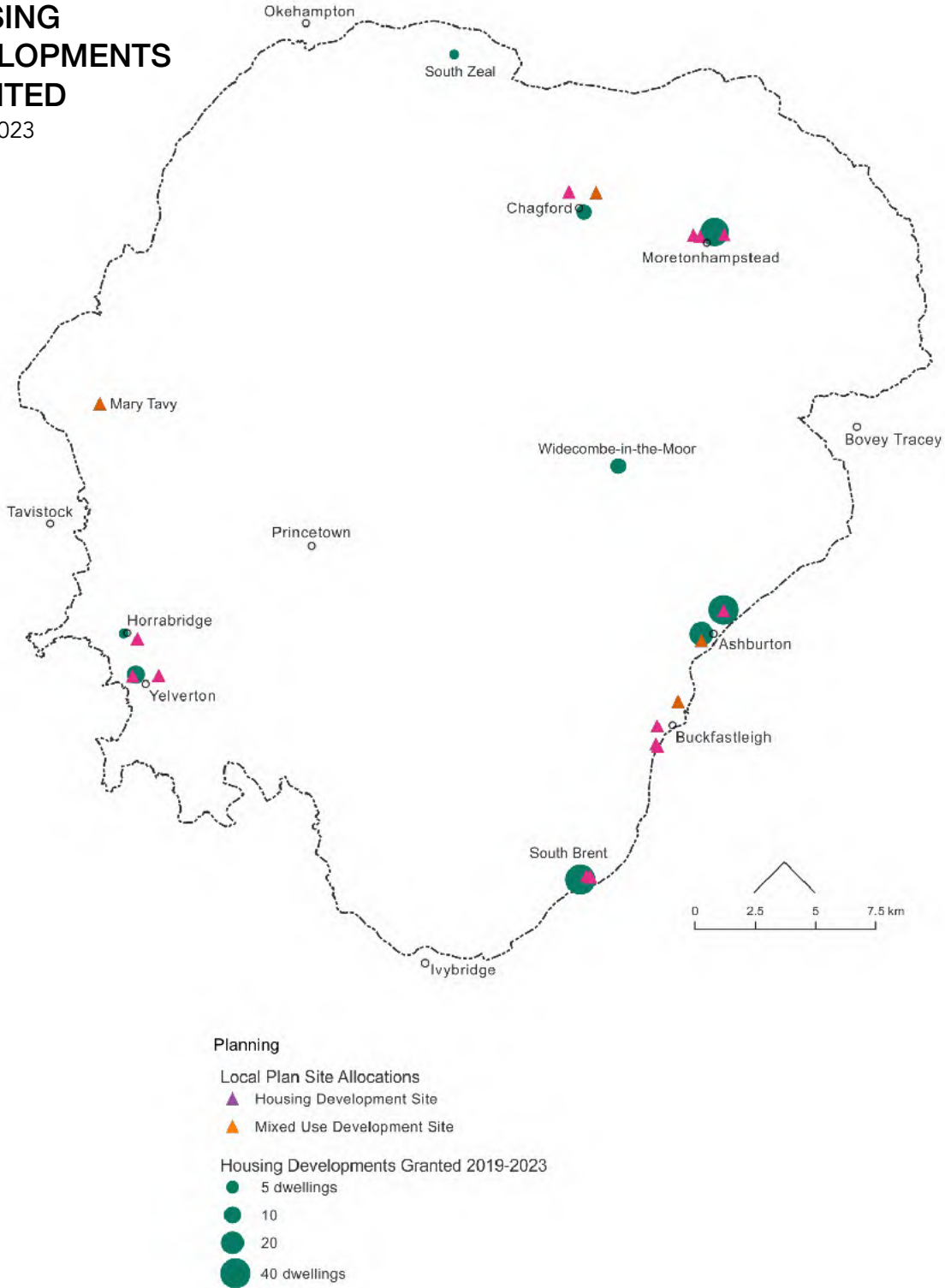
AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMPLETIONS 2018 - 2024 DNPA Planning Dept



Dartmoor is facing demographic challenges to which the planning system needs to respond. Dartmoor has an ageing population. It is forecasted that by 2035, **between 36% and 40% of Dartmoor’s population will be aged 65 and over.**⁷⁸ Older people require services such as home care which can be difficult to deliver in rural locations.

The Local Plan forecast that around 7,800m², or 430m² per year, of replacement and additional employment floorspace would be required to capture the economic growth projected over the plan period, 2018-2036. **Since 2017 around 700m² of employment floorspace has been delivered per year** to contribute to these indicative targets.

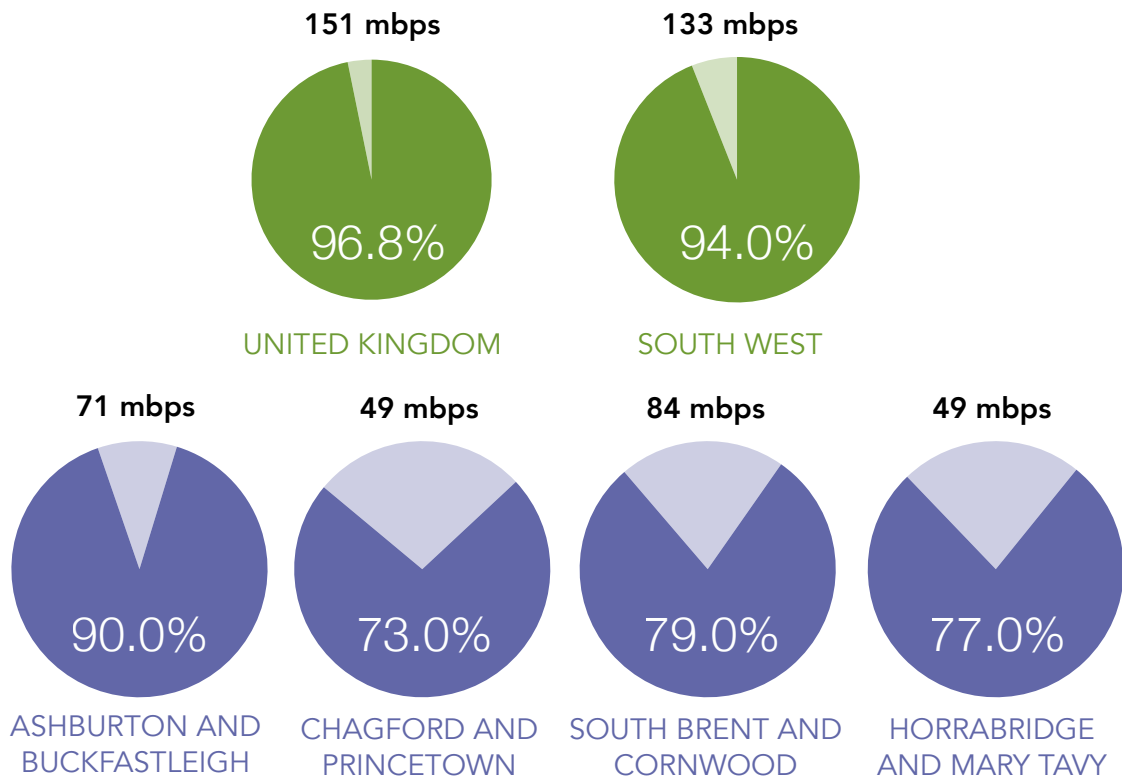
HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS GRANTED
2019 - 2023



Broadband

Availability of broadband connectivity and mobile connection is vital to enable rural businesses to thrive and ensure the growth of the rural economy. Overall, high speed broadband and mobile phone networks are typically less available in rural areas compared with urban areas. A recent report published in the House of Commons Library showed comparative broadband speeds (megabits per second [mbps]) in key settlements in and around Dartmoor.⁷⁹

ACCESS TO SUPERFAST BROADBAND - key settlements



Access to broadband and mobile signals is particularly important for the farming sector. The farming industry is experiencing major policy reform which will require access to digital technologies. There will be risks if rural broadband and mobile connectivity are not improved.⁸⁰ Broadband UK is extending funding to make many more premises on Dartmoor gigabit enabled.⁸¹

Mobile

The landscape and difficulties with locating masts within the National Park mean that for large areas of the National Park 'line of sight' between masts is hard to achieve. As a result, there are limited areas of signal availability, with large areas of the landscape unable to have mobile phone network connections.

Some improvements have been made through the 'Mobile Boost Scheme' from 'Connecting Devon and Somerset' which provides vouchers for the equipment that can pick up and amplify an available signal outdoors and transmit it to inside a property.

There are 16 masts within the National Park, of which three masts provide the Emergency Services Network (ESN). The Home Office has agreed that these masts – where possible – can be shared with Mobile Network Operators (MNO's), which could potentially increase signal availability in very rural areas.

EV charging

As the use of electric vehicles increases towards 2030, the charging infrastructure needs to provide local residents and visitors with opportunities to recharge their vehicles. For some visitors, the availability of EV charging will influence decisions of where to take a UK vacation. **Dartmoor has an increasing network of public chargers** - provided by DNPA and others.

| DNPA | Other publicly available <i>(* maybe available only to customers)</i> | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Haytor VC – 2 | *Ilington Country Hotel – 2 | Whitehouse Services – 2 |
| Postbridge VC – 2 | *Riverside B&B – 2 | *Klondyke House – 3 |
| Princetown VC – 4 | *Bovey Castle Hotel – 3 | *Blackadon Barn Cottages – 2 |
| Meldon Reservoir VC – 4 | Stableyard CP, Chagford – 1 | Mardle CP, Buckfastleigh – 3 |
| | WDBC CP, Chagford – 2 | Salmon's Leap, Buckfastleigh – 32 |
| | Stone Lane Garden Centre – 2 | *River Dart Country Park – 2 |

Road use

The roads across central Dartmoor have a speed limit of 40 miles per hour - for good reason. The free grazing cattle, sheep and horses often congregate near the roadside and sometimes decide to sit, sleep or walk on the roadway. In addition, there are large numbers of visitors, especially at certain hot spots, and a wide variety of wildlife.

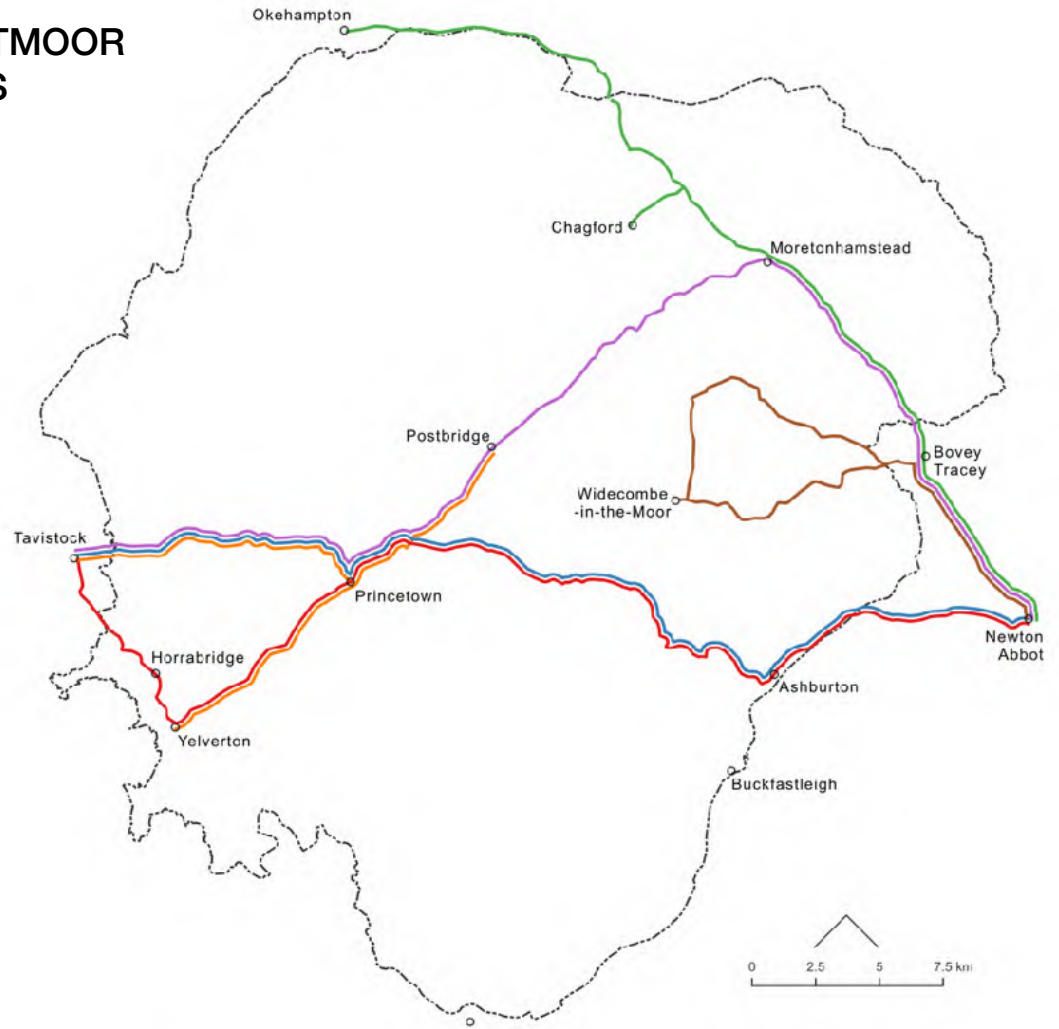
In the five years from 2019 to 2023, **there were 140 reported road traffic accidents**, of which three were fatal; 41 caused serious injuries and 96 caused slight injuries. This excludes the A386. Automatic speed sensors monitor the speeds of passing vehicles. In the month 22nd March to 21 April 2021, for instance, the Haytor sensor found that the average speed was 39.7mph. **However, the 6% of vehicles exceeding the limit were checked at an average speed of 61mph.**

Public Transport

Dartmoor is reasonably well served with bus transport options along the main routes around the periphery of the Moor - A38, A30 and A386. **Bus services across the Moor are much more infrequent.**

| Service | Operator | Days | Frequency | Note |
|---------|-------------------------------|---------|-----------|--|
| 98 | Plymouth City Bus | MTWTFSS | 4 | to Princetown. Once a day beyond to Yelverton |
| 113 | Tavistock Community Transport | W | 1 | |
| 171 | Country Bus | MTWTF | 1 | |
| 172 | Country Bus | MTWTF | 1 | |
| 178 | Country Bus | MTWTFSS | 2 | Once a day between Moreton and Okehampton |
| 271 | Country Bus | Sa | 4 | |

CROSS DARTMOOR BUS ROUTES



Bus Services

- 98 - Tavistock to Yelverton, via Princetown and Postbridge
- 113 - Tavistock and Newton Abbot, via Yelverton, Princetown, Ashburton
- 171 - Tavistock to Newton Abbot, via Princetown, Moretonhampstead, Bovey Tracey
- 172 - Newton Abbot and Tavistock, via Princetown, Ashburton
- 178 - Newton Abbot to Okehampton, via Bovey Tracey, Moretonhampstead and Chagford
- 271 - Haytor Hoppa Newton Abbot to Widecombe, via Bovey Tracey

LINKS

[Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021 - 2026](#) Δ

[Dartmoor Local Plan 2018 - 2036](#) Δ

[Dartmoor National Park Authority Annual Review 2024](#) Δ

[Dartmoor Economic Profile 2016](#) Δ

[Acorn Profile - Covid 19 recovery 2020](#) Δ

[Farming in Protected Landscapes programme - year 2 update 2023](#) Δ

[Independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor 2023](#) Δ

[Dartmoor Visitor Survey 2023](#) Δ

[A Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor National Park 2017](#) Δ

[The Cost of Commoning on Dartmoor 2021-23](#) Δ

[Land Use Emissions Baselines & Targets for UK National Parks – Synthesis Report 2024](#) Δ

ENDNOTES

- ¹ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>
- ² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-68110310>
- ³ <https://climate.copernicus.eu/copernicus-summer-2024-hottest-record-globally-and-europe>
- ⁴ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/met-office-a-review-of-the-uks-climate-in-2023/>
- ⁵ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/met-office-a-review-of-the-uks-climate-in-2023/>
- ⁶ Bates, J. M., Fidino, M., Nowak-Boyd, L., Strausberger, B. M., Schmidt, K. A. and Whelen, C. J. (2022) *Climate change affects bird nesting phenology: Comparing contemporary field and historical museum nesting records*, *Journal of Animal Ecology*
- ⁷ *Land Use Emissions Baselines and Targets for UK National Parks – A Synthesis Report*. Small World Consulting. 2024
- ⁸ *Land Use Emissions Baselines and Targets for UK National Parks – A Synthesis Report*. Small World Consulting. 2024
- ⁹ Natural England (2021) *Carbon storage and sequestration by habitat: a review of the evidence (second edition)*
- ¹⁰ (2011) *IUCN UK Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands*. IUCN UK Peatland Programme, Edinburgh.
- ¹¹ (2021) *England Peat Action Plan*
- ¹² https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/research/microsites/creww/miresprojectreports/Dartmoor_Deep_Peat_Extent_and_Condition_Mapping.pdf
- ¹³ South West Peatland Partnership
- ¹⁴ Defra (2023) *Get funding for farming in protected landscapes*
- ¹⁵ <https://devonworkhubs.co.uk/find-your-devon-work-hub/>
- ¹⁶ DNPA Visitor survey 2023
- ¹⁷ National Park Residents Census 2021
- ¹⁸ Natural England (2023) *Nature on Dartmoor*
- ¹⁹ *Independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor - GOV.UK.pdf*
- ²⁰ LUC (2017) *A Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor National Park*
- ²¹ [1] Natural England (2010) *Biodiversity studies of six traditional orchards in England*
- ²² LUC (2017) *A Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor National Park*
- ²³ [1] *The Special Qualities were established through consultation on the Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-26*
- ²⁴ *Water Environment (Health of Dartmoor waterways and bodies)*
- ²⁵ <https://nbn.org.uk/news/state-of-nature-2023/>
- ²⁶ [1] UK Parliament (2022) *Invasive non-native species*
- ²⁷ *Dartmoor Bird Report 2023*
- ²⁸ *Whinchat Range Changes on Dartmoor 2023*
- ²⁹ *Fiona Freshney surveys and reporting 2024*
- ³⁰ *Dartmoor Deep Peat Extent and Condition Mapping (exeter.ac.uk)*
- ³¹ Defra (2023) *Get funding for farming in protected landscapes*
- ³² *Historic England (2021) Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage*
- ³³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/>
- ³⁴ *Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) Historic Environment: Advises on enhancing and conserving the historic environment*
- ³⁵ Defra (2023) *Get funding for farming in protected landscapes*
- ³⁶ *Access Land on Dartmoor is land with a designated right of access under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 and the Countryside & Rights of Way Act, 2000 (CRoW Act)*
- ³⁷ *Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2023-2024*
- ³⁸ DNPA Visitor Survey 2023
- ³⁹ *SWEEP 2018. Population Futures and Dartmoor National Park*
- ⁴⁰ *Natural England (2019) Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: The national survey on people and the natural environment*
- ⁴¹ *Natural England (2022) How the natural environment can support children and young people*
- ⁴² Defra (2023) *Get funding for farming in protected landscapes*

⁴³ [Natural England \(2016\) Protected Landscapes Framework](#)

⁴⁴ [Defra \(2023\) Structure of the agricultural industry in England and the UK at June](#)

⁴⁵ [National statistics Farm Business Income by Cost Centre 2019 to 2023](#)

⁴⁶ <https://foundationforcommonland.org.uk/project-reports/the-cost-of-commoning-on-dartmoor>

⁴⁷ [Arnott, A., Riddell, G., Emmerson, M. and Reid, N. \(2022\) Agri-environment schemes are associated with greater terrestrial invertebrate abundance and richness in upland grasslands. Agronomy for Sustainable Development](#)

⁴⁸ [Less Favoured Areas \(England\) Defra](#)

⁴⁹ [Defra \(2023\) Structure of the agricultural industry in England and the UK at June](#)

⁵⁰ [DNPA \(2006\) Dartmoor Commons Factsheet](#)

⁵¹ [Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵² [Foundation for Common Land Commons in Dartmoor](#)

⁵³ [Dartmoor Moorland Vision and Dartmoor Farming Futures Evaluation 2021](#)

⁵⁴ [DNPA \(2019\) Farming and Forestry Review Paper](#)

⁵⁵ [Farming UK \(2022\) UK farming faces 'talent drought' as young people steer away](#)

⁵⁶ [Office for National Statistics The occupations most dependent on older and younger workers](#)

⁵⁷ [Defra \(2023\) Get funding for farming in protected landscapes](#)

⁵⁸ [Office for National Statistics \(2021\) Census](#)

⁵⁹ [Defra 2024. Stat_18_pltof_average_age_data_april_2024](#)

⁶⁰ [Office for National Statistics \(2023\) Profile of the older population living in England and Wales in 2021 and changes since 2011](#)

⁶¹ [Office for National Statistics \(2021\) Census](#)

⁶² [Defra 2024. Stat_24_pltof_pupils_data_july_2024](#)

⁶³ [ONS 2021 census](#)

⁶⁴ [ONS 2021 census](#)

⁶⁵ [Office for National Statistics \(2021\) Census](#)

⁶⁶ [ONS Median house prices for administrative geographies, March 2024 edition https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/medianhousepricesforadministrativegeographies](#)

⁶⁷ [HM Land Registry \(2023\) Price Paid Data](#)

⁶⁸ [Office for National Statistics Census 2021](#)

⁶⁹ [DEFRA \(2022\) Rural business statistics](#)

⁷⁰ [Parliament Access to skills and rural business support](#)

⁷¹ [DLP Planning \(2018\) Employment Land Review](#)

⁷² [House of Commons Library \(2022\) Hospitality industry and Covid-19](#)

⁷³ [Rural Services Network \(2021\) Cultivating rural growth: Recognising and addressing the post-pandemic rural productivity challenge](#)

⁷⁴ [STEAM data 2023](#)

⁷⁵ [STEAM data 2023](#)

⁷⁶ [DNPA Covid Business surveys 2020](#)

⁷⁷ [287% of business owners surveyed described their 2021 summer trading as excellent, good or fair. Businesses who define the impact of covid as 'Severe' has decreased from 30% to 18% in 12 months.](#)

⁷⁸ [Edge Analytics \(2016\) Dartmoor National Park Demographic Forecasts](#)

⁷⁹ [Commons Library: 'Constituency data: broadband coverage and speeds', published July 2024](#)

⁸⁰ [NFU \(2023\) 2022 Digital Technology Survey Results](#)

⁸¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/project-gigabit-framework-agreement-openreach>



NPA/25/005

Dartmoor National Park Authority

10 January 2025

Update to the National Planning Policy Framework

Report of the Senior Planning Policy Officer and Director of Spatial Planning

Recommendation: **That Members note the content of the report.**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 12 December 2024 the government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and updated Planning Practice Guidance. This paper provides an overview of some of the key changes in the NPPF and further discussion on the potential impacts of changes to the housing targets set for neighbouring district authorities.

2 Background

- 2.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and provides a framework for both preparing local development plans and for determining planning applications.
- 2.2 The Government has made a commitment to a 'growth-focused approach' to deliver economic growth and 1.5 million new dwellings over the next 5 years and are proposing a number of changes to the planning system to facilitate this.

3 Overview of key changes

- 3.1 Members should note that the sections of the NPPF which provide protection and enhancement of the National Parks have been retained unamended and reference to the *English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010* is also retained. The NPPF as a whole should be considered in the context of these paragraphs when applied to Dartmoor National Park.
- 3.2 Standard method for calculating housing supply and making this method mandatory for local authorities.
The Government has published a new mandatory 'standard method' for assessing housing need based on local authority area, rather than local planning authority boundaries. This distinction is relevant to Dartmoor as the standard method generates housing need figures for our constituent local authorities (West Devon,

South Hams, Teignbridge and Mid Devon), but not the National Park area. The updated planning guidance specifies that in areas such as the National Parks and the Broads Authority an alternative approach to assess local housing need may be used. In addition, it provides the opportunity for local authorities whose boundaries cross the National Park to take into consideration the proportion of land within the National Park when determining which method to use.

3.3 The proposed standard method for calculating housing need is further considered in the second part of this paper.

3.4 Cross boundary and strategic planning

Additional wording is proposed to encourage effective co-operation on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries to encourage policy making authorities to align policies as fully as possible. This section highlights for particular consideration (amongst others) any designation which has significant implications for neighbouring areas and therefore could provide an opportunity for greater co-operation between DNPA and neighbouring authorities in regard to the treatment of the setting of the National Park.

3.5 Green belt.

The revised NPPF defines the term 'grey belt' to distinguish previously developed land within the green belt which could accommodate new development. It also provides 'Golden Rules' for when development in the greenbelt is appropriate. There are no green belt designations within Devon and Dartmoor National Park would not be affected by these alterations.

3.6 Affordable Housing

The previous NPPF and Written Ministerial Statements prioritised affordable home ownership over other tenures and set a minimum percentage for affordable housing for major schemes over 10 dwellings. The amended NPPF allows local planning authorities greater flexibility on the type and amount of affordable housing to plan for in response to local needs. It does however require local plans to specify the amount of social rent that a housing site should deliver. The current Dartmoor Local Plan was adopted shortly before the Written Ministerial Statement and as such does not set a prescribed quantity of affordable home ownership tenures to be delivered. Instead, it requires all development to evidence a local need both in terms of the quantity and tenure of affordable housing. As such the Local Plan already aligns with the approach of the new NPPF wording and the greater focus on social rent is also welcomed.

3.7 Digital Infrastructure

The amended economic section of the NPPF now requires local plans to have particular regard to facilitating the modern economy by identifying suitable locations for laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistic. The majority of these are large scale developments that would not be appropriate in the National Park however digital infrastructure is already identified as an area where improvements would be welcomed and this aspect will need to be further investigated during the next iteration of the Local Plan.

3.8 Introducing a vision led approach to transport planning

The proposed amendments would strengthen the promotion of sustainable transport modes within the NPPF and introduce a vision-led approach to transport where the

aspirations for accessibility and connectivity within new development drive the type of development provided. The amendments would require the transport impact of development to be tested in all scenarios which moves away from a 'predict and provide' approach for private cars to a 'vision led' approach which could incorporate a range of modes of transport. This amendment is welcomed and will provide further support to our current Local Plan policy 4.3 which requires new development to enable sustainable travel.

3.9 Renewable energy

The amended NPPF wording now makes explicit reference to the Government's aim to transition to net zero by 2050 and the section on meeting the challenge of climate change has been strengthened by both lifting the previous restrictions on onshore wind energy and making reference to a wider range of climate change impacts that should be considered when assessing planning applications, including overheating, water scarcity, and storm and flood risk. Encouraging small scale renewable energy aligns with our Partnership Plan and Local Plan, however, this is predicated on the requirement that such development would not harm the Special Qualities of the National Park. The new wording bolsters support for renewable energies and would have to be read and interpreted in combination with paragraph 189 which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty and paragraph 190 which states that permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances. In addition, the current Local Plan policy sets out criteria for when renewable technology would be acceptable.

NPPF wording has been added to provide a greater focus on the need to support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings, subject to policy protecting heritage assets. Again, this is a welcomed change and does not conflict with the current Local Plan or Design Guide.

3.10 Well Designed Places

In recent years there has been much discussion around the concept of beauty and how planning could deliver beautiful places. This was embodied in the 'Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission' and references throughout the NPPF to building well designed, beautiful places. The amended NPPF wording has removed the word 'beautiful' from the title of the design section of the NPPF (Achieving well-designed places) and diminished the frequency of its use throughout the document. This change is reflective of the perceived subjectivity of the word, but the principle of requiring development to meet clear design expectations remains.

3.11 Transitional Arrangements

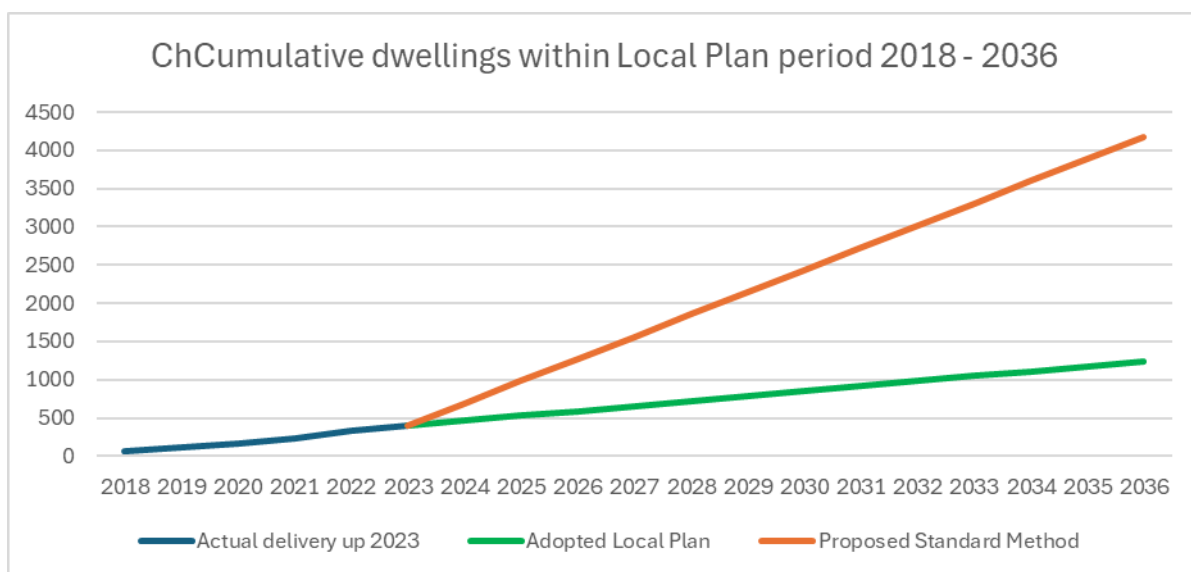
The amended Framework is a material consideration which is taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication. The Dartmoor Local Plan was adopted in December 2021 and is less than 5 years old; 5 years being the threshold at which an assessment of whether the plan is still up-to-date must begin. As the Local Plan is not subjected to the housing targets the publication of the NPPF does not affect the plan's status. The Local Plan will be reviewed before 2026 and this process will be undertaken within the context of the updated NPPF wording.

For local authorities who are subject to the new housing needs standard method, local plans will be considered up to date where the current local plan is less than 5

years old and the authority has performed well in the Housing Delivery Test. The status of the local plans in neighbouring authorities has not been confirmed.

4 The proposed standard method for calculating housing need

- 4.1 The proposed standard method to calculate the housing need for an authority area would add a 0.8% increase on the number of existing housing stock with a further percentage increase depending on the current affordability ratio. Housing targets using the proposed method for all unitary and district authorities was released alongside the NPPF consultation and showed an increase in housing target figures for most local authorities across England when compared to their current housing targets.
- 4.2 In addition, proposed amendments to paragraphs 60 and 61 remove reference to the standard method being an 'advisory starting point' and the reference to where an alternative approach to assessing housing need could be justified. In summary, the reworded paragraphs dictate that local authorities should meet their housing need as identified by the standard method without variation.
- 4.3 The volume of existing housing stock within National Parks has not been published following the 2021 census and the updated planning guidance states that alternative methods of assessing housing need will be required in areas such as the National Parks.
- 4.4 However, to illustrate how the proposed standard method would work, DNPA officers have run the calculation using the housing stock figure from the 2011 census. The proposed standard method resulted in an annual requirement of 291 dwellings per year. By contrast, the current Local Plan used an evidence based approach and established that 65 dwellings per annum was appropriate to meet local housing need and avoid depopulation of the National Park. The current Local Plan strategy seeks to distribute 60% of new housing to the 8 Local Centres. Using the proposed standard method, this would equate to 240 new dwellings over the plan period for each Local Centre settlement if shared equally. To put this into perspective, Princetown has approximately 370 dwellings.



- 4.5 Such significant increases in housing numbers cannot be accommodated without drastically and rapidly changing the character of settlements, and landscape of the National Park. Application of the proposed standard method would be detrimental to the Special Qualities of the National Park and contravene the purposes of the National Park.
- 4.6 Neighbouring Authorities
For our neighbouring authorities, the proposed standard method would result in similarly large increases in housing targets.
- 4.7 The Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon Joint Local Plan has a growth strategy which proposes approximately 30% of the housing delivery is provided within West Devon and South Hams, and of this approximately half is to be delivered in the 6 main centres which include Tavistock, Okehampton and Ivybridge on the boundary of the Dartmoor National Park.
- 4.8 Teignbridge Local Plan is currently at examination and proposes growth is steered towards Newton Abbot and sites on the edge of Exeter with 5% of housing delivery focused on the coastal and rural towns, including Bovey Tracey and Chudleigh.
- 4.9 The plans will require updating to accommodate the increase in housing targets but the current strategies are indicative of where development may be focused and show that there will be pressure to increase growth of towns on the boundary the National Park. Of particular note the amended NPPF also includes a drive to increase densities of housing developments which may result not only in a rapid increase in size but also changes to the character of adjacent settlements. This could result in hard urban boundaries encroaching on the boundary of the park and impacts on light, tranquillity and other landscape harm.
- 4.10 In general, a significant drive to increase housing within the surrounding areas of Dartmoor will likely result in increased levels of recreational pressure on Dartmoor National Park.

5 Next Steps

- 5.1 As part of the Local Plan review evidence on local housing need will be updated to confirm whether the current housing trajectory is still appropriate for the Park and to demonstrate what level of housing provision within the Park is justified. DNPA officers are mindful of the pressures neighbouring authorities will be under to deliver the proposed housing targets and an evidence based approach will strengthen the National Parks position in discussions with duty to cooperate partners.
- 5.2 Under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) all local authorities, where their functions affect a national park, have a duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Park. This duty extends to our neighbouring local authorities and applies to their planning functions in areas outside of the National Park. To this end, in the short term, Officers will be able to use this legislation to identify and where possible secure mitigation to impacts from increased levels of development in neighbouring authorities. In the longer term, as and when new Local Plans are prepared by neighbouring authorities, the strengthened wording within the NPPF on co-operation on strategic issues, in addition to the requirements of the LURA will provide an opportunity for Dartmoor National Park to have a greater

influence on the development of planning policies outside the boundary which can protect and enhance the National Park in new ways.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The revised NPPF contains many amendments across the entire document but not all are applicable to the National Park. The most contentious proposed change which could have implications for the Dartmoor National Park is the change to the method of calculating housing targets. This would not impact housing delivery in the National Park itself but would require neighbouring authorities to significantly increase housing delivery, resulting in impacts on the setting of the National Park and increase in recreational impact.
- 6.2 The duty to further the purpose of the Park within the LURA and the updated wording on cross boundary co-operation together are a welcomed and beneficial change that presents a new opportunity to have greater influence over development outside the boundary of the National Park. Discussions with neighbouring authorities on housing delivery have begun and will continue to ensure the increase in development in surrounding areas does not jeopardise the purposes of the National Park and that opportunities to mitigate impacts and enhance the Park are taken.

LIZ PAYNE &
DEAN KINSELLA



NPA/25/006

Dartmoor National Park Authority

10 January 2025

Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons Project – End of programme report

Report of the Director of Conservation and Communities and the Our Upland Commons
Dartmoor Officer (employed by Foundation for Common Land)

Recommendation: **That Members note progress and legacy of the Our Uplands
Commons Project**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons (hereafter referred to as Our Upland Commons) is a four-year (2021-2025), £3m, 25 partner project helping to secure the future of upland commons. The project has been made possible by funding from National Lottery Heritage, grants from Esmee Fairbairn, Garfield Weston Foundations and local funders. It is managed by the National Trust in collaboration with the Foundation for Common Land ('FCL'), and four protected landscape partners. The programme worked within 12 Upland Commons in four protected landscapes: Dartmoor National Park, Lake District National Park, Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Shropshire Hills National Landscape.
- 1.2 The project was designed to be a focus for concerted, and collaborative action. It signified a step-change from talking, convening and championing, to a time of action filled with demonstrating, delivering and empowering. The project piloted a practical package of works and activities designed to find ways through the complexity of upland Commons.

2 How this project fitted with Dartmoor National Park's Partnership Plan

- 2.1 Our Upland Commons has been an important deliver vehicle for ambitions and cations in Dartmoor's Partnership Plan 2021-26. When the plan was written *Our Upland Commons* was identified in the 'Better for Farming and Forestry' section as delivering a range of projects that will support Commoning and the management of the Commons (Greater Collaboration and Knowledge development) and to develop engagement activities that will provide educational opportunities linked to farming and forestry (Understanding and Appreciating Farming and Forestry on Dartmoor).

- 2.2 As can be seen by the evaluation report (appendix 2) not only has Our Upland Commons delivered these elements successfully, within budget and on time, it has also reached across the Better for Nature and Natural Beauty; and the Better for Cultural Heritage themes of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. Through programmes such as John Muir Award, Our Upland Commons has also delivered on the theme of Better for the Next Generation and through its cross-cutting programmes has ensured delivery of the Better Response to Climate Change.
- 2.3 The success of the Partnership Plan is monitored by how successfully it encourages everyone to come together to deliver the Vision for Dartmoor. That is to make choices that balance the needs of people and place, that embraces positive change and inspires the next generation to help shape its future.
- 2.4 The Our Upland Commons programme has been a critical driver in delivering all these elements of the strategy.

3 Project's Focus Areas

- 3.1 Our Upland Commons project focused on three commons on Dartmoor: Holne Moor and Harford and Ugborough Moor in the south and Walkhampton Common in the west. All commons are grazed by cattle, sheep and ponies and are privately owned.
- 3.2 All three Commons have a high density of archaeological remains from the Neolithic period to post war industrial sites with part of Holne and Harford and Ugborough Moors designated as a Premier Archaeological Landscape (PAL).
- 3.3 Holne Moor is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, as is the northern part of Harford and Ugborough Moor. All three commons contain notable species and habitats.

4 What Our Upland Commons aimed to achieve

- 4.1 The overarching aim was to secure a sustainable future for our nation's Common Land.
- 4.2 ***Collaboration: Weaving Communities together to secure and support collaborative management of Common land***
We are creating a landscape where farmers, landowners, conservationists, and communities don't just coexist, but actively work together.
- 4.3 ***Resilience: Building Stronger, Smarter Farming In a world of rapid change***
Our commons need to be more than just surviving - they need to be thriving. We are empowering farmers with cutting-edge knowledge, helping them adapt to environmental challenges, improve livestock health, and secure funding that supports both their businesses and the land they care for.
- 4.4 ***Environmental / Public Benefits: Turning Challenges into Opportunities - Enhancing the environmental and ecological benefits offered by Common land***
Commons are not just land – they are living, breathing systems of ecological potential. We are bringing together stakeholders to unlock this potential,

transforming these shared spaces into showcases of sustainable land management, biodiversity, and environmental innovation.

4.5 Public Awareness and Understanding: Bridging Worlds- Reconnecting the public with the natural and cultural heritage of Common land

We are reconnecting people with the rich, living heritage of commons by bringing the story of Commoning to cities, schools, and communities.

5 What Our Upland Commons has achieved

5.1 Our Upland Commons project aimed to secure the future of our upland Commons. On Dartmoor, we did this by bringing Commoners, landowners and experts together to learn more about Commons and how to manage and make them more resilient, whilst celebrating and sharing the heritage of Commoning and Common stories with the public.


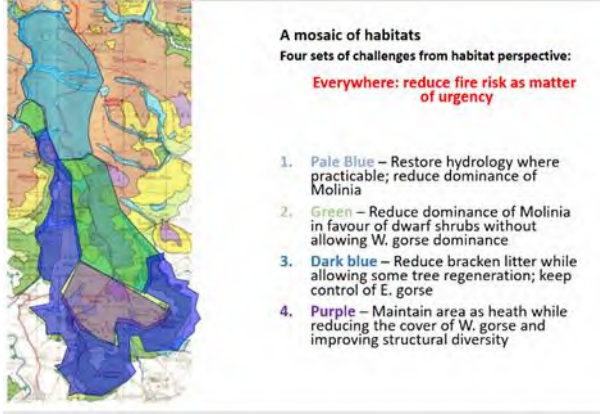
5.2 With the help of our partners, we commissioned surveys and research, and this evidence is informing trials to increase carbon storage, protect historic sites, enhance wildlife, habitats and resilient Commoning.

5.3 The key success to Our Upland Commons Project on Dartmoor is our collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders. By networking and taking the time to build relationships, we have increased the reach and activity of the project. Most importantly, the project is leaving a strong legacy, with many programmes continuing via the partnerships we have made and the funding we have leveraged.



6 Project Highlights (see appendix 1)

6.1 Collaboration: Weaving Communities together to secure and support collaborative management of Common land



Two Holistic Common Land Management Plans created

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| <p>Through my Eyes – Commons Site Visits: Commons Management stakeholder events to develop mutual understanding, shared values and trust.</p> | <p>Delivering our Visions: Developing Commons Land Management Plans. Harford and Ugborough & Holne Moor created a shared direction for the common.</p> |

6.2 **Resilience: Building Stronger, Smarter Farming In a world of rapid change**
 122 people trained; two Commons Livestock Health plans created. Dung Beetle Research Project & Cost of Commoning Reports influenced policy. Evidenced in Independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor, Fursdon 2023.

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| <p>Healthy Livestock Programme Farmer designed programme of activity improved the health and resilience of livestock grazing the Commons, whilst increasing biodiversity, notably dung beetle abundance.</p> | <p>Upland Farmer Support Running events and training upskilled farmers in preparedness for new Agri Environment Schemes</p> |

6.3 **Environmental / Public Benefits: Turning Challenges into Opportunities - Enhancing the environmental and ecological benefits offered by Common land**
 34,000 ha of common land surveyed & 13 ha of common land restored. one historical site better recorded and five historical sites better managed. 736m of traditional boundaries restored, 2,500 trees protected and/or planted, 16 new baseline surveys and ecological and archaeological research and other reports created.

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| <p>Peat & Blanket Bog restoration: Commoners and Landowners are leading on practical research to control Molinia (Purple Moor Grass) to restore degraded blanket bog and increase biodiversity.</p> | <p>Harford wet flush protection and restoration: Commoners and Landowners successfully designed a novel trial to protect a sphagnum flush by erecting a temporary fence around the bottom of the mire, providing an easily accessible drinking area for stock below the flush.</p> |

6.4 **Public Awareness and Understanding: Bridging Worlds- Reconnecting the public with the natural and cultural heritage of Common land**
 31 Public engagement events, 5,240 event attendees

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| <p>Great Gather: A celebratory programme of events reconnected the public with Common land and Commoning.</p> | <p>John Muir Award: Enabled those in urban environments to find out about upland Commons.</p> |

7 Lessons Learned

7.1 Every project is a learning journey and Our Upland Commons is no exception. The evaluation has helped to draw out ways of working that are essential for effective, equitable and impactful work on Commons. Please see Appendix 2 for a copy of the full report.

- **Recognising the multiple values of commons** leads to a much more holistic approach to planning, rather than focussing on a single outcome, which is a distinct difference to other agencies and projects.
- **When you are working on commons** – a people-based approach works best
- **Value expertise** – both lived and learned. So often initiatives and interventions often start with the technical data and expertise or a top-down requirement for conservation and land management actions. Instead, we brought people together who are most closely involved with each common, valuing lived experiences and recognising expertise, especially that of the commoners who have been working and managing this land all their lives.
- **Neutral convening role is key** – Our Upland Commons successfully trialled having a Commons Facilitator role – a dedicated individual, focussed on the uplands and issues of commoning. Whilst this is an area of work that crosses over with the role of many other staff working on Dartmoor, this role is vital due its complexity and multiple stakeholders. It provides a neutral, independent representative with no agenda who can navigate inter stakeholder and local politics.
- **Arts are a great way to provide a neutral space for people to feel listened to**, whether discussing the challenges they are facing whilst creating a community artwork or telling their stories and having them documented and visualised by artists.

- **Plan for the process not the outputs** – a Community Organising approach, based on listening and developing the solutions from the bottom-up works. This way of working is resource heavy and time consuming, yet it comes with the biggest rewards: truly invested individuals, communities and farm businesses, where sustainable change can take root.
- **A delivery-based approach** really works, by getting stuck into the doing you can start to explore and find solutions to challenges

8 Next Steps

- 8.1 **Scaling-up** There is a clear, substantial demand for more effective working on upland Commons in order to realise the triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental benefits. Methods of supporting place-based organisations need to be developed e.g. mentoring for Commons Facilitators, training in collaboration and support for Commons governance and legal expertise.
- 8.2 **Supporting knowledge creation and flow** – the project has made every effort to share good practice, tools and experience which stakeholders have immediately been able to put into practice. A vibrant national Community of Practice backed by an expanding knowledge base (Commoner-led where possible) and practical tools to support work in and with upland Commons is required.
- 8.3 **Placed based support** – Commoners and Commons Associations speak passionately about the need for local capacity for facilitation, governance help, practical projects and support to access agri-environment schemes and other funding opportunities. Providing a network of local commons facilitators would massively build the sustainability of Commoning and unlock maximum benefits from upland commons for society.

9 Legacy

- 9.1 Our Upland Commons has ensured that several of the projects it initiated have carried on through additional sources of funding, principally Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL). This includes the Healthy Livestock Initiative, Molinia Control Trials, the dry-stone walling club, Wildfire Response Plan and educational opportunities on farms. Whilst the resources created during the project, such as Common Land Management plans, Cost of Commoning, Molinia Control, Whinchat and Dung beetle research are informing policy and Landscape Recovery Projects on Dartmoor.

10 Financial Implications

- 10.1 DNPA supported the Our Uplands Commons project with £10,000 annually over the course of the programme plus staff time. Not only did this money help leverage the National Lottery Heritage Funding, it also enabled the projects listed in both sections 6 and 9 to be delivered and to carry on beyond the lifetime of the programme.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 There is an appetite among partners to ensure continuity and develop the programmes that have been delivered through the funding. The Authority is now working with Foundation for Common Land and other stakeholders to see if an additional funding application can be submitted that will ensure that, alongside the Land Use Management Group and other initiatives, the maximum benefits are unlocked from common lands on Dartmoor.

Tamsin Thomas (Foundation for Common Land) &
Richard Drysdale

Attachments : Appendix 1 – Project Highlight Report
Appendix 2 – Our Upland Commons – Evaluation Report

20250110 TT/RD OUC

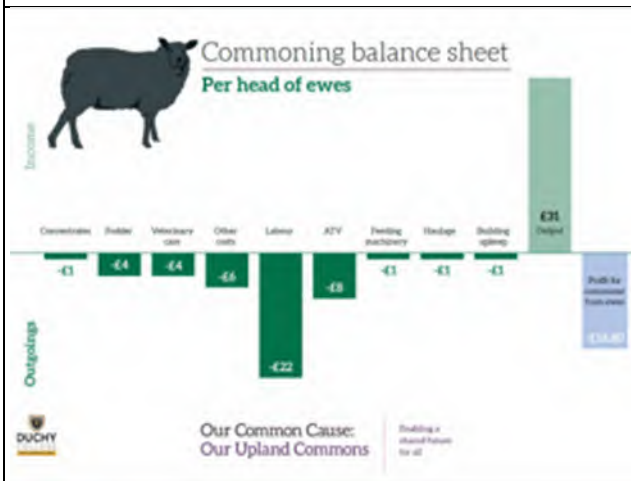
Appendix 1.

List of Our Upland Commons Projects delivered on Dartmoor.

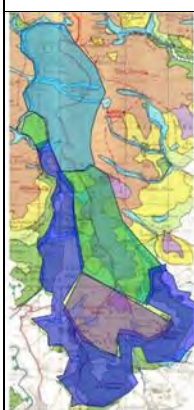
1. Collaboration: Weaving Communities together to secure and support collaborative management of Common land
 - 2 Holistic Common Land Management Plans created



Through my Eyes - 12 visits to Commons Commons Management stakeholder events to share their views of the site, to develop mutual understanding, shared values and trust.



Cost of Commoning
Research to understand the real costs involved in commoning on Dartmoor to inform future ELM support and intervention rates.



A mosaic of habitats
Four sets of challenges from habitat perspective:
Everywhere: reduce fire risk as matter of urgency

1. **Pale Blue** – Restore hydrology where practicable; reduce dominance of Molinia
2. **Green** – Reduce dominance of Molinia in favour of dwarf shrubs without allowing W. gorse dominance
3. **Dark blue** – Reduce bracken litter while allowing some tree regeneration; keep control of E. gorse
4. **Purple** – Maintain area as heath while reducing the cover of W. gorse and improving structural diversity

Delivering our Visions:
Developing Commons Land Management Plans. Harford and Ugborough & Holne Moor



Opportunity Mapping - New Common - Walkhampton Common To identify the opportunities available for Walkhampton Common to manage public goods on their Common and identify funding pots to achieve this. We are working in collaboration with all the stakeholders involved in the management of the Common.





Common Boundaries - Firm Foundations - Volunteer training programme restoring traditional boundaries leading to a self sustaining walling club

1.2. Resilience: Building Stronger, Smarter Farming In a world of rapid change.

122 people trained, 2 Commons Livestock Health plans created. Dung Beetle Research Project & Cost of Commoning Reports influenced policy. Evidenced in Independent review of protected site management on Dartmoor, Fursdon 2023.



Healthy Livestock Farmer designed programme of activity focussing on improving the health of livestock grazing the Commons.

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|  | <p>ELMS Support Project Officer to signpost Commons' Associations to advisers who can facilitate 'preparedness' for ELMs.</p> |
|  | <p>"Upland Farming to Net Zero", Farm Carbon Auditing Course delivered, by University of Cumbria Course, written by Becky Wilson, Carbon Toolkit</p> <p>Tick Event, focussing on human and animal health and welfare on commons.</p> |

1.3. Environmental / Public Benefits: Turning Challenges into Opportunities - Enhancing the environmental. and ecological benefits offered by Common land

34,000 ha of common land surveyed & 13 ha of common land restored. 1 historical site better recorded and 5 historical sites better managed. 736m of traditional boundaries restored, 2,500 trees protected and/or planted, 16 new baseline surveys and ecological and archaeological research and other reports created.

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|  | <p>Peat & Blanket Bog restoration: Harford and Ugborough 5 ha of Molinia flattened NW of Left Lake to control Molinia (Purple Moor Grass) and increase biodiversity.</p> |
|---|---|



To improve the hydrology of and enhance a mire on Harford and Ugborough Moor (Hangershell Mire) In collaboration with Dartmoor Headwaters Project



Scad Brook, Ugborough wet flush restoration In collaboration with Dartmoor Headwaters Project



Harford wet flush protection Trial protecting a sphagnum flush by erecting a temporary fence around the Hangershell Spring Mire, Harford and providing an easily accessible drinking area for stock below the flush.



Peat Restoration Shared Learning Natural Flood Management and Peat Restoration Training for Commoners and Local Contractors



Piles Hill Double Stone Row, Harford and Ugborough. Investigate the terminal and other key stones of this double stone row. Work will include a geophysical survey and archaeological investigation and uprighting stones where evidence is provided.



Scheduled Monuments Harford and Ugborough & Holne Involving Commoners and volunteers in clearance of vegetation, mainly bracken, that is causing damage to 3 at risk Scheduled monuments.



Leat repairs Holne Moor Significant repairs and restoration to an historic leat.



Healthy Trees for Tomorrow Survey The project aims to better understand the number, age, distribution, and health of individual trees on the Commons. The project will design a methodology for recording individual trees and change in woodland boundaries/why trees are regenerating in certain areas, which can be undertaken using volunteers.



Increase tree cover on the Common Harford and Ugborough & Holne Moor
Co-designing a natural tree regeneration trial with Commoners and Landowners.




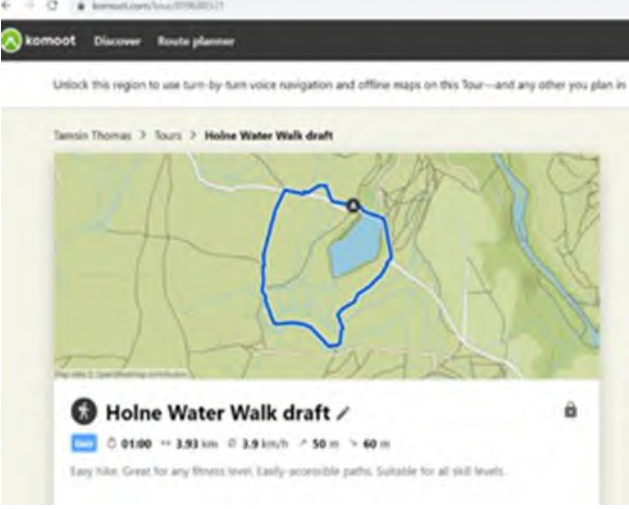

Whinchat Dartmoor Research to further our understanding of Whinchat and other important moorland bird populations and their habitats to help inform management decisions on the Commons



Butterfly Holne Moor Enhancing the habitat for Fritillary Butterflies on 2 sites on Holne Moor by bruising or cutting bracken and removing the bracken litter and targeted grazing

1.4. Public Awareness and Understanding: Bridging Worlds- Reconnecting the public with the natural and cultural heritage of Common land.

31 Public engagement events, 5,240 event attendees

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|  <p>Dung, soil, beetles and life - with Clive Turner Clive Turner is passionate about beetles. Here he talks about how vital these beetles are for life, and how their own wellbeing and the health of grazing animals are connected - and he shares results from the Dartmoor Dung Beetle survey.</p> <p>Increasing Trees on Harford Moor - with Tom Murphy As part of the wider programme of natural flood management work on Harford and Ughorrough Moors, research is being carried out to assess different techniques for increasing tree cover on the common. We meet Tom Murphy, a lecturer from the University of Plymouth, to find out</p> <p>Thinking at Landscape Scale, with Mark Owen and Naomi Oakley As the Central Dartmoor Landscape Recovery project gets underway, Harriet finds out more from Mark Owen and Naomi Oakley on their farm in the middle of the national park.</p> | <p>Digital Diary A collection of Commons Stories and Videos, written and photographed by Somewhere- Nowhere</p> |
|  <p>Unlock this region to use turn-by-turn voice navigation and offline maps on this Tour—and any other you plan in</p> <p>Tamsin Thomas > Tours > Hoine Water Walk draft</p> <p>Hoine Water Walk draft</p> <p>01:00 • 3.93 km • 3.9 km/h • 50 m • 60 m</p> <p>Easy hike. Great for any fitness level. Easily-accessible paths. Suitable for all skill levels.</p> | <p>Interpretation - Walking trail Komoot This resource will help visitors plan, prepare and explore the Commons.</p> |
|  | <p>Great Gather A celebratory programme of events to reconnect the public with Common land and Commoning.</p> |



Take the Commons to Town, RBST – 3 events at Community Events in Plymouth and one in Torquay to reconnect the public with Common land and Commoning

Farm2City, Shallowford Farm – week long event, taking the farm to Clapham Junction, London

2,099 people attended the event.



John Muir Award Enabling those in urban environments to find out about upland Commons.



NEW Events Programme

A celebratory programme of events to reconnect the public with common land and commoning.



Towards a sustainable future for our nation's Common Land

A final evaluation of the Our Upland Commons partnership programme



Introduction

Over one third of England's moorland is Common Land. Commons are spaces that are privately owned by organisations like the National Trust, National Parks, utility companies or private estates.

Commons are disproportionately important for England's natural and cultural heritage. While only 3% of England is Common Land, it is where we find 21% of England's SSSIs, 12% of our Scheduled Monuments and 39% of all open-access land – which means we all have the right to enjoy recreation on foot on Commons.

Commons are an amazing resource for the environment, economy and the nation's health and well-being.

Over 3,900 farmers in England are Commoners – with rights to collectively

graze (sheep and/or cattle and ponies) and to use resources from the land, such as trees, peat and soil. Each of their flocks or herds has a heaf or lea where they stay without fencing.

This way of shared land management is called 'commoning', and is a living link to land management as it was before the Norman Conquest.

Often, the Commons look untouched and free from intervention, but they are carefully managed together by Commoners and Common Land owners.

"I think the Commons hold the key in terms of delivering all the things that we need that are really important, for nature, for the environment. New forms of payment for this could rejuvenate Commoners' lives."

Neil Heseltine, Hilltop Farm, Malham in the Yorkshire Dales National Park

The partners



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority



Shropshire Hills
National Landscape



National Trust

Front cover images – top image clockwise: School visit to Trowlesworthy Tors, Dartmoor. Credit: Bex Blades. Grazier John Heighway checking on his Welsh ewes on Clee Liberty common, Shropshire. Credit: Rob Fraser. Angelique McBride, Natural Flood Management Officer for Dartmoor National Park showing Natural Flood Management on Harford Moor, Dartmoor. Credit: Rob Fraser. Waller Martin Stallard restoring Common Boundaries, Dartmoor. Credit: Rob Fraser

A collective will for action

"Our Upland Commons brings together those who manage and love one of England's most precious assets; common land. By sharing our passion and knowledge we are building opportunities and resilience in these uncertain times."

Julia Aglionby, Chair of the Our Upland Commons Project Board

Contents

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Admiring the view overlooking Sedbergh from Brant Fell. Credit: Rob Fraser

Verbatim quotes have been used throughout this document in order to include stakeholders' own voices. The spelling and grammar of these have not been corrected for authenticity. [] denote a deletion. ... denote a partial quote.

Unless otherwise stated, all photos in this report are the wonderful work of Rob Fraser of Somewhere Nowhere. Rob and Harriet Fraser are creative practitioners who have documented those involved in the project in Common Stories.

Foreword

For centuries, Commons have been integral to the way in which many farms operate, sustaining and raising generations of sheep.

In turn, the way in which Commons have been gently but consistently managed has helped to create and enhance sometimes nationally, even internationally, important habitats such as blanket bog and calcareous grassland.

The increased public interest in Commons is perhaps one of the biggest challenges and definitely the biggest opportunity facing Commoners across the country. The public conscience has been awakened to the need for low-carbon food production. This, coupled with the realisation of our national biodiversity shortfall, has prompted many to see these often vast landscapes as a cure-all.

It is vital that we don't overlook the importance of Commons to the people who rely on them. In our determination to rewild and regenerate, let us not be blind to the good that low-input farming is already doing, and has done for generations. Regenerative farming is nothing new to Commoners, neither is the sincere pleasure they have in seeing the wild intermingle with the farmed landscape.

Projects like this one can help get the message across of how these landscapes and their custodians are already producing

sustainable food whilst helping to maintain biodiversity. They give Commoners a voice and a platform as well as helping with the practicalities, such as new sheep pens, of securing a future in Commoning.

We need to reframe the national narrative so that the voice of Commoners is heard, and the people who have shaped these landscapes for centuries can actively shape their future. Active Commoners are in decline as the number of tenant farmers decreases and farming practices change because of new government schemes. The management that these farmers have given over centuries means that the Commons will miss them most, and we will have lost the people who knew these places best.

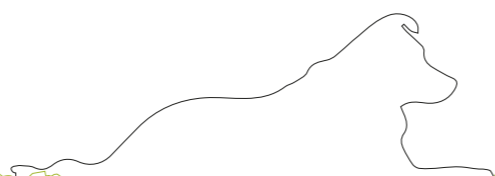
Commoning is very important to us at Bleak Bank. It is important because it is where our sheep live in the summer and because it is a big part of our own personal and cultural heritage. My great-great-grandfather was the first of the Dawson family to use Ingleborough, over a hundred years ago, and I like to think if he came to gather the sheep off with us tomorrow, little, except the invention of the quad bike, will have changed.

We look forward to Commoning into the future as caretakers for the livelihood, livestock, landscape and for nature.



Commoner William Dawson on Ingleborough Common. Credit: Rob Fraser

William Dawson, Commoner on Bleak Bank in the Yorkshire Dales National Park



“I think it's very important that we as farmers and shepherds make it clear to the public what the role of the common is, to farms like ours, and to the communities around us.”

William Dawson, Commoner on Bleak Bank in the Yorkshire Dales National Park



Bleak Bank Farm, Yorkshire Dales. Credit: Rob Fraser

A collective will for action

The use of Common Land for pasture has protected landscapes for over a thousand years, ensuring the survival of thousands of ancient monuments, enabling wildlife, such as rare birds and butterflies, to thrive where grazing maintains the balance of the delicate upland ecosystems on vast tracts of open landscape.

However, now is a particularly difficult time for England's upland Commons and those Commoners on whom we rely to manage these precious spaces in this traditional way.

Commons are contested spaces; where divergent interests, overlapping legal rights and passionately held views often collide. Polarisation and an un-even power balance can hamper progress and make supporting change on upland Commons more difficult and nuanced than in other landscapes.

The upland Commons are also under immense pressure from climate change, increased visitor numbers, consumer trends, rising costs and the post-Brexit dismantling of the agri-environment schemes. Crucially, the loss of Basic Payment Scheme ('BPS') subsidies poses a significant threat to already marginal farm businesses, and ongoing uncertainty has undermined faith in the ability of successor schemes to support upland farming systems or to address biodiversity and climate crisis.

The risk is that struggling farming businesses abandon the practice of Commoning or seek to shift to less sustainable farming methods to help navigate out of financial troubles, whilst other stakeholders might seek to bypass Commoners in making plans for the future.

This urgency has led to significant energy and commitment from the Foundation for Common Land, the supporting partnership of 24 organisations, protected landscapes, and, crucially, Commoners and Commons Associations.

Funders recognised the need, ambition and potential of the project to make a real difference for people, rural communities and economies, and for heritage, nature and the environment. Together they provided £3m of funding to kick-start the Our Upland Commons approach.

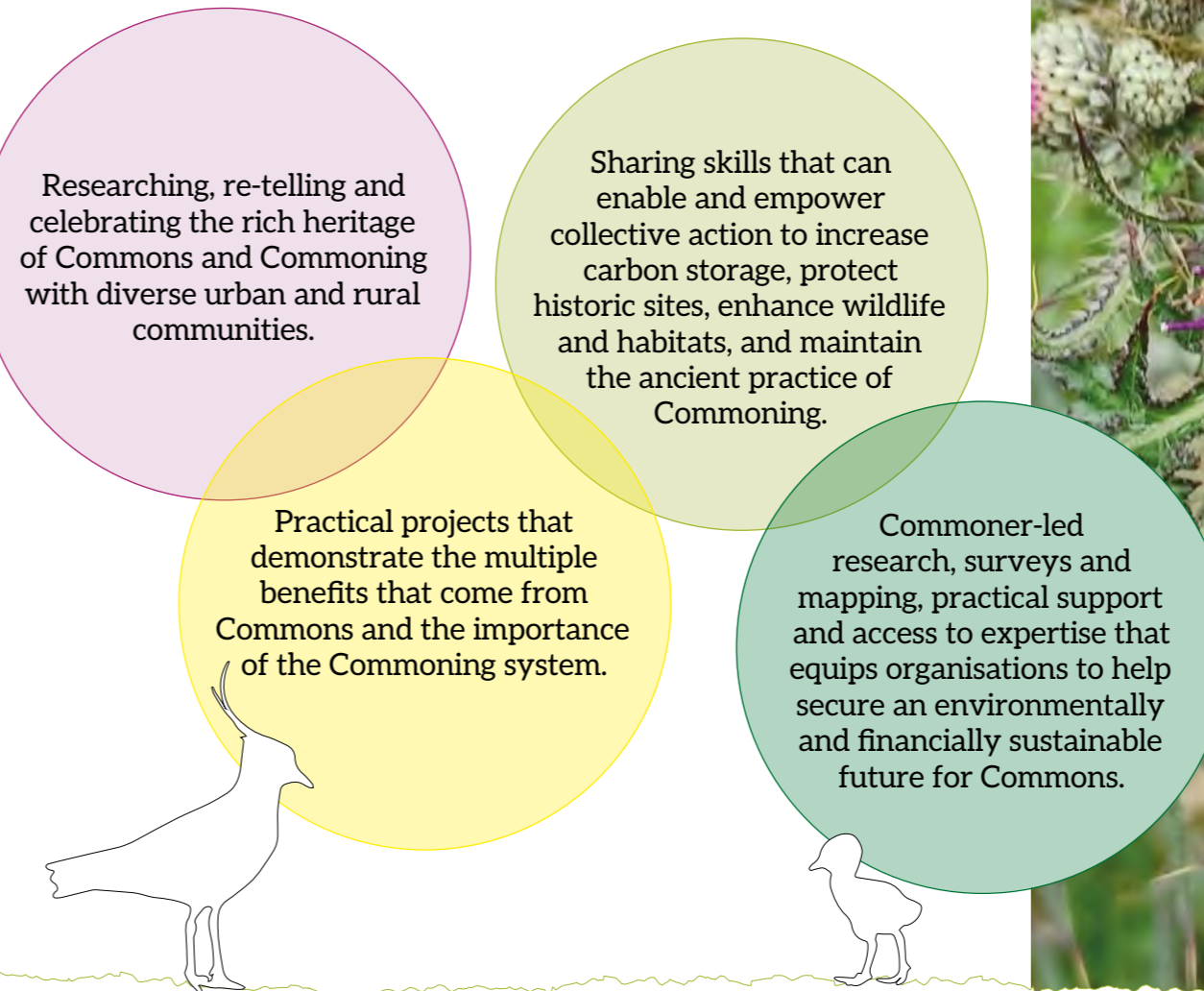


“What is the future of a hill farm? Our costs are going up, our production is fixed, and our income is pinned by Environmental schemes. It is a business that’s surviving, but people need to diversify. We’re looking now at the next evolution of agriculture: it’s all going to be about reversing climate change ...”

Commoner

The four-year Our Common Cause project was designed to be a focus for concerted and collaborative action. It signified a step-change from talking, convening and championing, to a time of action filled with demonstrating, delivering and empowering.

The project was a practical package of works and activities designed to find ways through the complexity of upland Commons:



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly

Upland Commons – where the programme focussed

Commons are a national resource dispersed across every county in England. Taking the next step on the journey to protecting upland Commons and their heritage on a national scale needed a trial which looked beyond one or two small areas.

The Our Upland Commons programme therefore worked within 12 upland Commons in four protected landscapes: the Lake District National Park, Dartmoor National Park, Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Shropshire Hills National Landscape.

Whilst upland Commons share some basic features, each is unique – even within the same landscape. This is due to their:

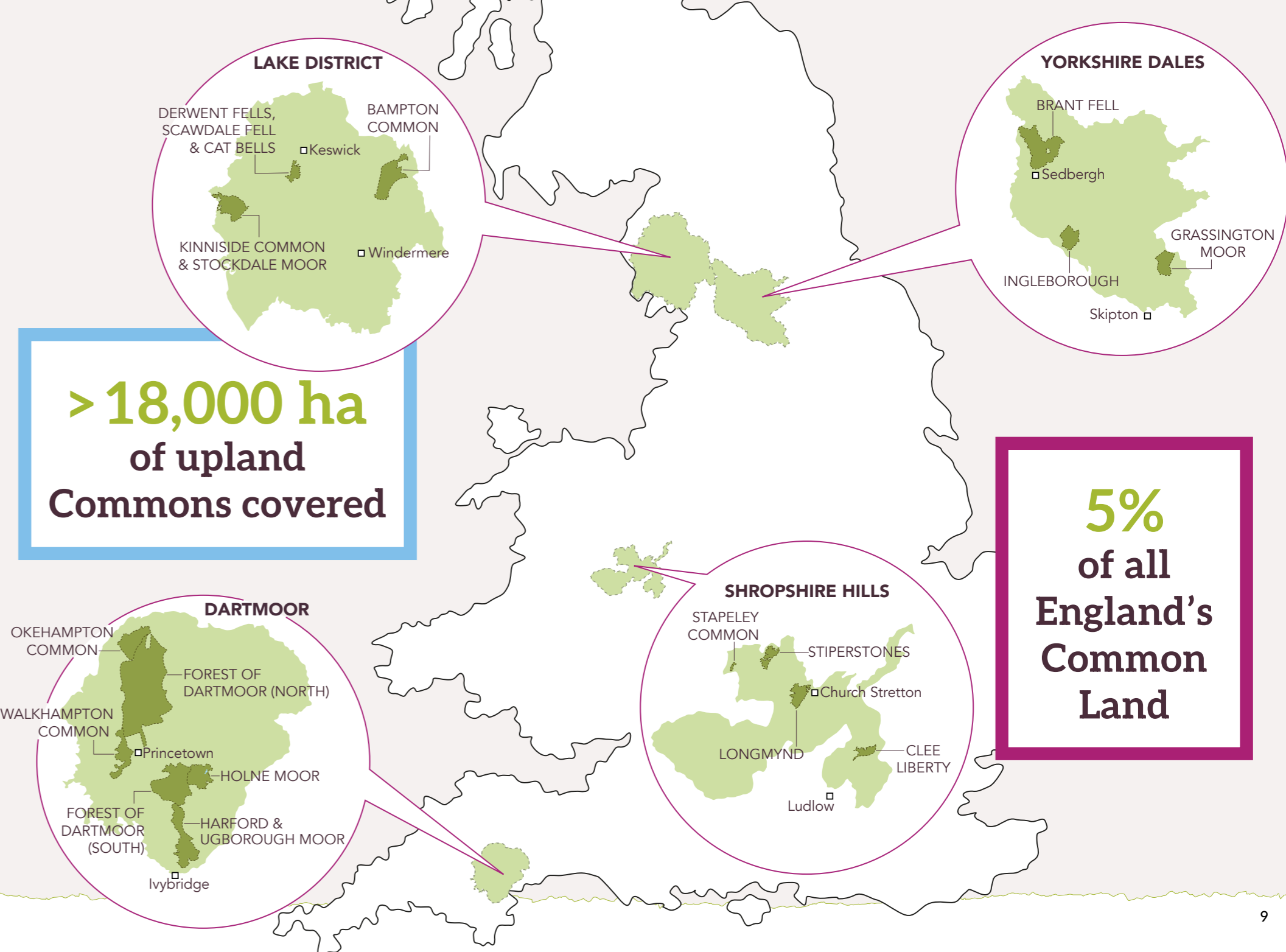
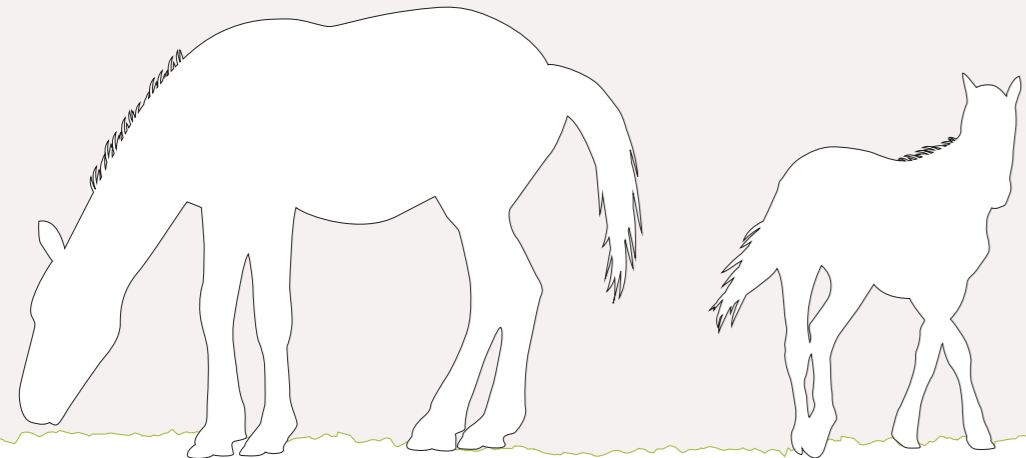
- **Physical characteristics** – Defined by their geology, hydrology, ecology and previous use by humans

- **Ownership** – Commons are privately owned land with ‘Rights of Common’ over them
- **Management** – Including the number of Commoners and how many exercise their rights to access and graze, how Commoners organise themselves locally and interact with other interested parties, as well as other uses such as leisure and sport
- **Communities** – Both Commoning communities and those around them.

Although highly ambitious, coverage across a range of areas has allowed the programme to trial ways of working across upland Commons with different characteristics, pressures and ambitions.

“Delivering across four different landscapes has allowed us to test and develop a method that is applicable across the collaborative and contested spaces of Common Land: an independent project officer, able to consider the multiple benefits of the landscape and needs of all stakeholders, enabling high-quality collaborative projects to increase knowledge and improve management, supported by the tools and capacity-building needed to deliver them.”

Sam Caraway, Programme Manager



> 18,000 ha of upland Commons covered

5% of all England's Common Land

A people-based approach

Initiatives and interventions often start with 'technical' data and expertise, or a 'top-down' requirement for conservation and land management.

In contrast, focussed work on upland Commons is a profoundly social process at its heart. It is about:

- Bringing people together within a Common and with wider stakeholders
- Valuing lived experience and recognising expertise, including that of Commoners and those most intimately familiar with our upland Commons
- Building acceptance of different perspectives, including being comfortable with disagreeing
- Fostering understanding of roles
- Exploring the most pressing social, economic and environmental needs and testing solutions together
- Finding shared viewpoints and a shared direction of travel for each Common.

Our Upland Commons therefore started with the people most closely involved with each Common, and strived together to build holistic solutions 'from the ground up'.

In this way, this work is akin to the Community Organising movement – an approach which brings people together to

take action around their shared concerns and overcome social injustice rather than presenting a pre-prescribed project and asking for support and cooperation to deliver it.

This way of working is resource-heavy, time-consuming, and organic in the way it plays out, yet with the biggest of rewards: truly invested individuals, communities and farm businesses, where sustainable change can take root.

It is therefore no surprise that personal relationships are at the heart of work on upland Commons, but they can also be its unravelling. Our Upland Commons successfully trialled having an independent place-based 'Commons Facilitator' role to listen, connect, motivate, channel advice and be of practical support to Commoners and Commons Associations. This is vital for:

Dedicated capacity focussed on the uplands and issues of Commoning – whilst this is an area of work that crosses over with the role of many staff, the dedicated resource is vital due to the complex issues and multiple stakeholders

A non-partisan representative – helping to navigate some of the tricky inter-stakeholder and local politics

A single-point of contact at the farm gate – this is allowing for improved relationship

management with stakeholders, which is in turn helping things to happen

Personalised advice and engagement – and a two-way flow of information: listening as well as providing support that's tailored to the Common and individual farm business

Timely trouble-shooting – when frequent issues or opportunities arise

Time to build trust – the Commons Facilitator becomes a trusted colleague and progress on upland Commons can only happen at the speed of trust.

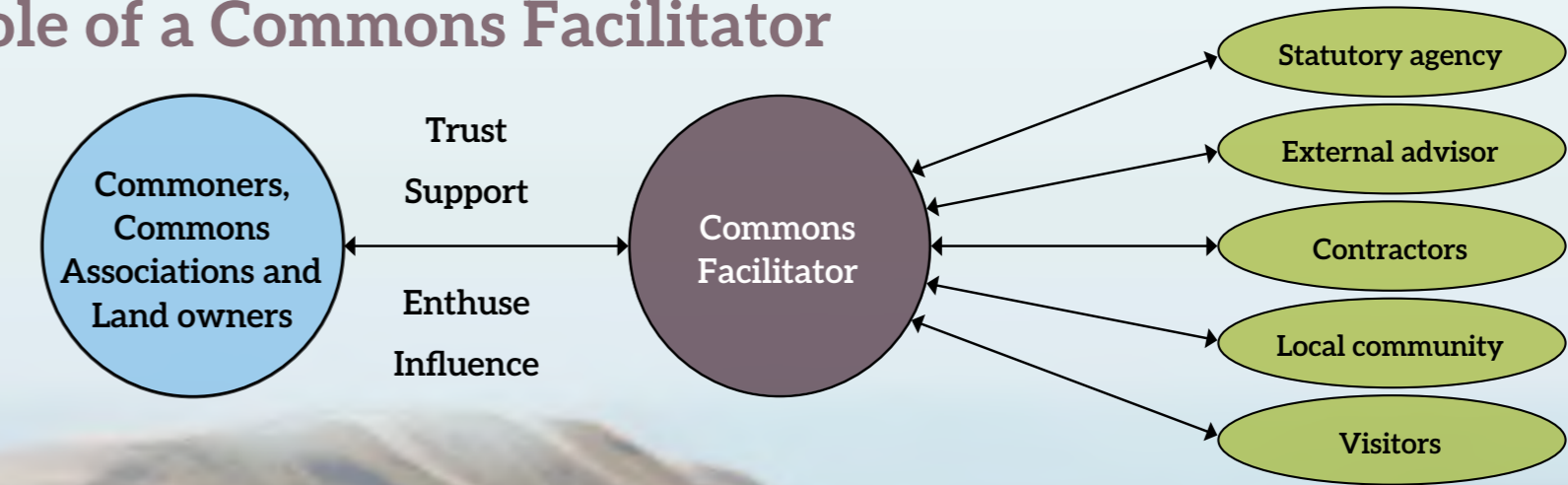
“The focus on Commons means that Commons are included in conversations where they were missing in the past.”

Land owner

“It has been very useful to realise the limits that, as Common landowner, there are as well as the other complexities of commoning.”

Land owner

The role of a Commons Facilitator



Key ingredients to successful working on upland Commons

Every programme is a learning journey and Our Upland Commons has been no exception.

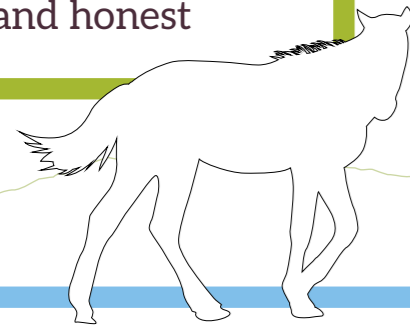
The evaluation has helped to draw out ways of working which are essential for effective, equitable and impactful work on Commons:

“It has [] been a great opportunity to shine the spotlight on individuals in the farming community and give them a voice.”

Land owner

Authentic -

Be open, transparent and honest



Respectful -

Everyone needs to recognise each other's expertise, stake and contributions to the Commons and projects, and livelihood

Fair -

Be particularly mindful of the power balance

People-based -

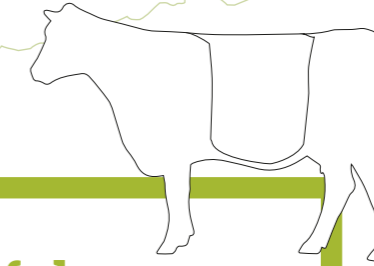
Value relationships and invest in them as fellow humans, not just as organisations or through opinions

Owned -

Ensure efforts are truly collaborative. Where possible, co-produce or have farmer-led initiatives and research. This will help move away from doing projects 'for' to work which is 'by' and, 'with' Commoning communities and other stakeholders

“I think you've pushed us in a way that has made us work better together. But also we've given you our thoughts and recommendations and we've been listened to.”

Commoner



Shared -

Establish shared visions and goals for Commons action and momentum, and, of course, celebration

Impactful -

Investment-driven by the agreed difference we want to make on Commons (the outcomes), not led by chasing numbers (the outputs) and what feels like 'box ticking'

Flexible and reflective -

To help programmes respond to context changes and to help navigate the complexity



Patience -

Working on Commons, bringing people together and finding fruitful ways forward takes time to develop and grow

Supported -

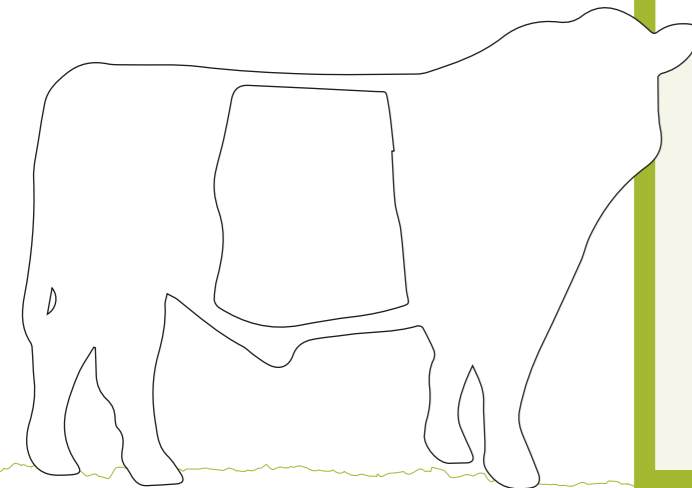
In recognition of conflicting views on Commons and the need to support everyone's well-being



Stepping stones towards sustainable Commoning and Common Land

Our Upland Commons has been a 'test bed' for finding pathways to economically, socially and environmentally sustainable Commoning, and ultimately securing our nation's amazing Common Land for the benefit and enjoyment of all.

Like all projects, not everything has worked all of the time. However, in evaluating the programme and the projects in each landscape, some clear stepping stones to this bold yet vital vision have been identified.



Start by...

Social – people are at the heart of change

Putting in place an independent single point of contact to be a conduit for advice and support, and to facilitate collaboration
 Identifying stakeholders, and the diverse interests and motivations on each Common
 Spending time listening to Commoners and other stakeholders
 Working to identify and bridge divides between Commoners, and with other stakeholders including Land owners and statutory agencies
 Encouraging open and honest dialogue
 Bringing people together to build better understanding and foster respect
 Trialling ways to positively engage with Commons Associations, Commoners and graziers, Land owners, statutory bodies and other interested parties.

Economic – farm businesses must be thriving

Spending time understanding the economic drivers and challenges on each Common, and for individual Commoners
 Collecting data and co-researching with Commoners
 Developing practical, evidence-based management plans for each Common
 Identifying key issues which are 'blockers' to economically sustainable Commoning
 Building solutions to fit the needs of each individual Common and Commoner's farm business.

Environmental – Common Land can move towards optimum ecological health and delivery of increased environmental benefits

Collecting baseline data in order to understand the ecological and abiotic health of each Common in more detail
 Building a shared understanding of each Common and the potential to increase the ecological and environmental benefits it delivers
 Identifying what other data is missing
 Identifying practical actions, works and management regime changes that would help improve each Common
 Consulting widely on potential actions, for example, tree planting, and take into consideration key factors such as archaeology, hydrology etc.

And then...

Find quick wins to help build momentum and goodwill, and kick-start collaboration
 Work hard to continue to strengthen the links and collaboration within Commons and between stakeholders, and build a shared future action plan
 Document the stories of Commoners and other stakeholders
 Recognise and celebrate the diversity of Commoners and other stakeholders, and what each brings to managing Common Land
 Research and raise the profile of Commoning traditions and the cultural and archaeological heritage of Common Land and communities
 Identify where things are not going well, and quickly take action to correct this.

Provide practical, hands-on support, training and funding to help overcome barriers to sustainable Commoning, for example, the purchase of water bowsers, stock pens etc.
 Make meaningful improvements are made to grazing, animal health, stock control, improved soil health etc.
 The new insight and better data to make informed business decisions
 Commoners are more 'funding-ready'
 Reduce barriers to economically sustainable Commoning, and overheads reduced
 Knowledge exchange is facilitated across Commons and with external expertise.

Trial management techniques to make improvements and support environmental restoration
 Package-up works on Common Land to ensure they are more attractive for contractors
 Empower and upskill Commoners, local partners, volunteers and communities to undertake concrete activities which protect environmental assets
 Enhance the environmental and ecological benefits offered by Common Land through trialling and delivering practical, collaborative projects such as Natural Flood Management, peat restoration and bracken control
 Work collaboratively with other projects in the area to deliver more.

So that...

Common Land is managed more collaboratively for the benefit of all
 The public and local communities are reconnected with the natural and cultural heritage of Common Land, and better understand the vital role of Commoning in managing it
 Decision-makers are more aware of the needs and opportunities on Common Land and in Commoning
 Land owners, stakeholders and statutory bodies adapt their working practices to better support Common Land and Commoning
The rich heritage of Common Land and Commoning are recognised and celebrated.

Farm businesses on Common Land are easier and more cost-effective to manage
 Agri-environment schemes are secured for Commons
 Other funding is secured for farm businesses on Common Land
 Improvements can be made on in-bye land
Commoning is more resilient as a rural business, livelihood and tradition.

There is greater capacity locally to act for Common Land
 The impact of restoration and management changes is monitored
 Other funding is secured for further improvements on Common Land
 Common Land provides increased water and carbon storage
 There is decreased upland erosion, water-flow rates and sedimentation on Common Land
Common Land is in better condition, provides improved ecosystem services and is more biodiverse.

Re-telling the story of Our Upland Commons

Commoning is an ancient part of our cultural heritage.

In Mediaeval times, Commoning was part of the fabric of society and just the way we did things, but its story has slowly slipped from public consciousness. When it has been mentioned more recently, it is often to cast 'blame' upon those who are in fact guardians of our uplands.

Our Upland Commons has started to redress the balance in this public narrative by seeking to understand and share what it is to be a Commoner, and practices such as the Gather. The programme has also explored what it takes to care for our nation's uplands and to reveal the significance of the special

heritage they hold through events, creative projects, workshops, exhibitions, school visits, trails, films, stories and poetry.

'Meet the Commoner' events have stood out as a highlight, where Commoners enjoyed sharing their work and way of life as much as the public enjoying learning about where their food comes from and about wool as a sustainable resource. Nearly a thousand people flocked to such event over a weekend along the route of the Ingleborough Falls walk, getting a close-up look at shearing and leaving with a new Commoning vocabulary such as 'heaf' and 'tup'.

Our Upland Commons is leaving Commons better understood, and Commoning re-interpreted to shine light on this regenerative farming technique and long-held cultural tradition.

“Seen it on the tele, great to see it in real life, the shearing’s fascinating.”

Visitor

“The Commoners’ passion for the land is awe inspiring and amazing in their dedication and hard work.”

Visitor

“Such vital work – yet so few get to hear about it.”

Visitor

7 Commons trails



for visitors to explore

John and John at the 'Meet the Commoner' event, Ingleborough, Yorkshire Dales. Credit: Skye Lyselle



“The [project] funding was a chance to show kids what farming is. We have been getting a mix of children from very different backgrounds and we visibly see their attitudes to being on a farm in the uplands change from when they first get off the bus to when they get up onto the fells.”

Commoner

“If everyone could have taken away something from the day, it would be that we all have a part to play in helping to restore and care for this precious environment.”

Event participant



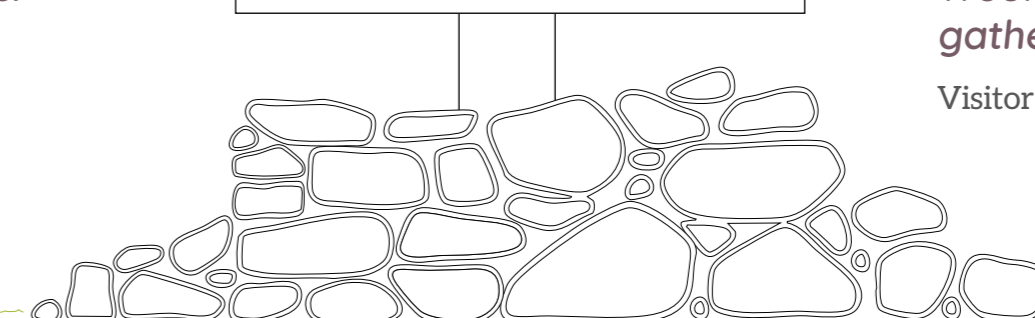
“We loved our visit to the farm. The class didn’t have any exposure to farming or animals before, so it was a great experience for them to have.”

Teacher

“Would love to experience the gathering – on younger knees!”

Visitor

Nearly
25k
people engaging
with Commoning
and Commons



Grassington interpretation trail, Yorkshire Dales



School visit to a Common

Resilient Commons

Upland Commons are brimming with natural heritage and human history.

All but one of the project Commons have at least one Scheduled Monument and are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (several of them for their special geology). Between the 12 they offer a range of priority habitats¹ and are home to threatened animals, plants and fungi.² Being unploughed means that Commons' archaeological and historic environment is largely undisturbed, and features from pre-history, Roman Britain and the 19th century survive in abundance.

The Our Upland Commons programme has helped to build a better understanding of the project Upland Commons through research, monitoring, surveying and archaeological digs. This has ranged from transect-walking to survey for upland butterflies to archaeological investigations of England's highest Roman road on Bampton Common in the Lake District.

The insight produced has underlined just how special upland Commons are. This new data has directly fed into new or updated management plans for each Common and is actively informing decision-making so that the project Commons continue to be better managed for nature, environment and people.

The programme has also undertaken a package of practical projects, from giving Commoners the tools to help manage bracken for butterflies, birds and plants, to restoring eroded peat hags, rewetting moorland and adding Natural Flood Management to increase the amount of water a Common can hold, slow the flow of water off the Common and contribute towards water quality.

The Our Uplands Commons programme is leaving the project Commons better understood, in better condition and better managed. In turn, this means more public benefits from upland Commons.

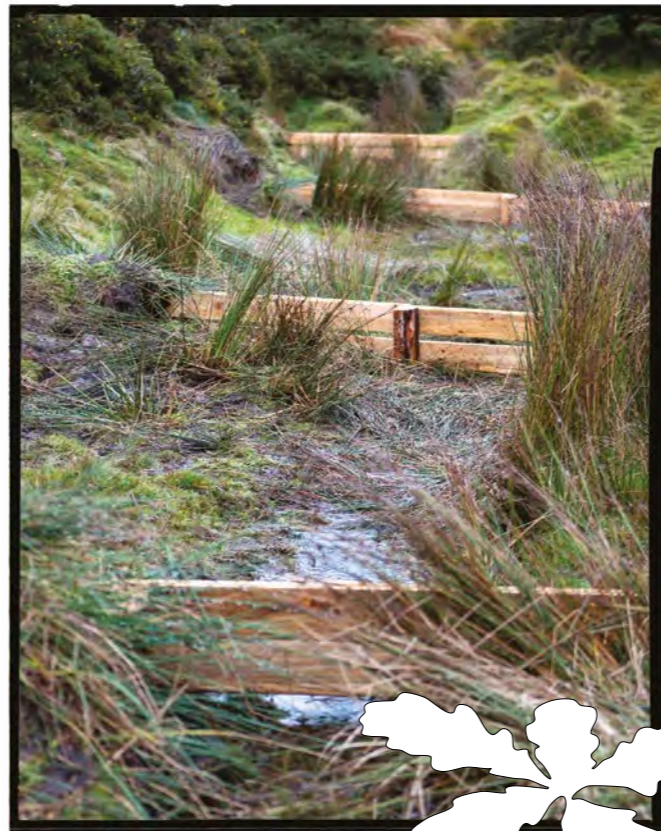
“We got survey results through too, that is a twofold success. The baseline information is useful in the future in terms of managing the commons, and the recommendations that will be taken forward that will make a difference in the management of that land for the better.”

Commoner

10 evidence-based management plans

>12,000 hectares surveyed for habitats and species

Natural Flood Management on Harford Moor. Credit: Jim W.



Natural Flood Management on Harford Moor. Credit: Jim W.

2,500 trees carefully chosen and appropriately planted

12 historic sites restored or protected

“I am a firm believer that you can have nature and farming on every farm - EVERY FARM.”

Commoner

503 volunteers giving their time to understand and conserve Commons heritage

18 historic sites better recorded

“You get an emotional attachment to the landscape. You get dirt under your fingertips, get closer to commoners and understand their way of working.”

Volunteer

736m of traditional boundaries repaired/conserved



Drystone walling, Okehampton Common, Dartmoor Hill Farm Project

Footnote: ¹Under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities (NERC) Act (2006)
²Species listed as threatened or endangered in the Red Data Book



Sustainable Commoning

Just £16,000 – that is the annual profit made on an average upland farm from Commoning.

Most farms would be in significant deficit if all the family members were paid the National Minimum Wage for Commoning.

We all need Commoning to be more economically sustainable – if Commoners leave the land, ancient knowledge is lost, and the intricate equilibrium of these landscapes, ecosystems and breeds will break down.

The programme worked hand-in-hand with Commoners and Land owners to find ways to help farm businesses to thrive, whilst maximising the benefits for nature, the environment and people, including:

- **Increasing skills** through funded training opportunities, good-practice sharing and a national programme of webinars
- **Essential equipment** such as a water bowser for Stiperstones Common in the Shropshire Hills to help make looking after the stock more time-efficient and reduce fuel costs
- **Facilitation and technical support**, for example, action plans to help improve the collaboration on individual Commons and ensure effective governance is in place

- **Farmer-led research** meeting specific Commoner needs, e.g. Livestock Health Projects in the Yorkshire Dales and Dartmoor aiming to maximise the health and welfare of Commoning livestock, and the Nature and Livestock research into dung beetles and worming
- **Practical tools**, e.g. a ‘Commons Proofed’ Farm Carbon Calculator which is helping Commoners reduce their carbon footprint
- **Help to unlock funding**, e.g. training and an app developed with Lake District Commoners for them to record and monitor public benefits to deliver the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) moorland standard, and also the Upland Farmer Toolkit which walks Commoners through reviewing their farm business and assessing agri-environmental scheme options.

Our Upland Common has explored making Commoning more economically viable whilst increasing the benefits for the environment and nature, both through the direct work of the programme and through inspiring and equipping others.

“The SFI app is empowering Commoners to feel like they have guardianship of the landscape.”

Commoner



Natural Flood management and peat restoration contractor training, Harford Moor, Dartmoor

1,205 people trained in skills for caring for Commons

219 knowledge-exchange events and visits

Healthy Livestock Project in action, Dartmoor. Credit: David Attwell



18 shared assets or equipment supporting sustainable Commoning

“Change is coming and I think a lot more farmers are understanding that and want to see how they can visit composition, their sales and their farm business in a way that makes it resilient. But they still have a cultural identity, I think is the biggest thing that we’re learning.”

Artist

> 20 reports

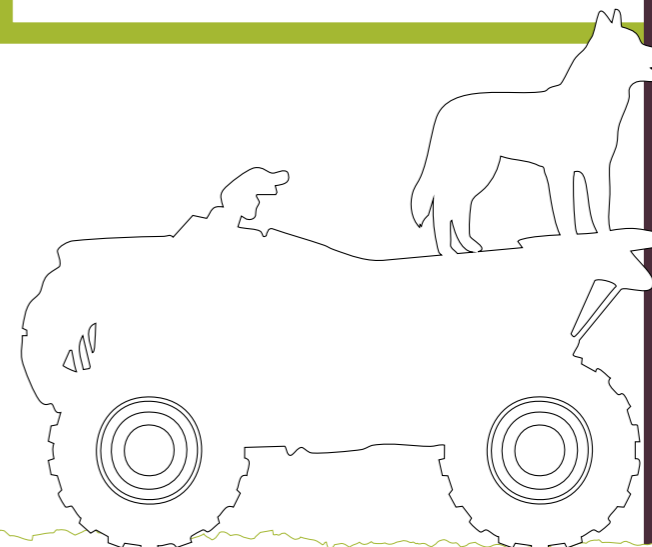
about Commons openly accessible



Brielmaier Alpine Motor Mower - Derwent Common, Lake District

“One project for example, around the cost of Commoning, it took 15 commoners and looked at how much it costs each commoner to raise a single ewe, cow or pony, that has been illuminating to how much money they lose before they get an output from an agri-environment scheme.”

Partner



Lessons learnt

The Our Upland Commons programme acted as a living laboratory for what does and doesn't work, working across 12 upland Commons.

The process was a rich learning journey with many insights which can help to inform future programmes:

Recognise the multiple values of Commons – Our Upland Commons found that it is important to acknowledge the multiple sources of value (nature, cultural heritage, carbon, water, access, farming) which Commons bring. This leads to a more holistic way of planning, not driven by a single outcome, in sharp contrast to most other agencies and initiatives in the natural environment.



“I think it just showed that the different people can have a look at these spaces who perhaps have a slightly different value system. And it doesn't have to be contested all the time.”

Artist

Value expertise – Traditionally, only people with technical expertise in ecology or hydrology, for example, acquired via an academic route have been deemed as 'experts'. However, those most intimately involved with Commons have an unrivalled expert knowledge of Commoning and invaluable lived experience of the Common their stock grazes and how it functions. This should be equally valued and recognised.

“The knowledge of the land that commoners and farmers have is not appreciated by a lot of people.”

Volunteer

“You don't just acquire the knowledge overnight – 50 years on, I'm still learning! I learned off the old fellas before me, and I'm trying to pass that down to the next generations.”

Commoner

A neutral convening role is key – The Commons Facilitator is key to bringing together Commoners, stakeholders and funders, and acting as an open and unbiased conduit of information, support and interaction. Recruiting people with the right characteristics and aptitudes is fundamental to the success of the role.

“Commoners are very busy farming their land and there needs to be a continued and dedicated individual to do this paid engagement work.”

Partner

Arts provided safe, reflective space – Having artistic practice Somewhere Nowhere's work run alongside the programme provided a neutral space for people to feel listened to, seen, and for their stories to be told by neutral yet supportive, practitioners. It functioned almost as a 'diary' of individuals' journeys through their own Commons project, but also the programme as a whole.

“...a lot of people appreciate the fact that they were listened to and were very happy with the way we put their stories out. Perhaps that makes a difference some way because they feel heard...”

Artist

“I think there is a role for arts right across the board to play in this conversation to broaden it further.”

Artist

Plan for the process, not outputs – Our Upland Commons has shown that a Community Organising approach (based on listening and developing solutions from the ground up) is an effective route to collaboration and progress on Commons. This has implications for the design of future projects, which need more flexibility to allow outputs to be developed from a co-production process rather than predetermined, and to allow time and support for these to develop.

“...allowing enough time to do the work, process the work and keep relationships going.”

Stakeholder

A delivery-based approach really works – Individual Commons projects have found that getting stuck into 'doing' rather than just talking has helped to increase both understanding and goodwill, whilst gaining momentum. For example, the Farmer-led habitat assessment and animal health projects have quickly gleaned new insight which Commoners and graziers could use to refine their farm businesses.

“It's been more than we expected. We've got a bracken cutter, we've got some brilliant sheep pens, we've taken part in the sustainable farming incentive, we've got an amazing new bench on Brant Fell that the community are really enjoying. A lot's happened in the couple of years that we've really got stuck in.”

Commoner



Commoner Craig Fearon helping a Herdwick lamb as part of a gather from Langstrath Valley, Lake District. Credit: Rob Fraser

What next?

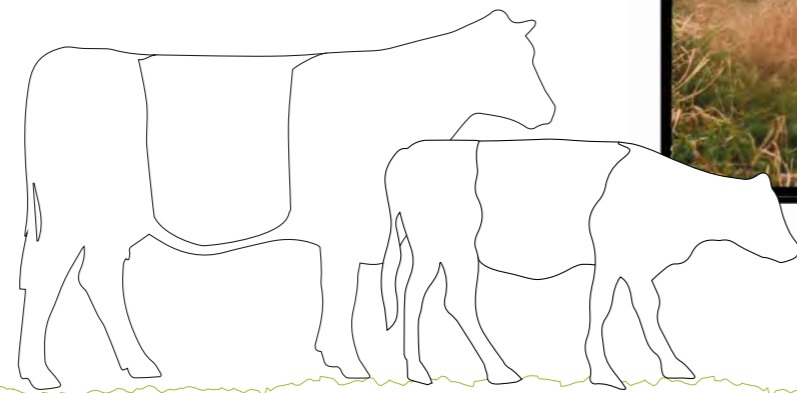
Through Our Upland Commons, the partners have developed a method for collective delivery on Common Land that really works.

This is a holistic approach acknowledging multiple sources of value and expertise, delivered by an independent Commons Facilitator. This is supported by tools and resources for Commoners, and a series of collaborative approaches to understanding and restoring Commons.

The Foundation for Common Land want to roll this model out to Common Land across England by supporting others to deliver these tested methodologies for nature and Commoning, and finding partners and funders to work in new landscapes themselves.

To this end the Foundation for Common Land will be convening partners from across the country to look at the next steps for project-funded delivery on Common Land. Together, partners will explore how they can continue to grow the community of collaborators owning, grazing or working on Common Land, for the benefit of all.

But this model is not static; the Foundation for Common Land would like to explore a greater connection between



“It’s shown us you can end up with something comprehensive, long lasting and worth investing in.”

Chris Short, Chair of the Foundation for Common Land

delivery on Common and in-by-ye land, develop their work on economically and environmentally sustainable models for Commons farm business and deepen work to engage traditionally excluded communities with the stunning heritage of Common Land and Commoning.

In order to support this, the Foundation for Common Land will be working on increasing their own resilience, developing new sustainable funding models and better ways to engage with target audiences, so that they can continue to be a strong national voice for Commons and Commoning.



David Sadler Chair of Harford and Ugborough Commoners Association talking to Harriet Fraser, Somewhere Nowhere. Credit: Rob Fraser

“Upland Commons are complex landscapes to work in, steeped in history and facing an uncertain future.

What this project has shown us is that by taking the time to work together, we can build understanding and respect and over time, trust. These human acts are as important as shaping a shared vision for these treasured landscapes and delivering specific projects on the ground.

We all have different roles, areas of expertise and interest, from Common rights holders to Land owners to community representatives but what

binds us together is our passion and interest in Commons and their future management, not the often perceived polarised views.

Many of the projects during this programme have shown how working together on these shared outcomes can bust many myths, change perceptions, remove perceived power dynamics and create the long-term collaboration needed.

It’s also shown us how important sharing our collective stories through creative communication can be to raising awareness of both the intangible heritage

of Commoning and the special qualities of Commons.

Building public support for our work will be critical for both how these places are loved and cared for but also securing the public funds needed to support their long-term management.

This has been a great step forward on our journey to a more stable future.”

Mike Innerdale, Regional Director (North) and National Trust Project Sponsor



Ponies on the Common. Credit: Rob Fraser

A framework for future action

Towards the end of the funded project, over 200 Commoners, Commons Associations, statutory bodies, not-for-profit organisations and advisors came together to reflect on the programme and consider what the future of the Our Upland Commons approach should look like.

The tone was one of hope and challenge in equal measure. Four common themes emerged:

Scaling-up – the initial funded project has provided ‘proof of concept’ for the Our Upland Commons approach across a range of Commons. Coupled with this, there is clear, substantial demand for more effective working on upland Commons in order to realise the triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental benefits.

Possible solutions: The Foundation for Common Land needs to increase its own organisational resilience to take this work to the next stage. However, it will never be able to service the scale of national need and intensity of work required. Therefore, methods of supporting place-based organisations need to be developed, e.g. mentoring for Commons Facilitators, training in collaboration, and support for Commons governance and legal expertise.

“All I’m thinking is ‘what about us on Exmoor?’”
Commoner

Supporting knowledge creation and flow – the need for, and value of, the programme’s efforts to share good practice, tools and experiences has been palpable. The impact of this has often been immediate, with many instances where stakeholders have immediately been able to put actionable insight into practice.

Possible solutions: A vibrant national Community of Practice backed by an expanding knowledge base (Commoner-led where possible) and practical tools to support work in and with upland Commons.

“Equal access to information is the first step towards equal dialogue.”
Sam Caraway,
Programme Manager

Bottom-up approach – stakeholders recognise that a new era is needed, embracing a more holistic way of working where Commoners are agents of change, not subject to it.

Possible solutions: A collaborative and people-centred approach to planning for Commons, backed by resource and evidence. This should take into account the multiple values Common Land and Commoning offer (including the cultural value of Commoning itself), and the expertise of all.

“The voice of the family farm could not be heard and this project has helped us to be heard.”
Commoner

Place-based support – Commoners and Commons Associations in particular speak passionately about the need for local capacity for facilitation, governance help, practical projects and support to access agri-environment schemes and other funding opportunities. This would massively build the sustainability of Commoning, and unlock maximum benefits from upland Commons for society.

Possible solutions: A network of highly effective local Commons Facilitators.

“The big lesson is that they [the commons] are all so different, everything needs to be geared toward individual Commoners.”
Partner



Looking across Derwentwater towards Cat Bells and Derwent Common. Credit: Rob Fraser



Burying the Giant – Local communities and artists gathered on Harford Moor in Dartmoor National Park for an event to share knowledge about how peatlands can be managed and restored to hold carbon and support biodiversity in the face of climate change.

In collaboration with Art and Energy Collective and Land owner John Howell. Photo by Jim W.



This report is a final evaluation of the Our Upland Commons project. It has been researched and written by expert evaluation consultants Heritage Insider Ltd.

The evaluation process has been undertaken through a desk-based review of project reports and outputs, creating case studies of new ways of working, a series of structured conversations and interviews with stakeholders, gathering feedback from event and exhibition

goers with grantees, and guided reflective practice and discussion.

Thank you to all those who have fed into this evaluation process for your reflections and data - especially the Project Officers, Commons and Commons Associations.

To find out more about Commons and how to protect them, and to read the Commons Stories and case studies which accompany this report, visit foundationforcommonland.org.uk

This project has been made possible thanks to the support of local and national partners, and funders including:

Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Dartmoor Commoners' Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Devon Wildlife Trust, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Preservation Association, Federation of Cumbria Commoners, Foundation for Common Land, Friends of the Lake District, Heather Trust, Lake District National Park Authority, Millichope Foundation, Moorland Association, National Farmers' Union, National Sheep Association, National Trust, Natural England, Open Spaces Society, RSPB, Shropshire Hills National Landscape, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, South West Water, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, University of Cumbria.