

## **PRESS RELEASE: The Exmoor Society at 60**

On 28 October 2018, The Exmoor Society will be 60 years old. The founding meeting was held in Simonsbath House, now an hotel, the oldest house in the former Royal Forest. Local people recognised that after a successful campaign against afforestation of The Chains, the central moorland block of relatively wild land, there was likely to be a further loss of moorland and a charity was needed to protect the four-year-old national park. Since the inaugural meeting, the Society has at times played a key role in protecting Exmoor at a national level and, at others, influencing the Exmoor National Park Authority as well as being engaged in many other activities. Today, the Society concentrates on alerting bodies and the general public to the core statutory purposes of national parks and searches for new approaches through collecting evidence and commissioning research in order to keep Exmoor special. It champions the National Park status and embraces an integrated approach balancing the aspirations of single-issue groups so that conservation can go hand-in-hand with socio-economic wellbeing, locally and nationally.

The Exmoor Society Trustees have decided that the best way to celebrate the anniversary is to focus on Exmoor's unique landscape character with a special programme through much of the year from April to November. Some activities are part of its annual programme of events but enhanced to showcase Exmoor's beauty and special qualities, others are new.

- There will be a celebratory walks programme of 28 walks for the public from April with new walks as well as old favourites, taking place in some of the most attractive scenery, rich in wildlife and heritage that Exmoor offers;
- A travelling exhibition from April indicating how the Society helps protect Exmoor;
- On Friday 20 April, the annual Spring Conference in partnership with the ENPA will explore new ways in which Exmoor Hill Farmers, in particular, can be paid for providing public goods and include the Exmoor Ambition and Exmoor Register for maintaining and improving natural/cultural capital;
- June is the closing date for the Pinnacle Award for young people, worth £3,000, and demonstrates how the Society encourages entrepreneurs to develop a local business;
- July is the closing date for the Schools Literary Competition;
- Friday 14 September, seminar on Exmoor as an English Outback, followed by
- Saturday 15 September, a special AGM in Porlock Village Hall looking in more detail at the Society's history and celebrating with a birthday cake;
- In November, the Society is aiming to hold a Pinkery celebration for local schools highlighting our work in education for over 50 years.

During the year, the Society hopes to attract even more people to the Exmoor Resource Centre in Dulverton. There is an increasing demand for knowledge about Exmoor and the Centre provides a unique facility, with work-space and free WiFi, for the public to use. It contains a wealth of material in its recently fully-catalogued archive that includes documents, letters, slides, pamphlets, reports, maps and photographs and the best collection of Exmoor books found in one place, all providing evidence of why Exmoor is so special. The annual *Exmoor Review*, now in its 59<sup>th</sup> edition, can be purchased from the shop as well as many other Exmoor-related books. The shop also profiles local artists and exhibits and sells their work. The Society hopes to inspire people to support its work in protecting Exmoor's special qualities for the benefit of all.

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Images: Exmoor Review 2018 Cover - © Adam Burton  
View over Bridgetown - © Mike Green

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Note to Editors:

The Exmoor Society exists to promote and organise action for the conservation and enjoyment of the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of Exmoor national park. It was established in 1958 and successfully fought proposals to afforest The Chains, the central moorland area of Exmoor. It has continued to campaign against adverse changes and encourage people's understanding of the park's special qualities. It acts as an independent watchdog and champion for Exmoor's status as a national park.

