

## **PRESS RELEASE: EXMOOR'S ICONIC COAST: Challenges Ahead in a Changing Climate**

Consider a family seaside holiday with opportunities to explore England's highest cliffs along the South West Coast Path, to take a boat trip to birdwatch and see England's longest stretch of coastal woodland, to experience spectacular unspoilt scenery and nature at its best, both wild and uplifting. The 16<sup>th</sup> Exmoor Spring Conference will concentrate, surprisingly for the first time, on Exmoor's iconic coast, one of the reasons why it was designated a National Park in 1954. However, with the recent declarations of a climate emergency on Exmoor, the focus will be on the challenges ahead in a changing climate including the impact of sea level rises and building resilience in a fast-changing world. The programme will be divided into three parts asking the following questions: What are the coast's special qualities? How can we keep the coast special in the context of climate change? What solutions are emerging for maritime communities environmentally and economically including case studies showing best practice?

The Exmoor Society hosts the annual event in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority and aims to encourage debate on matters affecting the National Park's special qualities. 'Past conferences have attracted keynote speakers setting the national scene, for example Dieter Helm on Natural Capital in 2017 and last year, Fiona Reynolds on Natural Beauty and People's Wellbeing. This year speakers include Matt Palmer, the Met Office Lead Scientist, Sea Level and Ocean Climate; Phil Dyke, Coast and Marine Adviser, National Trust; Ed Maltby, Emeritus Professor of Wetland Science, Water and Ecosystem Management, Liverpool University and Chair of the Devon Maritime Forum; and Matt Heard, Natural England's Area Manager for Somerset, Avon and Wiltshire', said Rachel Thomas, Chairman, The Exmoor Society.

'The rugged terrain of the National Park's 55km of coastline makes it among the most unspoilt and best-protected stretches in the country,' Sarah Bryan, Chief Executive of Exmoor National Park, said. 'Nesting seabirds and other wildlife, rare Atlantic oakwoods, historic coastal harbours and striking geological features are present in abundance. The beauty and wildness of our coast provided inspiration for the Romantic poets – in our modern world Exmoor's coast is perhaps more valuable than ever. By recognising what's special about the coast, we are helping to keep it alive for future generations and I hope as many people as possible will get involved in discussing the issues.'

Delegates will have opportunities to ask questions and air views on this important theme. The Conference takes place on Friday 24 April 2020 at the Tithe Barn in the

lovely medieval village of Dunster; please check [www.exmoorsociety.com](http://www.exmoorsociety.com) for the latest information.

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