



The Exmoor Society

Conserving Exmoor for All

Registered Charity No. 1160912

34 High Street
Dulverton
Somerset
TA22 9DJ
Tel: 01398 323335

ENPA COMMITTEE MEETING – 3 NOVEMBER 2020

ITEM 13 – Statement from The Exmoor Society

1. The Exmoor Society welcomes the Vision Statement that aims to achieve a nature rich Exmoor National Park. It is positive, forward looking and identifies possible strategies for enrichment and recovery of habitats and species.
2. It is a very ambitious vision that incorporates many themes and issues, short and long term time frames with specific targets, emphasis on wildlife habitats and species, suggestions of solutions to the crisis in biodiversity and climate change from the local to global level. The paper is consequently complex, complicated, and likely to have both intended and unintended consequences on National Park purposes and wider Authority achievements.
3. Consultation with farmers, landowners, and others responsible for delivery has been limited because of the coronavirus pandemic and constraints of webinar communication. Some ENPA groups have not had time to comment on the proposals, including the Consultative Committee and Landscape Advisory Group. Other concerns have been raised with The Exmoor Society, particularly by farmers and landowners, because currently there are so many unknowns in the national policy and financial environment.
4. What Exmoor will look like is a good question. There is a wide variety of interactions between nature and Exmoor's landscape across its 9 different types. That calls for a more comprehensive pictured approach to illustrate an even bigger, better, joined-up nature recovery strategy. A long- term opportunity map would help. The present illustration of one type of 'before and after' landscape is too simplistic. At the same time, it includes examples of everything from a standing stone to wood pasture to no moorland burning. If this technique is used to indicate that there will be no great change in the visual impact and other conservation aspects, then further landscape illustrations showing nature-rich habitat and species changes should be included as they are in the Exmoor Partnership Plan.
5. Targets need further explanation - how were they chosen? What is their current base line hectareage so that monitoring change can be undertaken, and at what cost? Can every detailed priority habitat be achieved, or will most remain as ambitions?
6. Delivery through new agri-environmental schemes is emphasised, hopefully to be based on Exmoor's Test & Trials approach using the natural capital assets register. However, hard financial reality has to be faced. Post-Covid19, post-Brexit, and with the Environmental Land

Management Scheme (ELMS) provisions not yet announced, only a limited financial package is likely to be available to cover the key objectives of the 25 Year Environmental Plan such as clean water and air, improved soils, and carbon capture and flood alleviation. We have very serious concerns about prospects for the survival of upland farming. Forward-thinking farmers and landowners are already engaged in regenerative agriculture, but they can consider opportunities offered by ELMS only when these become clearer.

7. The Exmoor Society requests that Members delay adopting the paper until its December meeting at the earliest, unless there is a compelling reason otherwise. This is the first time the paper has appeared in the public domain, and it needs further careful reflection on its content before publication.

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2 November 2020