

PRESS RELEASE: Beef, Birds & Beauty – A New Future for National Parks?

This is the theme for the 2018 Spring Conference, organised by The Exmoor Society in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority, taking place on Friday 20 April at Dulverton Town Hall.

The Government's 25-year Environment Plan states that the creation of designated landscapes has been among the most outstanding environmental achievements of the past 100 years. At the same time, it has set up a 21st Century Hobhouse Review of the English National Parks and ANOBs. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for the Environment, has described the present period as 'a moment unfrozen in time' because of the ability to shape a post-Brexit world.

National Parks are special places where nature and people over time have produced areas of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic values. The conference will explore how they can remain special, what changes are needed in delivering their purposes and enhancing their environments, landscapes and communities. Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Defra Minister for National Parks, will address the conference and launch the Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2018-23. Merrick Denton-Thompson, President of the Landscape Institute, will discuss the importance of a landscape-led approach in managing National Parks and Sarah Howes of Plymouth University will illustrate the health and wellbeing benefits of National Parks. There will be opportunities for delegates to contribute their views, as well.

Exmoor itself has taken the lead by producing a post-Brexit agri-environmental scheme. Called the Exmoor's Ambition, the National Park Authority and Exmoor Hill Farming Network have brought out a detailed transformative proposal for sustaining and enhancing Exmoor's farmed landscape and communities after Brexit. Following on from last year's conference exploring Natural Capital and addressed by Dieter Helm, chairman of the Government's Natural Capital Committee, The Exmoor Society has commissioned an Exmoor Register of Natural/Cultural Capital Assets, trialled on three Exmoor farms. The Register will be revealed for the first time at the Conference by Robert Deane of Rural Focus Ltd.

Places are limited and fill quickly, so early booking is advised and at least before 13 April, cost £20. Further details are available at www.exmoorsociety.com and from The Exmoor Society, 34 High Street, Dulverton TA22 9DJ. 01398 323335

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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.

