

## The Year in Retrospect

The Year in Retrospect highlights the significant contributions and activities the Society has undertaken in order to achieve its charitable objective of promoting the conservation and protection of Exmoor National Park for the benefit of all.

### Conserving & Campaigning

- **Natural Capital:** We continue to campaign for a record of natural capital as defined in our Register. The Society's Vice Chairman contributed to Natural England's Landscape Network webinars in December, leading on the theme: "Landscape and Natural Capital in a National Park - The Case of Exmoor. (see Spring Newsletter 2021)
- **Nature Recovery:** Nocturnal Exmoor was the theme of four live webinars in May that showed the significance of darkness to both wildlife and people. The webinars brought together biologists, ecologists, farmers, writers, film makers, astronomers and tourism providers to show how much we should value darkness and its importance to different species. They are available via our website.

The Society was invited to take part in a Visioning exercise on the current state of nature on Exmoor. In partnership with others, nature recovery will continue to be an important aspect of our work.

- **Game Shooting Update:** In 2018 the Vice Chairman was asked to look into shooting on Exmoor as the ENPA reported increased discussion about the impact of game shoots, the size and number of which have grown significantly on Exmoor over the last 20 years. Concerns were raised ranging from the relatively minor to those with discernible impacts. The report is available on our website.

The Society continues to monitor the report's recommendations but in 2021 is concerned that so far actions have been limited. Complaints continue and apply particularly to two localities. Since 2018, the context for game shooting in Exmoor has changed with new national policies for agriculture and the environment and the consequences of Covid-19. As a result, there will be more questions about game shooting in relation to its positive and negative impacts on ecology, economy, society and culture. The Society will continue to reflect on these developments and contribute to the discussion on its website.

- **Research Projects:** The Society commissioned two projects, the first a scoping paper on Exmoor's Farming Heritage. The second to consider *Art in Support of Improved Understanding of the Changing Character of the Exmoor National Park*. The focus will be

how art images, spanning the period from the 1770s to the present day, can be used to understand change.

- Enjoying Exmoor: The Society welcomes people to Exmoor to enjoy its special qualities. Exmoor receives a small number of visitors compared with England's other national parks: 2 million day visits a year compared with the New Forest, smaller than Exmoor, that receives 13 million. The pandemic led to greater numbers with overcrowding in popular places, litter and problems of overnight camping. We believe that visitor management needs to be addressed, particularly in sensitive conservation areas with no infrastructure. We are working to identify vulnerable sites and the issues raised, suggesting simple solutions and exploring the possibility of trialling more radical ones.

## **Planning**

The Society monitors the weekly list of new planning applications. Occasionally, the Society raises concerns and sometimes out right objection taking notice of the planning officers' recommendations.

- A retrospective proposal for change of use of an area from pasture to a timber storage area was objected to by the Society and strongly opposed by the planning officers for reasons including landscape impact and the site's location open countryside. It was similar to an application for the same site turned down two years ago but with a few additional landscaping proposals. There was strong support from the farming community for the business to continue and Authority members decided to approve the application.
- The Society objected to a proposal for an agricultural building on a small holding of ten acres in a hamlet, the Authority members decided to refuse permission. Again, a similar application for the site has been submitted.
- The Society continues to raise concerns over countryside clutter including the increase in signs, seats, fences, in different sensitive landscapes and even in some settlements.
- A Planning White Paper, to which the Society responded, caused much controversy nationally and we now await the publication of the Planning Bill.

## **Events & Outreach**

- The annual Spring Conference in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) was cancelled in 2020 and in May live webinars were held in place of the 2021 Conference. These were well received and will be used in future to complement the annual conference.
- Education: no activity for the last two years due to Covid-19.
- Walks. The Society provided an extensive walks programme led by knowledgeable guides, in different locations and on diverse themes. Covid-19 regulations originally limited numbers to six people, then thirty and finally no restrictions. The pre-booking system proved popular particularly with people who have just moved to Exmoor.

- The Resource Centre had to restrict access for much of the last year but dealt with many email queries. Work continued entering material from the estate of Victor Bonham Carter into the archive catalogue. Donations of material have been received. (See further detail in the Spring News Letter 2021)

## **Awards & Competitions**

This year's winners are as follows:

- Founder's Award – Dr Sean Beer for his support over many years and the enormous task of updating of the index catalogue of the Exmoor Review
- Brian & Mary Chugg Conservation Award – Linda Blanchard for her voluntary conservation work on Exmoor's heritage
- Adult Poetry Competition – Dora Allan for her poem *Wolf Moon over Exmoor*
- Lucy Perry Competition – not held
- Pinnacle Award 2020 – Caroline Westcott for her catering business
- MacEwen Essay Competition – Nick Hosegood, *Exmoor's Future Woodland*

## **Exmoor Society Governance 2021**

### Finance

Total incoming resources for 2021 amount to £133,364.

The income on the general fund of £48,143 is close to expectations apart from shop income which was lower than hoped due to the pandemic restrictions.

The restricted/designated fund income of £85,221 is mainly from bequests.

Total resources expended amount to £70,073. General fund expenditure has been well controlled, and after transfers resulted in a surplus of £335.

Expenditure on restricted/designated funds totalled £17,618 and this has mainly been spent on the completion of the book, grants – in particular Pinnacle Award and continuing to employ a part time Development Co-ordinator.

The valuation of investments has increased this year by £41,480, which increases the net movement of funds on the general fund to £41,815.

### Trustees: (Executive)

Trustees continue the overall strategic aims of Campaign, Conserve and Engage. With much greater understanding of the crises in biodiversity and climate change the Society is emphasising action on Nature Recovery and Climate Resilience and Adaptation. It has offered financial support to bodies that help achieve our charitable aims. We have employed a Development Coordinator to increase the use of social media, membership both individual/families and corporate, sponsorship and marketing.

Although, having to deal with the pandemic in 2020-2021 there have been opportunities to update our policies, public relations, and website and meet virtually at six Trustees and six Policy meetings and with others, particularly the National Park Authority.

We continue to search for an honorary Treasurer, following the remarkable achievements of our present one, Karen Trigger FCA who wishes to step down in September.