



DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2027-2032

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) SA Report

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

September 2026

enfusion



DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2026-2032

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) SA Report

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY (NTS) September 2026

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SA NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY (NTS)

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This is the NTS of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report

1. This is the Non-Technical Summary of the SA Report documenting the process of SA incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the draft Dartmoor Partnership Plan. This summary is an integral part of the SA Report that accompanies the draft DNPPP for public consultation during late 2026. It provides an outline of the SA process and findings, including how the SA has influenced the development of the draft plan, and in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations, and UK guidance on sustainability appraisal.

The Dartmoor Management Plan

2. The Dartmoor National Park Authority is preparing a new Partnership Plan 2027-2032 and continuing with a long-term Vision through to 2045.
3. Fundamental to the review of the Local Plan are the two statutory purposes of the National Park designation:
 - to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
 - to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public

Also, the duty of National Park Authorities in pursuing National Park purposes:

- to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities (within the National Park) by working closely with the agencies and local authorities responsible for these matters

4. The draft DNPPP 2027-2032 comprises seven Themes, as follows:

- Better for Climate Change (Cross-Cutting)
- Better for the Next Generation (Cross-Cutting)
- Better for Nature & Natural Beauty
- Better for Cultural Heritage
- Better for Farming & Forestry
- Better for People
- Better for Business & Communities

For each Theme, there are 3-6 Outcomes aligned with measurable Targets.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

5. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporates the requirements of SEA to ensure that potential environmental effects are considered fully alongside social and economic issues. An SA must be carried out during the preparation of local plans and spatial development strategies. Whilst not a spatial development plan, the DNPPP is likely to have significant effects for sustainable development and the environment.
6. Strategic Environmental Assessment is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of a plan that has the potential to give rise to significant environmental effects. The aim of SEA is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to promote sustainable development. The SEA of plans sets the strategic context for subsequent environmental impact assessment (EIA) of project proposals. The DNPA has commissioned independent specialist consultants Enfusion Ltd to undertake the SA process for the draft Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan (DNPPP).
7. The DNPA is also required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan in accordance with the Habitats Regulations. The aim of the HRA process is to assess the potential effects arising from a plan against the nature conservation objectives of any site designated for its nature conservation importance. The summary findings of the HRA have been incorporated into the SA/SEA Report.
8. UK Guidance suggests a staged approach to SEA. Initially the scope of the SEA is determined by establishing the baseline conditions and context of the area by considering other relevant plans and objectives, and by identifying environmental issues, problems and opportunities. From this the scope of the SEA is prepared and includes a SEA Framework of objectives for environmental topics and relevant to the Dartmoor National Park area. This framework and the baseline condition form the basis against which the draft plan is assessed.

Environmental Characteristics of the Dartmoor National Park area and likely evolution without the Partnership Plan

9. The National Park is defined by the characteristics that contributed to its designation – special landscape, wildlife and historical features. The extensive upland moorland supports internationally important blanket bogs; deep-cut valleys steeped in woodland with rivers are a notable landscape feature, together with distinct granite tors. A large amount of the land is used for grazing of cattle, sheep and ponies. Dartmoor is considered to have a high level of tranquility and dark night skies. The built environment is largely limited to small settlements and individual dwellings with settlement characters varying between those on the High Moor and those on the periphery.
10. Within the National Park there are three European designated Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) as well as others outside the boundary but within Devon. There is a further rich variety of biodiversity that ranges in designation from nationally to locally important; however, the significance of this may extend far more than the known resource and is important to the wider network of green infrastructure of Devon and the South West. Visitors, recreational use, and farming practices can all have detrimental effects on key habitats and wildlife.
11. Dartmoor has a very rich variety of designated heritage assets, and the archaeological landscape of Dartmoor is extensive. Dartmoor has more Scheduled Monuments than any other National Park in England. Many of the historical features are integral parts of the landscape and may have local significance to communities and individuals, together with contributing to the character of places and strong cultural heritage.
12. The granite on Dartmoor has been quarried for centuries and mining has also been a feature of Dartmoor landscape. The soils on Dartmoor are peat on the higher moors, and thin soils in the surrounding area. Most of the land is designated as Grade 5, least fertile, and farming is constrained to small areas. However, the soil resources of Dartmoor are still important, for non-intensive grazing and biodiversity.
13. Dartmoor is a major water catchment in the south west, supplying much of the water to Devon and Plymouth and with a surplus of water anticipated until 2040. Most waterbodies in the National Park are good-moderate ecological status; quality is mostly affected by pollution from agricultural run-off. Areas of medium to high flood risk (Zones 2-3) are largely located in steep sided valleys.
14. The population of Dartmoor is considered to be stable with little change since 2001. The National Park has a higher old age dependency ratio than the national average, creating issues for adaptable housing, pressures on local health services, and public transport. Each settlement on Dartmoor has its unique features and identity, and therefore each settlement has its own set of issues that are important to that specific community. Common issues across communities include access to local services/facilities, employment in

settlements and rural areas, public transport and traffic. The fewer employment opportunities has resulted in people out-commuting for employment and a lack of opportunity for young peoples.

15. Dartmoor is characterised by under-occupied housing stock. The ratio between average house prices and average earnings in the National Park is high. Young people, seasonal staff and part time workers, and other key workers are priced out of Dartmoor as they cannot afford accommodation. Enabling people to continue to farm whilst providing the highest status of protection to the landscape remains a key issue for Partnership Plan (and the recently commenced new Local Plan.
16. A number of key health statistics in Devon are below or in line with the national averages; Dartmoor also has a lower than average Index of Multiple Deprivation score. Overall, 48% of Dartmoor National Park is designated as Access Land for the public, and therefore all residents and visitors have access to this land to use for recreational purposes.
17. Many of the jobs in Dartmoor are in agriculture, forestry and fishing. Public transport into and across Dartmoor is very limited and unsuitable for most commuting purposes and a key factor is to increase opportunities for home working. In 2023, almost 3.1 million tourists visited the National Park and indicating a continuing growing trend.
18. Dartmoor is bordered to the north by the A30, to the south by the A38 and to the west by the A386. The A30 and A38 to the east provide access to the M5 at Exeter. The main A roads such as the A386 suffer from congestion; and the mode of transport for local people is private vehicles such as cars and vans. The public rights of way network is extensive with footpaths, bridleways and byways located across the National Park.
19. Transport is the highest source of energy consumption due to the rural nature of the area. Overall the climate of Dartmoor is changing, becoming warmer and wetter with a longer growing season – affecting biodiversity and farming.
20. Without the Partnership Plan, competing requirements for nature, natural beauty, the historic environment, farming and forestry, communities and visitors would not be considered or managed proactively and positively with likely adverse effects. There would be no strategic framework for longer term planning and management to address the predicted effects of climate change, nor to positively address the issues associated with the next generation and the emerging changes in Government policy and funding.

Key Sustainability Issues, Problems and Opportunities

21. Key sustainability issues, problems and opportunities include the following:

Key Sustainability Issues
■ National requirements for National Parks to take a lead on natural beauty and improving natural capital – for example, seeking opportunities for nature recovery and improving linkages considering the wider landscape scale for both designated and local landscapes ■ Land management changes have the potential for an unacceptable effect on the natural beauty, landscape & settlement characters ■ Climate change will threaten Dartmoor's varied habitats and wide range of species; however, nature recovery may allow species to move through the landscape and accepts that species will change; increasing invasive non-native species, and pests/diseases ■ Encouraging sustainable farming practices, and engaging farmers to ensure agricultural methods & practices do not result in negative effects on biodiversity; possibilities in the farmed areas through the new Environmental Land Management schemes, challenges as new funding is developed ■ Need to protect the internationally, nationally and locally designated biodiversity and geodiversity that covers much of the area ■ Managing access so that designated sites, priority habitat and priority species are not negatively affected by recreational activities, whilst sustaining positive effects for the economy ■ Need to protect the range of extensive historical and archaeological features, both designated and undesignated, and cultural heritage ■ Contributing to water quality improvement & more sustainable management of water; investigating opportunities to manage flood risk in upper catchments through changed habitats and land use practices ■ An ageing population & need to engage the next generation ■ Almost half of businesses are small or micro, and there is a high level of self-employment ■ 20-30% of employment is in tourism, with large-scale expenditure in the local economy by tourists, dominated by day visitors ■ Much of the economy depends on the quality of the natural and built environment, through encouraging tourism, visitors, and location of businesses ■ High dependence on private vehicle use with poor and infrequent public transport services – a common feature in rural Devon ■ Conflicts between users – for example, horse riders & mountain biking ■ Promoting access and use of the National Park for different people

How has the Partnership Plan been assessed?

22. The proposed scope of the Sustainability Appraisal was set out in the SA/SEA Scoping Report, including details of how the draft plan would be assessed. An SA Framework was compiled, including SA objectives that aim to help resolve the issues identified for land management in the DNPA area. This SA Framework, together with the baseline information, comprised the basis for assessment, and is summarised in the following table:

No.	SA Objective
1	To conserve & enhance the special qualities and natural beauty
2	To conserve & enhance Dartmoor's special boundary features, mosaic farmland
3	To protect & enhance sites of special geology, landscape scale geology
4	To preserve the wild, remote & tranquil characteristics
5	To recover and enhance natural and semi natural woodlands
6	To recover and enhance Dartmoor's moorland areas
7	To recover and enhance Dartmoor's wetlands
8	To recover & enhance habitats & networks for net gain with landscape-scale
9	To conserve & enhance the historic environment & its settings
10	To raise the quality of design and construction
11	To support cultural heritage including local traditions
12	To protect and improve air quality
13	To promote efficient water use and improve water quality
14	To protect & conserve soil, land, minerals, reduce soil erosion
15	To minimise Dartmoor's contribution to climate change
16	To reduce the risk of flood likelihood or magnitude and improve resilience and recovery where flooding still occurs
17	To promote understanding & enjoyment of the National Park's special qualities
18	To improve access to Dartmoor's open countryside
19	To promote and support a sustainable economy, particularly key business sectors
20	To enable all residents to share in growing prosperity
21	To ensure that the needs of all residents are met for affordable housing & access
22	To promote sustainable transport & improve safety, health & air quality
23	To safeguard & improve community health, safety and wellbeing
24	To promote inclusiveness, equality & participation

23. The emerging Themes, Outcomes and Targets of the draft Partnership Plan were subject to SEA. Using the SEA Framework of objectives, the baseline information, and professional judgment, the likely effects of the draft DNPPP were assessed. The SEA considered positive/negative, short/long term, and cumulative effects where possible, and according to categories of significance as set out in the following table:

Categories of Significance		
	Meaning	Sustainability Effect
++	Major Positive	Plan element encouraged as would it resolve existing environmental problem
+	Minor Positive	No environmental constraints and plan element acceptable
0	Neutral	Neutral effect
?	Uncertain	Uncertain or Unknown Effects
-	Minor Negative	Potential environmental issues: mitigation and/or negotiation possible
--	Major Negative	Problematical, improbable because of known environmental issues; mitigation likely to be difficult and/or expensive

What reasonable alternatives have been considered and assessed?

24. It was determined that there were no suitable or meaningful approach options for the Plan to consider and therefore, no meaningful or reasonable alternatives for the SA to consider. Doing nothing is not a reasonable alternative for the DNPPP as the authority is required to comply with the requirements of its statutory designation as a National Park.

What are the likely significant effects of the draft Environmental Plan? How has the SA influenced the draft Plan?

25. The new Partnership Plan has continued with the strong understanding of the cross-cutting factors involved –the need to address the predicted effects of climate change and the need to improve management of the National Park for the next generation. The plan has been prepared through an iterative participatory process that has rigorously considered potential negative effects and conflicts between different land use and management. The inherent inter-relationships between topics is understood and plan-making has explored options to resolve conflicts and potential negative effects.
26. Overall, the implementation of the Partnership Plan was found by the SA to have likely positive effects or neutral (insignificant or not directly applicable) effects for the plan Themes; there were no negative effects identified. Aspirations for Climate Change and the Next Generation are clearly presented as cross-cutting themes that are embedded and integrated throughout the Plan. Potential adverse effects have been identified, including possible conflicts within the plan, and considered through plan-making such that any potential significant negative effects have been mitigated through embedded measures.

27. The Plan is bold and ambitious seeking to scale-up proactive land management – and continues to reflect the Authority's declaration in 2019 for a climate change and ecology emergency. It provides a strategic framework for managing Dartmoor's National Park with cross-cutting and specific Themes that comprise strong Outcomes and measurable targets. These will help ensure that the positive effects predicted will be delivered. The SA confirmed through scoping and assessment that the relevant mitigation measures were embedded within the Partnership Plan such that there will not be any significant negative residual effects.
28. Challenges will remain to adjust to the emerging new national policy and funding regimes such that priorities for action can be implemented. The outcomes for strong partnership, shared evidence and knowledge and collaborative land management, together with clear targeted commitments, demonstrate progress with sustainability objectives since the last plan.

How could negative effects be mitigated?

29. Potential negative effects have been mitigated through avoidance measures that have been embedded into the development of the Partnership Plan with two cross-cutting Themes on Climate Change and the Next Generation, and careful development of measurable targets for each of the Outcomes in the specific Themes. For example, important mitigation is embedded in Outcome 3 of Better for People where visitor management maintains a balance between accessible, well-serviced areas and wilder, quieter spaces.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

30. The HRA screening stage of the process determined that there would be no adverse likely significant effects (LSEs) on the identified habitats sites – either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, and no further assessment was required at this time. The HRA screening suggested where consideration of HRA may be needed in the future for project level assessments.

Were there any difficulties encountered?

31. There were no significant technical difficulties encountered during the preparation of this SA. There are inherent difficulties in predicting the likely future baseline and assumptions were made using professional judgment. The SA noted the Partnership Plan and the key challenges that are likely; also, that the plan was being developed during a period of uncertainty with changes to Government policy and funding.

Consultation

32. The development of the draft Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan has included wide consultation including workshops and various engagement activities. The proposed scope of the SA/SEA was consulted formally at the scoping stage in late 2025 with the statutory bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency, and Natural England). Comments were received and some additions were made to the baseline information in the SA Scoping Report.

Monitoring Proposals

33. Government advises that existing monitoring arrangements should be used where possible in order to avoid duplication. The Dartmoor National Park Authority has advised that Outcomes and Targets will be monitored through periodic updates to the State of the Park Report. These measures should be sufficient for monitoring requirements from the SA process.

Next Steps

34. The draft Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2027 to 2032 and this accompanying Environmental Report will be available for consultation during later in 2026. Comments received on the S&A and the draft Plan will be taken into account in finalising the Partnership Plan prior to adaptation early in 2027. This will be accompanied by a SEA Adoption Statement in line with the requirements of the SEA Regulations.