

# Public Opinion Survey 2025

## Dartmoor Partnership Plan

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

2021-2026 Review





# Executive Summary

Between August and September 2025, Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) invited people to share their views on what matters most for Dartmoor's future. The Public Opinion Survey forms part of the review of the Dartmoor Partnership Plan — the shared Management Plan for the National Park.

**A total of 2,654 responses were received** from individuals and organisations connected to Dartmoor, providing valuable insight into the priorities and values of those who live, work, visit, or care about the National Park.

Respondents strongly support all priorities, particularly:

- Helping nature recover by restoring peatlands, woodlands and soils to enhance carbon storage, support wildlife and reduce flooding
- Encouraging responsible and sustainable visitor behaviour (e.g., dogs, fires, wild camping)
- Keeping Dartmoor peaceful and dark by reducing light and noise pollution

While environmental and cultural priorities were most strongly emphasised, respondents also recognised the importance of housing, connectivity, and public transport as part of a balanced approach.

These insights will help inform the next Partnership Plan, helping ensure Dartmoor is protected, enhanced and sustained for future generations.

# Introduction

## Help Shape the Future of Dartmoor

Dartmoor National Park is a unique place, valued for its landscapes, wildlife, heritage, and communities.

### What is the Partnership Plan?

The Dartmoor Partnership Plan, the shared Management Plan for Dartmoor, sets out how partners and stakeholders can work together to protect, conserve, and enhance all that makes Dartmoor special. It is a plan for the place.

DNPA leads the development of the Plan, working with the Dartmoor Partnership Board to set the strategic direction and oversee implementation.

### What is the purpose of Public Opinion Survey?

The survey was carried out to ensure that the next Partnership Plan reflects the views and priorities of those who live, work, visit, or care about Dartmoor.

The aim was to gather views on what matters most for Dartmoor's future and how to maintain a thriving, beautiful, and resilient National Park - for nature, people, and future generations.

The survey results, summarised in the Executive Summary, provide insight into public priorities and will help guide the development of the next Partnership Plan.



# Survey Methodology and Limitations

The Public Opinion Survey was open to anyone with an interest in or connection to Dartmoor and ran from 4<sup>th</sup> August until 14<sup>th</sup> September 2025. It was hosted online and promoted widely through the Dartmoor National Park Authority website, newsletters, social media, the Dartmoor Partnership Plan Board and partner organisations' communication channels. The survey was also shared on the BBC news website and paper copies were available on request to ensure accessibility.

**A total of 2,654 responses were received** from individuals and organisations. The survey included both closed and open-ended questions, allowing respondents to rate priorities for Dartmoor's future and share their own views and ideas in free-text form.

Participation was voluntary, so the 2,654 responses reflect those who chose to take part rather than a statistically representative sample. Findings should be seen as indicative rather than fully representative.

The respondent profile was skewed toward those aged 46 and over (73%) and those identifying as White British (90%), with fewer responses from respondents under 46 and from ethnic minority groups. In addition, the majority of responses at 56% came from visitors rather than residents, which may bring different perspectives and priorities compared with those who live and work within the National Park.

Despite these limitations, the responses provide strong insight into the public's priorities for Dartmoor and a valuable foundation for developing the new Partnership Plan.



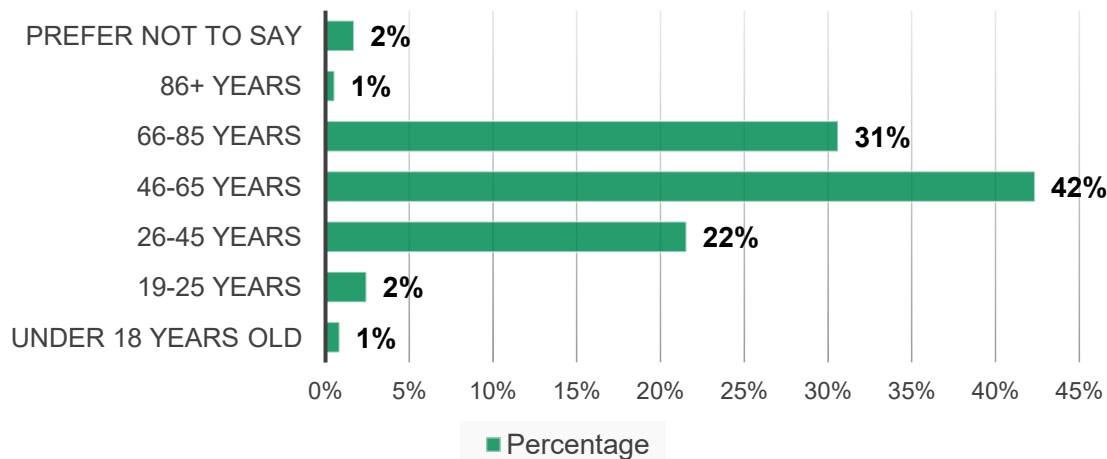
# Respondent Profile

The survey attracted a diverse range of people and organisations connected to Dartmoor, helping us understand the views of those who live, work, visit, or care about the National Park. The charts and map below summarise the demographics of the respondents.

## Age

Respondents represented a broad age range. The largest group was 46-65 years old – 42%, with strong participation from 66–85-year-olds – 31%. Only 3% of respondents were 25 years and under.

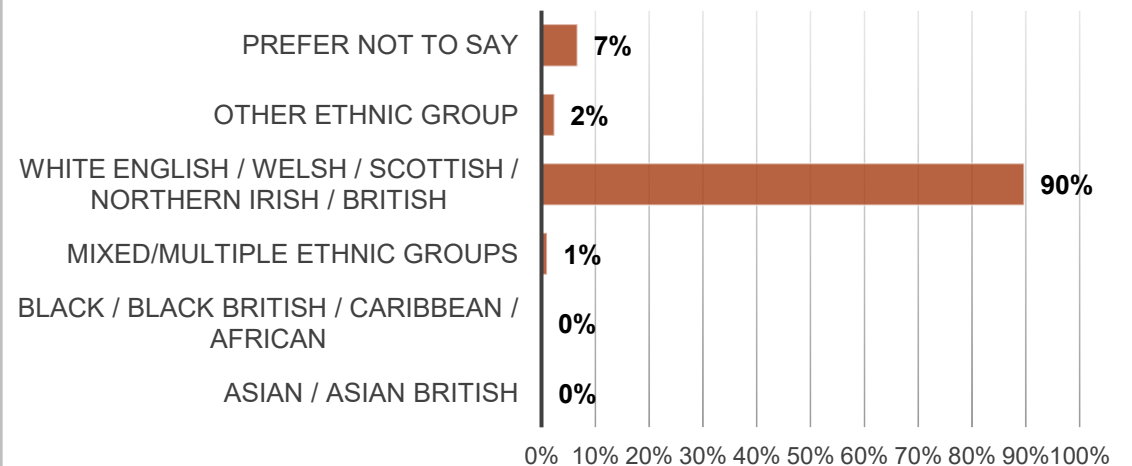
### Respondents by Age Range (%)



## Ethnicity

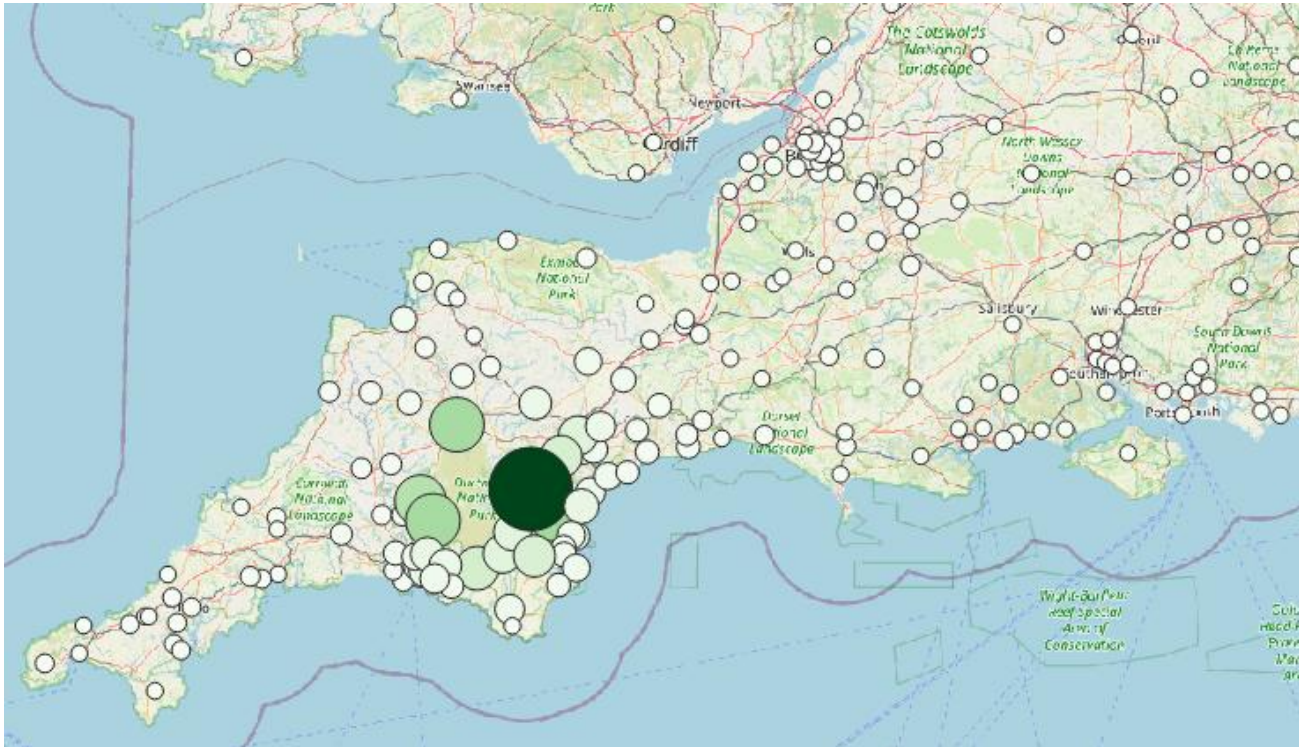
Most respondents identified as White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish or British – 90%. 3% of respondents identified as mixed race or other ethnic groups.

### Respondents by Ethnic Group (%)



## Location of Respondents

Responses came from across the UK, demonstrating the survey's extremely broad reach, with concentrations in Devon. The largest number of responses came from the Bovey Tracey area, followed by Newton Abbot, Okehampton, and Tavistock, with additional clusters in Plymouth, Exeter, and Torquay.



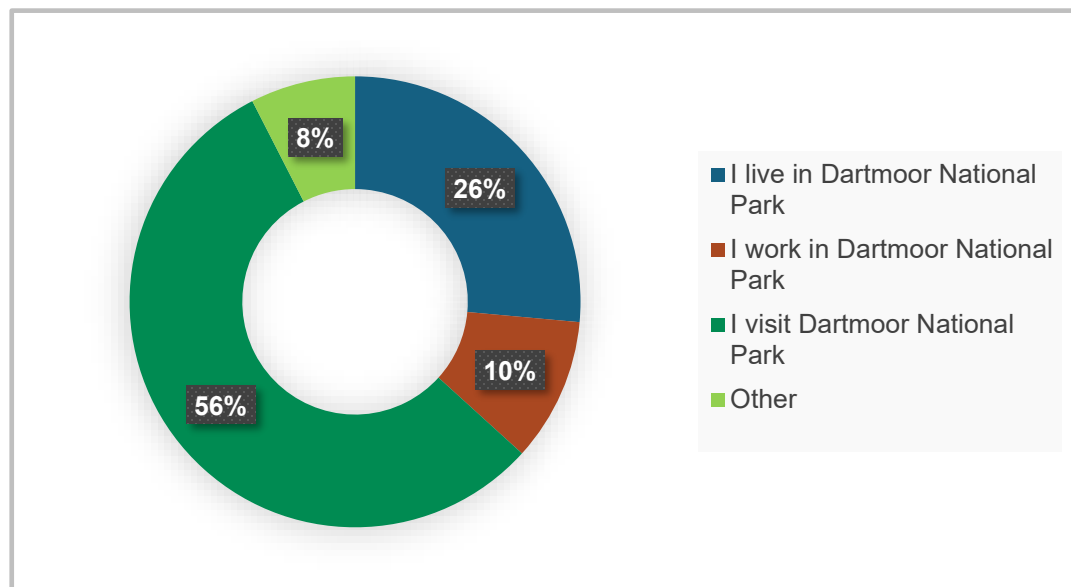
This pattern aligns with the 2023 Visitor Survey, which found most visitors to Dartmoor came from the Southwest, particularly Dartmoor and nearby urban centres and others from major UK cities such as London, Bristol, and Birmingham<sup>2</sup>. A small number of respondents were from abroad, including the United States and Germany, but the vast majority were UK-based. (Only UK locations are shown on the map).



## Respondent's Connection to Dartmoor

Respondents had diverse connections to Dartmoor, reflecting the varied ways people engage with the National Park. The chart below illustrates these connections:

Most responses came from visitors (56%), while 26% of responses were residents within the Park and the remainder were connected through work, volunteering, family connections, upbringing or a general interest in Dartmoor. This distribution reflects the relative size of the populations: Dartmoor welcomes approximately 2.58 million visitors each year, compared with a resident population of around 37,237 people<sup>1</sup>.



## Representation of Organisations



**17 responses (<1%)** came from organisations, most based in Dartmoor or elsewhere in Devon. These included a mix of conservation and wildlife organisations, outdoor recreation and visitor-focused groups, community and youth organisations, accommodation and hospitality providers, small businesses, farms, and local food or craft producers. The remaining 99% were from individuals, reflecting a broad range of perspectives from people who live, work, visit, or care about Dartmoor.

## Familiarity with the Partnership Plan

Respondents were asked how familiar they are with the current Partnership Plan. Most respondents were not familiar with the Plan – 55%, followed by 41% being somewhat familiar. 4% of respondents felt that they were very familiar with it.

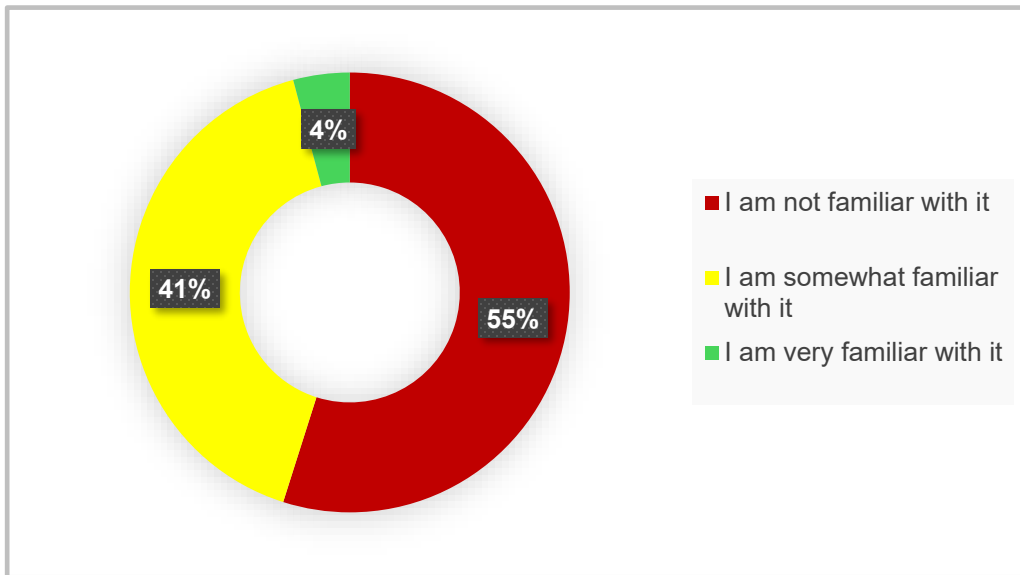


Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of familiarity with the Dartmoor Partnership Plan. Scores for “Not familiar” and “Somewhat familiar” are fairly evenly distributed across the UK, while Figure 1 illustrates that respondents who are “Very familiar” are primarily concentrated in Devon.

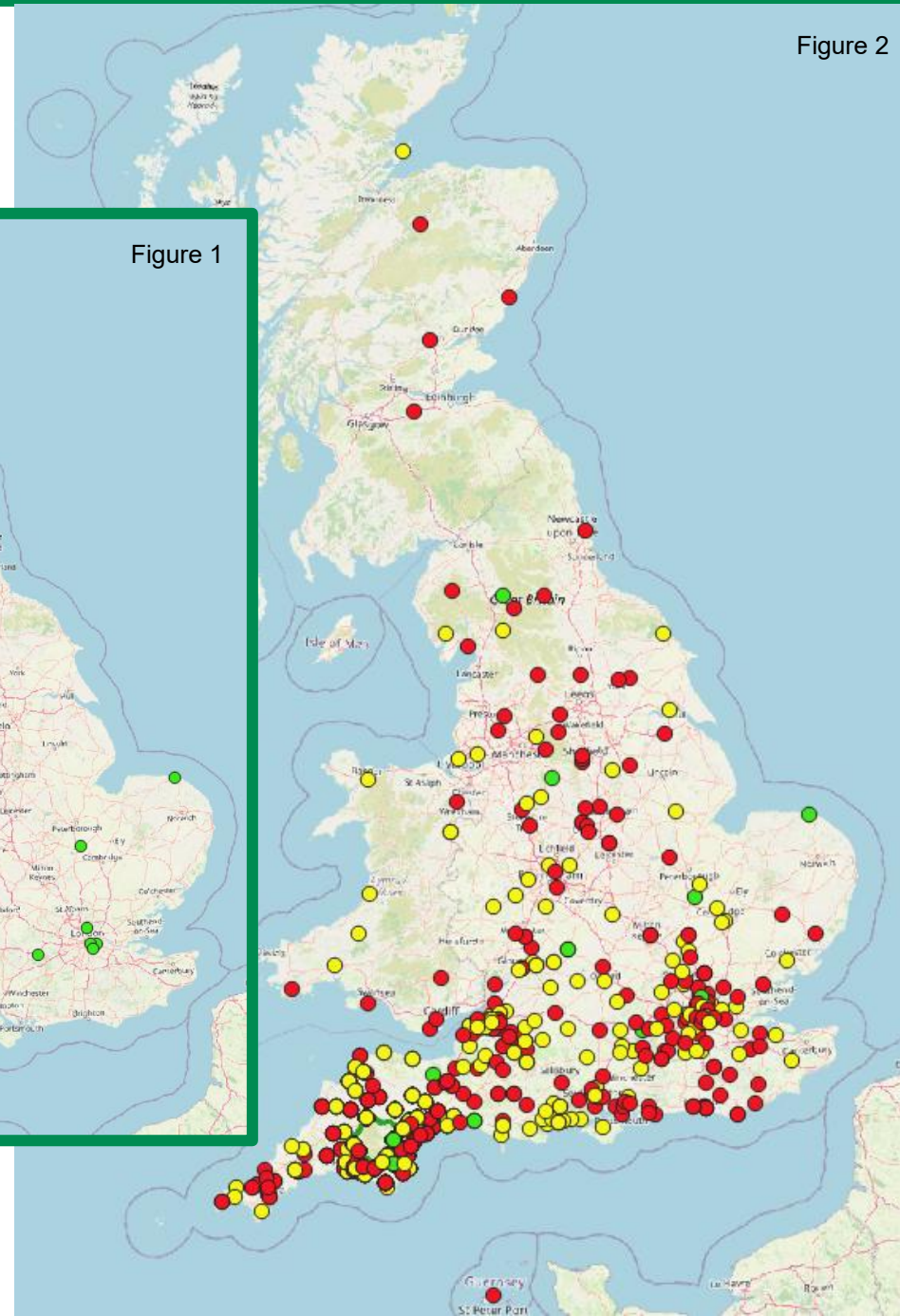
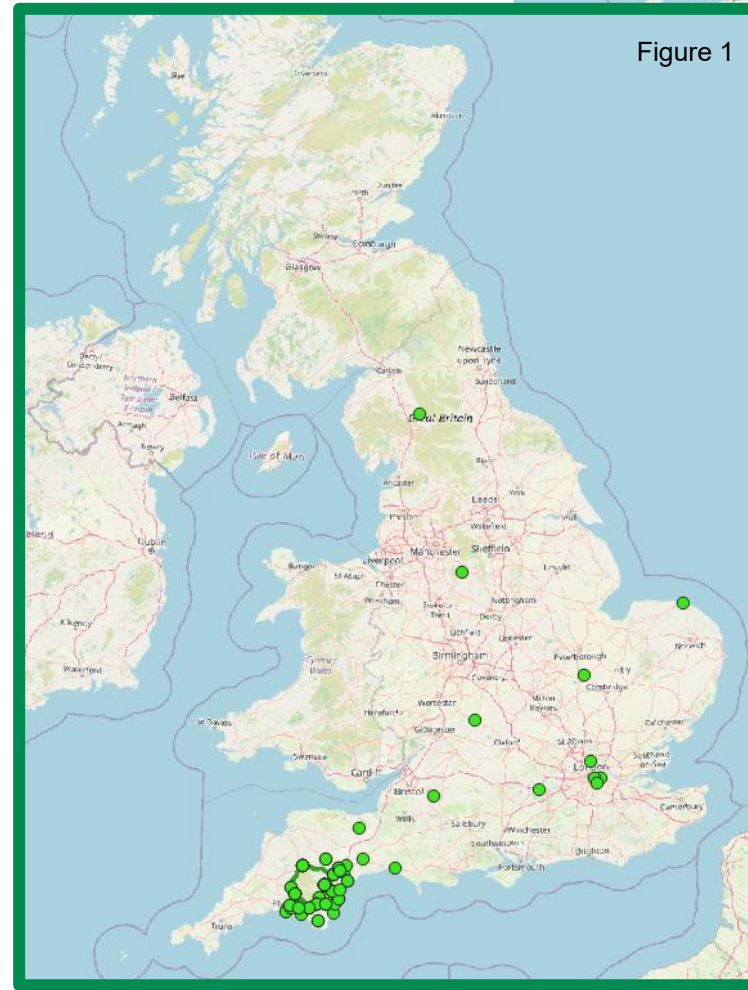
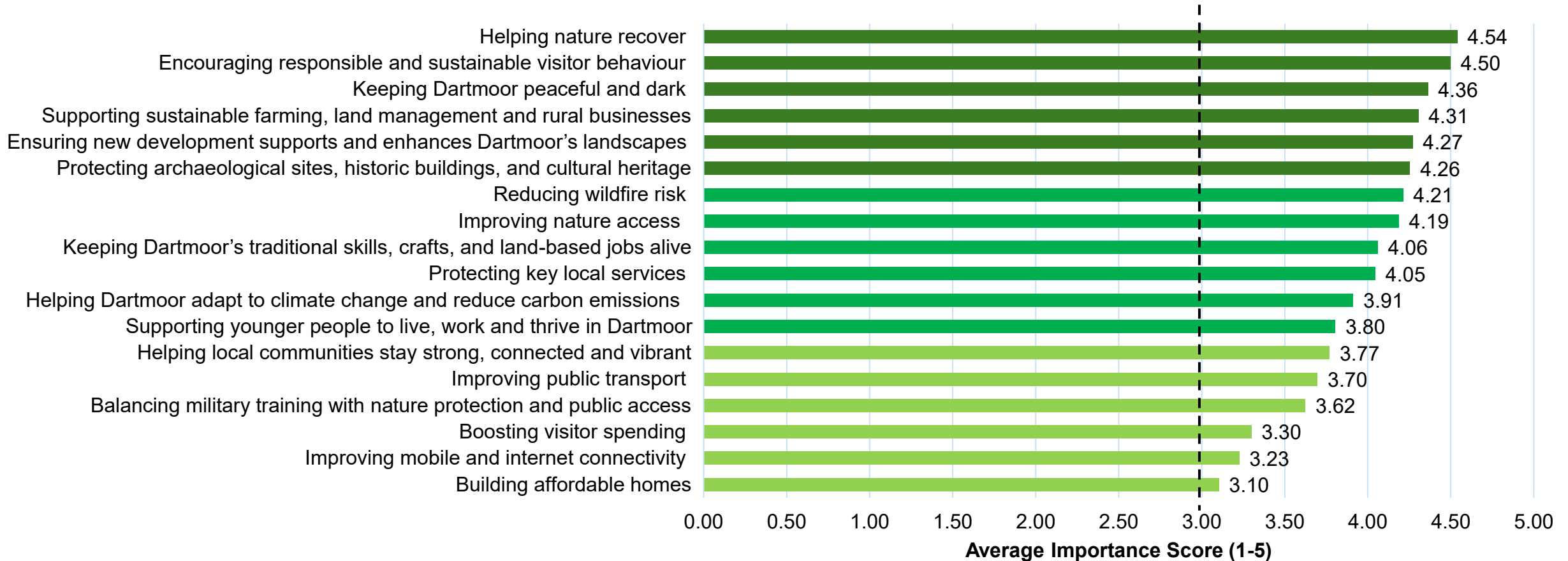


Figure 2

# Shared Priorities for Dartmoor

Respondents were asked: “What should be the top priorities for Dartmoor over the coming years?” They rated a list of opportunities and challenges on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important).



## Priorities are groups by average score:

- **High Importance (4.25-4.50):** Priorities that received the strongest emphasis from respondents and are widely recognised as critical for Dartmoor's future.

- **Medium Importance (3.80-4.20):** Priorities that are broadly valued across respondents and reflect a wide range of issues.
- **Lower Importance (3.0-3.79):** Priorities that, while slightly lower on the scale, remain moderately important in shaping Dartmoor's future.

## Context on Priorities

The survey shows that respondents placed higher emphasis of importance on environmental protection and sustainable land use, including:

- Helping nature recover by restoring peatlands and woodlands
- Encouraging responsible visitor behaviour
- Keeping Dartmoor peaceful and dark

Priorities that were slightly lower in average score relate more to infrastructure, economic growth, and balancing competing land uses, such as:

- Affordable housing for local people
- Improving mobile and internet connectivity
- Boosting visitor spending

Overall, respondents placed the strongest value on Dartmoor's natural and cultural assets, rather than economic or infrastructural priorities. This could reflect the respondent's profile: over half were visitors, who are often drawn to Dartmoor for its landscapes, wildlife, and recreational opportunities.

Priorities with lower average scores are still rated moderately important and should continue to be considered to support both the natural environment and community needs.



## Qualitative Analysis

In addition to rating specific priorities, survey respondents were asked:

*“Is there anything else that you think should be prioritised for Dartmoor?”.*

This open-ended question generated a wide range of qualitative responses. Many of these responses reflect the themes identified in the prioritisation exercise, while also highlighting specific local concerns and nuanced perspectives that may not have been captured previously.

The responses have been grouped into key themes to aid interpretation and linkage to the quantitative prioritisation results. Selected quotes have been included to illustrate these themes; however, they represent the subjective opinions of individual respondents rather than a decided or collective viewpoint. They have been chosen to reflect a broad range of perspectives and to help explain the diversity of views expressed.

Rated Priority Area	Themes from Open-Ended Responses	Key Insights / Examples / Quotes
Nature Recovery & Biodiversity	Habitat restoration, wildlife protection, rewilding, tree planting, invasive species management	Peatland and woodland restoration; controlling Molinia, bracken, and gorse; mixed views on rewilding and grazing. <b>Quotes:</b> “Absolute priority should be adopted to manage the devastation that the invasion of Molinia has caused.” / “New planting and woodland creation of native trees. Increasing biodiversity by making and restoring habitats”.
Sustainable Land Management	Grazing management, support for hill farmers, balancing nature and farming	Adjust grazing intensity and livestock mix; support local farmers and commoners; maintain productive farmland while enhancing biodiversity. <b>Quotes:</b> “Go back to letting farmers look after the Common, let them regulate grazing, swaling etc.” / “I feel we need to reduce grazing.” / “Supporting the hill farmers should be our highest priority so that the moor can remain stocked, and the beautiful landscape maintained.”
Visitor Management & Public Access	Visitor behaviour, access management, transport, facilities	Reduce litter, fires, and dog attacks; improve signage and education; manage visitor numbers in sensitive areas; improve toilets, bins, parking, and public transport. <b>Quotes:</b> “Providing facilities for visitors to dispose of rubbish”. / “Better public transport for all communities.”

Open-ended responses reinforced the priorities identified in the rating exercise, highlighting the importance of nature recovery, sustainable land management, visitor management, and support for local communities.

Collectively, these responses reflect a strong desire among residents and visitors for Dartmoor to remain a wild, natural, and working landscape, with a careful balance between environmental protection, community wellbeing, and sustainable land use.

<p><b>Housing &amp; Local Communities</b></p>	<p>Affordable housing, planning, economic support</p>	<p>Address second homes and unaffordable housing; enforce planning; support local businesses and sustainable tourism. <b>Quotes:</b> “Limit overnight camper vans... restrictions on second homes so local folk can afford to live in the park.” “Prioritise homes for people who live and work here.”</p>
<p><b>Cultural Heritage &amp; Traditions</b></p>	<p>Historic landscapes, traditional activities, local knowledge</p>	<p>Protect archaeological sites, ancient walls, and historic land use; support traditional practices; involve local communities in decision-making. <b>Quotes:</b> “Keeping some of the historical aspects of the tors going, for example the Buckland beacon carving.” / “Driving apprenticeship schemes in local skills such as stonewalling and banking, hedge laying, stone masonry, thatching, slating, lime pointing and plastering and greenwood work”.</p>
<p><b>Climate Change &amp; Sustainability</b></p>	<p>Environmental resilience, sustainable energy and transport</p>	<p>Mitigate wildfire risk; manage water storage; promote low-carbon travel and renewables where appropriate. <b>Quotes:</b> “Climate change is the greatest threat to nature and our current way of life, so every opportunity to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the effects... should have a high priority.” / “Peatland restoration and better targeted grazing should be the focus when mitigating wildfire risk.”</p>
<p><b>Governance &amp; Enforcement</b></p>	<p>Stronger enforcement, rangers, leadership and coordination</p>	<p>Proactive planning enforcement; visible ranger presence; DNPA leadership in education, funding, and partnership coordination. <b>Quotes:</b> “Increase visibility of Rangers, encourage good behaviour of people and enforce bylaws.” / “Improving the enforcement of unauthorised development.”</p>

## Priorities for Under 25 Year Olds and Residents

The survey results were also analysed by age and residency to explore whether priorities differed for younger people and those living in Dartmoor. It is important to note that only 97 responses came from under 25s and 850 from residents out of a total of 2654, so these results are not statistically representative. Nevertheless, they provide useful insight into the perspectives of these groups and help highlight any differences in emphasis compared with the overall population. Appendix B presents the full percentage breakdown of importance ratings for Dartmoor's priorities, comparing overall results with those of under-25s and residents.

### Under 25's

For respondents aged 25 and under, the overall pattern of priorities broadly aligns with the wider survey, with the High Importance category aligning exactly with the overall results. However, there are some notable differences in emphasis within the lower-rated priorities.

While all priorities generally received scores above 3 in the overall survey, several under-25 respondents rated some priorities below 3. Improving mobile and internet connectivity, which was considered moderately important overall, was ranked lowest by this age group. Other priorities within the Lower Importance category retained similar relative rankings to the overall survey. The Medium Importance priorities also show broadly similar patterns, indicating that while younger respondents largely share the wider population's views, they place slightly less emphasis on certain infrastructure and connectivity issues.





## Residents

For residents, High Importance priorities were similar to the overall survey, with slightly higher emphasis on ‘responsible visitor behaviour’ and ‘supporting sustainable farming.’

Residents’ lower priorities also align with the overall results, with ‘building affordable homes for local people’ and ‘boosting visitor spending to support Dartmoor’s economy’ remaining in the Lower Importance category. Improving mobile and internet connectivity was also in the Lower Importance category for residents but scored higher on average (3.60) compared with the overall survey (3.23). These results reflect residents’ emphasis on maintaining the local landscape and supporting productive farming practices alongside infrastructure and economic considerations.

Residents made up only 26% of survey respondents. While connectivity and housing priorities, scored in the Lower category among this group, wider evidence and ongoing work demonstrate that these issues remain critical.

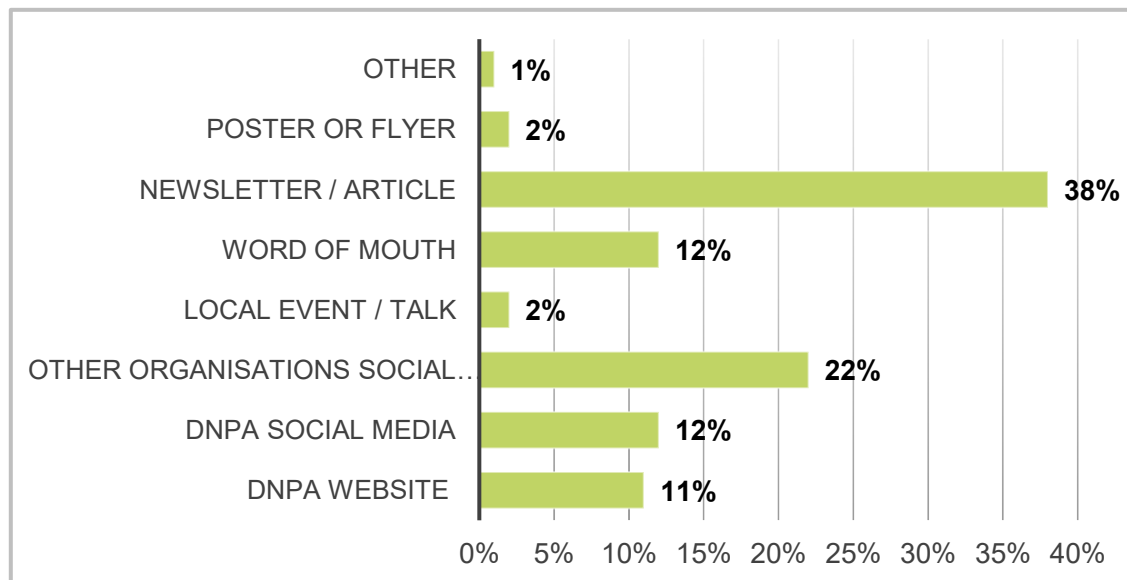
**All 18 priorities remain central to Dartmoor and will be fully considered throughout the development of the Partnership Plan.**

# Communications

As part of the survey, respondents were asked how they first heard about the Public Opinion Survey and how they would like to be kept informed about the Partnership Plan and the work of partners in the National Park.

## How respondents heard about the survey

The majority of respondents (38%) reported hearing about the survey through newsletters or articles. The second most common source, at 22%, was “other organisations’ social media,” highlighting the important role of the Dartmoor Partnership Board in extending the survey’s reach.



The Partnership Board is made up of a group of organisations and stakeholders who work collaboratively with DNPA to support the review and delivery of the Partnership Plan. Board members shared the survey widely through their organisation’s newsletters and social media, demonstrating how joint messaging strengthens engagement with the Partnership Plan.

Posters, flyers, and local events or talks were the least common sources (2%), indicating these channels were less effective in reaching respondents.

## Preferred communication channels

Respondents were also asked how they would like to receive information in the future. The results indicate the most effective channels for keeping the public informed about the Partnership Plan. The majority preferred updates from the DNPA website (18%), followed closely by email newsletters and social media (17%). Posters, flyers, and word of mouth were the least popular options (6%).

**These insights provide clear guidance for future public engagement, ensuring that updates on Dartmoor’s priorities and initiatives reach communities and stakeholders in the most effective way.**

# Summary and Next Steps

The survey has provided an understanding of what people who live, work, visit, or care about Dartmoor consider most important for its future. The results demonstrate strong shared support for protecting the natural and cultural assets of the National Park, promoting sustainable land use, and encouraging responsible visitor behaviour, while also highlighting differences in emphasis across age groups and residents.

The survey insights will help guide discussions on the priorities for the next five years that will shape the new Partnership Plan.

## How to stay involved and follow progress:

- Updates on the Partnership Plan and related projects will be shared via the DNPA website: [www.yourdartmoor.org](http://www.yourdartmoor.org).
- You can subscribe to the DNPA newsletter to receive news and opportunities to provide further input.
- Further consultations will continue to allow residents and visitors to share their views and help shape delivery.

## Learnings from the survey:

- Public priorities are strongly aligned around environmental protection and sustainable land use, confirming these as core areas for action.
- Differences in emphasis between age groups and residents indicate the importance of tailoring engagement and communications to reflect diverse perspectives.
- Even priorities with lower average scores remain important, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that considers both high and lower priorities.

Through this process, DNPA and partners can ensure that the Partnership Plan reflects the community's shared values, supports sustainable management of the National Park, and provides clear opportunities for ongoing engagement.

**Dartmoor**  
**Partnership Plan**

**THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK**

[www.yourdartmoor.org](http://www.yourdartmoor.org)

# Acknowledgements

**Thank you** to everyone who took part in the survey. Your time, insights, and thoughtful responses are invaluable in helping shape the future of Dartmoor.

We are also grateful to our partner organisations who supported the survey and helped engage communities across the National Park and beyond. Your collaboration ensures that a wide range of voices are heard and reflected in the development of the new Partnership Plan.

Together, respondents and partners are helping to guide the sustainable management, protection, and enhancement of Dartmoor for current and future generations.

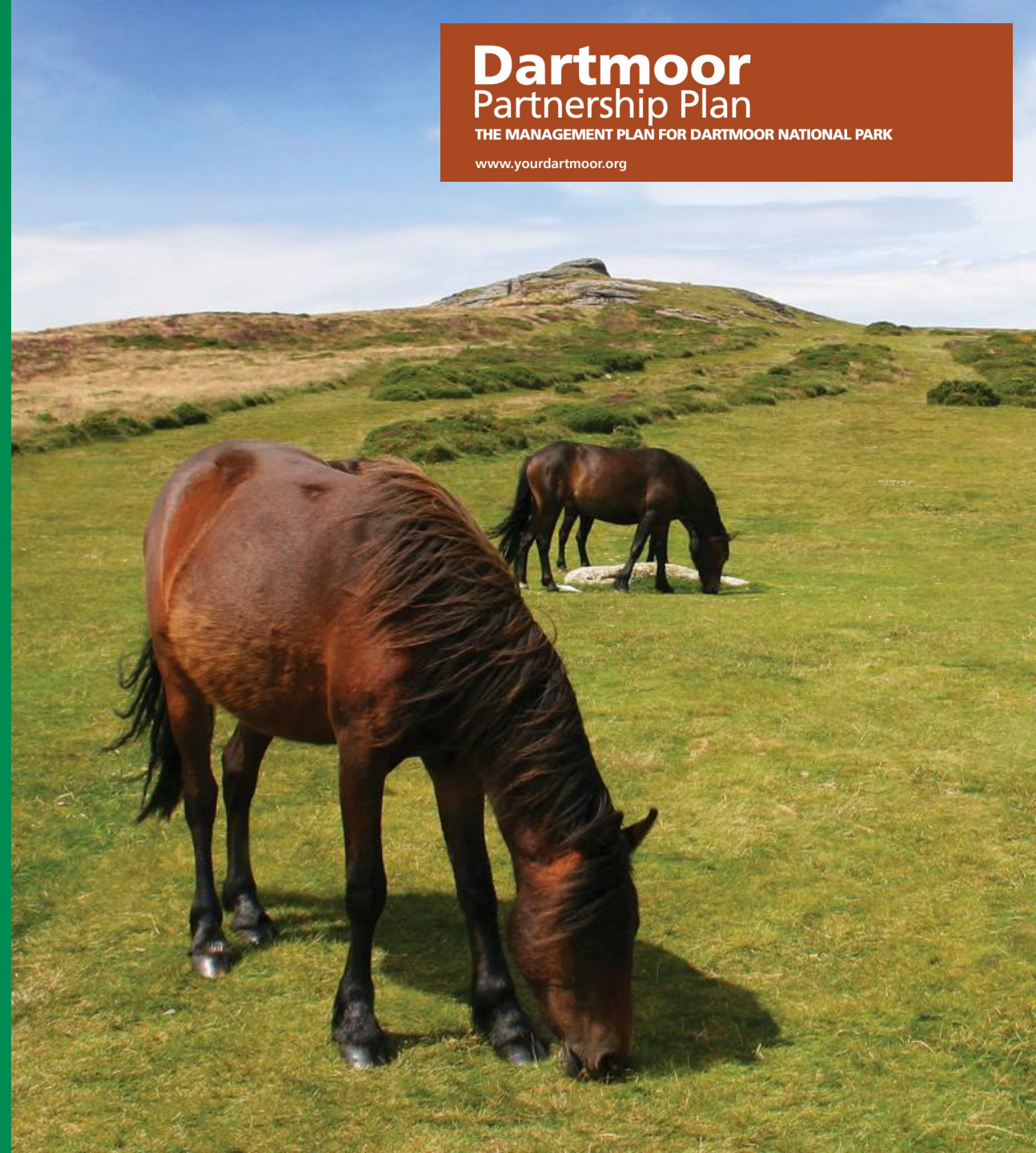
## References

1. Small World Consulting. *Exmoor & Dartmoor National Park Carbon Footprint Assessments*. PowerPoint Presentation. 2023.
2. DNPA. *Dartmoor National Park Visitor Survey 2023*. [https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0027/515547/2023-Visitor-Survey-report.pdf](https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/515547/2023-Visitor-Survey-report.pdf). 2023

## Dartmoor Partnership Plan

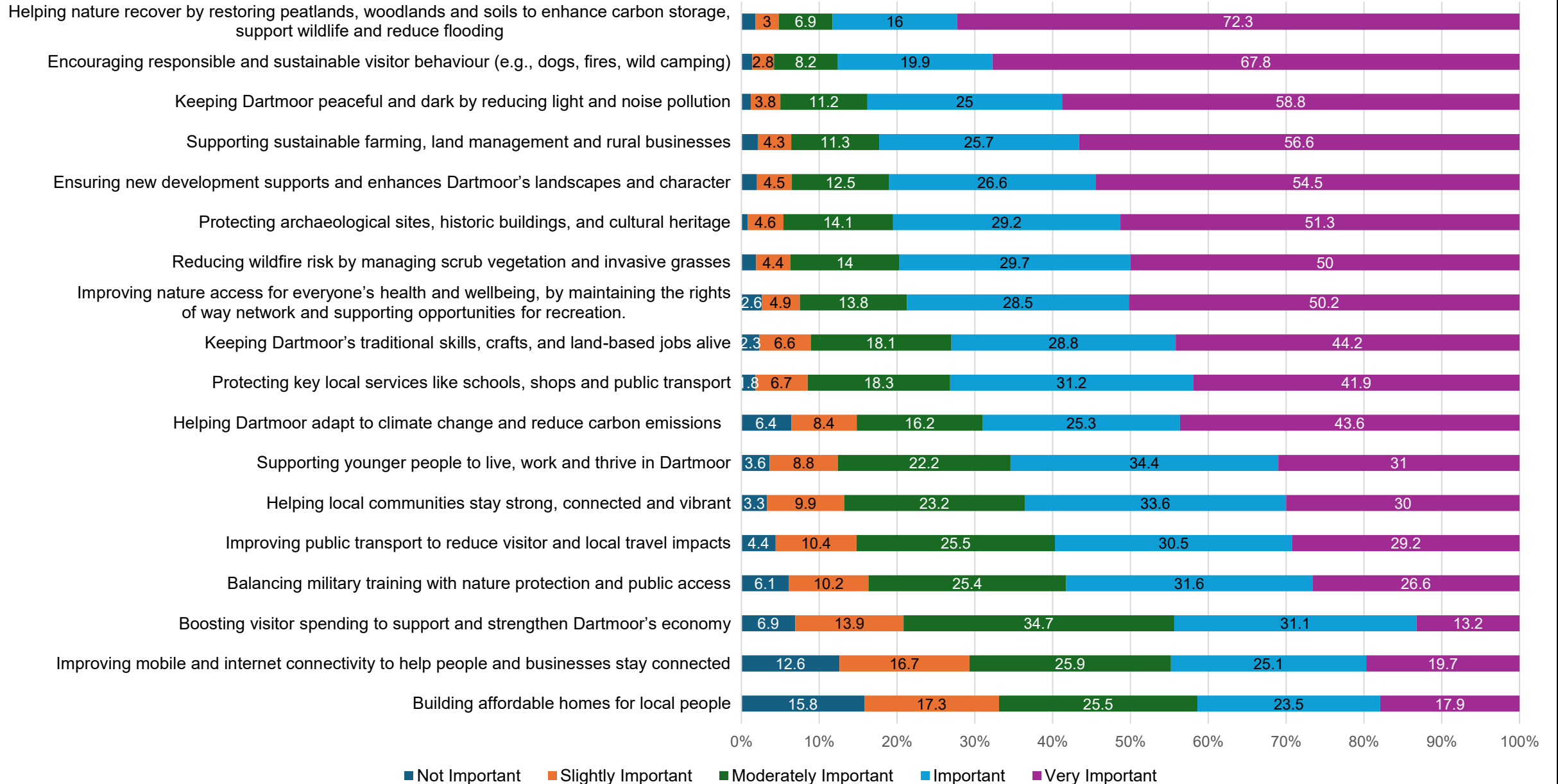
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# Appendices: Appendix A

## Percentage Breakdown of Importance Ratings for Dartmoor's Priorities



# Appendix B

## Percentage Breakdown of Importance Ratings for Dartmoor's Priorities: Comparison of Overall Results with U25s and Residents

