

Dartmoor Partnership Plan

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

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Dartmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2021-2026

Review Background Paper

Theme: Better for Businesses

Purpose of paper:

The Dartmoor Partnership Plan 2021-2026 is the single most important policy document for the National Park (also known as the National Park Management Plan). It is the strategic, overarching plan for the National Park and is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purposes and duty are met and provides a mechanism for combining national and local priorities.

The Partnership Plan is for the National Park and not just the National Park Authority, or any individual group or organisation. It sets the framework for partnership action to deliver outcomes set out in the Plan and the Vision for Dartmoor.

The Partnership Plan is required to be reviewed at least every five years. This paper provides the background evidence required to support the review of the Partnership Plan.

A background paper has been prepared for each of the seven themes within the Partnership Plan.

Forces for Change:

- The climate in Dartmoor is changing, with higher average temperatures and increases in rainfall predicted. Businesses may have to reassess their flood risk, depending on their location for example, and could face insurance liability consequences.
- Dartmoor's overall population has been relatively stable over the past 20 years, but within that period the proportion of people over 65 is increasing while the working age population is decreasing, which will affect recruitment for Dartmoor businesses.
- Additional pressure is being seen by large areas of housing development outside the borders of the National Park.
- Since 2021 the UK has seen economic circumstances resulting in a cost-of-living crisis which has affected businesses. Increases in employer expenses – such as National insurance – have resulted in some businesses facing financial difficulties

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and some are reducing their recruitment levels of seasonal workers to address these costs.

- There have been several reductions in the number of, and frequency of bus routes over the past 5 years, directly impacting the ability of people to access employment, especially those working shift-patterns.
- 'Digital Voice' switchover will see all analogue telephone lines being switched off by January 2027 and moved onto digital, broadband-based landlines. It is expected that there will potentially be some impact on businesses during the transition period.

Key Issues and opportunities

Climate Change

- Opportunity for local renewable energy business partnerships, acting as micro-generators can support local economic input.
- Dartmoor is home to high quality local producers and a large accommodation and food sector which can reduce food miles and create a circular economy. Local food networks are being established to support producers and retailers / cafes / restaurants with sourcing and supply from local producers.
- Public transport within the National Park is very limited, without any daily services for workers or students, and resulting in most commuters being reliant on private vehicles.
- New developments outside the National Park could lead to greater access to workforce within the National Park, opening up opportunities for growth.
- Remote areas serviced by private water sources and drainage may be more susceptible to extreme weather events, which could impact several Dartmoor businesses.

Access to services

- The closure of most high street bank branches has had a significant impact on businesses, meaning most have to make long journeys to pay in takings. Cash machines have also been greatly reduced, decreasing access to cash. Many businesses are now taking card payments only, which excludes many people.

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- Several villages have seen the closure of Post Offices, Village Shops and pubs. Some community businesses have been established to try and address this problem, but these businesses need support to thrive.
- Opportunities for people to travel within and between settlements – for employment in local businesses – should be regularly assessed. The increase in housing outside the National Park could influence improvements in public transport provision.

Connectivity

- Broadband connectivity is poor across the majority of Dartmoor when compared with the rest of the UK both regarding the average download speeds and the percentage of premises unable to receive a decent broadband. This has severe impacts on businesses, with many unable to develop online services such as e-commerce, and improved functionality on websites etc.
- Large gaps in mobile phone network coverage also affect businesses, as many SME businesses operate without using landlines.

Housing

- High property prices on Dartmoor, and comparatively lower wages mean that many employees of Dartmoor businesses are unable to afford to buy a house near to their place of work.

Business Development

- A decreasing percentage of the population are of working age with the majority self-employed making it a challenge for businesses to recruit staff.
- Most registered businesses on Dartmoor are Micro / SME businesses, with between 0-9 employees. Challenges within rural locations include a more limited labour market supply and sparsity in business networking can make it difficult for businesses to grow in scale.
- Support is needed to help smaller business become more resilient.
- Accommodation and food services are the largest sector by employment in Dartmoor but result in the least turnover per job, keeping earnings lower.

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- Production and professional, scientific and technical sectors in Dartmoor (along with construction) produce the highest comparative turnover per employee.
- The median work-based earnings for Dartmoor are much lower than the national average (in 2023 the median for Dartmoor was £29,071 compared with £35,004 nationally)

Policy Drivers:

- [English National Parks and the Broads- UK Government Vision and Circular \(2010\)](#) provides a long-term vision for the National Parks and priority outcomes including support rural economies and affordable housing, improving communications infrastructure and promote sustainable tourism and transport.
- [Fit for the future: 10 Year Health Plan for England \(July 2025\)](#) Seeks to radically shift the NHS in 3 ways: firstly, from hospital-based to neighbourhood-based service through Neighbourhood Health Centres, secondly through fully digital, patient-controlled systems and thirdly through proactive prevention.
- [National Planning Policy Framework \(2024\)](#) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- [Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 3 \(2011 – 2026\)](#) Rural Devon Strategy promotes walking and cycling routes, better bus services, remote working and remote access to services to reduce travel need.
- [Draft Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 \(2025 – 2040\)](#) emerging Rural Devon Strategy published for consultation only includes transition to lower emissions fuels, improving digital access, increasing community services within rural settlements, development of countywide LCWIP and creation of mobility hubs and shared modes of transport.
- [Draft Devon and Torbay CA Local Growth Plan](#) - identifies 5 priorities for the region including supporting 'bedrock sectors' (including regenerative farming, sustainable visitor economy and health), place promotion and retaining talented working age population.
- [Devon Carbon Plan](#) (2022) sets out emissions targets for the county, with a goal of net zero by 2050 and sets out key actions.

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- [Devon's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 - 2025](#) sets priorities including improving housing, promoting physical activity, supporting good mental health and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- [Dartmoor Local Plan 2018 – 2036](#) sets out policies to deliver new sustainable development that meets the needs of local communities whilst protecting and enhancing Dartmoor's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. The plan provides for 65 dwellings per year with a focus on affordable homes.
- Housing Strategies
 - [South Hams & West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026](#)
 - [Teignbridge District Council Housing strategy 2021-2026](#)
- Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plans:
 - [South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council \(2025\)](#)
 - [Heart of Teignbridge \(2024\)](#)

Public consultation on priorities for Dartmoor

A public consultation on Dartmoor's future priorities was held during August and September 2025. The consultation invited people to share their views on the most important issues to be addressed in the updated Dartmoor Partnership Plan and for Dartmoor's long-term future.

Data and trends

The [State of the Park Report](#), produced on a five-year cycle to inform the review of the Partnership Plan, provides a detailed assessment of data and trends relating to the National Park and is the principal evidence base for all themes within the Partnership Plan.