

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 Communities

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.
- 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.
- Since 2021 the UK has seen economic circumstances resulting in a cost-of-living crisis which has affected both households and businesses.
- There have been several reductions in the number of and frequency of bus routes over the past 5 years, including Dartmoor Explorer bus from Exeter to Princetown.

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- 'Digital Voice' switchover will see all analogue telephone lines being switched off by January 2027 and moved onto digital, broadband-based landlines.

Key Issues and opportunities

Climate Change

- Opportunities for local renewable energy networks and partnerships, to adapt and mitigate to climate change by producing electricity with a lower impact.
- Dartmoor is home to many high-quality food and drink producers, and a large accommodation and local food sector, which reduces food miles and supports the circular economy.
- Public transport within the National Park is very limited which results in communities being heavily reliant on private vehicles to access employment and education, producing higher levels of emissions.
- Development of regenerative tourism has the potential to create positive social and economic opportunities, benefitting businesses and communities.
- Remote areas serviced by private water sources and drainage may be more susceptible to extreme weather events.

Access to services

- Greater distances and limited public transport act as barriers to services such as post offices, GPs, schools, banking and shops.
- Some communities are working to provide and maintain their own local services (for example, Christow community shop, Drewe Arms Community Pub in Drewsteignton). Local Parish and Town Councils may have a role in better supporting these local projects that benefit communities.
- An aging population may require different services and accommodation, and there will be an increasing need for support services for this sector.
- Distance, undulating topography and high elevations can be a barrier for commuter cycling routes between settlements.

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- Improvements to, and expansion of, local active travel routes within settlements and connecting to other settlements should be further examined to allow more car-free journeys within these areas.

Health

- Health on Dartmoor is consistent with national figures, with 80% of residents reporting good or very good health. The PRoW network and open access routes support active lifestyles and give communities the opportunity to become social prescribing hubs, making the most of the recreation opportunities offered by the National Park

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 superfast broadband.
- There are significant gaps in mobile phone coverage, with many 'not-spots' in communities across the moor.

Housing

- High property prices are out of step with local earnings making it increasingly difficult for local people and workers to live inside the National Park. In 2023, the affordability ratio (house price to earnings) of Dartmoor was 11.87, compared with 10.22 for Devon and 8.26 for England.
- Between 2018 - 2014 398 homes were built with 158 of these being affordable homes for local people.
- 65% of Dartmoor neighbourhoods are in the 'most deprived' quintile for living environment (ONS, Multiple Indices of Deprivation). Indicators for this include housing without central heating and housing in poor condition. Plans are needed to support improvements to these properties.

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.

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- [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.
- [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](#)

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- [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.