

Exmoor National Park Authority (NPA) Exmoor Panel Update 03/09/19

Exmoor National Park Dark Skies Festival

- Following sell-out events during the first two years, the third annual Dark Skies Festival is being held over three weeks (14th October-3rd November). It includes over 50 events to celebrate Exmoor's starry skies and its status as one of three of the UK's International Dark Skies Reserves.
- These include an Astro Party at Wimbleball Lake, planetarium experiences in Dunster, Bampton and Barnstaple and the National Park's first Dark Skies Big Adventure with the National Trust. There are also guided and National Park Ranger stargazing walks / meteor opportunities, night mountain biking and events on astrophotography. Many link an activity with food and drink or accommodation.
- An Exmoor dark skies story writing competition for children aged up to 16 years of age, provides a chance to win an astronomy and space workshop for their school;
- The full programme is at www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/darkskiesfestival or from National Park Centres at Dulverton, Dunster or Lynmouth. Phone: Lynmouth National Park Centre 01598 752509 (7 days a week).

Exmoor Historic Buildings Festival

- Exmoor's first Historic Buildings Festival took place in September with a week of events celebrating the National Park's buildings.
- A wide range of events were on offer about how and why these structures came to be and what they can teach us about how our ancestors lived and worked. The Festival forms part of Heritage Open Days, when places across the country open their doors to celebrate their heritage, community and history.
- The week included: Simonsbath's Ashcombe Gardens (garden restoration and Scottish croft-house); story of Lynton and Lynmouth's cliff railway; Ada Lovelace's former Porlock estate; a tour of Dunster medieval buildings as part of a project to trace and record the town's early history; a convoy of military vehicles to the former World War II radar station and tank training grounds on North Hill.

Porlock Fire Station

The National Park Authority (NPA) has been consulted on the proposed operational changes in and around Exmoor National Park. A response was due to be submitted including to raise the issue of the impacts of large summer wildfires on the National Park's wildlife and landscape and recognise the importance of ensuring the correct skills, knowledge and management practices to address the increasing risk of moorland wildfires; welcome the emphasis on prevention advice and the wish to continue good partnership working; recognise concerns about some aspects of the proposals; and seek an explanation of how the risk of Summer Moorland fires has been considered in the review.

Glover Review Update

- Last year, the Government commissioned a review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) (often referred to as "protected landscapes") led by Julian Glover. It was one of the commitments in the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

- The Government stated that weakening or undermining existing protections or geographic scope for National Parks/AONBs would not be part of the review, which would instead focus on how designated areas can boost wildlife, support the recovery of natural habitats and connect more people with nature.
- Some headline messages were set out in a letter from Julian Glover to Michael Gove (the then Environment Secretary) published last July:
 - More outreach work to reach new audiences
 - Placing protected landscapes at the forefront of nature recovery, the future of farming, and supporting people’s health and well-being
 - Ensuring protected landscapes are priorities for Environmental Land Management payments to achieve “nature recovery” through farming and by developing landscape scale, long term strategies to assess and improve nature
 - Protected landscapes taking a lead in the national response to climate change
 - Exploring the potential for a National Landscape Service
 - Reforming the current system of National Park governance for.
 - A specific proposal for a way for protected landscapes to address the shortage of social housing to be in the final report (the report has now included a proposed National Park Housing Association)

[Since the last Panel meeting, the report has been published and a link to the report is here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf

The National Park Authority’s response to the report can be found here: <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/about-us/press-room/press-room/news-2019/exmoor-national-authority-response-to-landscapes-review>]

Rural Worker and Succession Farm Dwelling Guidance Consultation

The draft document sets out detailed guidance on the practical aspects of making planning applications for new homes for those working in land-based businesses in the National Park. The public consultation ran from May to 31st July 2019.

The document is intended to be formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to enable greater weight to be given to it when deciding relevant planning applications. Members were due to be updated on the consultation responses in September [an update / discussion on the consultation took place]. Taking account of responses, a revised draft guidance document will be taken to an Authority meeting for sign off.

Rural Enterprise Exmoor:

An audit is being undertaken and survey work (which will in part add to the audit) is also due to happen. A business engagement workshop is intended as the main face to face gathering as part of this exercise.

[Since the last meeting on the **24th October** the Business engagement workshop was held at Wheddon Cross with over 100 businesses/individuals having confirmed they would attend].