

## Exmoor National Park Authority (NPA) Exmoor Panel Update 07/11/19

### Rural Enterprise Exmoor:

The project aims to better understand the breadth and depth of business activity within the National Park, including:

- A business engagement workshop, attended by a broad range of local businesses and support agencies, held in October at Wheddon Cross as the [official launch of Rural Enterprise Exmoor](#) and to launch a business survey which aims to better understand the types of business activity across the National Park and the challenges and opportunities of doing business on Exmoor. Participants could win an Exmoor food hamper.
- The [5-minute online survey](#) is open until the end of the year to any business based or operating within Exmoor. There is an option for respondents to complete a further set of questions after completing the survey, either online or by requesting a telephone survey, to explore some of the issues in more depth.
- Panel members can assist by helping to make businesses aware of the survey which is available at <http://bit.ly/ExmoorRESurvey>, on the Exmoor National Park website at [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/living-and-working/business-and-economy/rural-enterprise-exmoor](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/living-and-working/business-and-economy/rural-enterprise-exmoor) and via @RuralEntExmoor on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). [Following a question at the Panel meeting, it is confirmed that details of the survey are being sent out to Parish and Town Councils shortly]
- The data, once collated and analysed, will be used to inform a rural enterprise strategy.
- For further information please contact Dan James, Sustainable Economy Manager at [ruralenterprise@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:ruralenterprise@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

### Rural Worker and Succession Farm Dwelling Guidance Consultation

- A Representation Statement and the amended draft final Rural Worker and Succession Farm Worker Dwellings Guidance are out for [consultation](#) until 20<sup>th</sup> November.
- The Representations Statement explains how the consultation has been carried out at key stages in the preparation of the guidance:
  - the organisations and individuals who were invited to make representations,
  - how they were invited to make representations,
  - summarises the main issues raised as a result of the consultation, and
  - Shows how those main issues have been addressed.
- Taking account of responses, it is intended that a revised draft guidance document will be adopted by the Authority as Supplementary Planning Document to enable greater weight to be given to it when deciding relevant planning applications.

### Exmoor's Ambition Test and Trial Project

- Defra has recently confirmed they will fund the Park Authority's 'Test and Trial' proposal to demonstrate some of the principles of Exmoor's Ambition proposal in partnership with Exmoor Hill Farming Network. The aim is to give land managers more say over how to manage their land to deliver public goods, making better use of their expertise.

- The Ambition proposes two complementary approaches, ‘Good Farming Measures’ to reward environmentally sensitive farming practice at a holding level and ‘Enhanced Benefit Measures’ to support benefits from wider landscape scale working.
- Tests and Trials (T&Ts) are small scale projects which contribute to the design of the new Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) which is due to replace current EU farming subsidies, the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Countryside Stewardship. They are the first stage, to be completed by 2021 and are intended to help Defra develop the National Pilot.
- Defra’s broad principles for ELMS are different to the current subsidies as they are not reliant on land being in production i.e. not restricted to supporting farming but instead they support the delivery of environmental benefits or ‘public goods’; focussed on environmental outcomes. The 6 categories are: plants and wildlife; clean & plentiful water; beauty, heritage & engagement; climate change; protection from/mitigation of hazards and clean air.

### **Climate Change Emergency**

- The NPA declared a climate emergency in October and agreed to work towards being a carbon neutral Authority by 2030. A detailed action plan will now be developed to be presented back to Authority Members next year.
- Members agreed to sign up to the [Devon Climate Declaration](#) and to work with Devon and Somerset County Councils to produce carbon plans covering the National Park to meet or exceed Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) targets.
- Since the NPA started monitoring its carbon footprint in 2008, there has been a 30% reduction in carbon emissions from measures such as energy efficiency improvements in Authority owned buildings, renewable energy installation and through help to install 73 new renewable energy systems in local communities, farms and houses across Exmoor.
- The NPA also manages its own estate, particularly woodlands, and works with other foresters and land owners to support positive woodland planting and management.
- Nearly 2,500 hectares of Exmoor’s peatland have so far been restored through the [Exmoor Mires Partnership](#), with plans to extend this to at least 3,000 hectares.
- The Exmoor National Park [Local Plan](#) contains further climate change measures:
  - reducing the need for energy and promotion of renewable energy.
  - Encouraging water conservation through sustainable and efficient supplies.
  - Support for upland and woodland management for carbon sequestration / storage.

### **Promoting Woodland Creation in South West National Parks**

- Exmoor NPA hosted an event with the Forestry Commission to promote good practice for woodland creation in Exmoor and Dartmoor as part of the long-term priority to increase the UK’s tree cover.
- It was the first of several workshops across the country, bringing together landowners with key partners to outline design principles for expanding wooded areas in a way that is sensitive to their species, habitats and cultural heritage.
- Exmoor and Dartmoor National Park Authorities are drawing up detailed action plans for carbon neutral efforts with increased tree cover likely to play an important role.

## BT Consultation Proposals for Public Telephone Box Removals

- BT wrote to Somerset West and Taunton Council (SW&T) in August 2019 to consult on a programme of public payphone removals. The deadline was 3<sup>rd</sup> November. SW&T consulted the parish and town councils affected.
- BT previously consulted the NPA about the removal of public phone boxes in 2003/4, 2008, 2009 and 2016.
- On this occasion, BT proposed to remove four public phone boxes in the Somerset area of the National Park. Of these, the K6 box at Luccombe, is no longer proposed for removal following an objection and additional evidence from Luccombe Parish Council.
- The three phone boxes still affected are at Bridgetown, Exford and Luckwell Bridge. Two of these are traditional K6 red phone boxes.
- At the 1<sup>st</sup> October Exmoor NPA meeting, members resolved to respond to SW&T and BT to object to the removal of heritage 'K6' phone boxes and on grounds of inadequate mobile phone signal.
- The NPA wrote to SW&T and BT on 26<sup>th</sup> October to object to the removal of the phone boxes at Bridgetown and Luckwell Bridge [At the 7/11/19 Panel Meeting, Jane Lillis Somerset RCC confirmed she has examples of incidents at Luckwell Bridge where a public phone box had been essential]. The NPA made a holding objection for the box at Exford in light of the information available. Extracts from the NPA response are set out below

Bridgetown: ... *The phone box and communities are in and around the Exe Valley where there is very limited or no mobile coverage. The area is very popular with visitors and there is a camping and caravanning site in Bridgetown.*

*Exton Parish Council has commented: "The Parish Council ... wish the telephone box to be retained due to lack of a mobile signal in the Village. Please note that ENPA led the last consultation in October 2016 where the Parish Council again requested the telephone box stay and this was supported by ENPA".*

*The National Park Authority notes that the public phone box in Bridgetown is a traditional red K6 box. It is recorded on the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record. The National Park Authority considers that it is important to retain the phone box in Bridgetown because of its heritage value as a K6 red phone box. This is consistent with the National Park's statutory purpose to conserve and enhance its cultural heritage<sup>1</sup>. The second reason is that there is very poor mobile phone coverage and the phone box is also close to the camping and caravanning site in Bridgetown. Exmoor National Park Authority **objects** to the removal of the public phone box.*

Luckwell Bridge, Wheddon Cross: *This phone box is in the small hamlet of Luckwell Bridge. The Authority previously resisted the removal of this box in 2009 and 2016.*

*Cutcombe Parish Council has objected to the proposed removal of this phone box. It said: "Cutcombe Parish Council object to the proposed removal of the telephone box at Luckwell Bridge due to the lack of mobile signal. In addition, in the phone box it states payment for calls can be made using cards and details how to lift the handset and swipe cards through the card reader, yet there is no card reader in the phone box".*

*As context, the Parish Council also objected to the removal of this payphone in 2016 because of a lack of mobile phone reception, its importance for local people, visitors and walkers and that Luckwell Bridge is a recognised accident blackspot with the nearest public payphone a mile away - a steep uphill walk.*

*The National Park Authority notes that the public phone box in Luckwell Bridge is a traditional Red K6 Box; It is also recorded on the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record. The National Park Authority considers that it is important to retain the phone box in Luckwell Bridge because of its heritage value as a K6 red phone box. This is consistent with the National Park's statutory purpose to conserve and enhance their cultural heritage<sup>2</sup> The second reason is that there is very poor mobile coverage. Exmoor National Park Authority **objects** to the removal of the public phone box.*

Exford: *This new "black-red" box (rather than a K6 box) is in the village of Exford.*

*Exford Parish Council has submitted a request to BT for information on the cost of maintaining the call box and a breakdown of that cost. The Parish Council intend to submit a response by the closing date of the consultation and that response will be dependent on the information supplied by BT. The Parish Council have not, therefore been able to provide a response until they have received the requested information, but do not wish the lack of a response to be considered as agreeing with the proposal. If BT were not able to supply the information by 25/10/19, they requested that the consultation deadline be extended until the information can be supplied and responses produced and circulated. We are not aware of whether the requested information has been received from BT and therefore what the Parish Council's response to the consultation is likely to be.*

*Given the above position of Exford Parish Council, Exmoor National Park Authority wishes to make a **holding objection** to the removal of the public phone box until the Parish Council has received the information they have requested and are able to clarify their position and respond.*

- The NPA recently responded to a parallel consultation with North Devon Council (and directly to BT) objecting to BT's proposed removal of four public phone boxes in Challacombe, Lynbridge and Parracombe. North Devon Council subsequently objected to the removal of all four phone boxes. They are now to be retained.

#### **Exmoor National Park Dark Skies Festival Update**

- Held from 14<sup>th</sup> October to 3<sup>rd</sup> November.
- 50 events, including 14 run by ENPA attended by nearly 2000 people.
- There has been positive feedback from the businesses involved.
- Next year's festival will run from 16<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

### **Exmoor Historic Buildings Festival**

- 18 events were held over 7 days in September celebrating the National Park's buildings.
- Estimated that 500 people came along (with an additional 300 at the North Hill event).
- Events were run or hosted by ENPA staff, local history groups, Exmoor Society and local businesses.
- The open day at Simonsbath was well attended with ex-pupils and relatives of ex-pupils visiting to share their memories of the building.
- Cob classes at Dulverton School involved around 50 pupils. The school are keen to repeat this and build a cob structure in the grounds.