
Dartmoor National Park Management Plan

May 2001

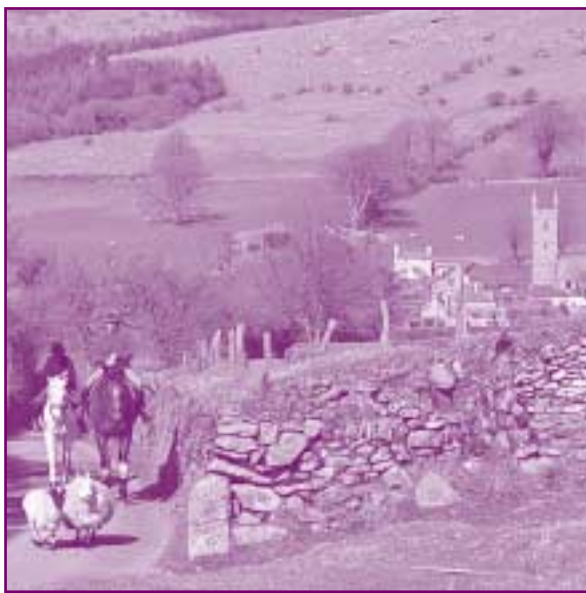
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Part 1

Introduction

- 1.1 *The Environment Act 1995* requires National Park Authorities (NPAs) to prepare and publish National Park Management Plans. These plans are intended to guide both the NPAs themselves in



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carrying out all their functions and all other bodies and individuals who have an interest in the management of the National Parks. Sensitive management is essential to achieving the purposes for which the National Parks were established. The *Dartmoor National Park Management Plan* can help achieve this sensitive management by encouraging all those who have an interest in the National Park to work to common aims. The experience gained in the management of the National Park in accordance with the principles and objectives set out in this Plan can also help further the general understanding and appreciation of the means by which development and conservation may be better balanced in the wider countryside.

- 1.2 Guidance issued by the Countryside Commission (now the Countryside Agency (CA)) and the Countryside Council for Wales, on the preparation of Management Plans, indicates that they should:

- ◆ set out a vision and take a long term view;
- ◆ adopt sustainability as the underlying principle;
- ◆ be plans for co-ordinating and influencing the activity of others, not just the activity of the National Park Authority;
- ◆ take account of relevant regional, national and international policies;
- ◆ be developed and implemented in partnership with others;
- ◆ be concise and concentrate on strategic issues;
- ◆ identify measurable objectives which are supported by good information;
- ◆ promote opportunities for National Parks to be used to develop innovative conservation and management techniques;
- ◆ be monitored and regularly reviewed.

- 1.3 The process of preparing the Management Plan is as important as the final Plan. The establishment of relationships, understandings, common approaches and support is essential if the National Park is to be managed in a purposeful and integrated way. This Management Plan has benefited from an initial wide consultation, on matters to be included in the Plan, and a further two rounds of detailed consultation, on an Outline Draft and on

a subsequent full Consultation Draft. [Earlier versions of the Plan included sections highlighting trends and issues, to stimulate response, and included Indicators and Targets which have now been substantially revised and included in an Appendix entitled *The State of the National Park*.]

- 1.4 Under the *Local Government Act 1999*, the National Park Authority is a Best Value Authority charged with the duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Whilst the Management Plan sets a framework for involving others in the achievement of National Park purposes, it also serves to review and set fresh corporate objectives for the NPA itself, which will be assessed annually within the NPA's own Best Value Performance Plan. Accordingly, this Management Plan has been prepared with the duty of Best Value in mind, and the principles of Best Value will influence all NPA activity in pursuit of Management Plan objectives.
- 1.5 The twin purposes of National Park designation, first established under the 1949 *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act*, have been amended by the *Environment Act 1995* to the following:

to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage: and

to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (of the National Parks) by the public.

The 1995 Act also places a general duty on all relevant authorities, including the NPAs, statutory undertakers, and other public bodies, to have regard to these purposes when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to or affecting land within National Parks. Relevant authorities are expected to be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled this duty. (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Circular 12/96, Environment Act 1995, Part III, National Parks* S.19.)

- 1.6 In most cases, the two purposes are mutually supportive, but enjoyment of the special qualities must be such as to leave the natural beauty of the National Park unimpaired for future generations. Should conflict between the two purposes become acute, with no possibility of reconciliation, then S.62 of the 1995 Act makes it clear that the first purpose must prevail.
- 1.7 National Parks in England and Wales are living and working communities with many of the characteristic qualities that give them their appeal being as much the result of human activity as of natural forces. It is in the interests of the conservation of these qualities that the 1995 Act states that, in pursuing National Park purposes, NPAs should:

seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities (within the National Park) by working closely with the agencies and local authorities responsible for these matters, but without incurring significant expenditure.

The Government expects NPAs to take this duty forward in ways which are compatible with their pursuit of National Park purposes and with the need for appropriate economic development.

1.8 Dartmoor National Park is one of a family of eleven National Parks in England and Wales and part of a wider network of protected areas within Europe and worldwide. The British National Parks, which are classified as Category V Protected Landscapes by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, have a strong tradition of pioneering conservation management measures within inhabited landscapes which provide valuable models for sustainable development, both at home and abroad. The NPA is a member of the Association of National Park Authorities, a member of Europarc (the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe) and has links with the Department of National Parks and Nature Conservation in Nepal.



□ National Parks
 ★ Current proposals for new National Parks (boundaries undefined)

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1.9 The first management plan for Dartmoor, the *National Park Plan*, was published in March 1977. That Plan set out the aims, objectives and practical management policies which

were needed to harness resources for achieving the purposes set out in the 1949 *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act*. A *First Review of the National Park Plan* was published in 1983, followed by a *Second Review* in 1991. Neither of these reviews changed the fundamental aims and objectives of management, but the detail of emphasis and approach was changed in the light of evolving local issues and changing legislative, financial and national policy contexts.

1.10 This Management Plan covers the period 2001 to 2006 and is founded on the experience gained from the former Plans. It is intended to provide a strategic framework for the continuity of sensitive and appropriate management that will sustain the special qualities of the Dartmoor National Park in the long term. It reflects environmental, social, economic and political contexts that have changed greatly since the 1991 Plan was published:

- ◆ **Global concerns** - there is increased concern about global climate change and acceptance of the imperative of sustainable development;

- ◆ **the European dimension** - there is recognition of the need for a Europe wide strategy for the protection of sensitive landscapes, habitats, and species; for linking local economic opportunities and conservation; and developing models for sustainable development;
- ◆ **changing UK policies** - there have been changes in policy direction resulting from the *Fit for the Future* National Parks Review



Farming - the principal land use of the National Park

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Panel's report, redefined purposes and duty under the *Environment Act 1995*, national Biodiversity Action Plan preparation, state of the environment reporting, revised agri-environmental measures, new initiatives from the government's countryside and environmental agencies, changes to local government and increased representation of local interests upon NPAs;

- ◆ **changing local conditions** - these include increasing visitor impacts, erosion concerns, the need for traffic management measures, the development of local partnerships to promote environmental management and the support or regeneration of communities, the decreasing economic health of farming and structural change within agriculture, the need for sustainable development particularly in relation to tourism and

community initiatives, and work to develop the local components of the national Biodiversity Action Plan.

- 1.11 There are three overarching themes which highlight and bring together the principal aims of management over the course of the next five years. They may be summarised as:

Communicating on principles

Dartmoor is a special place with distinctive qualities, of its landscape and its people, and promoting understanding of these special qualities is a new purpose. Helping to raise public awareness and appreciation of what is involved in the conservation and enhancement of Dartmoor is a vital element in ensuring that this part of the nation's 'critical environmental capital' remains unspoiled for the generations to come. Good quality information and interpretation, well presented, with effective means of two-way communication between the public and the NPA, are essential to ensure that this priority is accomplished.

Conservation and enhancement through partnership

Conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of Dartmoor depend upon forging understanding, links and strong working relationships with all those who have an interest in the land and its life. Of course, there are many bodies, agencies, companies, associations and

individuals that are involved, and it is the task of the NPA to nurture those links that are already productive and to always remain open and willing to establish new links. Reporting upon the state of the environment, making use of appropriate indicators, targets and monitoring measures, will allow clear assessments to be made of what is actually happening in the National Park, thereby enabling all those involved to modify, change or improve practices whenever necessary.

Sustainable communities

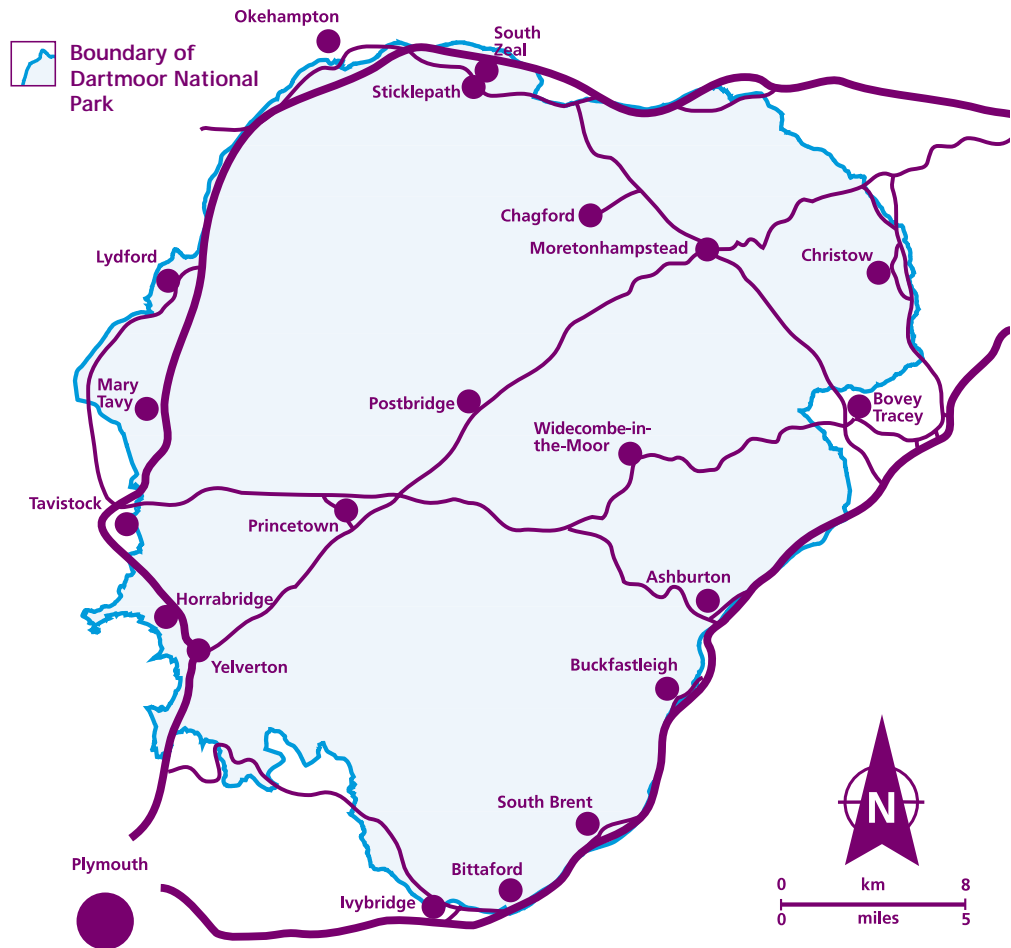
In farming, the tourist industry, and within the social and economic life of communities in general, we must strive to achieve sustainable development. This will involve putting the principles of sustainable development into practice, including devising and testing new models of environmentally friendly management which will be essential in ensuring that the National Park, its visitors and viable local communities, all derive the highest possible quality of life and experience and at the same time conserve Dartmoor's unique environmental qualities for future generations.

- 1.12 These overarching themes help link the objectives of this Management Plan with the objectives of the Government's strategy for sustainable development – *A Better Quality of Life* (DETR, Cm 4345 1999). That strategy put forward a set of objectives to assist in developing actions in support of sustainable development. It also proposed indicators that could be used to measure progress. Local Agenda 21 strategies (see Section 7.1) are also an important component in the attempt to set sustainable development within a clear and achievable framework.
- 1.13 The Government's aim for sustainable development is simply expressed: "to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come". It is envisaged that this will be achieved through:
- ◆ **Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone.** Access to services must be improved, social exclusion needs to be addressed, and the threats to health caused by poverty, poor housing, unemployment and pollution must be tackled.
 - ◆ **Effective protection for the environment.** Global environmental threats such as climate change must be limited, human health safety must be protected from hazards such as poor air quality and toxic chemicals, and valuable resources such as wildlife, landscapes and historic buildings must be protected.
 - ◆ **Prudent use of natural resources.** Natural resources must be used efficiently and alternatives developed to replace them in due course. Renewable resources, such as water, should be used in ways that do not endanger the resource or cause serious damage or pollution.
 - ◆ **Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.** Business must produce the high quality goods and

services that consumers throughout the world want at prices they are prepared to pay. This demands an educated and skilled workforce, businesses prepared to invest, and an adequate supporting infrastructure.

1.14 Whilst the principal aim of this Plan is to create a framework whereby the purposes and duty of National Park designation can be promoted, the objectives and policies have been framed with the priorities of sustainable development very much in mind. In this way it is hoped that this Plan will indeed help to “influence the way in which we care for our countryside” and “help further understanding and appreciation of the means by which development and conservation can be better balanced”. (Circular 12/96. Environment Act 1995, Part III, National Parks.)

Map 1 Dartmoor National Park Management Plan Area



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Part 2

A Vision for Dartmoor National Park

- 2.1 This Management Plan begins with a long term view of Dartmoor, looking beyond the five year time horizon of this Plan, to a time several generations into the future. A wide consultation exercise in 1997, under the title 'The Future of Dartmoor', identified a significant level of popular support for the series of 'vision statements' which follow. The vision will not be realised within five years for there will remain political, financial and technological barriers to its achievement. Nevertheless, it offers a vision of the future that all can share and work together to strive towards.
- ◆ the wildness of remote moorland remains undiminished, heather is recovering and past physical and ecological damage has been repaired
 - ◆ farming remains the principal land use, and is always maintaining and enhancing the character and wildlife interest of the landscape
 - ◆ the moorland is free from live firing
 - ◆ hardy, traditional ponies freely graze
 - ◆ all broadleaved woodland is being actively conserved and conifer plantations are better integrated into the landscape
 - ◆ the air, soils and rivers are unpolluted and diverse wildlife thrives
 - ◆ the archaeological and historic character of buildings, settlements and landscapes are being actively conserved and new development is designed in sympathy with the landscape
 - ◆ residents and visitors still find peace, solitude and enjoyment, in harmony with the landscape and with each other
 - ◆ the impact of the motor vehicle is reduced and attractive viable alternatives to car travel exist
 - ◆ services, amenities, housing and employment opportunities are meeting the needs of a thriving local community
 - ◆ everyone shares a deeper understanding and appreciation of National Park values and is working together to sustain and enhance Dartmoor's distinctive high quality environment and cultural heritage.
- 2.2 In this vision, Dartmoor is a place where all human activity is in harmony with the conservation and enhancement of the area's scenic beauty, ecological value and cultural heritage. It is a place of inspiration, of evolution and of socio-economic viability, where resources are managed sustainably. National Park status is seen as critical to ensuring that Dartmoor remains a special and distinctive place in which to live, to work and to experience quiet enjoyment.
- 2.3 The same consultation exercise revealed widespread agreement on what people perceive as the special qualities of Dartmoor. The most frequently mentioned qualities were variously described as

peace and quiet, remoteness and solitude, unspoilt natural beauty, wide open space, wildness and wildlife habitats and the freedom to roam. Tranquillity is clearly a highly valued special quality of Dartmoor National Park. The protection and enhancement of this quality must be borne in mind in all decisions affecting the management of the National Park.



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The special qualities of Dartmoor derive from natural and cultural processes