

NEWS FROM THE EXMOOR MOORLAND LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

MILLION POUND BOOST FOR EXMOOR'S MOORLANDS

The future conservation and enhancement of Exmoor's moorlands has received a huge boost with the news that the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership has been offered a grant of £662,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The HLF grant represents about 50% of the total cost of the proposed scheme with some of the balance being represented by in-kind contributions and income generated through events and activities.

The Partnership comprises twelve organisations: Active Exmoor, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor Society, Exmoor Trust, Field Studies Council, The National Trust, National Farmers Union, Natural England, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and West Somerset Community College - with the National Park Authority acting as Lead Partner.

Background

In 2004 when, to mark the 50th anniversary of the designation of Exmoor as a National Park, the National Park Authority launched its Golden Jubilee Moorland Review. The objective was “a thorough and objective review of the state of Exmoor's moorlands, and prepared a comprehensive and compelling plan of action for their future conservation.”

A series of studies and reviews was carried out which culminated in the publication of *Moorlands at a Crossroads – the State of the Moorlands of Exmoor* – a comprehensive report commissioned by the Exmoor Society. As a result of this report, the National Park Authority set up the Exmoor Moorland Initiative Board which recognised that ‘livelihoods for thriving local communities of farmers and other rural businesses that depend on the land’ was perhaps the most important challenge. The Board also looked for ways to carry the work forward and this included

possibility of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund under its Landscape Partnership grant scheme.

A Partnership of twelve organisations was brought together and the long and complex process of developing the bid commenced, resulting in a successful outcome.

Rachel Thomas, Chairman of the Exmoor Society which chaired the partnership bid, said that “some of the projects that came out of the report *Moorlands at a Crossroads*, such as Moor Keepers, employing local people with local knowledge, and improving the moorland landscape, now have a chance to be put into operation.”

Commenting on the grant offer, Dr Graham Wills, Head of Conservation and Land Management at Exmoor National Park Authority said: “We are absolutely delighted with the news that the Heritage Lottery Fund has recognised how important the moorlands are to Exmoor and its communities. It has taken a huge amount of work to get this far, yet in some ways the real work is about to begin and we look forward to working with our partners to take this exciting scheme forward.”

Six of the Partners, including the National Park Authority, the Exmoor Society, the Exmoor Trust, the Environment Agency, Natural England, and English Heritage, have offered to help match the Heritage Lottery Fund’s contribution to the Scheme, and applications have been submitted to the North Devon and Western Somerset Local Action Funds.

Nerys Watts, HLF Head of Region said: “Few people realise that every lottery ticket has the potential to save the UK’s landscapes, countryside and creatures. HLF is pleased to recognise the importance of the moorlands and their impact and relevance to the local Exmoor communities.”

ENDS

Notes to editors: Image available by replying to this email

1. The Scheme comprises 20 projects in 3 programmes spread over three years. The first Programme is about “reconnecting people with their moorland heritage.”. about helping more people to access, understand, enjoy, and celebrate Exmoor’s moorlands. Project will cover such things as creating new links with

surrounding communities; improving access particularly for people with disabilities; and providing more opportunities for schools, colleges and volunteers to be involved in studying and recording the history and wildlife of moorlands.

2. The second Programme is about “reconnecting livelihoods to the moorland – helping to support a thriving, sustainable moorland community” There are four Projects all designed to benefit those who manage moorlands. There is funding for a pilot scheme to employ farm-based “moorkeepers” and to train moorland apprentices to carry out moorland management and conservation tasks; funding to set up and support a Moorland Managers Network and for arranging a series of moorland management demonstrations.

3. The third Programme is about “reconditioning the moorland landscape – helping to ensure that the moorlands remain wild, open, beautiful and awe-inspiring.” There is funding for a suite of projects to tackle eyesores; protect archaeological sites; support the management of Exmoor ponies and to encourage landowners to manage former moorland areas and areas adjoining existing moorlands in ways that would benefit the landscape and wildlife plus a pilot study of techniques for restoring former moorlands.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4billion across the UK. Website: www.hlf.org.uk