

Dartmoor National Park Management Plan consultation: Response from Confor

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About you

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I would like to be kept informed about the Management Plan

General

Does the Management Plan focus on the right themes and issues?

- Yes

Please explain your answer

- See below

Have we missed anything?

- No comment

Are there any parts of the Plan that you particularly support and why?

- Confor is the not-for-profit organisation for sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses in the UK. We have more than 1,500 member companies representing the whole forestry

and wood supply chain. **Confor focuses on the strategic issues that are vital to the success and sustainable future of the sector.** These include helping to build the market for wood and forest products, creating a supportive policy environment and helping members to become more competitive and successful.

- **The themes/parts of the plan that we particularly support are:** Climate Change; Better for Farming and Forestry, Better for Business and Communities, and Better for People. Modern forestry balances wood production with recreation, environmental sustainability and wildlife conservation so we would also support the part of the plan that is Better for Nature and Natural Beauty.

Are there any parts of the Plan that you would like to see change?

- No comment

Any other general comments

- No comment

If there is a specific section you would like to comment on, please select one of the chapters below to skip to those questions. Or if you'd like to comment on multiple sections, skip through the sections using the 'Next' button below.

- Skip

Vision

Share your comments on the Draft Vision for Dartmoor in 2045

- No comment

Climate Change

Do you have any suggestions for how the National Park can move towards being carbon neutral by 2050, or earlier if possible? Can you provide any evidence to support this?

- Confor launched its **“Think Global, Plant Local”**¹ campaign last year. **Tree planting is a “simple, low-cost option” to remove carbon from the atmosphere** - part of a mounting body of evidence that says **tree planting and timber construction must play a greater role in mitigating the damaging effects of climate change.**
- In October 2019 I wrote an article in the Western Morning News, “Local woodlands, global difference”², that urged local landowners to think globally, but **plant trees and manage woodlands locally to start making a positive difference to our global environmental future**, but also our local environment and economy.

¹ Think Global, Plant Local <http://www.confor.org.uk/news/climate-change/>

² Local woodlands, global difference <https://www.drcompany.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WMN-Oct-DR-Co.pdf>

- On page 11 of the consultation document it says, ‘promoting local food supply chains to reduce food miles and support the local economy. This should say, **‘promoting local food and wood supply chains to reduce food and timber miles and support the local economy’**. The UK imports 80% of its timber needs, second only to China in the world for timber imports, and global timber demand is expected to treble. That means **there is increasing pressure on the world’s natural forests, which are vital intact carbon stores**. We must plant more of our own.
- Planted forests make up only 7% of global forest cover but provide 33% of commercial timber³. The best way to protect intact natural forests under threat from timber production is to make it uneconomic to exploit them by **outcompeting them with a sustainably produced farm product**.
- **See case study 2⁴** shows the carbon costs and benefits of carbon in the growing forest, in forest soil and deadwood, in forestry and processing operations, in harvested wood products including construction timber, and in the substitution of fossil fuel and mineral construction materials with timber alternatives. **This case study could be duplicated on Dartmoor at a smaller scale.**

Better for the Next Generation

Do you have any suggestions for improving how the Next Generation can be involved in decision-making?

- **Forestry is always a project for the Next Generation.** We are benefiting from the jobs and low-carbon material gifted to us by those who planted trees thirty, sixty or a hundred years ago. Our wildlife suffers because of declining woodland management thirty years ago. And we face a shortage of wood because of the decline in planting over the same period.⁵ We can’t change the past, but our decisions now will shape the woods of the future. In their lifetime children now in school will use wood from the trees we plant and enjoy young woods we have nurtured into mature ones. Exmoor National Park have involved them in decision making and taught them about forest management by engaging them in erecting bird boxes made from timber from the forest and managing regeneration in clearings. **See case study 1.** Some of those children may go on to become the foresters of the future and develop green businesses of their own.

Any other comments?

³ Protecting global forests <http://www.confor.org.uk/media/247568/farm-forestry-for-biodiversity-eight-ways-ppt.pdf>

⁴ Eskdalemuir carbon benefit from forestry and timber <http://www.confor.org.uk/media/247533/eskdalemuir-summary-report-and-infographic.pdf>

⁵ Canopy Cover Report 2015

https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/2716/Preliminary_estimatesofthechangesincanopycoverinBritishwoodlandsbetween2006and2015.pdf

- The forestry sector has the Forestry Skills Plan 2019-2024⁶. The Forestry Skills Forum (FSF) is dedicated to promoting education, skills, learning and development across the forestry sector in England and Wales, and maintains close links with the equivalent group in Scotland. Members comprise the sector's leading authorities, charities, companies, educational institutions and training providers. They represent all areas of the sector, including employers, trade associations, education providers, funders, research centres, and include specialists in all age groups: early years, primary, secondary, further and higher education. The FSF is an independent group, supported by Forestry Commission England. **The National Park could feed into this group.**
- The forestry sector also has a careers website called Careers in Forestry.⁷ **The National Park could direct its young people to this site for careers information.**
- This also links to the statement on page 26 of the consultation, 'seek to actively engage the next generation of farmers and foresters in practical delivery of environmental benefits and **identify opportunities to support new entrants to farming and forestry.**'

Better for Nature and Natural Beauty

Do you have any comments on the proposals for a network of nature recovery areas and where these could be?

- No comment

Any other comments?

- Woodland covers 12.5% of Dartmoor National Park including around 60% broadleaf and 40% conifer, producing 20-30,000m³ wood.⁸ Much of the broadleaf is important Atlantic oak woodland. Oak is under threat internationally from disease and habitat loss, and its huge importance for wildlife in the UK has recently been assessed in an important study: oak hosts at least 2300 species of which 555 fungi, invertebrates and lichens are obligate or high association, that is, they rarely live on other types of tree.⁹ Bringing existing oakwoods into management and extending them should be a priority for nature recovery areas. **This can include creating local supply chains for firewood and quality timber, enabling sensitive management to open up the canopy to also create jobs, resilient income streams and opportunities for education.** This has been successfully demonstrated on Exmoor National Park.

⁶ Forestry Skills Action Plan <https://www.confor.org.uk/media/247374/forestry-skills-plan-2019-2024.pdf>

⁷ Careers in Forestry <https://careersinforestry.org.uk/starting-out/>

⁸ https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0028/92872/DD4-Farming-and-Forestry_ReviewPaper_V2.0_070219.pdf

⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006320718317920>

Better for Cultural Heritage

Share your comments on this section.

- **Woodland management such as coppicing is an important part of Dartmoor's cultural heritage**, an opportunity to develop skills as well as benefiting nature. Local timber can be used for local restoration projects.

Better for Farming and Forestry

Share your comments on this section.

- Increasing tree cover is likely to be an important part of future ELMS schemes so developing strategies to integrate trees onto farms in ways which deliver both for the farmer's business and for wider public benefit will be essential. **Growing timber crops can deliver an income, provide animal welfare benefits, and diversify habitat at the same time.**¹⁰ Planning how trees can deliver these benefits across the park at landscape-scale will be essential to accessing higher tiers of ELM support as well as delivering the aims of the Plan.
- On page 26 of the consultation document it says, 'annual farm and woodland 'open day' programme by 2022 to enable more people to experience and understand the roles that farming and forestry play' – this is an excellent idea but would be better titled a **'farm and forestry open day' to communicate that it is about active, productive management of natural landscapes.**

Better for People

Do you agree with the proposed priorities for managing visitors through the updated Dartmoor Recreation Strategy?

- No comment

Are there any other priorities that you would like to suggest?

- No comment

Do you have any suggestions for how people can travel more sustainably around the National Park and how to encourage people to use sustainable modes of transport?

- No comment

Share your comments on this section?

The Timber Transport Forum supports forestry by ensuring that the timber industries can access forests and market timber in a sustainable way. At the same time it **seeks to minimise the impact of**

¹⁰ <https://www.confor.org.uk/media/246612/confor-farm-forestry.pdf>

timber transport on the public road network, on local communities and on the environment.¹¹ The Timber Transport Forum is an excellent example of a sector that works to good practice guidelines, working with local stakeholders, and continually considers its carbon footprint.

Better for Communities and Business

Share your comments on this section

- The aim to ‘develop a modern design vernacular for Dartmoor which draws on traditional local materials and styles, and promotes innovation, challenge, and an expectation of sustainable building’ **will only be possible through local supply chains, which means developing local woodland management businesses.** These in turn will deliver local jobs, skills and income.
- On page 35 of the consultation document it says, ‘improve productivity through strengthening local supply chains, promoting local food and the widespread recognition of the “Dartmoor brand” with strong links to the tourism economy. It could say, ‘**promoting local food and wood**’. Food is not the only local and sustainable product.

Key Challenges

How much do you agree or disagree with the principles for responding to the Key Challenges identified in the Plan?

Landscape management and nature recovery

- Agree

More trees

- Strongly agree

Existing conifer plantations

- Disagree

A grazed moorland landscape

- Agree

More visitors

- Agree

Changing demographics

- Agree

Communication infrastructure

¹¹ Timber Transport Forum <https://timbertransportforum.org.uk/>

- Agree

Renewable energy and energy efficiency

- Agree

Military training

- Agree

Should there be a target in the Management Plan for increased woodland cover? If so what should that be?

- Yes, but any target needs to be worked up first by the Dartmoor Woodland Advisory Group, drawing together the current information available from Forestry Commission, Natural England, Duchy, etc **to develop a map of current planting, and potential growth areas, highlighting any “no go” areas, such as deep peat, archaeological sites, etc.**
- This mapping exercise should be part of a **Regional Forestry Partnership that is currently being piloted in Northumberland, including the National Park, and will be a recommendation in the forthcoming England Tree Strategy.**

Any other comments?

- On page 39 of the consultation document it says, ‘The Climate Change Committee has suggested a UK target of 1.5million hectares of new woodland planting by 2050 to respond to the climate emergency. The Forestry Commission also suggest that nationally the target should be for 17% woodland cover.’ To this paragraph should be added: **‘This is intended to be a mixture of conifers for timber production, and native woodland. The UK Forestry Standard¹² ensures that forests planted for timber include a mix of species and are not planted on important habitats, and provides a framework within which timber production, native woodland and natural regeneration can be combined as appropriate to deliver multiple benefits for wildlife, people and the landscape.’**
- On page 39 of the consultation document it says, ‘Dartmoor currently has around 12% woodland cover – the debate is not about trees or no trees, but about the right trees in the right place, and the scale and location of new woodland.’ **It should say, ‘the debate is not about trees or no trees, but about the right trees in the right place for the right reason, and the scale and location of new woodland.’**
- On page 40 of the consultation document it says, ‘where increased tree cover is planned, aim to avoid negative impacts on significant heritage assets. **Heritage assets are well protected from impacts of afforestation through the forest design process and the UK Forestry Standard.**
- On page 40 of the consultation document it says, ‘the species of trees planted should be native and traditional to Dartmoor. Where other species need to be considered in response to climate change and pests /diseases including non-native species, these should be sympathetic to the landscape character, and enhance biodiversity.’ **It would be better to**

¹² The UK Forestry Standard <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard>

emphasise ecological function and management objectives rather than species here. For example – ‘the species of trees planted should be appropriate to the site and management objectives, with attention being paid to enhancing, expanding and bringing into management existing native or ancient woodland remnants or ‘ghost woodlands’ with appropriate native planting/regeneration, and using the design of larger-scale planting for timber production to connect fragmented forest patches and shelter belts into larger, ecologically viable woodlands.’

- The woodland expansion section could usefully include a section on **agroforestry and integrated land use**.¹³¹⁴
- On page 41 of the consultation document it says, ‘long term ambition to remove conifer plantations where they do not fit with the landscape character or detract from its quality and scenic beauty’. This following should be added, **‘or expand them with new planting to create more diverse, ecologically viable and aesthetically pleasing forested landscapes that compensate for productive loss elsewhere.’**

Monitoring progress

Do you agree with the proposals for monitoring the Management Plan?

- Generally

Do you have any suggestions for alternative indicators to use, or relevant datasets that we can use?

- Yes, as follows

Any other comments?

- On page 49 of the consultation document it says, ‘hectares of woodland in active management’: **Meeting a target for this will require deliberate strategic actions. One way to do this would be to summarise and shorten the ‘existing conifer plantations’ section (p.40) and make it a subsection of a ‘Bringing woodland into management’ section.** This should then include proposals for bringing existing broadleaf woodland into management, for example linking to an **expansion of locally-produced firewood, supporting local businesses**¹⁵, and ensuring that any newly-created native broadleaf woodland has a clear and funded **long-term UK Forestry Standard compliant Management Plan**¹⁶. This section

¹³ Farm Forestry <https://www.confor.org.uk/media/246612/confor-farm-forestry.pdf>

¹⁴ The Agroforestry Handbook <https://www.soilassociation.org/farmers-growers/technicalinformation/agroforestry-handbook/>

¹⁵ Buy local, burn local to boost economy and protect UK trees

<https://www.confor.org.uk/media/246878/feb2018-buy-local-burn-local-ch.pdf>

¹⁶ Create a Woodland Management Plan <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/create-a-woodland-management-plan>

might also discuss promotion of **the Grown in Britain¹⁷ and Woodsure assurance schemes¹⁸, and investment in local wood processing capacity.**

- Protecting our trees and plants, whether productive crops or designated habitats, from imported pests and diseases, will require concerted and co-ordinated action from all parties: governments, landowners and managers, and Protected Landscapes. The UK imports firewood and wood packaging. **In five years, financial and regulatory incentives must make it easier and cheaper to supply firewood by managing UK woodlands, than to import it.**¹⁹
- On page 50 of the consultation document, Farming and Forestry, **this doesn't include any forestry targets. It could include a target for locally produced firewood and timber and the resultant jobs²⁰**; or the woodland in management target, or the increased woodland cover target might fit better here than in Nature and Natural Beauty.
- On page 51, Confor welcomes the target for affordable homes and AECB or Passivhaus accredited. Wood for Good²¹ is the timber industry's campaign to promote the use of wood in design and construction. Wood is nature's most versatile building material and modern engineering methods expand possibilities for its application beyond traditional uses. **Wood should be a first choice material for specifiers and designers looking at building affordable homes in the National Park.**

Working in Partnership

What can you do to help deliver the Vision and objectives of this Management Plan?

- I am a director of the **DR Company (Diverse Regeneration Company)**. Since 2005, The DR Company has been helping rural businesses, including on Dartmoor, in sectors such as farming, forestry, tourism and community grow and prosper.
- Confor is also a member of the **Dartmoor Woodland Advisory Group** that, as demand for timber increases and farm revenues decrease, should assist the National Park in increasing woodland cover and woodland management to bring environmental, economic and social (amenity) benefits.
- At a recent meeting of key forestry stakeholders that work across Dartmoor, the following perspectives were given:

¹⁷ Grown in Britain <https://www.growninbritain.org/>

¹⁸ Ready to Burn <https://www.readytoburn.org/>

¹⁹ Plant health and Brexit <https://www.confor.org.uk/media/246818/plant-health-and-brexit-statement-jan18.pdf>

²⁰ The Silvanus Trust and Laura Jones Associates. 2015. The HoTSW Forestry Enterprise Action Plan. A business case for the growth and development of the forestry and woodland sector – Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership Area. HoTSW Forestry Task and Finish Group and HoTSW Local Nature Partnership. Available from: <https://www.naturaldevon.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2015/08/HoTSW-Forestry-Proposal-Draft-v2-2.docx>

²¹ Wood for Good <https://woodforgood.com/>

- *“Consensus is needed to draw together a long term Land Management Strategy, which incorporates a thirty year supply chain involving small local businesses, which develops skills, and which builds year on year. The objective is to develop a thriving woodland economy. This may require fresh thinking about trees within the landscape, and recognise that much of the investment is likely to come from private and philanthropic sources.”*
- *“Aiming for a wood culture where policy is based on evidence, there is a shared understanding, and where landowners have access to the skills and intelligence to make good planting decisions. This requires education across organisations such as NFU and CLA to appreciate the value of forestry and ensure that advice for landowners is consistent and balanced. Forestry offers the opportunity to bring together economic, academic and environment objectives.”*
- *“Wish to develop an integrated Land Management Scheme, which supports growth and builds the skills (through apprenticeships etc) to establish an effective supply chain. This must address the concerns and priorities of local people and be based on solid silvicultural knowledge. This should embrace technology and scientific developments. A long term ambition would be the development of a Forestry School in the South West.”*
- *“The technology exists for timber and forestry to be an exciting opportunity for young people. To gain support, illustrations of different options would be beneficial through technology (either 2D or 3D) to enable the visual impact of tree planting to be understood clearly. It would be beneficial to consider different approaches to strategy development rather than relying on stale methods.”*
- *“Key objective is to ensure that rural areas thrive, and that future economic challenges can be met effectively. Forestry is seen as a key option for landowners and DR offer independent, impartial facilitation for the development of an appropriate strategy.”*

Bringing ancient oakwood into management through timber production

Graeme McVittie FICFor, Senior Conservation Officer, Exmoor National Park

Burrige Wood is a twenty hectare SSSI ancient woodland within the extensive Exmoor & Quantocks Oakwoods Special Area of Conservation. Once an estate's native oak coppice, it was planted with European oak of high timber quality in the late nineteenth century. Following a period of neglect after the second world war, it was gifted to Exmoor National Park to benefit the people of Dulverton, and since the 1980s has been managed for conservation and public access.

Oak timber has long been a 'by-product' of woodland management at Burrige, with around 20m³ a year from thinning, coppicing and felling used for signage, waymarking and gates. This saves money, reduces our 'timber footprint', creates beautiful infrastructure with a story, and contributes to forest ecology as over time they host lichens and other deadwood species. Burrige Wood supplied the timber for the new Woodside Bridge in 2020, built from large sections of oak (COVER IMAGE).

Around eight years ago Authority Members approved proposals for a more strategic use of the whole 600 hectare woodland estate to develop an income stream, integrating timber production with conservation management. Since then we have built knowledge of local markets and users including firewood markets, timber frame construction and furniture making. Identifying specialist applications around the UK such as boat building and historic reconstruction repays in high sale prices. Local foresters have been generous in providing expertise to identify which trees should be felled to combine the greatest conservation benefit with the highest timber value and stand improvement.

The increase in habitat quality through the harvesting of timber from Burrige Wood has been clear. Following the removal of rhododendron, shade-tolerant holly was threatening to dominate. Thinning to increase light beneath the canopy has helped bluebells and other ground flora to expand, as well as the epiphytic lichens for which the oak woods are particularly important. Some timber has been made into nest boxes for pied flycatchers, thanks to a collaboration with BTO. This has resulted in a dramatic rise in successfully fledged chicks, with ringed offspring returning from migration to colonise new woods the following year. This demonstrates the importance of active management in providing nest boxes in woods with few veteran trees, alongside the nurturing of 'future veterans'.

Our hard work to communicate to National Park members, the parish council and the public repays when felling operations are taking place in highly visible areas. We rarely receive complaints and our contractors are often thanked for the work they are doing to manage the wood. Local school children help to install and monitor nest boxes. They also adopt clearings where canopy opening results in oak regeneration, measure the new growth and thin it out, and learn about woodland management.

Timber income has become essential to conservation work. When the Park faced cuts to public funding due to austerity, the income from timber enabled us to save a crucial staff member by demonstrating that over half their salary was paid for by timber, and thanks to their work carbon was being locked up, habitat improved, a local resource supplied, and a great story told to members.

We import timber from all over the world which don't have the UK's very well regulated forestry sector. We know this is fuelling all kinds of environmental catastrophes. So if we can harvest timber on our own doorstep, why don't we use it?



CASE STUDY 2

