

SECTION 2

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

“Over the centuries, man ... has left his traces on our wild uplands, and these age-old survivals are an essential part of their value and interest. The little prehistoric hut circles, the rings of standing stones, the wavering marks of the ox plough, the ruins of long-gone tanners’ huts and workings – these can be sought out in the lonely places, and they speak to us and fire our imagination and sense of history.”

Lady Sylvia Sayer (1904 – 2000), writing about *Dartmoor, Wild Country* (1971)

The *Moor than meets the eye* Landscape Partnership area is one of the finest examples of a palimpsest – a landscape on which layer upon layer of human activity has left its mark – in the UK. Its unique character has been shaped over millennia ensuring that people and place are intrinsically linked.

Roly Smith (2008) describes the area thus:

“Perhaps the epitome of the Dartmoor palimpsest is the moorland as seen from the col between Hameldown and Hookney Tor, northwest of Widecombe-in-the-Moor. In the foreground, enclosed by a stone wall, lies Grimspound, probably the most famous and complete Bronze Age settlement in England. The remains of the round houses are outlined in the granite moorstone of their walls, and stand out clearly through the purple heather.

On the ridge above, a line of cairns or barrows acted as both landscape features and burial places for these Dartmoor residents of some 4,000 years ago. Further down the valley of the West Webburn there are more hut circles, and on Challacombe Down are the remains of a prehistoric stone row, which marches up its northern flank above the later opencast tin workings.

On the slopes above the enclosures of the late 16th century Headland Warren Farm, the extensive remains of tin working can be seen: spoil heaps and deep, ravine-like gullies, which cut into the surface of the moor. In the valley of the West Webburn, parallel ridges show where medieval miners had ‘streamed’ for alluvial tin ...

The name Headland Warren is a clue to yet another occupation on Dartmoor – this time dating from the Middle Ages. Rabbits, which were introduced into

Britain by the Normans for their meat, were bred in artificial warrens, and Headland Warren, created at the beginning of the 18th century, was one of the biggest. Cigar shaped mounds known as 'pillow mounds' were also constructed to encourage the rabbits to burrow and breed.

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Over on the slopes of Challacombe Down, distinct parallel lines of terraces can be seen extending along the hillside. These are the remains of medieval strip lynchets, created by the build-up of oxen ploughed soil against the boundaries of the ancient fields."

All of this can be viewed within a square mile or so.

What Roly Smith did not describe is the rich wildlife of the area. Within that same area can be found examples of rhôs pasture – an important habitat for a number of butterfly species and the bog hoverfly, which is only found on Dartmoor, and breeding birds such as snipe and reed bunting. Nor would he have known (at the time of writing) that the red-backed shrike would choose this area to make a reintroduction to England having last been seen in the 20th century. He could also have referenced the impressive remains of the Birch Tor and Vitifer mining complex adjacent to Headland Warren: here, in addition to the remains of medieval streamworks and openworks with associated leats and storage systems are the shafts, adits, pumping systems and tramways associated with 19th and 20th century workings.

National and International Significance

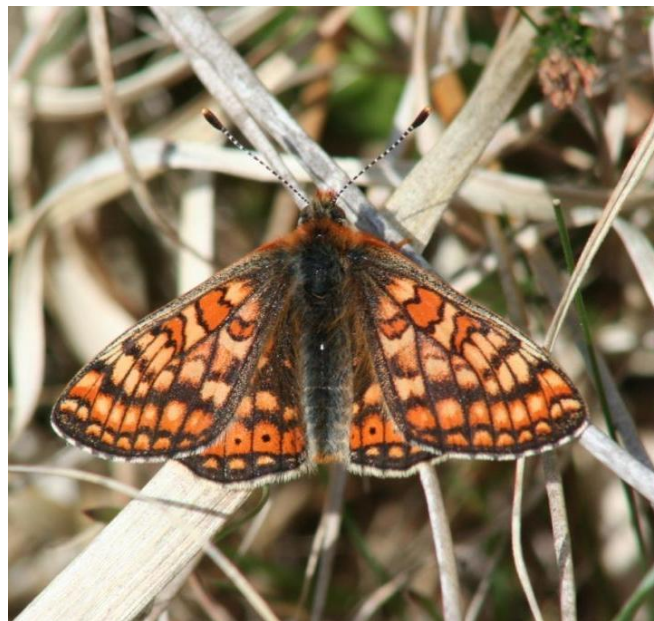
The number of designated sites is testament to the variety and importance of the area.

Key designations include:

- **National Park** – over 95% of the area is within Dartmoor National Park
- **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – 16.6% of the area.** The SSSIs on Dartmoor represent the sites designated for their national importance for their wildlife and/or geological value. They include the most southerly blanket bogs, upland heathlands, upland oak woodlands and valley mires in the UK and contain a mix of habitats and species that reflect the influences of the mild and wet climate and the underlying granite and peat soils. The *Moor than meets the eye* area SSSIs include some of the best examples in the National Park of the habitats listed above.
- **Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – 16.1% of the area, reflecting its European importance.** The SAC designation on Dartmoor covers nearly all of the SSSI areas. They are strictly-protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive and form a Europe wide network of high quality conservation sites known as *Natura 2000* sites. The Dartmoor SAC was designated principally because it is home of the southernmost blanket bog in Europe but also because of its important areas of wet and dry heaths. The South Dartmoor Woods SAC displays fine examples of old sessile oak woods whilst the portion of the South Hams SAC within Dartmoor National Park contains the largest known maternity roost for Greater Horseshoe Bats in the UK. The *Moor than meets the eye* area contains 16.6% of the SAC area on

Dartmoor and includes some of the best examples of the habitats of European importance.

- **Section 3 Moorland and Woodland – 48.1% of the area.** These are areas of the National Park that were identified under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* as land that was particularly important to conserve. The areas are included mainly on the basis of vegetation types but areas are also included for their natural beauty, archaeological importance or for recreational value. The conservation of the moorland is central to the National Park's fulfilment of its statutory duty to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Dartmoor.
- **1 National Nature Reserve (NNR).** The East Dartmoor Woods and Heaths NNR was the first to be designated in the country, and consists of three adjacent sites (Yarner Wood, Trendlebere Down and the Bovey Valley woodlands). Together they provide an excellent example of internationally important oakwood with its associated bird and lower plant communities. The habitats contain a superb mixture of ancient oak woods, open heathland, bogs, flower meadows and streams, and support pied flycatchers, woodpeckers and wood warblers in the woods, ponies and fritillary butterflies around the moorland, and dippers along the Bovey Valley.
- **County Wildlife Sites (CWS) – covering 2% of the area.** County Wildlife Sites are the layer of sites lying below the SSSI level, and as such are regarded as having regional rather than national significance. However, they still represent sites of high wildlife value. Some of them may be of SSSI quality but have not been notified for a number of reasons, the most common being that survey information has come to light since SSSIs were last notified. Much of the Section 3 Moor and Heathland not notified as SSSI is probably of CWS status but has not yet been put forward for potential designation.
- **A number of European and UK protected species and a wide range of UK priority species and habitats.** Dartmoor supports a large number of European and UK protected species and a wide range of UK priority species and habitats. These include the globally threatened Southern Damselfly and



Marsh fritillary

Marsh Fritillary butterfly, the only UK sites for Bog Hoverfly and Red-backed Shrike, and the most significant UK populations of Greater Horseshoe Bat, Blue Ground Beetle, Flax-leaved St John's Wort and Deptford Pink. Other than the Southern Damselfly, all of these species of national and international importance listed occur within the *Moor than meets the eye* area, which contains key sites for future conservation.

- **Recorded ancient woodland – covering 2.9% of the area.** The broadleaf woodlands of the National Park are primarily upland oak woodlands, most of which have remained wooded since at least the 17th century and are therefore referred to as being ancient. Most of the area of ancient woodland occurring within the *Moor than meets the eye* area is designated as SAC and SSSI.
- Over 970 Listed Buildings
- 269 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 5 Premier Archaeological Landscapes covering 9.9% of the area
- 7 Conservation Areas
- 226km of Public Rights of Way

The following attributes are crucial to the significance of the area's unique landscape character and combine to create the internationally important and highly valued landscape of the National Park:

- The area is deeply layered and steeped in history. Its unique character has been shaped over the millennia and this palimpsest means the area hosts one of the most important collections of archaeological landscapes in Western Europe revealing a chronology of human activity stretching back over 8,000 years. The area has long been recognised as one of the most important prehistoric landscapes in Western Europe. There is a rich tapestry of hut circles, stone menhirs, burial cairns and cists, stone circles and rows and a network of over 100 miles of reaves (early boundaries).
- A strong medieval settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, hamlets, villages and towns set within enclosed farmland surrounded by open moor, linked by an intricate pattern of sunken lanes. There is an extensive network of medieval field patterns and farmsteads with dry-stone walls and banks being a particularly significant and well recognised feature of the area.
- The area contains one of the best examples of a metamorphic aureole to be found in Britain, creating a varied geology and a wide range of valued minerals including copper, lead, silver and arsenic which have been exploited over time leaving their own historical legacy in the landscape. The area has widespread evidence of industrial archaeology from quarrying and mining of the rich minerals of the area (tin workings, stone quarries and some of the earliest forms of industrial transport). The stone sets of the earliest horsedrawn tramway, which carried stone to Teignmouth for shipping, can still be clearly seen on Haytor Down.
- The area has a link, through the quarrying of stone, with some of England's most famous landmark buildings – Nelson's Column, London Bridge (now in Arizona), Holborn Viaduct, the Bank of England and New Scotland Yard. This

industry has led to the development and wealth of the stannary towns of Ashburton and Chagford.

- The area's Victorian influence is probably not widely understood or recognised but the impact on the development and character of the area, especially in the Wray valley is significant as is the interest in, and understanding of, the archaeology of this period.
- It is home to 'letterboxing' – in 1854 a local guide James Perrott of Chagford built a cairn at Cranmere Pool and left a glass jar and visiting book so that visitors could leave their cards or sign the book. There are now many more of these 'letterboxes' scattered across the moor. It remains an activity peculiar to Dartmoor, and is still popular although new technology has introduced 'geo-caching', which is its modern equivalent and is now spreading across the globe.
- Traditional farming practices extending back thousands of years, using the moorland commons for extensive grazing of cattle, sheep and ponies.
- A unique system of pony 'drifts and pounds' associated with the management of the commons.
- Communities who have a strong affinity with the heritage of their local area, which is reflected in a number of active community archives, local history groups and local conservation volunteer groups who work hard to record and help protect the heritage of the area.
- An inspirational landscape of legends and myths that has inspired art and literature through the centuries and continues to inspire, offering spiritual refreshment and opportunities for quiet reflection, escape, challenge and creativity. Those who have derived inspiration from the area include Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and more recently the Director of *War Horse*, Stephen Spielberg, who described the area thus:

“There's no place like it in the world. When I got to Dartmoor I realised I had a third character that I had to include in War Horse and that was the land and sky, so Dartmoor plays a major role.”

- A unique assemblage of wildlife dependent upon the area's distinct habitats, including upland blanket bog, heathland and ancient oak woodland, rhôs pasture and small pockets of haymeadow of international importance; vast displays of gorse and heather create a rich palette of colours and textures through the seasons. As described above, the area is nationally important for a range of species. The area is home to Marsh Fritillaries which have an internationally important stronghold in the National Park, it supports a crucial maternity roosting area for the nationally scarce Barbastelle bat, and the Bog Hoverfly can be found here, the only place in the UK.

SUMMARY

A large proportion of the *Moor than meets the eye* area lies within Dartmoor National Park, which was designated for its outstanding landscape and the opportunities it provides for the enjoyment and understanding of its special qualities. Within the area, there are nationally and internationally important designations such as SACs (European significance), the first NNR to be designated in the country, SSSIs and Scheduled Monuments. The landscape and its key components described above is therefore of national significance and, as such, their conservation and the opportunities they offer for public enjoyment are also of national importance.

In 2012, approximately 2.24 million visitors came to enjoy the area, and surveys show that they are attracted by the landscape and have a particular interest in the heritage of the area. This figure includes only those who stay for more than 3 hours. We know from our community engagement work that more local people visit Dartmoor on a regular basis, and that they have a deep affinity with the natural and cultural heritage of the area. All of the attributes described in this section add to the significance of the landscape and all have a part to play in the sense of place appreciated by people visiting the area, or living and working here. The priorities for *Moor than meets the eye* have been shaped by the risks and opportunities for the heritage of the area, risks that cannot be managed by other management prescriptions, such as agri-environment schemes and planning legislation.

Opportunities to improve awareness and appreciation of this heritage by visitors, and increase the engagement with and empowerment of local communities to help with conserving and enhancing local heritage has become more apparent in the development of the Scheme and it is essential that the Landscape Partnership builds on this, continues to listen to the views of local people, and works with them to deliver the objectives of this Landscape Conservation Action Plan.