July 2020

**EHFN Update**

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has had a fundamental effect on the Network’s activities, most of which have come to a halt, while our costs continue. We are extremely grateful to local organisations who value our work and have come forward to assist us financially in this challenging time. We are adapting to our new normal based remotely from the office. The Network remains open and available to members as a source of trusted information and will respond to the needs of our farming community here on Exmoor and in the Greater Exmoor area. We are fortunate on Exmoor that we have not experienced some of the hardship and lack of labour Covid-19 has brought to other parts of our rural communities in the UK during this outbreak. We continue to work closely with our key funders, partners and in particular other Farmer Network’s around the country. We hope to resume some sort of normal activity once safe to do so and we will keep you updated. Continue to stay safe and well. #weareinthistogether

**NEW EXMOOR GRASS-FED LAMB FILM AND ONLINE DIRECTORY ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO BUY LOCAL (Register Attached)**

Residents and visitors across Exmoor as well as further afield can now get a true taste of Exmoor at home by buying grass-fed lamb direct from some of the area’s passionate farmers and producers. A new list of farms supplying lamb direct and accompanying film has just been released and is available on-line from Exmoor Hill Farming Network (EHFN), Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA), Visit Exmoor and Edible Exmoor.

Grass-fed Exmoor lamb can often be found on the menus of the area’s award-winning restaurants including Woods, Dulverton, the Coleridge Restaurant at Dunkery Beacon Hotel, the Coach House, Kentisbury Grange and the Swan, Bampton. But this is the first time a supply chain has been developed for people to enjoy the product at home.

One of the farmers supplying direct is Holly Purdey at Horner Farm. Holly said: “We farm in the Porlock Vale working with nature to ensure biodiversity across the farm is being restored, building a healthy environment for us all while producing a delicious, nutritious product. We keep native- breed ewes, ensuring our lambs grow at their own speed, resulting in the perfect balance of flavour, fat and tenderness.” Katrina Munro, who works on Exmoor National Park Authority’s Eat Exmoor initiative, promoting the benefits of buying local food, said: “One thing we should all be taking away from the lockdown experience is the vital importance of food security and supply. Local producers and shops have been at the heart of keeping people fed and now we need to ensure they continue to benefit from our support. By buying produce from Exmoor you’ll be helping our rural economy recover as well as doing your bit to protect the environment and conserve the beautiful landscapes of Exmoor.” The succulent juiciness and characteristic flavour of Exmoor lamb won over diners at an event at Woods in Dulverton at the end of 2019. Restaurateur and producer Paddy Groves served lamb cutlets from four regions across the UK and the Exmoor grass-fed lamb was the most popular in a blind-tasting, with customers using words like ‘delicious’ and ‘cuts like butter’. The event features in a short film celebrating the quality and benefits of Exmoor grass-fed lamb available at: [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/eat-exmoor](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/eat-exmoor).
Professor Jeff Wood, a leading academic specialising in animal and meat production who co-led a study with Bristol and Exeter Universities, comparing red meats that had been raised in different agricultural systems, said: “When compared to standard produced meat raised on a large proportion of processed feed, the grass-fed meat was preferred by all the taste panels in our study. You also have more omega-3 fatty acids in a grass-fed product from the leafy grass the animals eat. So, you not only get a good tasting product, but also something which is better for human health as well.”

The register of suppliers has been compiled by Katherine Williams of EHFN. Katherine said: “Our farmers are protecting the landscape and the environment by using both traditional and modern sustainable farming methods and keeping food miles to a minimum. They’re passionate about conserving the area and also the high welfare of their animals. Traceability and provenance are also so important to us and the animals here are all reared on a very high percentage grass diet - making the lamb both tasty and healthier to eat.”

The Exmoor Hill Farming Network is welcoming enquiries from retail, food and hospitality businesses who wish to supply Exmoor lamb direct to customers. Contact katherine@ehfn.org.uk for more details. Our website will be updated in the next 24 hours showcasing the relevant details. The list of farms supplying lamb direct can be found at www.ehfn.org.uk, www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/eat-exmoor, www.edibleexmoor.co.uk or go to www.visit-exmoor.co.uk/eat-exmoor for some of the area’s top restaurants. Photo credits: Oli Hill, Paula Williams and West Ilkerton Farm

**Peer Support Groups**

**Exmoor Women in Farming Group goes Virtual**

Wishing to maintain contact and keep the momentum at the heart of the group going. The Network decided to take a leap into the unknown world of video calling via Zoom. After much debate with WiFi connections and would it work? As it would challenge members to try something different, out of their comfort zones. We decided to give it a go. The group is holding fortnightly meetings from the comfort of their homes. Since mid-April we have engaged with over 32 individuals and the positive feedback has been most welcomed at this uncertain time keeping members united. We have received various talks from NFU, a Yorkshire Hill Farmers Daughter to general catch up meetings, giving members the opportunity to talk about their own challenges and updates from the farm. During these conversations we have tackled issues from tick and worm prevention to mis mothering tips in the cow shed, sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas to improve the issues raised.

*Picture: Zoom Call with NFU Somerset County Advisor Lydia Cox*

**Exmoor Women in Farming Group Zoom Meeting**

Our next meeting will take place via Zoom video call on Monday 13th July at 8pm from your own home. This meeting will be a general catch up amongst group members. We welcome new members and would be very happy to guide you through the zoom process prior to the meeting. If you do not receive the emails for the group, please let us know and we will add you to the contact list. Please contact us for the login details for the 13th July.
**Next Generation Group**

Is there an appetite to schedule a Zoom video call with group members for later this month? A general catch up meeting with members followed by a guest speaker next month? This new method of technology has worked well with our Women in Farming Group. At present we have no indication as to when we can resume to some sort of normal activity. We are keen to keep the momentum going and finding other ways to maintain the contact within the group. We hope it won’t be too long and we can resume visits in the not so distant future. Please get in touch if this would be of interest to you and we always welcome new members.

**ELM Update**

**Environmental Land Management: Policy Discussion Update**

Due to the impacts of COVID-19, and the concerns expressed by stakeholders, DEFRA paused the policy discussion on 8th April. DEFRA have now reopened the Policy Discussion Document for responses. The closing date for responses is **31st July 2020**. If you have already submitted a response, it is still valid and will be analysed along with all other responses received. You are welcome to submit another response (to reflect a change of view, submit extra information etc.), but the original response will still be counted. DEFRA will be running interactive online seminars for farmers, foresters and land managers in England, to discuss what our proposals mean for them. These will be held on the following dates:

- **Wednesday, 1st July – 12:00-1:30 pm**
- **Tuesday, 7th July – 6:00-7:30 pm**
- **Thursday, 16th July – 8:30-10:00 am**
- **Thursday, 23rd July – 12:00-1:30 pm**
- **Tuesday, 28th July – 8:30-10:00 am**
- **Thursday, 30th July - 6:00-7:30 pm**

To register for one of these webinars, please go to: [https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/elm-policy-discussion-document-webinars-tickets-109605757772](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/elm-policy-discussion-document-webinars-tickets-109605757772)

You can request a print copy of the ELM Policy Discussion Document by:

- Phoning the Defra call centre on 03459 33 55 77
- Emailing: elmfeedback@defra.gov.uk

**Latest News from Exmoor National Park Authority**

**New Research Unveiled On Exmoor’s Rural Economy**

60 per cent more businesses are operating in the National Park than previously known, according to findings from one of the largest ever surveys undertaken into the rural economy on Exmoor*. It reveals a total of nearly 1,300 businesses operating within the National Park, many of which had been previously missing from national datasets that can overlook micro-businesses and sole traders, which comprise most of business activity on Exmoor. The research has been undertaken by Wave Hill, an independent social and economic research firm, as part of the Rural Enterprise Exmoor Initiative – created by Exmoor National Park Authority to better understand the local economy and bring together partners to support sustainable economic development in harmony with the area’s special status as a National Park.

It was compiled following an audit of business activity across the moor via an in depth survey of businesses, supplemented by additional workshops and focus groups, to gain a deep understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities facing businesses operating within one of the most iconic and deeply rural areas of the country.

Dan James, Sustainable Economy Manager for Exmoor National Park Authority, said: “As we emerge from lockdown, the findings of this report will provide an important baseline to understand the issues affecting Exmoor’s rural economy and how we can best plan our recovery. The National Park
Exmoor Authority is primarily charged with conserving and engaging the public with Exmoor’s special landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage. But we also have an important role to play in fostering economic and social wellbeing and these findings will be invaluable in helping us better support communities to thrive, while living and working in such a deeply rural place.”

The findings show that the accommodation and food and drink services are the most common line of business, representing 38% of the total number of businesses and 44% of all employment (compared to 8% and 11% of employment across Somerset and Devon respectively). Agriculture and retail are the next largest sectors each representing 14% of all business on Exmoor and each providing an estimated 9% of jobs.

**Report highlights:**

- Productivity is low with an estimated Gross Value Added (GVA) per job of just under £22,500, compared to over £45,000 across the South West**. This may reflect the sectoral composition of Exmoor; the higher number of lower value and lower skilled industries compared to the region. It may also reflect some of the challenges of doing business on Exmoor of the lifestyle element attached to some business choices.
- Over a third of businesses are based from home (35%).
- Poor connectivity – both physical and digital networks – were seen as the biggest barriers to doing business on Exmoor.
- The status of the National Park and its natural and historic assets were highly valued for their ability to attract customers. Over half of businesses (52%) also identified wellbeing benefits for staff as being important.
- 40% of businesses perceived the National Park designation as providing a positive opportunity, whilst 10% considered the National Park designation presented challenges ‘to a great extent’.
- A non-sector specific Exmoor based Business Network was identified as a practical way to provide business support needs and draw on the experience of the business professionals within the National Park and be mutually supportive.
- Making better use of the Exmoor brand and highlighting products ‘Produced in Exmoor’ was also seen as an opportunity to further maximise the brand appeal of the National Park in support of businesses.

The study was funded by the National Park Authority, the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, West Somerset Opportunity Area and North Devon and Somerset West and Taunton District Councils.

All of the primary research was gathered prior to the emergence of Covid-19 in the UK. The National Park has subsequently completed a business impact survey which is published alongside the main research report.

Dan James continued: “Exmoor is especially vulnerable to the economic impact of Covid-19 given the dominance of the hospitality and retail sectors. And while farming may seem like a relatively safe industry in these uncertain times, many agricultural businesses on Exmoor have diversified into tourism over the years, making them vulnerable too. As a result, our survey suggests a staggering two thirds of all Exmoor businesses had to cease trading with 89% reporting a negative impact on trading - 66% describing this as ‘severe’.

“We know that Exmoor’s communities are innovative and resilient, and we plan to use this latest research to grow our economy sustainably in a way that benefits the area’s special status as a National Park, as well as the communities that contribute to it being a vibrant living, working landscape.” To read the full report [https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/living-and-working/business-and-economy/rural-enterprise-exmoor](https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/living-and-working/business-and-economy/rural-enterprise-exmoor)
Other Interest

Latest News from NFU
A meeting with the Deputy President

There’s a chance to hear from NFU Deputy President Stuart Roberts at an online meeting on Monday 13 July starting at 7pm. Stuart will talk about the politics of delivering Brexit, securing future trade deals and designing a new agricultural policy that is fit for purpose. Gloucestershire county chairman James Cox will talk about how the NFU has been working for members over the last six months including our response to Covid-19 and plans for recovery. If you would like to attend, email the regional office south.west@nfu.org.uk or call 01392 440700.

Could slurry gas make you money?
Have you thought about collecting gas from slurry pits to save costs, earn extra income and reduce carbon emissions? If so, a webinar being organised by Devon County Council may be of interest. It will include a look at methods for collecting and storing biogas and there will be a presentation from Bennamann Ltd on their pioneering slurry pit/lagoon biogas collection projects in Cornwall, trials of biomethane tractors and the collection of slurry pit gas to be sold to Cormac for use in their road repair vehicles. It is on July 17 from 10am to 11.30am. Register here https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/slurry-pit-gas-collection-tickets-11161186156

AHDB Webinars
A range of subject areas are being discussed using webinars / online sessions covering Beef and Sheep related topics from Animal Health to Grassland Management. You can find further details here https://ahdb.org.uk/beef-lamb-events-archive. Dave Knight (EHFN Chairman) featured in one of the sessions ‘The positive role of livestock on the environment’ last month and this can be found by clicking the link above.

Covid-19 Update
Business Support and Advice
Coronavirus (COVID-19): information for farmers, landowners and rural businesses

Farming Help
The Farming Help partnership is a collaboration between The Addington Fund, The Farming Community Network, R.A.B.I, RSABI and Forage Aid and is supported by The Prince’s Countryside Fund. https://www.farminghelp.co.uk/
Commercial Advert
Part time House and Pet/Farm Sitting Person Required
Due to the existing incumbent’s retirement, we are looking for a person to take care of our two dogs, cat, horse, guinea fowl and check our small flock of sheep (grazed at Withypool and Exford), whilst we are away. This is a part time position, not regular hours but would suit someone who is flexible and has a keen interest in caring for animals. It may sometimes be for only a night, or a few days, and sometimes for two to three weeks at a time. We require a keen individual preferably with experience who has enough knowledge of animals to undertake their full care in our absence. It is a position of responsibility and trust, so we are looking for a competent self-motivated person, someone who can be relied upon and is able to make decisions in our absence. The person who has been helping us for the last ten years was semi-retired and worked this role in with his other responsibilities. If you get on well with dogs, cats and horses, and feel you could fulfil this role. For further information, please email details of your suitability to: Mrs Jane Scripps
Email address - jane@adrianscripps.co.uk

For further information on any of the above. Please contact Katherine Williams on 07970 795808 or email katherine@ehfn.org.uk