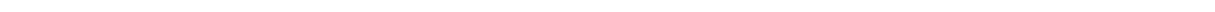


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# Exmoor National Park Young Voices 2015 Problems and solutions





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**Where the  
Young Voices live**

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# Exmoor's Young Voices

Groups of young  
people from

Twitchen

Sandyway

Hawkridge

Withypool

Exford

Minehead

Watchet

Porlock

Dulverton

Williton

Brompton Regis

Carhampton

Dunster

Parracombe

Timberscombe

Combe Martin

Lynton and Lynmouth

have been meeting since 2012 to advise the National Park what is needed for young people to stay living and working on Exmoor, keep Exmoor special, and minimise a drift towards an unbalanced population.

**They include**

farmers

labourers

shop workers

horse managers

administrators

trainee professionals

part time workers

couples

a young mother

students

and young people still studying, who will not be going on to higher education and want to stay living here - all are residents.

**These are their  
ideas and  
recommendations**

**All the quotes are  
young voices  
unless indicated  
otherwise**

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# Summary

## A Sustainable Future for Young People

### Employment – the context

*Exmoor has more over 60's than the national average. The trend is growing and the number of under 16's is dropping.*

*Exmoor has a higher rate of unemployment than other National Parks.*

*It is one of the most isolated parts of the UK.*

*The number of people living in each dwelling has dropped.*

### What Young People Say

1. Grants and planning support are needed to help new and existing businesses
2. Allow local businesses to expand to provide work for younger family members
3. Discount rent on empty business units if employers will take on local young people
4. Help pay for young people to take vehicle and equipment tests
5. Subsidise farmers to employ and train young people in local skills – hedging, fencing, shearing etc
6. Stimulate share farming
7. Take on two apprentice Rangers each year
8. The steam railway going into Taunton would help access to work
9. Support and encourage development of work opportunities for graduate young people returning to live

*“As a one bedroom flat is £400pm, we are better off homeless with £10 a week and Job Seekers Allowance”*

### Agricultural work

*“The average age of farmers at markets is 60+”*

1. Training needs to reflect the multi-skill requirements of employers
2. The National Park and The Forestry Commission could offer both work and dwellings to locals, as in Cumbria
3. Income is inadequate for a worker with a family
4. ENPA could help by placing a levy on unused or misused land
5. ENPA could incentivise employers of all types to take on local staff
6. Share farming, as in Devon, could help young workers gain experience and access to farms; farmers would act as mentors

### Housing - Agricultural and Affordable

*“Empty houses, second homes and holiday cottages continue to be a problem”*

1. Student style accommodation with low rents would bridge the gap between leaving home and becoming eligible for affordable housing eg a partnership with the White Horse and Exford's recent YHA
2. Allow starter flats for young people
3. Stimulate affordable renting

- 
4. Ask Housing Associations to change their Emoor conditions to favour young people working in agriculture
  5. Design affordable homes from the outset for agricultural workers, with large porches, space for dogs, storage for work clothes and kennels
  6. Encourage or subsidise landlords to create affordable rents for young people
  7. The National Trust at Holnicote and Crown estates now rent their cottages to wealthier outsiders rather than local workers who maintain the landscape
  8. Recognise that help is also needed for young people, returning after education and training, to find housing

*“The small cottages originally built for agricultural workers are sold as second or holiday homes”*

### **Keeping Exmoor Special**

1. Make this an eco area with help to install green energy equipment
2. Stop building affordable housing that looks urban and corrupts the Exmoor image (and is not fit for land workers)
3. Burning increases productivity on the moor

### **Partnership with the community**

1. More activities are needed for young people, plus grants to use the sports centre. Stimulate a 16-25s club to run trips, holidays and participate in local sporting events
2. Youth proof the ENPA website and use Facebook
3. Contract young people to youth proof the Partnership Plan; possibly add a community section
4. Support local community groups and maintain links with them
5. Increase contact with Middle and Upper schools
6. Explore partnership budgeting potential with other services and councils

### **Transport**

*“Young people often work for less than the minimum wage. Distances can be great, so young people can remain trapped at home”*

1. Transport is needed into the deeper rural villages
2. Bus costs are prohibitive for young people
3. The Moped Scheme is too dear
4. We need to learn how a car works, how to drive safely on rural roads and how to buy a suitable vehicle on a low budget
5. A transport scheme is needed, to address the above and/or find a fuel subsidy for low paid young people – The Partnership Fund, Awards for All, UnLtd and other funds might contribute to a pilot project

### **Broadband and Mobile Reception**

*“The economy of Exmoor is held back until reception problems are addressed; new businesses are put off from setting up, and working from home is less viable than elsewhere”*

### **Planning**

1. There are strong feelings about unequal treatment of wealthy incomers compared to small disputes with residents
  2. The design of affordable housing is too urban and not fit for agricultural purpose
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- 
3. A partnership of young people with ENPA is needed to prevent a situation where schools have to close, families are lost, and Exmoor's viability as a healthy, well balanced community is jeopardised
- 

**CPRE Research Spring 2014 suggests**

*An entrepreneurial culture needs encouragement*

*Broadband and mobile reception vital*

*Appropriate planning flexibility needed to support local initiatives*

*A single person living in a village needs to earn 50% above minimum wage to survive*

*Costs rise and rural wages do not*

*Share farming works - young people borrowing land from farmers who mentor*

*New technologies enable micro businesses to collaborate and work globally*

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# Living, working and surviving on Exmoor A Sustainable Future for Young People Young Farmers say

## Housing, Agricultural Work, Transport, Broadband and Mobile, Planning.

### Exmoor National Park Authority Priorities include

- Supporting community led initiatives that help to meet local needs (C1)
- Improving economic prospects for young people living and working on Exmoor (C2)
- Inform, inspire and engage people about Exmoor's special qualities (B3)
- Engage people in understanding, protecting and managing Exmoor's cultural heritage and historic environment (A4)

### Context

Cutcombe, Kings Brompton, and Williton Young Farmers met at Wheddon Cross in 2014 to discuss

- The current and long term prospects for young people who want to continue living and working on Exmoor.

The eleven participants live and/or work in the Park, and are not waiting to go away to university/higher education. They want to stay living and working on Exmoor. Ages range from 20-28, female and male.

### Their starting point is

*"Without farming there wouldn't be a national park".*

#### Q. What needs to change for young people on Exmoor?

**Housing** – children of farmers need to be able to live at home.

What happens to the others? Make affordable homes affordable – they are not mortgage-able because they have no re-sale value. The minimum wage is too low to get a mortgage and the cost of living is high.

*"Small cottages – originally built for agricultural workers – are sold for holiday homes and second homes".*

An example was given of three cottages at Luckwell Bridge sold recently to people who come at weekends.

*"There are no children living there as a result and our schools will close if this continues, and there will be no young people to continue working the land and providing other services".*

#### Q. What can be done?

**Housing Associations** – should change their conditions to specifically favour young people working in agriculture. Currently there are too many hoops to jump through and too much waiting to hear if you have been accepted. Magna was cited in this respect.

*"If I were single and pregnant, from anywhere, I'd get one – which cuts out all of us".*



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**Affordable homes** are not designed for the reality of agricultural life; they are far too tiny. “Where do you put four working dogs?” These houses are the same design as for an urban area; no thought has gone into the needs of real life, rural tenants. “They are not even as good as the original ones eg in Conifer Close”.

## Recommendations

1. **Provide a generous porch for wet clothing and boots**
2. **Space for dogs**
3. **Storage for working clothes**
4. **A reasonable sized garden with room for a kennel**
5. **Space to park a truck as well as a car**
6. **Involve agricultural people in the design from the outset.**

*“Affordable homes don’t fit on Exmoor, unfit for purpose, probably due to developers’ costs, yet a local wanting to build a proper home is refused planning permission.”*

## Rents

*“We are in competition with the second home/holiday home market.”*

*“I pay £550pm to live on the edge of the moor; this adds to my travel costs. It would be nearer £750 in the park”.*

A young woman worker pays £450 pm for a tiny, one bedroom cottage with no garden. “To afford this, pay utilities and travel, costs requires a minimum income of £900pm”.

*“It should be cheaper for agricultural workers”.*

It was noted that Jersey gives reduced rates and rents to locals working in agriculture.

*“One third of homes in Withypool are second or holiday homes”*

## Solution

**Incentivise or subsidise landlords.**

## Agricultural Work Life is Changing

- There are more part-time than full-time jobs available now - as machinery is reducing the need for manpower.
- Some of us go freelance/self-employed and do more than one job, or type of job, so we need to be multi-skilled. Apprenticeships provide opportunities to build up experience and skill eg shepherding combined with heating engineering. Training needs to reflect this.
- We would prefer full-time work. Much work is seasonal, so there is less available in the winter, when shooting is the only new activity. One of the young women travels to Bridgwater from Exmoor, daily for work, another to Taunton.
- Finding work usually depends on who you know. In this way, the YFC movement is invaluable.
- One of the young men has come from Cumbria; the shepherding job he came for fell through but he was able to move in with a friend. He observed that the ‘National

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Park and the Forestry Commission where he comes from offer both buildings and work to locals working in the area, whereas on Exmoor they are sold to the highest bidder.’ Thus, local young adults are systematically priced out of the market, even by organisations such as ENPA and the Forestry Commission who could make a difference.

- Income – a full-time agricultural worker in tied accommodation earns £1,000pm. If s/he wants to start a family, this is inadequate.
- There are examples of philanthropic incomers helping eg by employing only local builders, whilst others buy up farms and bring their own staff from away, or, worse still, neglect the land entirely.

### Suggestion

*“Could ENPA – or someone – put a levy on unused or misused land, possibly through the Single Farm Payment?”*

*“We need access to smaller tenancies in order to get a start in farming.”*

*“It seems wrong that ignorant outsiders can buy them up, possibly spoil the land and keep us out.”*

- An entrepreneurial approach is seen as ‘a good way forward’ eg providing agricultural services across a wide band of skills, as last year’s Pinnacle winners do. They are part of Young Voices.

*“Look for a gap in the market and fill it.”*

*“We need staged opportunities and apprenticeships”* eg retiring farmers could offer their farm to a young person to manage, with their support, on a five year tenancy – as in Devon – with a view to taking it on permanently.

*“Local employers could be asked to employ local people only, where possible”*

- Share farming should be encouraged, with protection of earnings, to avoid exploitation

### Q. Why do you stay on Exmoor?

*“Farming”*

*“Fresh air”*

*“Don’t like what I’ve seen elsewhere.”*

*“Family.”*

*“Concern for the long-term future of Exmoor”* eg *“The average age of farmers bringing supplies to market is about 60”.*

### Transport

- Fuel prices rise all the time; wages do not keep up
  - Travel for us is inevitable. Two examples from Young Voices:
    - 40 miles per day for 6 days per week
    - 45 miles per day for 5 days per week
-

- 
- Even the moped scheme is too dear at £25pw. **Make it cheaper and let it lead to supported car maintenance and ownership.** This sort of preparation for life is not included in local secondary education.  
*“We need to learn how a car works, how to drive safely on rural roads and how to buy a suitable vehicle on a low budget.”*
  - The Moped Scheme is not supported by ENPA *“They need convincing that it does help.”* eg *“It saves busy parents constantly providing transport or saves some young people becoming trapped at home, unable to get to work”.*
  - The Scheme is used by young people because they are often working for less than the minimum wage. £25pw represents only one third of the costs of the scheme which includes youth work input. **Exmoor young people have a better record of care for their machines than others.** Google SRYP and look for the moped sign.

### Suggestion

*“Could ENPA initiate a simple scheme for Exmoor young people, possibly provided by a local garage working to high standards of safety?”*

- Transport schemes take no account of conditions eg roads too dangerous to walk (up to 3 miles!) to nearest bus stop – not even verges on some roads, nowhere to go. A three mile walk, morning and evening, adds two hours to the working day, makes life tough for younger people. Devon runs a ‘Wheels to Work’ Scheme, which does need some subsidy.
- Comments on proposals to raise the car driving age to 18 were negative including *“Won’t change anything” “Making a bad situation worse”*
- A fuel subsidy for low paid young people working in agriculture and associated businesses would help.

### Suggestion

*“Use the Partnership Fund, with young people involved in the decision making, and support young people to apply for Awards for All, UnLtd, other grants. Use Funding Central, The Smart Guide to over 4,000 grants, contracts and loans.”*

## Broadband and mobile reception

**This is the Young Voices chosen project to work with ENPA to improve coverage.**

- Current provision makes agricultural business extremely difficult eg drivers bringing deliveries, or collecting from away, do not expect to be out of phone contact for most of their Exmoor journey, so deliveries can be late or missed.
  - Tourism bookings and even cattle returns are done on-line
  - All the schools would benefit
  - The current situation is off-putting for potential new business
  - Phones – we don’t need 4g, just basic masts for normal communication
  - High safety factor – working alone with machinery and animals in fields and no means to call for help, and a long journey both ways for ambulances
  - A new mast has lost the old Orange signal and mostly picks up Wales
  - Heathpoult Cross and the Brendons, where winter weather causes accidents, are mostly without a signal
  - Action on this front would demonstrate ENPA’s commitment to locals
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- There is almost certainly Government funding available now to help put this right, hence this is the group's first choice for immediate action.

*"Farmers could dig the trenches etc"*

- ENPA could use this group for future consultations.

*"The Park never wanted to meet us before so this has got to be good"*

## Planning

- A young farmer originally from Northumberland said *"This NP is very hard on planning, eg large sheep sheds."* This makes viability less possible. Other Parks are more flexible. *"Wealthy and assertive people, who the Park cannot afford to take on in legal battles, can get pretty much what they like, whilst the hardworking residents who maintain the National Park for everyone, find it difficult to put up a garden shed."* Unequal treatment.

- Planning conditions/provisos for new houses need a re-think – houses have to be mortgage-able.

- There are many examples of poor and unhelpful planning decisions that affect young people wanting to stay and work

- A quality house design from a local person, where local builders would definitely be used, is refused, whilst inadequate and potentially shoddy affordable homes get the go-ahead, use builders from away and *"we may not then be successful under the bidding process."*

*"Currently, the only way to build your own property is to buy an existing one, knock it down and re-build. I'm currently seeking a future home on Exmoor."*

## Q. Are there other organisations that could help solve the housing crisis?

*"Yes. The National Trust on the Holnicote Estate and Crown Estates. They now rent out cottages to outsiders who can afford them, leaving nothing for locals."*

*"A re-think is needed on the costings ie a local person on a lower rent stays for a much longer period of time and does his/her own maintenance, whereas incomers move on, so that upgrading work between lets has to be done more frequently."*

*"A young people's partnership with ENPA is urgently needed or we will be left with a situation where there are no children to fill and save our schools and maintain Exmoor's viability in the future."*

## Q. What age groups should ENPA focus on?

*"20-30"*

*"16-25"*

*"There is a need to recognise that help is required both to stay, and to come back, having lived away for experience and training."*

*"The YFC offers essential outlets for training and socialising, is strong and growing. YFC, as a self managed organisation, offers a model for sustainability, and requires continuous support; the participants in this group are organised, considered and 'adult' in their views, fun to be with, and deeply respectful of each other. The £20K given by SCC towards their minimal running costs is under threat."*

## Next Steps:

- **Meet with ENPA directly to suggest/debate ways forward, particularly on broadband and mobile reception - See next section**
  - **Identify others in YFC and elsewhere who might like to be involved.**
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# Exmoor Young Voices meet with the Chair, Andrea Davis, and CEO, Nigel Stone, at Exmoor House 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014

## I. Digital Inclusion

### Young Farmers and Workers say

- Mobile reception and broadband speed are essential for agricultural work, safety and deliveries
- DEFRA will require all communications online, including Single Farm Payment applications, by 2015; for some, the connection speeds make that impossible unless done late at night; forms time out and cannot be saved
- Satellite broadband is less reliable, especially in storms, and is slower to get started
- Modern farm work is increasingly carried out without other people around and no working phone; this is now a major health and safety issue
- Ordering, eg small parts, cannot be done from the fields or outbuildings so everything takes longer in a labour intensive, solo working process
- SatNav runs out and drivers cannot make contact for directions (general agreement that drivers should carry maps)

*“Children cannot do homework online and have to be driven back to school. BT copper wires will not solve all problems so we must look for other solutions such as microwave.”* Andrea Davis.

### Broadband and mobile reception - Nigel and Andrea reported

- ENPA already active to acquire better broadband speeds and mobile reception, via Broadband Delivery and DEFRA by 2016 and then through Super Fast Extension programmes
- Pockets of remaining poor service will require specifically local solutions for which grants might be available
- Mobile not-spots: Exmoor may get 3-5 extra masts, used by the 4 main providers -
- Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) is a scheme being led by the two county councils with local funding and funding from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). The tender process resulted in a successful bid by BT who are creating a fibre network across both counties integrated with their existing telephone infrastructure. The predominant approach is to deploy fibre to existing roadside cabinets which hook into the copper wire network and enable improved internet speeds to individual premises. The impact fades for properties further away from the box and not all boxes will be reached through the programme.
- The Authority has been proactive in seeking as good a coverage as possible in the National Park and has worked with Dartmoor National Park and the two county councils to secure funds from Defra's Rural Communities Broadband Fund. This is likely to lead to an increased reach within the National Park for the CDS programme, although there will still be areas of the National Park that do not benefit.

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- A follow-up programme, Super Fast Extension, is aimed at bringing both counties up to 95% coverage. It is jointly funded by government with matching local funding. Around £39M of additional funding will be available through this programme. It is likely to be more flexible in approach so that any provider can be involved and any technical solution could figure eg satellite or wireless etc. It enables different solutions for different locations.
  - Even after this programme there will still be some properties and communities left without access to the superfast service although it is not possible at this stage to be certain which properties this would apply to.
  - Costs: BT was offered local and cost efficient help eg to dig trenches for cables, but they chose to continue laying cables under roads and there has been little or no opportunity for community or local engagement in the roll out of the CDS/BT programme.

Exmoor Young Voices ask *“Will the capacity be sufficient for future developments?”*

*“Hopefully. 2016 will see the conclusion of the CDS programme and ENP continue to chase up progress for the Park through the extension programme and other mechanisms.” Nigel*

## 2. Mobiles

Commercial decisions on installation of new masts are based on the number of properties rather than the numbers of users, as in tourist areas. On top of installation costs, each mast costs £20k pa to service. This means that costs rather than planning constraints have been the major obstacle to achieving better coverage by commercial operators in deep rural areas like Exmoor.

Government recognises the problem of reception ‘not-spots’ and is funding a Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP). A survey of not-spots is underway and Exmoor may get three to five extra mast sites. The sites do need planning permission and the National Park is working closely with the contractors deploying the new masts to identify good sites and minimise landscape impact. This means that, unless there is strong local opposition to a new mast in a specific location, it is likely to be supported. Each mast would be used by all four of the main networks. While the minimum coverage being sought is for voice communications (2G), it is hoped that the equipment deployed on the new masts will be 4G, which would be very good for nearby properties.

*“Will digital developments help to keep young people living and working on Exmoor?”*

*“All benefits will have to be claimed online in future, so all communities need good digital services. More and more people will be able to work from home and in as yet unknown and undeveloped fields of digital development.” Andrea*

*“As the new situation on broadband and mobile coverage becomes clearer over the next year or two, there will be opportunities for communities and businesses to work together to help fill the remaining gaps. Ultimately, the indications are that broadband availability is a key driver to develop rural economies by providing new business opportunities and enabling more businesses to locate in places like Exmoor.” Nigel*

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### 3. Housing

*“It seems that young people either remain dependent on family or have to leave.”*

*“Devon CC is hanging on to its farms, despite pressure to sell, whereas SCC has only one left, here.”*  
Andrea

*“Share farming works well; a retiring farmer mentors a young farmer to work the farm, under a formal agreement.”*

*“The new Local Plan may have a succession farming policy, as in Wales, whereby a second house can be built on the farm for the retiring family, thereby releasing the main farmhouse for the family successor.”* Nigel

*“If that is not an option, then transport costs added to high rents make local work not viable for young workers.”*

*“Single young people are not eligible for affordable homes.”*

Nigel and Andrea told Young Voices that

- The new housing policy is focussed entirely on local people and local workers.
- There are problems with land prices but the ‘affordable housing only’ clause helps keep land values down.
- There is a need for private renting as not everybody wants to be with a Housing Association, so the new policy will enable mixed developments of open market and affordable housing, which we hope will create incentives for landowners to provide and retain local rented housing.
- Exmoor National Park Authority and the housing authorities have not, so far, focussed on the specific housing needs of young people in the step between leaving home and moving up on to more substantial family housing.

*“West Somerset Council can use the New Homes Bonus to help young people.”*

- Regarding size, to be considered as affordable, a dwelling cannot be over a certain size or it might be lost through planning appeals which adjudge larger properties to be ‘unaffordable’.
- The ties are essential to retain a stock of more affordable local needs housing into the long term.
- It is possible for independent, community-owned trusts to buy land and build more freely than HAs and to let on their own terms, as Caractacus does
- Two hundred sites in the National Park have been offered for new housing, mostly around larger settlements, but also for places as small as Hawkridge. Communities can approach landowners directly and discuss possible sites with the National Park planning team.

*“How have the Young Voices team managed to stay living and working here?”* Leslie

*“On my parents’ farm; they built another bungalow and an annexe onto the farm house when regulation was lighter. The farm is big enough to create smart deals. It’s good luck – otherwise I would be renting.”*

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*“The farm house has been split to accommodate parents, brother and family and myself.”*

*“We both live with our parents.”*

*“I’m in the family home. Young people play an important part supporting ageing relatives in a remote area.”*

*“There is still not enough exploration with people seeking housing, landowners and local communities to develop local solutions. Not all Parish Councils want to be pro-active but where they do they can make a big difference, e.g. Porlock and Dulverton.”*

#### **4. Transport - isolation and getting around**

*“Public transport will be slashed in 2015. Parents have to chauffeur children to work and leisure locations.”* Andrea

*“Subsidised transport is equally important to the elderly, of whom there are huge numbers on Exmoor.”*

*“The demographics are scary – so many old people dependent on so few younger ones.”*

*“Schools struggle to remain viable.”*

Nigel, introduced the DEFRA map of population densities

- *“Rural young people everywhere are identifying the same problems.*
- *Exmoor is identified by DEFRA as one of the most sparsely populated areas in the UK – even more so than Dartmoor – and is the most remote of the National Parks, being so far from motorways and rail links.*
- *The greatest pressure for development is along the M5 corridor with little market pressure as far west as West Somerset and Exmoor.”*

*“The best we can do is to tweak at the edges.”*

*“A group like this could become involved in, for example, encouraging share farming and community land trusts. In the past ENP did not know how to set up a group such as this to enable better communications with young people in the National Park. It needs a co-ordinator.”* Nigel

*“I would like to see the 14-18 age group engage with these issues and to learn about their hopes and aspirations. Perhaps we could follow up the original 4 groups to see where they are now?”* Andrea

#### **5. Local Pay**

*“Local rates of pay are not good.”*

*“Large firms and organisations could, using improved technology, employ local people as remote workers, which would immediately produce better rates of pay.”*

*“Local bigger businesses show signs of getting together, which could lead to expanded and shared networks and collective lobbying for funding etc.”*



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*“Think tanks of economically active young people from all the National Parks could come here to compare notes. It needs a day or an event to bring people together. We could help with that.”*

*“We could start work with Dartmoor or the New Forest.”*

### **Immediate next steps**

- **A think tank conference of economically active young people, including from the other National Parks in 2015**
- **The creation of an informal reference group of young people that ENPA can call upon for advice**

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# Exmoor's Young Voices

## Research with Four Groups of Young People in 2012

### Context

This is what 28 young people on Exmoor say will help them to:

1. stay living and working on Exmoor,
  2. make their contribution to Keeping Exmoor Special,
- both of which are targets for the National Park and its Plan for partnership.

The Park Authority recognises that a key component for Keeping Exmoor Special will be the inclusion of young people so that as well as continuing to live and work here they can contribute to maintaining and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the Moor.

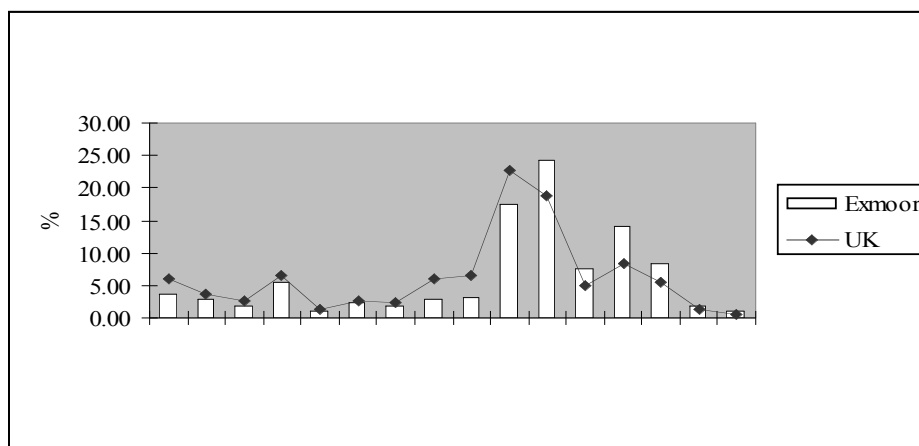
This report details what 28, 16 to 24-year-olds, in four discussion groups, north, east, west, and mid-Exmoor, say will help them to stay living and working here and make a contribution to keeping Exmoor special.

### Demography – notes from the Census

#### Population and age.

The only age group where there has been a reduction is the 'student' group of 15-24 years. West Somerset also has a much lower proportion of people in the 20-30 age group than the national average. This reflects not just the inward migration of older people but the outward migration of younger people because of the lack of higher education facilities in the area and a lack of job opportunities for people with higher education. In North Devon there is a prediction of a 5.5% increase in population between 2001 and 2011 but this incorporates a 32.3% rise in the over 60s and a 4.7% decrease in the under 19s.

Exmoor's age profile shows a lower proportion of infants and people aged 20 to 44 and a higher proportion of people aged 45 to 84 than the national average.



There is a steadily decreasing proportion of young people and increasing proportion of old people within the National Park. In 2001 14.94% of Exmoor's population was aged under 16 years. In 1991 it was 15.8% and in 1981 it was 16.8%.

Exmoor has a higher rate of unemployment than other National Parks.

#### **Households and accommodation.**

2001        4,896    occupied households.  
              216     vacant households.  
              563     second or holiday homes.

1951        3.2     persons per household.

1971        2.7     persons per household.

2001        2.22    persons per occupied household.

Vacant spaces dropped from 4.6% in 1991 to 3.8% in 2001.

There has been a steady decrease in population in private households from 10,731 in 1951 to 9296 in 1971.

An increase in population on the fringes and decreasing size of household in the Park were attributed to an influx of retired people.

The problem of second and holiday homes has been highlighted on Exmoor.

### **The Young Voices**

The 28 young people speaking in this review live, work, and study across Exmoor and its fringes. Their homes are in Twitchen, Sandyway, Hawkridge, Withypool, Exford, Porlock, Dunster, Timberscombe, Minehead, Watchet, Williton, Carhampton, Parracombe, Combe Martin, Lynton and Lynmouth.



They include farmers, labourers, shop workers, horse managers, administrators, trainee professionals, part time workers, a couple, a young mother, students, and young people, still studying, who will not be going on to higher education and want to stay living here. All are residents at present.

Of the 28, 6 are over 20, 16 are young women and 12 young men.

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The four groups met in January and February 2012 despite snow and ice.

They were asked, in group discussion:

1. What is needed to help young people stay living and working on Exmoor?
2. What can young residents do to keep Exmoor special?

They were told that the National Park's Partnership Plan has three Priorities. They are:

1. A Thriving, Living Landscape
2. Connecting People and Places
3. A Sustainable Future

There were copies of the Plan for participants who wanted one.

The interviewer told them that the Park wants partners to focus on keeping Exmoor special while meeting the needs and wellbeing of local communities. Young people will need special encouragement and opportunities to stay if a balanced community is to be sustained.

To achieve these aspirations the Park is placing its emphasis on closer partnership working and greater community engagement. ENPA wants communities to take the lead in shaping future development to meet their needs and aspirations, including access to services, housing, communications, and infrastructure. Promoting community engagement is a priority for the Partnership Plan. The young people who contributed to this research have proposals for how this can be effected.

During the group discussions participants were also introduced to local planning and public service arrangements in Exmoor National Park, and the overlapping roles of West Somerset and North Devon Councils, Somerset and Devon County Councils, Town and Parish Councils, Health, Police, Fire and Rescue, and Housing Services, their responsibilities and relationships, as well as current trends in youth engagement, participatory and community budgeting.

## Exmoor's Young Voices

You will read in the quotes which follow that, unsurprisingly, the main issues are jobs, including part-time work; homes, including renting; travel; a love of the Park and Exmoor, with the belief that there needs to be greater participation, especially by young people. They report that it is not possible for young people to stay living here other than with their parents or in shared accommodation. See 'A Young Worker's Suggestions', page 21, for solutions to this problem.

## Employment

1. *"Friends move away because they cannot find work or earn enough."*
2. *"There are part-time jobs but these do not lead to a decent life – farm labouring, lambing, horses, picking up etc."*
  - Young people cannot earn enough to sustain an independent life on Exmoor.
  - They must live at home or leave.
  - Those who do not go on to education after 18 ask the authorities to consider:
3. *"Grants to help businesses – existing ones as well as new ones."*

and report, for example:

4. *"Morrisons only employ older people; Tesco's are good at employing younger people."*

They suggest:

5. *"Help young people with vehicle tests, machinery tests e.g. chainsaws, tractors."*
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6. *“Provide support for local skills.”*
  7. *“More job opportunities different from vocational jobs; WSCC already creates vocational opportunities; A-level students need opportunities too.”*
  8. *“Young people need support to develop local skills: shearing; hedging; fencing; local crafts; burning the moors. Give subsidies to farmers to employ young people.”*
  9. *“Help young people with jobs, houses, getting young people into Exmoor jobs, developing skills in hedging, fencing.”*
  10. *“Encourage local farming companies to try and offer more opportunities to young people looking for part-time jobs.”*
  11. *“Make the steam railway go all the way to Taunton (for work).”*

They would like to see business better supported:

12. *“Support businesses trading on Exmoor.”*
13. *“Allow businesses to develop and expand to allow the next generation to go into the family business.”*

## Education and training

The educational opportunities at Minehead, Ilfracombe, Bridgwater, Taunton and Barnstaple are horizon widening. Young people who want to benefit further from these have to move away for higher education and are unlikely to be able to return until middle age or later.

14. *“I hate it when adults say young people should leave the area to broaden their experience. I love it here.”*
15. *“I can only go to Cannington because I am able to live at home.”*

## Housing

Accommodation for young people is vital. The current housing stock, rents and prices provide little or no opportunities to stay. A builder during this review said:

16. *“If I had a small plot of land here I’d build a low rise block of small starter flats for single young people”.*

Another young person said:

17. *“We need the equivalent of student accommodation if we want this age group (16 to 24) to be encouraged to stay”*

Several of the interviewees knew of situations like this:

18. *“My sister rented a house in Dunster but had to move back home; she could not afford it.”*

Others reported:

19. *“The only way I can live here is to stay on with my family. A one bedroomed shared flat will cost me £400 a month. I would be better off homeless, in temporary accommodation, with £10 a week and £45- £53 Jobseeker's allowance.”*
20. *“50% of our friends have left already or are going to.”*
21. *“A one bed flat in Minehead costs £500 a month, there is no job security, the shops come and go.”*

They suggest:

22. *“Affordable housing which is specifically designed for younger people.”*  
and
23. *“Stimulate Affordable Renting.”*

**Affordable homes** is a significant issue for three of the groups.

24. *“The new homes don't look right.”*
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25. *“Affordable homes are too small; they are not big enough and do not fit the environment; design properties for our age range.”*
  26. *“At Wheddon Cross there is nowhere for your vehicle, wellies etc.”*
  27. *“Make affordable homes bigger. They don't look right on Exmoor. They need to look less like a housing estate and more like traditional Exmoor houses. They are too small for developing family life, having visitors, and storing the essentials of country living.”*
  28. *“Don't build houses that look like the new modern ones taken from the inner city.”*

### **Holiday and second homes**

29. *“Empty houses, holiday cottages, second homes are a problem.”*
30. *“There are a lot of empty houses for long periods due to holiday homes – we need to make sure that the backbone, i.e. farming of Exmoor, is looked after to keep it attractive for tourism.”*
31. *“Find a way to prevent outsiders taking over farms and decent sized houses.”*
32. *“People from away buying farmhouses and not living in them is a waste.”*
33. *“There is a sense that people with money can do anything they like.”*

### **Keeping Exmoor Special**

In sustaining the heritage of Exmoor, planners and the Authority will need to consider how to maintain cultural memory. As well as stimulating employment and learning, managing housing, immigration, and recreation, fresh partnerships with local communities, including young people, need developing. To keep their Exmoor special this is the range of what young people have to say:

34. *“Green energy, windmills, solar panels, should be encouraged to make this an eco-area. There must be help to install these.”*
35. *“It's silly that there are two lorries following each other for rubbish and recycling.”*
36. *“Underground heating sources should be installed.”*
37. *“Exford shop is important.”*
38. *“Laying paving slabs where there should be cobbles is wrong.”*
39. *“The red roofs at Wheddon Cross are wrong.”*
40. *“Don't build housing estates e.g. Wheddon Cross, Exford.”*
41. *“Let people be eco-friendly.”*
42. *“Keep local events going like Ironman, Golden Horseshoe, Tour of Britain, Perambulation.”*
43. *“Maintain moorlands to keep the area looking special and also keep tourists coming to this pretty area.”*
44. *“Keep houses in keeping with this countryside so that it does not corrupt the Exmoor image.”*
45. *“The affordable housing at Wheddon Cross and Exford does not reflect what Exmoor should look like. Build to suit the area.”*
46. *“Manage the Moors – burning more enhances productivity.”*
47. *“Ecology is important.”*
48. *“Minehead young people want to move away, but Exmoor young people want to stay.”*

### **Partnership**

It has been recognised that a shift in how public services are funded and delivered is vital. One major advantage for ENPA in pursuing partnerships with local people is that there is an almost universal love of Exmoor among the people who live and visit. The conversations with young people demonstrated that goodwill.

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49. *"There needs to be more community involvement."*
  50. *"Youth proof your website."*
  51. *"If the national park wants to be successful with young people it needs to use Facebook."*
  52. *"Support groups and organisations for local people to keep that community feel, such as youth groups, social clubs, village halls, Young Farmers, and maintain links with all of these."*
  53. *"Get young people more engaged and understanding Exmoor."*
  54. *"Social networking."*
  55. *"Set up Facebook for young people; young people can do this for you very easily."*
  56. *"Emphasise the reasons for staying – this is a great area of natural beauty."*
  57. *"Young people who know the Park are negative because they hear stories of planning permission blocked to local people who want to extend a farmhouse, build a cottage next door."*
  58. *"If I want to convert my loft to improve living space I should be able to tell them it is my property and what I am doing won't hurt anybody."*
  59. *"Support, not block."*
  60. *"Planning: allow people working and living on Exmoor, who will earn money on Exmoor, to have easier planning permission rather than just letting the rich put through retrospective planning in the knowledge that they can fight to keep it while genuine Exmoor people are not brave enough to do this."*
  61. *"The National Park does a lot of good stuff but its reputation is tainted by blocking development, and inconsistency."*
  62. *"The national park should be more open-minded and understanding."*
  63. *"Youth proof documents and publications to appeal to young people."*
  64. *"The National Park makes good contact with first schools, a little with middle schools, and none with the college."*
  65. *"It will be so much better if we could all work together."*

### Partnership Priorities

Other ways the Park might meet this target:

- Local Ambassadors: nominated representatives in each village, hamlet and town to be National Park partners
- Community budgeting with partner authorities and local communities
- Small participatory budgeting projects with Parish Councils and the Sustainable Communities Fund
- Involving local and young people in neighbourhood planning based on the Lynton experience.
- Link ENPA staff informally to strategic young people's representatives across the moor.

### Activities and leisure

66. *"More activities for young people."*
  67. *"Appeal to the interests of young people – sports."*
  68. *"We don't mind local quad bikes and Land Rovers off road."*
  69. *"They shut the swimming pool. That shows what they think about young people staying here."*
  70. *"Quite a few people need grants to be able to use the sports centre."*
  71. *"Minehead Eye needs to be more flexible, not just massive skateboard ramps, and cheaper for locals."*
  72. *"There is nothing to keep young people here. We walk up and down in Minehead. The police move us on."*
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73. "If you are 12 to 19 years old there's nothing to do. This is an overpopulated retirement area."
74. "There are no clothes shops for young people without travelling considerable distances."
75. "For young residents to stay here and help to keep Exmoor special there need to be activities and facilities around the moor which appeal to young people."
76. "If they want to keep us on Exmoor they need to be more supportive and not take the piss."

### Transport and travel

77. "Transport into the deeper rural villages."
78. "We need cheaper public transport."
79. "Cheaper buses."
80. "Buses are too expensive."
81. "Buses to Taunton cost seven pounds. I can earn £80, but spend £35 on fares."

"Even if I have to go away after A-levels, to study, I will want to come back."

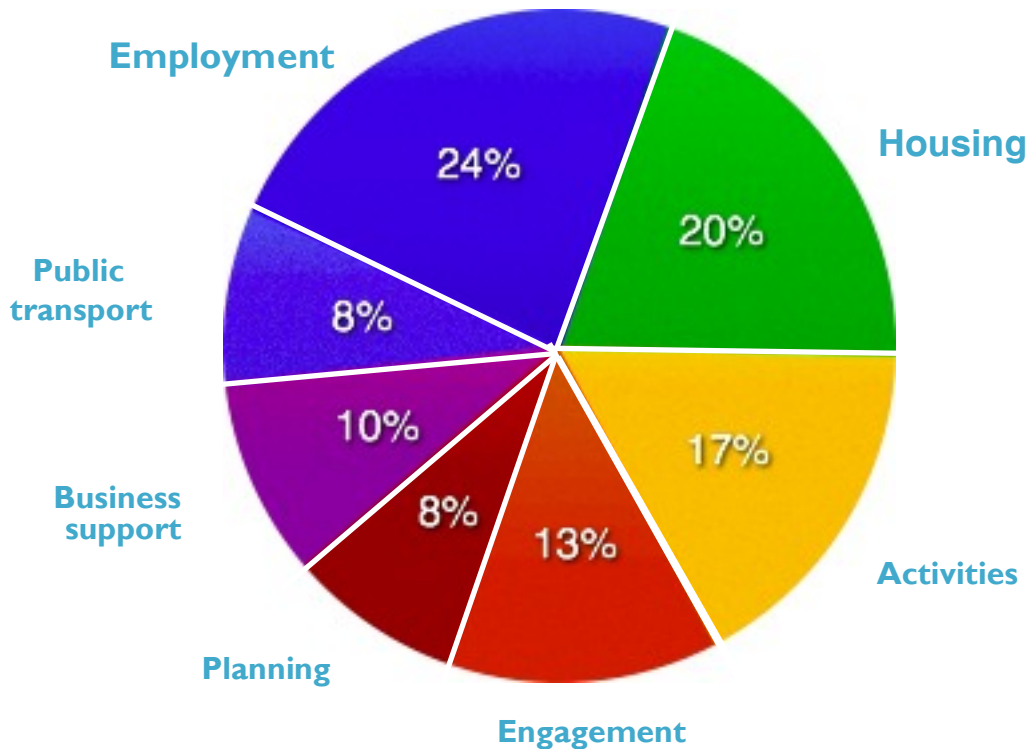
### In order of importance, young people have identified:

- a) To keep them living and working on Exmoor
- b) To keep Exmoor special

	<b>Comments</b>
1. <b>Employment</b> - inc. wage levels, vocational and non-vocational opportunities	<b>41</b>
2. <b>Housing</b> - size, quality, costs and purpose; protection of existing housing stock from wealthy incomers/standing empty; first step affordable accommodation for young people	<b>36</b>
3. <b>Activities</b> - including swimming, skating, cheaper Butlins, dance and clothes shopping	<b>30</b>
4. <b>Engagement/partnership with young people</b>	<b>23</b>
5. <b>Planning</b> especially poor styles of affordable housing – not in keeping with Exmoor seen as a block to local people, but not wealthy incomers	<b>7</b>
6. <b>Support to local businesses</b> - including farms and small shops and other family businesses	<b>17</b>
7. <b>ENPA</b> seen as a good thing for the protection of landscapes and townscapes but not seen as helpful to the real residents	<b>8</b>
8. <b>Public Transport</b> - inc trains in to Taunton and cheaper buses	<b>15</b>
9. <b>Green energy</b> - support for	<b>7</b>
10. <b>Local skills and knowledge</b>	<b>5</b>
11. <b>Support for local events</b>	<b>4</b>
12. <b>Friends move out</b>	<b>3</b>
13. <b>Exmoor young people want to stay</b>	<b>3</b>



## Young Voices prioritise the issues like this



### A young worker's suggestions

#### First, a case study:

*"In March 2011 my brother got a job in Taunton. We had to drive him into Dulverton every day to pick up public transport and meet him every night – 200 miles per week. He moved to Taunton in October, but is moving home again now as his income barely gives him enough to live on in Taunton – so what hope independent life on Exmoor?"*

#### Suggestions

##### Housing:

- *Build university style studio flats for young people as a first step into the housing market*
- *Allow more family annexes to be built for the children*

##### Leisure:

- *Stimulate the formation of 16-25's club which would run trips eg to the races or participate in local sports events, or even organise group holidays*
- *Create a trust fund to help low income residents to have a break away. Given the high level of mental illness and depression on the moor this could make a significant difference*

##### Employment, ENPA and WSC:

- *Take on two apprentice Rangers each year, minimum wage, to learn and practise basic maintenance skills such as swaling, hedging etc. This would provide skills training and 'previous experience' on their cvs.*

- Encourage farmers/land owners to rent out '50 acres plus a barn' to young people who could then get a starter flock or a suckler herd to help them get into farming, the traditional route being closed to them by planning restrictions and impossibly high prices/rents
- Invite businesses at very favourable rates to rent the empty units in the business parks, on the condition they take on local young people. This would enable those who don't want to work in agriculture or tourism to stay here too and might also provide post graduate opportunities (to counter balance the influence of retired graduate incomers who do not know Exmoor)
- Encourage a good local home delivery service – another job for a young person

### **One Group of young people additionally said:**

#### **They Like:**

- Living here
- Knowing and being known by everybody
- The quiet
- The lack of dangers they hear about in other places
- The local cinema

#### **They do not like:**

- Some aspects of the quiet and being known by everybody
- Sundays – nothing to do, boring, everything shut
- The bus service – too expensive and returns too early

#### **Leaving or Staying:**

- They all want to stay
- Those who have to leave will come back, but probably will not be able to afford to until their fifties

#### **Employment Now:**

- They all have work, as in part-time, evening and weekend work to earn a little
- Most have had this since ages 12/13

### **An 18 year old, about to leave, wrote:**

1. What is needed to help young people stay living and working on Exmoor?

*Good employment prospects in a wide range of trades and professions. This needs diversity of work placements to include manual work, apprenticeships as well as professional and 'white collar' work with good earnings. Giving potential to keep the ambitious academic young generation here as well as the ones that want to go into more manual work.*

*Good income = prosperous family life, enabling more families to be able to move here and raise a family without struggling.*

2. What can young residents do to keep Exmoor special?

*Be aware of the beauty of the environment that surrounds us which could come through education about Exmoor.*

3. Get the young people involved in local projects so that they get a real feel and understanding of the area in which they live, along with its facilities and need to maintain/sustain it as a living and prosperous place to live.

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## Next Steps and Recommendations From Young People

1. Design Affordable Homes For Country Working
2. Put a Levy on Unused or Misused Land
3. Initiate a Simple Transport Scheme for Exmoor Young People
4. Use the Partnership Fund To Involve Young People in Decision-Making
5. Take on two Apprentice Rangers Each Year
6. Explore the potential for partnership budgeting with other services e.g. other councils, especially parishes, housing, police, health, fire and rescue services who can contribute to the ideas proposed by young people in this project. Likely benefits are economies of scale, increased local engagement and the enhancement and sustainability of the Park.
7. Review the balance between educating local people and local people educating the Park Authority.
8. Make a presentation to the Authority by young people
9. Contract four young people to youth proof the Partnership Plan for an additional 'community' version to be produced, to engage a wider cross section of Exmoor residents in its delivery.

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Thankyou to the young Exmoor workers, students, residents and professionals who shared their ideas so warmly, enthusiastically and willingly.

**Contributors**

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Leslie Silverlock, January 2015

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# Keeping Rural Communities Alive

## Research findings and quotes from CPRE Spring 2014

- Lack of entrepreneurial culture: “People and local politicians are waiting for something to drop from the skies.....rather than taking the bull by the horns and making something happen themselves”. *Andy Lake of Flexibility, a work specialist, bringing together research and opinions on innovations in employment.*
- Innovation is alive in rural communities but obstacles such as the slow roll-out of broadband are holding people back. “Our members say the lack of broadband in rural areas is one of the biggest barriers to doing business. It is so vital for growth in the countryside that it should be considered the fourth utility”. *David Webb, Rural Affairs Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses.*
- Homeworking is already more prevalent in rural areas. At the end of 2009, 18.88% of the rural workforce was working from home compared to 11.24% in urban areas. Two thirds of rural homeworkers were self-employed. *Not referenced.*
- “The future for local food production is very positive. We have more than 700 farmers’ markets in England,” but “Current legislation isn’t helping eg you can put up a temporary sign for a circus but not for a farmers market, because the legislation pre-dates the growth of the markets”. “Every £ spent on locally produced food generates £2.50 for the area economy”. *Ceinwen Lally, Plunkett Foundation*
- Cost of living in rural areas: “People in rural areas need to spend 10-20% more ...to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living” High costs of transport, housing and energy are cited. Thus, a single person living in a village needs to earn at least 50% above the minimum wage (£6.31 per hour) to make ends meet. *Loughborough University, for Commission for Rural Communities*
- Higher living costs have not been met by a corresponding rise in rural wages. *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*
- Farming start ups: *Survey 2014 (FCN and NFYFC)* shows 54% of young farmers not confident about the future of farming profitability and 41% felt rural employment opportunities were limited.
- There are young people not from farming backgrounds who want to work in food production, but costs and risks are prohibitive. Share farming might be a way round this: “Young people could offer to provide the labour, machinery or livestock in return for the use of farmland, and then share the profits with the landowner. It works in NZ and Australia” *Charles Smith, CEO of FCN*

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- It is quite possible to run a small business without premises or other paid staff. People act as free agents; micro-businesses collaborate with others as needed. Using the new technologies, a business can have national and global reach. This encourages local spending, rather than joining the exodus to earn and spend elsewhere. *Andy Lake, Flexibility.*
  - “We have the will in the countryside – we’re just not being given the wherewithal” *Suffolk vineyard entrepreneur*, still waiting after 3 years for planning permission for a barn conversion to create a plant shop and café, (which involved successive planning officers with differing interpretations about what it should look like; related costs are now running at £350,000).



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# Young Voices 2015

