

## PROPERTY

# Keeping Exmoor Youthful

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Exmoor has always been a popular place to buy all kinds of property, covering permanent, holiday and second homes. It enjoys a huge draw thanks to an outstanding environment with carefully managed landscapes and traditional communities and we all work hard to ensure that Exmoor remains a beautiful place in which to live and work. So how do we ensure that there is space for the next generation without devaluing what already exists? This challenge is gaining more and more coverage, not just here, but across the UK.

With the average local earning ability for a 25- to 28-year-old being just £12-£15,000 per annum, affording to get even a toe onto the open market housing ladder is nigh on impossible.

The difficulties are complex and intertwined. Competition for house purchases inflates prices, whilst competition for rental houses inflates rents. Planning constraints allowing for few new-builds means a small number of low-cost houses are being identified and often these are inappropriate for those in need.

What are the alternatives to avoid the younger generation being forced to move away from the National Park?

Support is beginning to grow and gel, with many authorities and public bodies now coming together to identify and tackle this web of problems. Exmoor National Park Authority is co-ordinating parish opinions and identifying opportunities within planning guidelines, while local housing associations have identified and are filling all currently available 'affordable' housing stocks. A formal body of 18- to 30-year-olds called Exmoor Young Voices has been created to provide a focus for those requiring assistance and to specifically work on solutions for their generation.

Interesting options are evolving. These include communal accommodation, whereby individuals have a room in a shared 'affordable' house. Self-build projects are gaining increasing backing as a way of keeping the eventual cost of a new home more manageable. Flexible and less restrictive mortgages and deposits are being discussed to provide that first step.

Restrictive planning permissions can be applied to discourage non-permanent accommodation. However, Exmoor, being a National Park, has few new-builds and therefore this only really applies to a change of use. Socially aware owners of property that is being sold on Exmoor could place a tie on their house restricting a sale for permanent use only, but the narrowing of marketing could devalue that property. Rental properties could be offered to a housing association to manage their occupancy for young locals.

Let's all lend our support. If you would like to find out more about what is being done to champion affordable homes for young people, you will find lots of information via Exmoor Young Voices and the Exmoor Rural Housing Network:

[www.facebook.com/ExmoorYoungVoices](http://www.facebook.com/ExmoorYoungVoices)

[www.facebook.com/ExmoorRuralHousingNetwork](http://www.facebook.com/ExmoorRuralHousingNetwork)

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