

Exmoor Business Survey

Introduction

During July 2018 the Exmoor Rural Housing Network¹ conducted a survey of businesses on Exmoor to find out the views of local employers on whether the supply of local housing may be affecting local businesses and their ability to function optimally. This survey was available on line as a Survey Monkey survey and available from the Exmoor Rural Housing Network Facebook page. It was widely advertised to local businesses through direct emails, social media and publicity through networks held by Exmoor National Park Authority and Business Exmoor and Exmoor Young Voices.

Survey Results

A total of twelve questions about housing on Exmoor were asked and nine responses from local businesses were collected. The results are summarised below.

Q1. High housing costs and shortage of affordable homes is an issue for Exmoor National Park. To what extent to you agree or disagree with this statement?

78% of respondents said that they either strongly agreed or agreed that high housing costs are an issue on Exmoor.

Q2. What impact, if any, does the availability (or lack of) local housing for employees have on your own business?

44% of respondents said they thought that the lack of local housing for employees had either a high impact or quite a lot of impact. 33% of respondents thought that the impact is moderate.

Q3 Have you ever considered the need to relocate your business because of difficulties with recruiting or retaining staff?

Over 55% had not considered relocation and a further 44% said that relocation was not possible. Only 1 respondent 11% had considered relocation.

Q4. If you are affected by either the recruitment or retention of staff because of a lack of suitable housing, please tell us more:

6 respondents answered this question. Their answers are listed below.

¹ The Exmoor Rural Housing Network is a partnership of local organisations and individuals across Exmoor with the common concern of helping local people find suitable and affordable housing on Exmoor.

If you would like to discuss issues related to housing on Exmoor please contact Sue on 01392 248919 or email sue@devoncommunities.org.uk.

1. I can only pay just above min wage so for staff to pay a rent in this area is impossible. This means I usually have staff living with me which is not always suitable or successful.
2. Lack of affordable housing means an aging less diverse population. This restricts our talent pool.
3. Staff not happy with the long distant drive. If they can't drive they struggle to get to us
4. people are moving to towns and say it's too far to travel
5. I have purposefully stunted the growth of my business to not require more staff. This is because acquiring trained personnel that are local and have secure housing making them reliable is very difficult.
6. Care staff needed for ageing population but nowhere affordable for them to live. They are on low wages.

Q5. What type of housing would benefit the operation of your business? The different types of housing are explained at the start of this form. You can tick more than one box.

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Shared ownership/equity | 33% |
| Affordable/social rent | 67% |
| Self-build/custom build | 67% |
| Discounted market home | 33% |
| Rent to buy | 56% |
| Market housing | 67% |

Q6. Which settlements in the National Park could new housing be located to be of most benefit to your business?

7 responses were received

1. Parracombe
2. Dulverton
3. Timberscombe
4. All settlements should be considered.
5. South/South East Exmoor
6. Luxborough and surrounding parishes
7. Dulverton Minehead, Tiverton

Q7. Do you have any suggestions for suitable sites for affordable housing in your parish or any other comments regarding housing in the parish your business operates?

5 responses were received to this question.

1. Yes we have a splat of land with road frontage opposite Christchurch
2. Scope in surrounding villages for development e.g. Brushford
3. Allow residents of any parish in Exmoor be considered for any other parish rather than only their own or neighbouring, you will never get skilled people in the right place if you restrict them.
4. Promote self builds! Land above Tarr Water cottages in Luxborough.
5. The old laundry site Dulverton

Q8. Are you aware that if people want to apply for an affordable home to rent they will need to register with:

Homefinder Somerset if they want to live in in Somerset?

Devon Home Choice if they want to live in Devon?

56% - yes

44% - no

Q9. Are you aware that if people want to apply for an affordable home to buy they will need to register with Help to Buy South West:

25% - yes

75% - no

Q10. How many people do you employ?

The average number of permanent employees per organisation was 9 employees and the average number of temporary/seasonal staff per organisation was 4 employees.

54 of the staff employed were permanent and 35 were seasonal/temporary staff

Q11. What number of employees currently live in Exmoor National Park?

Out of 8 respondent employees, 19 have staff who live on Exmoor

Q12. What number of employees have previously lived in Exmoor National Park but have had to move away because of housing availability/cost?

Out of 8 respondent employees, 6 have staff that have had to move away.

Conclusion

Despite the low number of replies received the survey does provide some interesting information. The findings tend to support the anecdotal evidence that high housing costs and shortage of affordable homes is an issue for employers in Exmoor National Park, and that the lack of availability of housing for employees has at least some degree of impact on the business.

The three most popular tenures suggested by respondents (67% in each case) were affordable housing for rent, self-build/custom build or open market. Other tenures were less popular.

The results provide some useful information about what type of homes Exmoor businesses require to help them to continue to survive over the longer term. This report will be shared with Exmoor National Park Planning Authority to supplement their evidence base of local housing need (such as parish housing need surveys) used to assess the need for local affordable homes in settlements across Exmoor and the potential for future housing schemes.