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Dartmoor Partnership provides helping hand to Dartmoor businesses

The Dartmoor Partnership, a team of just four people, has been doing some amazing work all in the name of Dartmoor. As the official tourism organization for the region, the Partnership is tasked with championing Dartmoor as the No 1 place to visit as well as supporting the businesses that reside on the moor.

Through workshops, events, training and classes, the Dartmoor Partnership has assisted over 400 local businesses. The organization has put 40 individual B&Bs, guest houses and pubs through cookery classes with Ashburton Cookery School, which led to the opportunity to gain NVQ qualifications and a better offering to guests.

The company has worked extensively with the National Park Authority and the Dartmoor Farmers to show a unity and a partnership between tourism, farming and the environment for the first time. Promoting local produce and sustainable farming is something that Mark Walker, Chairman of the Dartmoor Partnership, feels very strongly about.

“We have an abundance of excellent local produce on the moor, from beef and lamb to cheese and honey; what we are lacking is a way to get that message out to the rest of the world. We are bringing together our members – restaurants, hotels, B&Bs, guest houses and pubs – with local producers in an effort to get local food on the menu. Wouldn't it be fantastic if you were staying in a hotel on Dartmoor that provided fresh local eggs for breakfast or a steak from the farm up the road? There is a real story to tell and it is up to us to tell it. We want to make sure that these producers don't disappear through lack of support.”

The Partnership has been busy in other areas too. It has spent a great deal of time creating a brand for Dartmoor, something now widely recognised as a marque of quality and well, community. Word is already spreading through the company's new website, www.dartmoor.co.uk of all the great things that are happening and the logo is appearing on anything from Jail Ale beer bottles to t-shirts, leaflets and menus to show that local businesses support Dartmoor.

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The company is hosting competitions, press visits, holding networking evenings and photography days, attending local festivals and shows and offering business advice and support to its members. It has worked with its partner, West Devon Borough Council to provide an online booking facility at Okehampton and Tavistock Tourist Information Centres, and now has a presence at the Dartmoor National Park Visitor Centres.

Mark comments, "It has been a tough few years for businesses and we are not out of the woods yet. We are in a position to be able to offer marketing and promotion for local businesses when they are struggling and this is something that is imperative right now. We need to pull together, buy local and show Dartmoor for the awesome place it really is. It is a slow process but we have seen huge changes in the past year and I believe that the work we are doing to support our members is really starting to show its worth."

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Dartmoor Partnership, please contact 01837 52200 or visit the website: www.dartmoor.co.uk

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Press enquiries: please contact Jess Whistance at the Dartmoor Partnership on 01363 83553 / 07748 635 869 or email jess@discoverdartmoor.com

Editor's notes:

Dartmoor Partnership

The Dartmoor Partnership has been promoting Dartmoor and supporting local businesses for more than 25 years as the Dartmoor Tourist Association. In March 2008, it joined forces with West Devon Borough Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority and The Duchy of Cornwall to form the Dartmoor Partnership, aided by funding through Devon Renaissance. The partnership is now established as the official tourism and trade organization for Dartmoor, a representative for local people, local business and a champion of Dartmoor as a tourist destination. The partnership aims to ensure that Dartmoor thrives in any economy. The company has in excess of 600 members who rely on the organization for promotion as well as assistance and support.

The Dartmoor Partnership has recently launched its inspiring website, www.dartmoor.co.uk

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