Tamar Valley
National
Landscape



June 2026

Tamar Valley National Landscape **An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan No.6** 2026 - 2031

Development in the Tamar Valley

Planning and Development

The Tamar Valley faces development pressures that are reshaping its character and tranquillity, including:

- Urban expansion reducing green buffers and transition zones, impacting tranquillity and light levels.
- Increased housebuilding targets and settlement growth threatening the valley's sparsely settled character.
- Transport corridors and glazed buildings undermining dark skies and rural tranquillity, alongside expanded permitted development rights.
- Increased use of non-locally sourced building materials, such as from local quarries, resulting in loss of connection with landscape context, diluting distinctive vernacular architecture.
- Fragmentation of farm holdings, diversification, and decline of traditional industries such as market gardening.
- Mining resumption, with the potential to significantly alter landscape and heritage.
- Cumulative impact of minor urban growth since 2012, alongside pressure on residential properties from tourism and second home ownership.
- Eleven heritage assets at risk; historic mining infrastructure and smallholdings under pressure.

These trends have the potential to impact the valley's special qualities, highlighting the need for robust planning, landscape monitoring, and community engagement to guide sustainable development and protect its unique identity.

Agriculture

Agriculture in the Tamar Valley is undergoing significant structural change post Brexit and there is growing uncertainty around farming payments, such as the end of the Basic Payment Scheme. Since 2010, agricultural holdings have declined by 14%, with a marked shift toward poultry production (+275%) and away from sheep and cattle (down 18% and 12% respectively since 2016). Hobby farming, solar farms, and glasshouses are increasing, while traditional features such as hedgerows, Cornish hedges, Devon hedgebanks, orchards, and historic field patterns are disappearing, eroding local distinctiveness.

Woodland management remains partial, with only 56% actively managed. Ancient woodland is stable but under pressure, and participation in agri-environment schemes has fallen from 42% to 32% of land area. Post-Brexit uncertainty and global market volatility are driving land-use changes, soil erosion, and nitrate pollution.

Landscape homogenisation is accelerating through over-managed hedgerows and intensive practices, while tree diseases (ash dieback, Phytophthora) and invasive species compound ecological stress. These trends threaten biodiversity, heritage, and the valley's character, underscoring the need for nature-friendly farming and integrated land management.

Challenges of accommodating substantial, modern agricultural buildings into the intimate, complex and tranquil valley landscape, and the impact of changes to land management practices, and pollution control measures affecting agricultural landscape need addressing. Increased intensity of rainfall and storms puts increasing pressure on water management improvements and nutrient inputs throughout agricultural practices.

Access, Social & Economic Pressures

Limited access to the TVNL continues to constrain opportunities for health, wellbeing, and inclusive engagement with nature. Transport connectivity is fragmented, with rural communities and visitors facing barriers to sustainable travel; public transport remains limited, and car dependency is high (91% of households). While proposals such as reinstating the Bere Alston-Tavistock railway and low-carbon transport options offer potential, delivery remains uncertain. Digital connectivity also lags behind, restricting local business growth and visitor experience.

At the same time, demographic and economic shifts are reshaping the valley. The population is ageing (average age 49), the working-age share has fallen to 55%, and ethnic diversity remains low. Earnings are below the rural average (£2,100/month), house-price ratios are high (8), and farming employment is declining. Home working has surged (11% to 32%), while tourism and second-home ownership add pressure, contributing to community fragmentation and disconnection from heritage.

Without coordinated investment and integrated planning, these trends risk deepening inequalities, eroding community cohesion, and undermining the valley's potential as an inclusive, resilient landscape. It is recognised that some of these constraints cannot be resolved without appropriate and sensitive development which could help support the delivery of services and facilities and to provide jobs.



Tamar Valley
National
Landscape

Date of Adoption:
June 2026

If you require information in a different format – for example in braille, large print, paper copy or other languages, please contact:

Tamar Valley National Landscape, Tamar Valley Centre
Cemetery Road, Drakewalls,
Gunnislake, Cornwall PL18 9FE

www.tamarvalley-nl.org.uk

© Tamar Valley National Landscape 2026

Acknowledgements:

Photography Credits: Trevor Burrows, Steven Draper, Tobi O'Neill / TON Drone Services, Ted Giffords, Apex Photography, Fotonow, Lesley Strong, National Trust and Sarah Gibson

Designed by Kyff