

## Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

# Annual Review 2012/2013

### From our chairman

Over the past year we've looked both forward and back as we celebrated the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's rich heritage and invested in the area's future.

I was delighted to welcome more than 300 people to the Blackdown Hills Heritage Day in September. There were events across the area with opportunities to explore thousands of years of human history from the Iron Age onwards.

Many local people, schoolchildren and American veterans were also involved in Dunkeswell War Stories, a project which produced a fascinating archive of interviews and multi-media learning resources to help new generations learn about the Second World War.

Looking ahead, the team developed Blackdown Hills Natural Futures a major new project which, if our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund is successful, will start in autumn 2014. It will help to discover more about the nature of the Blackdown Hills, with plenty of ways for everyone to get involved, including support for communities who want to help nature 'on their doorstep'.

Other work this year has also involved planning for the future. We were closely involved in planning and licencing issues surrounding a number of high-profile proposals, including large-scale, solar PV farms and music festivals. And we worked to foster new relationships such as the Devon and Somerset Local Nature Partnerships and Force for Nature - our first joint initiative with the Blackdown Hills Trust, a recently established local charity.

We also began work on the AONB's new Management Plan for 2014 - 19. This vital document guides the work of the AONB partnership for the next five years, and so it is important that we have feedback from as many local people, organisations and parishes as possible. Many of you will have already helped us by responding to our questionnaire, but there will be another opportunity to comment on the draft plan in the autumn.



**Cllr Paul Diviani**, Chairman,  
Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

## Landscape



- We developed Dunkeswell War Stories with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and local sources.
- We developed What Makes a View as part of the European CORDIALE project, to enable local people to speak up for the views which matter to them.
- We put together a funding bid for Natural Futures, a major project to help communities to understand and cherish biodiversity and heritage on their doorsteps.
- We worked with English Heritage to train new volunteers to monitor historic monuments.
- We supported projects to monitor species, including the Somerset Environmental Record Centre's Big Bat Survey, and the RSPB's Blackdown Hills summer visitors bird survey.
- We worked with East Devon AONB to update our Strategic Nature Areas - an important tool in future planning to protect wildlife.
- We supported the Blackdown Hills community iron workings archaeology project in training volunteers and mapping key sites.



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[www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk](http://www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk)

## Sustainability



- We welcomed over 300 people to the Blackdown Hills Heritage Day to discover the AONB's rich history.
- We supported the formation of the Blackdown Hills Parish Network and the creation of a community website [blackdownsonline.org.uk](http://blackdownsonline.org.uk)
- As part of Force for Nature (a Heritage Lottery Fund initiative with the Blackdown Hills Trust and the Forestry Commission) we created an online portal for countryside volunteering in the AONB and helped to create new opportunities.
- We supported the Devon Dance Compass project, involving local communities in high quality dance.
- We were a partner in Beef, Butterflies and Trees, supporting farmers and woodland owners to manage land more sustainability, with the Forestry Commission and funded by Making it Local.
- We supported local groups in their efforts to create a multi-user trail along the old Culm Valley railway line.

## Communication



- We worked with the Highways Authority and local communities to install three more road signs marking entry to the AONB.
- We carried out two surveys to gather input for the AONB's Management Plan 2014 - 2019, on which we have started review work.
- We designed and installed a high-quality interpretation board about Dumpdon Iron Age Hill Fort at the Otter Valley Ice Cream garden.
- We promoted over 100 countryside opportunities to enjoy and learn about the Blackdown Hills through our Countryside Events programme, and we continue to spread the word on social networks reaching over 1,000 followers.
- We supported a local photographer to document traditional Blackdown barns and produce a high-quality book of her work.

### Making it Local and Neroche

This year we have continued to support the Making it Local grants fund and the Neroche scheme.

To find out about what these major projects have achieved in 2012-13 go to:

[www.makingitlocal.org](http://www.makingitlocal.org)    [www.nerochescheme.org](http://www.nerochescheme.org)



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## Financial Information 2012/2013

Income		£	Expenditure		£
2011/12 Income brought forward		11,043	Staffing		149,366
Defra		180,944	Office costs		19,281
Devon County Council		10,635	Partnership costs		26,047
Somerset County Council		6,000	Partnership Projects		59,471
Mid Devon District Council Fund 12/13		12,000	Sustainable Development Fund		28,422
East Devon District Council		10,116	(Including administration)		
South Somerset District Council		6,000			
Taunton Deane Borough Council		10,000			
Rental income		6,500			
Other income		2,124			
Project income		55,800			
Income carried forward to 2013/14		-28,575			
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>£282,587</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>£282,587</b>

## Sustainable Development Fund grants 2012/13

Making it Local Development Workers	£5,548
Culm Valley Trail	£4,006
Devon Dance Compass: Facing East	£4,500
Built on Earth	£2,816
Apples for the Future	£804
Relics of our Forgotten Craft	£1,537
Food on the Hill	£2,850
Nightwatchman's Clock	£278
War Memorials	£2,625
Iron Workings	£984
Castlefields Wild Grassland	£700
Moth Surveying	£713
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£27,361</b>

*The Blackdown Hills is one of the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – landscapes protected for the nation because of their exceptional countryside, heritage and wildlife. The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership consists of over 80 organisations with a small, dedicated staff team based in Hemyock. To find out more about the Blackdown Hills AONB, including news, events and walks, go to:*

**[www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk](http://www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk)**



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**Tel:** 01823 680681 **Email:** [blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk](mailto:blackdownhills@devon.gov.uk)

Photo credits: Dan Bryan and Chris Goodman

## **Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership**

Axe Vale Conservation Society  
Blackdown Hills Business Association  
Blackdown Hills Hedge Association  
Blackdown Hills Transition Group  
Blackdown Hills Walking Group  
Blackdown Hills Woodland Association  
Blackdown Support Group  
British Horse Society  
Butterfly Conservation  
Community Council for Somerset  
Community Council of Devon  
Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Council for Voluntary Service (Mid Devon)  
Country Land and Business Association  
Culm Valley Young Farmers  
Devon County Council  
Devon Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group  
Devon Rural Women's Network  
Devon Wildlife Trust  
Devon Youth Association (Young Devon)  
East Devon Council for Voluntary Service  
East Devon District Council  
English Heritage  
Environment Agency (Devon)  
Forest Enterprise  
Forestry Commission  
Highways Agency  
Honiton Development Trust  
Mid Devon District Council  
National Farmers Union  
National Trust  
Natural England  
Parish Councils  
Ramblers Association  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Silvanus Trust  
Somerset County Council  
Somerset Rural Youth Project  
Somerset Wildlife Trust  
Somerset Young Farmers Club  
Somerset Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group  
South Somerset District Council  
South West Regional Development Agency  
Stockland Turbaries  
Taunton Deane Borough Council  
The Conservation Volunteers  
Wessex Water  
Women's Institute

## **Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership management group 2012-13**

**Cllr Paul Diviani** East Devon District Council (Chair)  
**Cllr John Berry** Devon County Council  
**Cllr Ross Henley** Somerset County Council  
**Cllr Ros Roderigo** South Somerset District Council  
**Cllr David Reed** Taunton Deane Borough Council  
**Cllr Frank Rosamond** Mid Devon District Council (Vice Chair)  
**Emma-Rose Herrera** Environment Agency  
**Gavin Saunders** Forestry Commission  
**Heather Stallard** Blackdown Hills Business Association  
**John Greenshields** Blackdown & East Devon Woodland Association  
**Charlotte Russell** English Heritage  
**Martin Turner** Blackdown Hills Hedge Association  
**Mark Pope** National Farmers Union  
**Roland Stonex** Devon Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group  
**Geoffrey Sworder** Campaign to Protect Rural England/Community Council of Devon  
**David Jenkins** National Trust  
**Bruce Payne** Culm & North Parishes  
**David Allen** Yarty & East Parishes  
**Cllr Roger Boote** Otter & West Parishes  
**David Northcote-Wright** Somerset Wildlife Trust

## **Blackdown Hills AONB staff team 2012-13**

**Linda Bennett** manager  
**Lisa Turner** planning officer  
**Pippa Rayner** funding and development officer  
**Jackie Vaughan** office manager  
**Katherine Findlay** information officer



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