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 licensing 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.

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.

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
- 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      www.nerochescheme.org

www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk
### Financial Information 2012/2013

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<th>Income</th>
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<td>Defra</td>
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<td>Sustainable Development Fund (Including administration)</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenditure</strong></td>
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### Sustainable Development Fund grants 2012/13

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<td>Culm Valley Trail</td>
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<td>Built on Earth</td>
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<td>Food on the Hill</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>£27,361</strong></td>
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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)
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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