



Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Delivery Plan

*Management Plan 2014 – 2019: **Part 3***



Blackdown Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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For an explanation of abbreviations and terms used in this document please refer to Appendix E of the main Management Plan.

INTRODUCTION

This Delivery Plan forms Part 3 of the *Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014 – 2019. Part 1: Setting the Scene and Part 2: Management Framework* form the main Management Plan document¹.

Part 1 explains the designation, provides the vision for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), describes the area's special qualities and gives the international, national and local context. Part 2 contains the aims, objectives and policies for each topic. This Delivery Plan, Part 3, outlines the strategic priorities for the next five years necessary to achieve Part 2 and the main programmes, projects and partnerships that will provide the action.

Much has changed since the writing of the last Delivery Plan, which was part of the 2009 to 2014 Management Plan. The government's spending review has led to substantial reductions in public funding. The Blackdown Hill AONB Partnership itself has seen a cut in its annual Defra grant of some 30% over the four years to 2015; the AONB staff team has been reduced from six to four and we continue to look for further savings. Similar or greater reductions have been experienced by our local authority funding partners, along with the national agencies, such as Forestry Commission, Historic England and Natural England. Our partners in the voluntary sector have also experienced a reduction in income.

This 2014–2019 Delivery Plan recognises that there will continue to be public sector reform and further reductions in spending. To ensure a future for the AONB Partnership the focus must be on delivering the AONB purposes and broadening the funding base.

It is vital to maintain the minimal core team to support the delivery of the Management Plan. The need and importance of partnership working and community engagement has never been greater. New and innovative working relationships will be needed not only to deliver the priorities of the Management Plan but also to draw down new sources of funding as they become available. However the competition for these funds is forever increasing.

For this 2014 to 2019 period we have therefore deliberately presented this delivery plan as a strategic level document. We have not set an ambitious list of new targets, with detailed tasks assigned, but will focus on more efficient, effective delivery of the work we and our partners already do to conserve, enhance and protect the AONB landscape and contribute to the wellbeing of local communities.

We hope that this approach to the Delivery Plan will highlight opportunities to all public bodies, landowners and businesses, interest groups and others on ways they can contribute to managing the Blackdown Hills AONB.

1. <https://tinyurl.com/luvqee6>

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIFFERENT PLANS

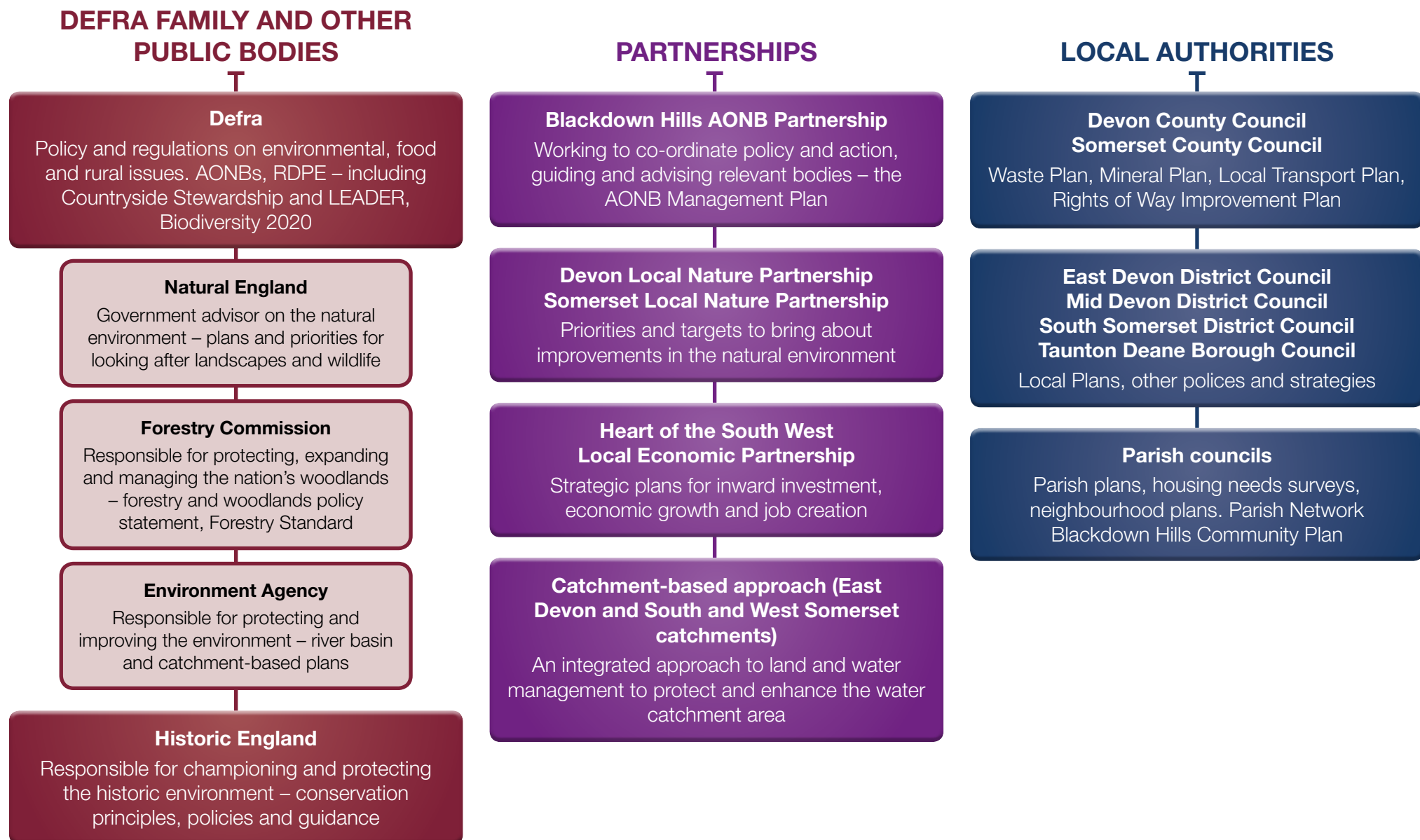


This diagram (left) explains the different roles of AONB plans and the relationship between them.

The actions the AONB Partnership itself will take to deliver the management plan objectives are set out in detail in the Business Plan. The Partnership Management Group, Officer Support Group and AONB staff team will seek to review and prioritise future partnership delivery through regular meetings and the annual business planning process.

The Blackdown Hills AONB and the AONB Management Plan do not sit in isolation. The diagram opposite shows some of the key organisations whose plans and policies are particularly relevant to AONB management.

Partner organisations, partnerships and plans influencing management of the Blackdown Hills AONB



WAYS OF WORKING

Strategic priorities:

These determine where effort will be focused in order to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan. They are identified from the Management Plan Vision and Aims and the AONB purpose, and provide the context for our work.

Conserving and enhancing the special landscape, biodiversity and heritage

Promoting understanding and enjoyment

Supporting sustainable communities

Strengthening and developing the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership as a body committed to an integrated approach to the management of the AONB

Cross-cutting themes:

The policies in the Management Plan describe what needs to be done on a topic-by-topic basis. Taken together across all topics, there are some recurring **key messages for delivery**:

- **Discovering more** – through research, survey and monitoring
- **Celebrating and communicating** – educating and informing people about the value of the area's assets
- **Involving people** – encouraging and supporting active community engagement and volunteering

Partnership:

The concept of collaboration and working together with others to achieve success underscores all AONB Partnership work. Most AONB Management Plan delivery needs to be done by encouragement of effective partnership working and not enforcement.

TABLES OF OBJECTIVES, WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE AND DELIVERY MECHANISMS

The following Delivery Plan tables overleaf mirror the topics of the Management Plan and list:

- AONB management objectives
- What needs to be done – which equates to the policies in the Management Plan
- The available and potential mechanisms to help deliver that topic area of the plan

In the final column, the chief means of delivery are identified, based on information known at the start of the plan period. Other funding streams, programmes and different approaches to delivery may also be applicable over the lifetime of the plan, and the list is not intended to be exclusive, nor exhaustive.

The tables should be read as a whole. In other words, in implementing individual delivery activities these should be compatible with policies and objectives elsewhere in the plan.

The main Management Plan² should be referred to in order to understand the context for the policy and for exact policy wording.

Any specific actions arising that may have potential for a negative environmental impact or effect should be appropriately assessed on a case by case basis as recommended or required by legislation.

2. <https://tinyurl.com/luvqee6>

Landscape character

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The particular features that make the Blackdown Hills landscape distinctive at a national, regional and local level are conserved and enhanced. • Studies of the Blackdown Hills landscape lead to greater awareness and understanding of the significance of the area and help to plan for future resilience. • The Blackdown Hills landscape is valued as a place where a sense of tranquillity can be enjoyed free from man-made noise and visual intrusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental schemes and projects that conserve and enhance landscape character and distinctiveness • Landscape character assessments informing decision-making • Research that investigates the impacts of changes • Chances for local people to get involved in conserving and enhancing their landscape • Encourage initiatives that conserve and enhance tranquillity and dark skies, and their appreciation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape character assessments, landscape guidelines, position statements and other guidance published by the AONB Partnership, local authorities and others are used to inform a range of decisions and the development of projects • National character area profiles and their statements of environmental opportunity help to prioritise future projects and initiatives • In particular the guidance referred to above is used to inform agri-environment schemes (including woodland grant schemes), other land-based initiatives and funding schemes, and planning decisions • Review and update existing landscape character assessment and management guidelines for the AONB • Community-based and academic research projects that contribute to an improved knowledge base • Baseline and continued monitoring of the landscape and its change • Information, projects and initiatives that result in the reduction of light and noise pollution

Cultural heritage

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Blackdown Hills is conserved and managed. • The historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB is understood, valued and celebrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving and managing the historic environment as part of agri-environment schemes and other initiatives • The information from historic environment records and historic landscape characterisation informs decision-making • Training in traditional heritage skills • Studies and research into various aspects of local heritage • Offering chances for local people to get involved in heritage projects by encouraging volunteering and other activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Environment Records, historic landscape characterisation and other guidance published by Historic England, local authorities, the AONB Partnership and others are used to inform the conservation of the historic environment • Practical conservation activity and site management by Historic England, local authorities, National Trust and other organisations and landowners, including works to remove heritage assets from 'at risk' status • Implementation of projects supported through Heritage Lottery Fund, other grant schemes, and works through agri-environment scheme • Research and interpretation developed by local history groups, civic groups and others locally • Practical skills training through colleges and local organisations • Regular meetings of the AONB's local heritage forum to co-ordinate and encourage partnership working

Biodiversity and geodiversity

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitats in the AONB are well managed, restored and extended forming a coherent ecological network that can support more species and facilitate movement of wildlife within the landscape. • Geodiversity within the AONB is conserved. • Knowledge and understanding of the biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystem services of the AONB are increased among those who influence, or are engaged in, management of the landscape. • More people are aware of the value of the biodiversity and geodiversity of the AONB and are taking positive action to help conserve and enhance it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-environment schemes and other initiatives helping to conserve, enhance and create priority habitats and species • Creation and management of ecological networks • Minimise the impact of development on biodiversity and ensure enhancements are delivered • Management of sites of geological importance • Minimise the impact of development on geological interests • Survey and monitoring of habitats and species • Identify and promote priority habitats and species • Value of the area’s biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystem services recognised in decisions • Understanding the significance of biodiversity and geodiversity to the natural beauty of the area • Chances for local people to get involved in conserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity in the AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting of agri-environment schemes towards sites associated with identified priority habitats and species • Positive management of SSSIs and County/Local Wildlife and Geological Sites • Initiatives and projects developed by Local Nature Partnerships and others that support Biodiversity 2020 strategy and a landscape-scale approach • Practical conservation activities by bodies such as the Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, Butterfly Conservation and others • Encouragement of research, survey and monitoring of habitat and species • Implementation of the Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project and other initiatives to encourage awareness and enhancement by local communities and others of the AONB’s biodiversity • Regular meetings of the AONB’s Biodiversity Working Group forum to encourage information engagement, collaboration and partnership working

Natural resources

The Objective	What needs to be done to achieve this objective:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The natural resources of the AONB, such as air, water and soils, are protected and conserved through research, understanding and sustainable management, and the ecosystem services they provide are recognised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguard earth, air and water resources through initiatives that also conserve and enhance the AONB Research and monitoring projects that improve knowledge of the state of the area's natural resources Management of the water environment through a catchment-based approach Value of ecosystem services provided in the AONB is realised and a system developed that rewards their delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research projects that contribute to an improved knowledge base and understanding of ecosystem services in the area The development of funding streams and projects linked to the provision of ecosystem services Active Catchment Partnerships engaging with a range of partner organisations Catchment Sensitive Farming programme, or equivalent Initiatives that promote healthy soils and their sustainable management

Farming, forestry and land management

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable farming practices conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB, and deliver ecosystem services. • Management of woodland, forestry plantations, hedgerows and new planting conserves and enhances the special qualities of the Blackdown Hills AONB, and locks up carbon to combat climate change. • Restoration and management of orchards as an element of the landscape and biodiversity of the AONB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence agri-environment schemes to benefit the special qualities of the AONB and the land managers that deliver them • Sustainable farm management, especially through agri-environment schemes and diversification, that benefits landscape, wildlife and the historic environment • Sensitive management of important landscape features and habitats • Training in traditional land management skills • Production and marketing of local food and products that are compatible with the AONB designation • Sensitive environmental management of woodlands and hedgerows for conservation and economic benefit • Planting trees and woodland for multiple benefits • Local use of woodland products which are compatible with the AONB designation • Restoring and managing orchards for multiple benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-environment schemes, including woodland advice and grant schemes • Other elements of the RDPE funding that deliver farm diversification and rural business development • Projects which link high quality landscape management with the provision of local produce and products • Colleges and local organisations provide training in land management and traditional rural skills • Land managers co-operative activities to help deliver AONB’s conservation objectives • Forestry Commission strategies, forest standards, and regulation • Local advisory services to promote environmentally sensitive management of farmland and woodland • Initiatives that promote hedgerow management for conservation and wood fuel

Access and enjoyment

The Objective	What needs to be done to achieve this objective:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable opportunities to explore and enjoy the Blackdown Hills countryside and special qualities are in keeping with the AONB purpose, improve understanding of the area, and benefit the local economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible, connected and above minimum standard Public Rights of Way network across the AONB • Manage access to avoid negative impacts • All-ability access opportunities • Initiatives that support health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and improvements of the PRow network by local authorities, including parish council, with the assistance of volunteers • Initiatives that support opportunities for local communities to enjoy their local area • Provision and promotion of a wide range of access opportunities including long distance routes, circular walks, horse-riding and cycle routes • Projects by Health and Wellbeing Boards and others that encourage access to the natural environment for all • Management of certain sites and routes with multiple users and multiple benefits in mind

Planning and development

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All development in the AONB is of the highest quality, is in keeping with the landscape and conserves its wildlife, historic character and other special qualities. • Emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases are reduced within the AONB through reducing energy consumption, applying energy conservation measures and utilising appropriate renewable energy technologies. • Waste is reduced and waste management does not impact on the natural beauty of the AONB. • Appropriate affordable housing is available in or around the Blackdown Hills to enable local people – living, working or connected to the area – to remain in their local communities. • The tranquillity of the Blackdown Hills AONB is conserved and enhanced by restricting or reducing noise and light pollution, and major developments within or affecting the AONB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that planning decisions take account of AONB status and policy guidance • New development that conserves and enhances natural beauty and special qualities • Avoid inappropriate and unnecessary development • Encourage use of traditional local materials in building projects, along with being carbon neutral, water efficient and using renewable energy if appropriate • Small-scale, sensitive renewable energy schemes • Waste minimisation • Sustainable, affordable housing initiatives • Encourage quiet enjoyment and protect tranquillity • Supporting recreational development only if it conserves and enhances the AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan, landscape character assessment, guidance and statements published by the AONB Partnership used to inform decision-making • Adherence to national planning policy and guidance and local planning policies • Appropriate mitigation measures and use of conditions when development is permitted • Close collaboration with statutory consultee partners in responses to development proposals • Planning and environmental health regulations and enforcement • Use of best practice techniques for sustainable construction • Projects and initiatives that lead to more sustainable lifestyles • Housing initiatives that respond to meeting local needs • Information, projects and initiatives that result in the reduction of light and noise pollution

Transport and highways

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact on the AONB landscape and environment is considered in the planning and provision of transport networks and services. • Public transport services and community transport schemes are maintained and improved and provide an integrated service throughout the AONB. • Manage the minor road network to encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road and transport schemes that conserve and enhance the AONB and special qualities • Sustainable local transport initiatives • Traffic management provides a safer environment for walking, cycling and horse riding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of public transport options in and around the Blackdown Hills • Community transport provision that responds to local needs and demand • AONB documents and published highways good practice guidance used to inform road and transport projects • Partnership working with Highways England and relevant local authorities on major road infrastructure projects

Rural economy and tourism

The Objective	What needs to be done to achieve this objective:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustainable rural economy that is based on the resources of the AONB and conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural diversification projects that have economic benefits and are compatible with the AONB designation • Availability of local, sustainable, employment opportunities in the AONB • Developing locally beneficial, sustainable tourism projects • Initiatives to link the AONB and surrounding towns economically and culturally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of Making it Local LEADER programme • Development of tourism initiatives that support local facilities, food, drink and other local products and services • Support for rural business and social enterprise through LEP, local authorities and other local organisations • Development of local supply chains, distribution networks and markets • Provision of high quality communications infrastructure throughout the AONB

Community and culture

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-led initiatives encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of local communities. • Community-led planning tools (neighbourhood plans, parish plans, village design statements and others) have an important influence on the policies and actions of organisations and agencies relevant to the Blackdown Hills. • An increased understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Blackdown Hills encourages greater local involvement in conserving and enhancing the AONB. • Local communities in the Blackdown Hills have access to appropriate local facilities, services and amenities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local communities taking action to meet their own needs, celebrate achievements and reinforce cultural traditions • Production of community-based plans and guides that reinforce the AONB designation • Community participation in cultural and natural heritage projects and initiatives • Retain and improve community facilities, services and amenities • Community initiatives promoting sustainable measures and lifestyles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding support for local community projects and actions through national programmes and local grants such as the AONB's Sustainable Development Fund and Blackdown Hills Countryside Fund • Parish councils sharing best practice and collaboration through a well-connected and pro-active Blackdown Hills Parish Network • Self-help community and parish networks and co-operative actions • Implementing Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project • Community groups supported in efforts to retain and enhance local services and facilities • Local community and groups supported to improve understanding and keep local traditions and culture alive

Communication, education and awareness

The Objectives	What needs to be done to achieve these objectives:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of opportunities exist for active engagement with the countryside, wildlife and heritage of the Blackdown Hills AONB. • Relevant information about the Blackdown Hills AONB is freely available and easily accessible to organisations and individuals. • Educational and research activities improve understanding of the AONB’s special qualities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of existing and new volunteering opportunities • Outdoor events and activities • Interpretation of natural, cultural and built heritage of the AONB • Community-run projects and events to engage others with landscape, wildlife and heritage • Decisions affecting the AONB are informed by good knowledge and understanding • Availability of engaging information about the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project • A range of walks, talks and events provided by partnership organisations and others • Provision of interpretation material aimed at improving understanding and awareness of the AONB and its special qualities to a wide range of audiences • Use of appropriate and effective methods of communicating with range of audiences • Community-based and academic research projects that contribute to an improved knowledge base

Partnership and management

The Objective	What needs to be done to achieve this objective:	The Delivery Mechanisms:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The special qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced through effective joint working within AONB Partnership co-ordinated by the Partnership Management Group and the AONB team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working among partners All partners working to increase the profile of the AONB and improve awareness Use funding programmes to further the purpose of the AONB Testing of new ideas and pilot projects that would benefit the area Joint working with other protected landscapes Monitoring progress and impact of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and manage an effective AONB Partnership structure that is fit for purpose Partner organisations engaging positively and pro-actively in partnership working and delivery Securing additional funding to support the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and well-being of communities Develop ideas for projects and sharing resources with nearby protected landscapes, working individually or collectively Close working with the National Association for AONBs to ensure best practice Monitoring framework that provides information to report on AONB indicators and measures of progress

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