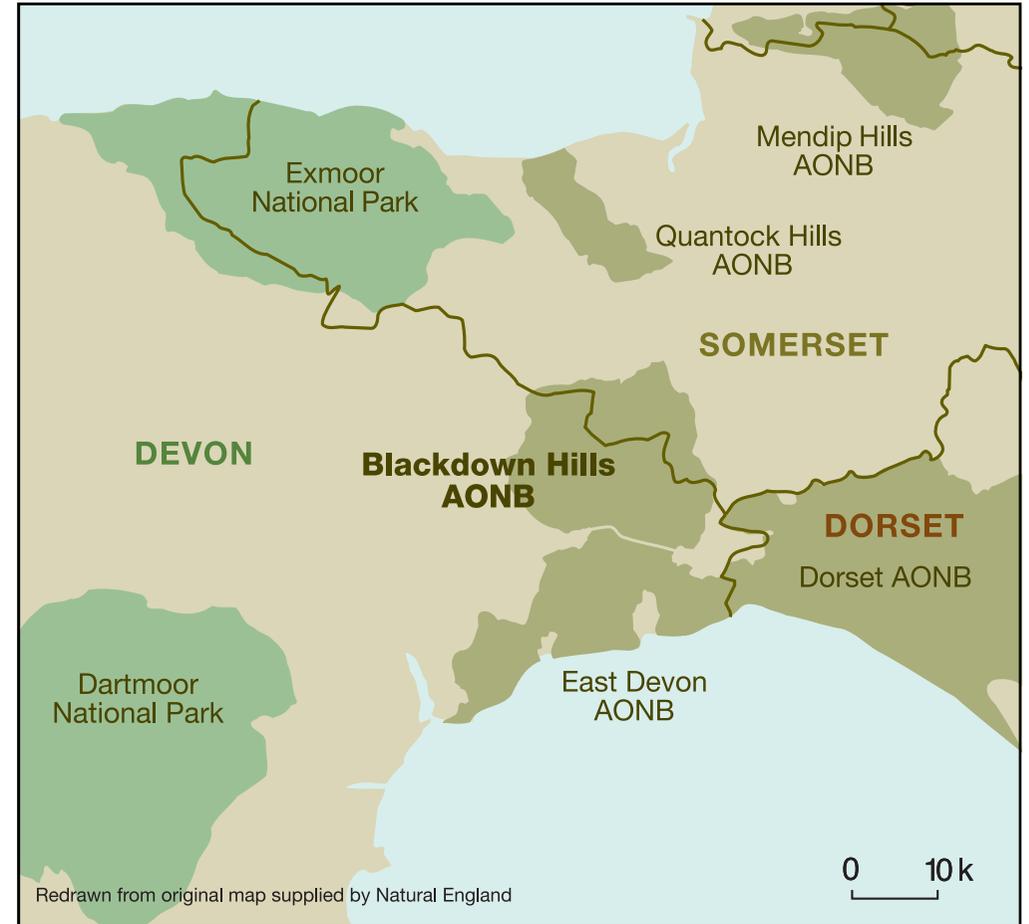
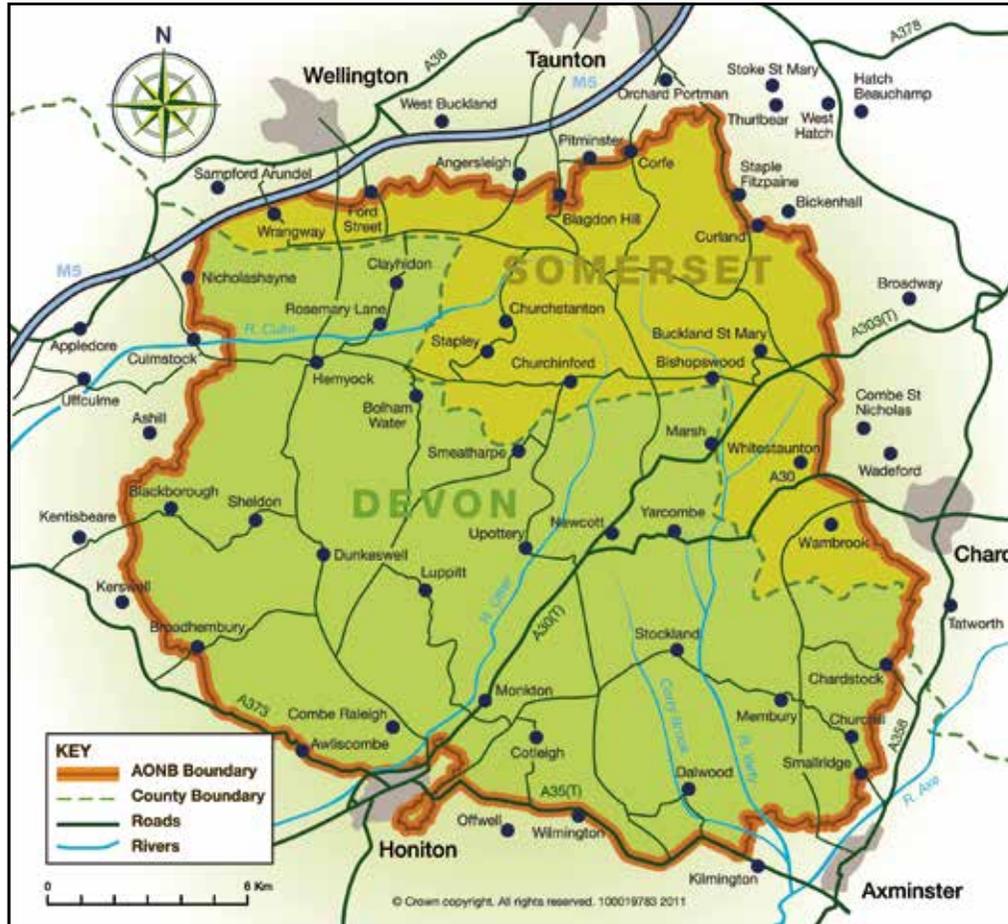




Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Management Plan 2014 – 2019

The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 370 square kilometres (143 square miles) of unspoilt countryside straddling the Somerset and Devon border.



AONB Partnership commendation: This management plan is endorsed by partnership organisations as the guiding framework for collectively maintaining the special character of the Blackdown Hills AONB, while recognising the need for a thriving future for the area and its communities.

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government's Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased

to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects, to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it's great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.

Lord de Mauley

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for natural environment and science, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



AONB CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD



The past five years has seen considerable progress in conserving and enhancing the special landscape of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and everyone involved can be truly proud of what they have achieved together. The success of the AONB is dependent on the joint actions of the diverse members of the AONB Partnership, from the national agencies to the local communities, and the Management Plan is the key to co-ordinating this work.

Some of the highlights for me of the last Plan period have been the success of our LEADER programme *Making it Local*, the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme, the recognition of the significance of the area in the Second World War through Dunkeswell War Stories, and the setting up of the Blackdown Hills Parish Network, which has given the communities of the Hills a stronger sense of belonging.

Looking to the future and the aspirations of the new Plan, the collective effort of the AONB Partnership has never been more important. At a time when we are all facing serious financial constraints and the countryside is under increasing pressure from development, the AONB has the opportunity to stand out as a national beacon for

innovation and sustainability. The AONB Partnership can demonstrate the benefits of the natural environment and champion best practice in the management of resources from local food and wood fuel to tourism and health and wellbeing.

The AONB Partnership will need to draw on all its diverse skills and knowledge to deliver the challenges of this new Management Plan so that we continue to enhance the natural beauty and strengthen the special communities of the Blackdown Hills.

This is your Plan for your area. We look forward to working with you for the next five years and beyond, continuing to build on past achievements and ensuring the special qualities of the Blackdown Hills are enjoyed, celebrated and maintained.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Paul Diviani'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Cllr Paul Diviani
Chairman, Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership



Part 1:

Setting the scene





INTRODUCTION

What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are nationally important protected landscapes. The Blackdown Hills is one of 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Together with National Parks, these are particularly special landscapes with such outstanding distinctive character and natural beauty that they are protected in the national interest for future generations. AONBs are also recognised internationally by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as part of the global family of protected areas.¹

The purpose of AONB designation

AONBs are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

- The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
- In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities.
- Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses. (Countryside Commission, 1991).²

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 confirmed the significance of AONBs and created improved arrangements for their management. There are two key sections of the Act for AONBs:

- Section 85 places a statutory duty on all ‘relevant authorities’ to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when exercising or performing any function affecting land in AONBs.
- Section 89 places a statutory duty on local authorities to prepare and review a Management Plan for each AONB in their administrative area.

AONBs are of equal status to National Parks in terms of scenic beauty and landscape protection. The designation of the Blackdown Hills AONB:

- Gives formal statutory recognition to this nationally important landscape
- Requires special land-use planning policies to apply
- Encourages an integrated approach to land management

Natural Beauty

‘Natural Beauty’ is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries (Countryside Agency, 2001)³. These aspects of natural beauty are key physical components of the landscape. However landscape is also about tranquillity, sensory experiences, cultural associations and the relationship between people and place. It is therefore important that the cultural, perceptual and aesthetic dimensions of landscape are also recognised as elements of natural beauty. Natural England has developed a list of factors that contribute to natural beauty:⁴

- *Landscape quality* - a measure of the physical state or condition of the landscape
- *Scenic quality* - the extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses)

- *Relative wildness* - the degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape makes a particular contribution to sense of place
- *Relative tranquillity* - the degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape
- *Natural heritage features* - the influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. (Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features.)
- *Cultural heritage* - the influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception

The natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills AONB is considered further in the next section (Statement of Significance – the special qualities of the Blackdown Hills).

1. <http://goo.gl/Akv7ci>

2. Countryside Commission, 1991. CCP356 AONBs: a policy statement.

3. <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/116019>. CA24: a guide for AONB Partnership members

4. www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/B1DesignationGuidanceMar11_tcm6-26242.pdf



This Management Plan

What is the Plan for?

This Management Plan sets out the policy framework for the conservation and enhancement of the Blackdown Hills AONB for the next five years. Put simply, it describes the special qualities of the area and why the AONB is important, sets out an agreed vision for its future, identifies the challenges and opportunities for the area, and how these will be tackled. It is a revised and updated version of the previous Management Plan 2009 – 2014.

As the principal strategic guidance for the Blackdown Hills AONB, the plan provides the basis to:

- Inform and influence decisions
- Stimulate and prioritise action
- Promote collaboration
- Help prioritise resources

Who is the Plan for?

The AONB Management Plan provides a framework to help guide all activities affecting the AONB. Its audiences include:

- *Local authorities* – the organisations that are required to prepare, adopt and review the Management Plan
- *AONB Partnership organisations* – these organisations will have a key role in delivering and championing the Management Plan
- *Relevant authorities* – all public bodies and statutory undertakers have a duty to have regard to the primary purpose of the AONB; this Management Plan will guide them in fulfilling their statutory duties
- *Landowners and managers* – those who own and manage land in the AONB have a vital role to play; the plan aims to guide, support and attract resources for sensitive management of the AONB
- *Local communities and businesses* – all who live and work in the Blackdown Hills can play an active role in caring for the AONB; the plan identifies some of the priorities for action and ways to become involved

How does it relate to other plans, strategies and activities?

As the statutory policy document for the AONB, this plan should be used to guide and inform all other plans and activities developed by public bodies and statutory undertakers that may affect the AONB, in line with their duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing natural

beauty. It can also be used as a guide and information base for other organisations, groups and people in and around the Blackdown Hills.

Some of the key links are:

- *Local plans*: it provides part of the evidence base for local plans including those for transport, waste and minerals
- *Development management*: local planning authorities have a statutory duty of regard for the AONB when making planning decisions; this Management Plan can be a material consideration and provide the depth of information to support relevant planning decisions
- *Community-led planning*: it can help inform neighbourhood and parish plans and similar tools
- *Local nature partnerships and catchment partnerships*: it provides part of the evidence base for their own plans and offers a basis for working in an integrated way at a landscape scale
- *Land management and economic investment*: it can guide the targeting and prioritising of environmental stewardship grants and other rural economy programmes.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE – THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

Introduction

The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has a suite of special qualities that together make it unique and outstanding, underpinning its designation as a nationally important protected landscape. Special qualities may be considered as specific components of ‘Natural Beauty’, distilling out the key attributes that combine to form the natural beauty of the AONB. These are the special qualities we need to conserve and enhance for the future and they should be considered in all decisions affecting the AONB.

Description

The Blackdown Hills are a distinctive, diverse rural landscape stretching from the prominent scarp above the M5 in the north to Honiton and Axminster in the south, and from Chard in the east to Culmstock in the west. Ranging from around 50 to 310 metres above sea level, the area is characterised by a sense of relative remoteness and tranquillity, and was designated as an AONB in 1991.

From the dramatic, steep, wooded north-facing scarp, the area dips gently southwards as a flat-topped plateau deeply dissected by valleys. This is the northern part of the East Devon Plateau – one of the finest, most extensive in Britain. The tops are open and windswept; in the valleys villages and hamlets nestle among ancient patterns of small, enclosed fields and a maze of winding lanes lined with high hedgebanks. The steep valleys support a patchwork of woodland and heath, nationally and regionally important habitats which support a wealth of charismatic and priority species and interesting plant communities.

Landscape character

Key to the Blackdown Hills designation as an AONB is the subtle combination of four aspects of the landscape (*The Blackdown Hills landscape: A landscape assessment*. Countryside Commission, 1989):

It is an isolated, unspoilt rural area and remains relatively undisturbed by modern development and so ancient landscape features, special habitats, historical and archaeological remains have survived intact. There is a sense of stepping back in time in the winding lanes, the hidden valleys and relatively remote villages. The traditional pattern of villages, hamlets, paths and roads remains largely unchanged and there is an identifiable and characteristic vernacular, pastoral landscape.

There is a diversity of landscape patterns and pictures. The visual quality of the landscape is high and is derived from the complex patterns and mosaics of landscapes. Although the scenery is immensely varied, particular features are repeated. Ancient, species-rich hedgerows delineate the fields and define the character of the landscape, enclosing narrow twisting lanes. There are long views over field-patterned landscapes. The high plateau is dissected by steep valleys, supporting a patchwork of woodland and heath, and fine avenues of beech along the ridge. The history of medieval and parliamentary enclosures has resulted in an individual, patchwork landscape of small fields in the valleys and larger fields with straight hedges on the plateau.

The composition of the underlying geology of the Blackdown Hills and the adjoining East Devon AONB is unique in Britain, and is one of the area’s strongest unifying features. It has given rise to the distinct topography of a flat-topped plateau, sharp ridges and spring-lined valleys. The springs have created the characteristic pattern of rough grassland, mire and woodland vegetation on the valley sides. The nature of the Greensand rock has meant that plant communities are particularly diverse. Moreover the geology has provided a local building material, chert, which is uncommon elsewhere.

It is a landscape with architectural appeal. The landscape pattern is punctuated by a wealth of small villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads of architectural value and distinctive character. Devon and Somerset are recognised nationally for their fine rural architecture, but the Blackdown Hills contain a special concentration of buildings where the vernacular character is particularly well preserved. Predominant materials are chert and cob with thatch, often now replaced by corrugated iron, or clay-tiled roofs. The appeal lies in the way in which the buildings blend and fit into the surrounding working landscape.

Historic landscape

The landscapes of the Blackdown Hills have been created by the interplay of people and the land over the centuries. There are significant concentrations of early prehistoric evidence: since prehistoric times those who lived here have left evidence of their activities that can still be seen today; tools from the Neolithic, Bronze Age barrows on the ridge tops and spectacular Iron Age hillforts that dominate the surrounding lowlands. The Romans left their villas and extensive evidence of iron working.

The pattern of fields, farmstead and villages is medieval in its origins, and there are a high number of surviving late medieval houses and other important medieval sites in the AONB. The ancient woodlands and the Royal hunting forest of Neroche are also survivals of the medieval period. Parliamentary enclosure of the commons, culminating in the 19th century, created the regular fields and straight roads of the plateau tops.

The Wellington Monument, a prominent feature on the northern skyline, commemorates the battle of Waterloo. While later three airfields on the plateau played important roles in World War Two. Since that time there has been a substantial loss of hedgerows and orchards to meet

the needs of modern agriculture; simplifying parts of the landscape and masking their early origins.

Biodiversity

The biodiversity of the Blackdown Hills is one of its greatest assets. The unique geology and landscape patterns of the area have combined with traditional management to support a rich diversity of habitats and species. This immense variety, with patches of valuable habitat scattered throughout the landscape, is notable; these include flower-rich meadows, ancient hedgerows, springline mire, wet woodland, heathland, calcareous grassland, ancient woodland, fen and bog. Bees, butterflies, birds, bats and many other animals, some nationally scarce, thrive in the Blackdown Hills, feeding and breeding in the habitats the area provides. These habitats and wildlife bring colour, texture, sound and life to the landscape, epitomising the mental picture of the 'English Countryside', which has, in reality, long since disappeared elsewhere.



Special qualities and distinctive characteristics of the Blackdown Hills

From the diverse characteristics, features and qualities outlined on the previous page, Table 1 summarises the special qualities that create the particular sense and spirit of place that gives the Blackdown Hills its distinctive identity. These special qualities require protection, conservation and enhancement if the AONB is to retain its character and status among England's finest landscapes.

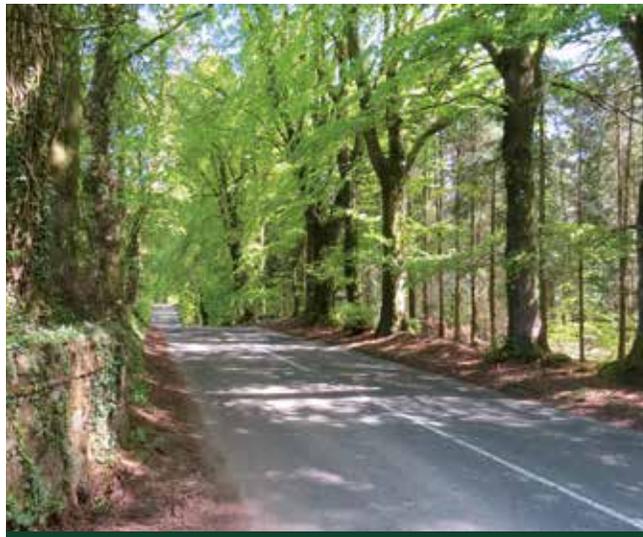
The landscape character assessment for the AONB, described in Part 2 – Section 1.1 and Appendix D, supplements this information by providing a more detailed picture of local, geographically specific variations in character.

Natural Beauty	Special qualities (including distinctive characteristics and key features)
Landscape quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A managed landscape sculpted and maintained by the stewardship of generations of those who work the land • Undeveloped skyline of the northern scarp slope is a prominent feature in views from the Vale of Taunton and beyond • Rich mosaic of diverse and interconnected semi-natural habitats; a patchwork of woodland, heathland, meadow and mire linked by hedgerows • Clear, unpolluted streams that meander down the valleys to feed the Yarty, Otter, Culm rivers • Ancient and veteran trees in hedgerows, fields and woodland • A settled landscape with a strong sense of time-depth containing farms and small scattered villages well related to the landscape
Scenic quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The elevation and long, panoramic views out from the Blackdown Hills create a sense of detachment from surrounding towns and transport corridors • Unspoilt, panoramic views across flat-topped plateau and straight undisturbed ridge tops and over hidden valleys • A well-wooded pastoral landscape with a strong pattern of hedges and hedgerow trees • Pattern of regular, large-scale enclosure fields on the plateau contrasts with the smaller, curving medieval fields on the valley slopes • Majestic avenues of beech trees along northern ridges • Long straight roads across the plateau with verges and low, neat hedges give way to narrow, enclosed, high-hedged winding lanes in the valleys • Wellington Monument is a key landscape feature identifying the Blackdown Hills over a very wide area in all directions
Relative wildness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of remoteness enhanced by the exposure of the plateau and more intimate extensive woodland of the upper slopes and hidden valleys • Wide open spaces provide exposure to the elements; big sky, windswept places, contrasts of sunlight and shadow
Relative tranquillity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of high tranquillity spared many of the intrusions of modern life • Places to enjoy natural sounds; the melody of the song thrush and skylark, the call of buzzards • Dark night-time star-filled skies contrasting with the light pollution of the surrounding towns
Natural heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the finest, most extensive Greensand plateau in Britain; a distinctive landform that contrasts with the surrounding lowlands to the east, north and west • The presence of straight, uninterrupted ridges are evident as a visual backdrop over a wide area • Distinctive springline mires located around the upper slopes of the valleys • The varied landscape supports a rich assemblage of wildlife including many species of bats, butterflies and meadow flowers • Ancient, species-rich hedges with many hedgerow trees and flower-rich banks; colourful displays of primrose and bluebells in spring • A network of ancient semi-natural woodland linked by hedgerows support the dormouse population
Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well preserved buildings in the local vernacular – chert, cob and thatch – are an important element of the landscape • Hillforts are prominent features on the ends of the plateau ridges • Mining remains from the once internationally significant whetstone industry • Three World War Two airfields and their associated buildings are found on the high, flat land of the plateau • A community with a strong sense of place closely linked to the land and its management, with a particularly strong tradition of hedge laying • A landscape that has inspired artists from the early 20th century Camden Town Group to the Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers of today

Table 1: Summary of special qualities of the AONB



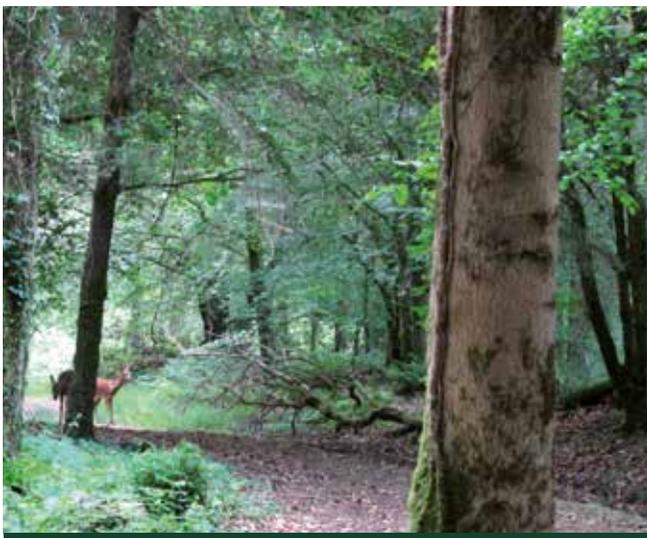
A rich mosaic of habitats



Avenues of beech trees



Big skies



Places to enjoy natural sounds



Meadow flowers



Well preserved vernacular buildings

The value of the natural environment

Alongside recognition of the AONB's special qualities, the Blackdown Hills AONB provides a wide range of benefits.

The benefits for society and economic prosperity derived from nature are technically described as 'ecosystem services'. They are generally described as:

Provisioning services provided by natural resources such as food, water, fibre, and fuel.

Regulating services provided by natural systems including clean water and air, fertile soils, and climate regulation.

Cultural services including recreation, cultural heritage, spiritual and aesthetic values, inspiration and education.

Supporting services providing the basic infrastructure of life including soil formation, the cycling of water and nutrients, fixation of carbon by plants and the ecosystems themselves.

With products such as food or timber the financial value is evident, but further exploration of the model is on-going in other areas, such as the role of bees in pollinating crops or the storage of carbon in woodland and heathland, to understand the real value and costs and the potential impacts of damaging them. Understanding the wide range of public benefits provided by the special landscape of the AONB can help to ensure that our natural resources and systems are properly valued into the future.

Many of the objectives and policies set out later within Part 2 of this Management Plan will influence the management of land and natural systems in the AONB and ensure effective management to help sustain and improve the range and quality of public benefits (ecosystem services) that the Blackdown Hills provide.

No doubt as understanding of these services improves over the plan period, the true value of these benefits will be better articulated and new approaches to delivery will be found.

Some of the key public benefits provided by the Blackdown Hills include:

- AONB farmers and foresters produce food, fibre, timber and wood fuel.
- The AONB lies over an Upper Greensand aquifer providing water for both public and private supplies. The sources of the rivers Culm, Otter and Yarty are in the Blackdown Hills.
- Carbon storage in woodland, heathland and peat deposits.
- Hedgerows, rough grassland, buffer strips and woodland help to regulate soil erosion and water flow.
- Recreational opportunities support the health and wellbeing of both residents and visitors.
- The characteristic and richly patterned landscape and ancient features provides a strong sense of place and history.
- The distinctive landform and coherent landscape are inspirational at a personal, cultural and spiritual level.
- The AONB gives access to clean air, tranquillity and freedom from noise and light pollution.



CONTEXT

Changing times: issues for AONB management

The statutory basis for England's protected landscapes dates back to a very different time in terms of environmental pressures and public expectations. Then the priority was to safeguard extensive areas of great natural beauty and its coastline from 'ill-considered building development' during the period of post-war reconstruction, while offering access to outdoor recreation 'to give our young people a chance to roam about and get their exercise' (Minister of Works and Planning, 1942).

Today, while demand for housing and infrastructure remains an ever present issue, new social, economic and environmental challenges have arisen, such as climate change, water resource management, renewable energy demand, changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and calls for food security. The public's recreational aspirations have also changed with more than 100 million annual visits made to AONBs and National Parks. England's relatively affluent and mobile population seeks a varied and a different kind of outdoor recreation experience from that envisaged in the post war years – with access to cultural heritage, easy walking opportunities and refreshment facilities required alongside adventure, solitude and spiritual renewal.

There is now an increasing expectation that protected landscapes should help deliver a range of ecosystem goods and services, including assisting species migration and habitat connectivity, as well as increasing the public's enjoyment, contribute to sustainable development and further understanding, health and wellbeing, particularly targeting socially excluded individuals and groups. This will need to be achieved alongside the conservation and enhancement of the nationally important qualities for which protected landscapes are designated.

[Extract taken from Natural England protected landscapes draft policy consultation, 2009]

The broader picture: connecting people and place

The Blackdown Hills AONB is part of a wider family of protected landscapes on a global and national scale. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognises a number of 'protected areas' across the world: clearly defined geographical spaces, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (IUCN Definition 2008). The UK's AONBs are designated as Category V 'a protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.'⁵

Nationally the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) provides a collective voice for the AONB partnerships in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership, as a member of the NAAONB, has signed up to four common objectives:

- Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future.
- Support the economic and social wellbeing of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

- Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encourage people to take action for their conservation.
- Value, sustain and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and wellbeing.

The south west of England has a particularly rich landscape and environmental resource, with more than a third of the region having AONB or National Park status. The Blackdown Hills is one of nine AONBs that lie entirely or partially within the counties of Devon and Somerset. To the south, between Honiton and Axminster, the AONB shares a boundary with the East Devon AONB, and not far to the east is Dorset AONB. Looking north, there is a strong visual relationship across the Vale of Taunton with the Quantock Hills AONB and Exmoor National Park. A population of around 150,000 live in the towns close to the AONB.

5. <http://goo.gl/Akv7ci>

The broader picture: key principles for AONB management

Sustainable development

The five UK principles for sustainable development⁶ underpin the approach to managing the AONB:

- *Living within environmental limits*
Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.
- *Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society*
Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all.
- *Achieving a sustainable economy*
Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.
- *Using sound science responsibly*
Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) as well as public attitudes and values.
- *Promoting good governance*
Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging people's creativity, energy and diversity.

Ecosystem approach

The Ecosystem Approach⁷ is a concept that integrates the management of land, water and living resources and aims to reach a balance between three objectives:

conservation of biodiversity; its sustainable use; and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of natural resources.

Defra has developed six principles for its application in England:

- taking a more holistic approach to policy-making and delivery, with the focus on maintaining healthy ecosystems and ecosystem services.
- ensuring that the value of ecosystem services is fully reflected in decision-making.
- ensuring environmental limits are respected in the context of sustainable development, taking into account ecosystem functioning.
- taking decisions at the appropriate spatial scale while recognising the cumulative impacts of decisions.
- applying adaptive management of the natural environment to respond to changing pressures, including climate change.
- identifying and involving all relevant stakeholders in the decision and plan making process.

(*What nature can do for you*, Defra 2010).

Landscape approach

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. Created by the Council of Europe, the convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning, and European co-operation on landscape issues. Signed by the UK government in 2006, it applies to all landscapes, towns and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that are afforded protection. The ELC defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Council of Europe 2000)⁸.

It highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation.

Conservation and enhancement of the character and quality of the AONB landscape lie at the heart of this Management Plan. It is only possible to make informed and responsible decisions on the management and planning of sustainable future landscapes, if there is a good understanding and proper regard of their existing character.

6. <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/what/principles/>

7. www.gov.uk/ecosystems-services

8. www.coe.int/europeanlandscapeconvention

The broader picture: drivers for change

The statutory requirement to review the AONB Management Plan every five years provides an opportunity to reflect on key policy and political developments and wider environmental and economic changes that have taken place. Some of the more significant factors that influence the scope and content of this plan are summarised as follows:

Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network by Professor Sir John Lawton (2010)⁹

The review proposes that England's ecological network must deliver 'more, bigger, better and joined up' habitats to help ensure ecological recovery for wildlife sites. The document identifies AONBs as having great potential 'to establish a coherent and resilient ecological network' through projects and activities that:

- Improve the quality of current wildlife sites by better habitat management.
- Increase the size of existing wildlife sites.
- Enhance connections between sites, either through physical corridors or through 'stepping stones'.
- Create new sites.
- Reduce the pressure on wildlife by improving the wider environment.

Natural Environment White Paper (2011)¹⁰

The Natural Environment White Paper contains a commitment to move to a net biodiversity gain by supporting healthy well-functioning ecosystems and coherent ecological networks. It moves the management of biodiversity from a site-specific approach to larger landscape-scale initiatives. The White Paper emphasises that natural capital, including the landscape and biodiversity of protected areas, should be properly valued and sets out ambitions including creating more

joined-up action, making the ecological network resilient to changing pressures, growing a green economy and reconnecting people and nature – all significant for the delivery of AONB purposes.

One of the key delivery mechanisms for these aims is through the formation and strategic work of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs).

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011)¹¹

This strategy builds on the Natural Environment White Paper directing biodiversity policy for the next decade. The mission is 'to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.'

It identifies a series of priority outcomes for habitats, ecosystems, species and engaging people. AONB Partnerships are expected to assist delivery of a number of Biodiversity 2020 outcomes including that relating to taking an ecosystems approach (as outlined earlier in this section) and others described further in Section 1.3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)¹²

In March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced the majority of previous Planning Policy Statements, significantly reducing the amount of policy and guidance available to planning authorities. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The importance of protected landscapes is recognised in paragraph 115, 'great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in

relation to landscape and scenic beauty.' The NPPF states that planning permission should be refused for major development in AONBs except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.

Also of relevance to AONBs is the requirement to plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries (paragraph 117) and the more general duty to cooperate on strategic planning matters introduced by the Localism Act 2011¹³.

9. <http://goo.gl/K0JITZ>

10. www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-natural-choice-securing-the-value-of-nature

11. www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services

12. See <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/>

13. <http://goo.gl/S7E1bK>

The broader picture: key principles for AONB management

National Character Areas (NCAs)

Natural England has produced up-to-date National Character Area (NCA) profile documents for each of the 159 NCAs in England¹⁴. NCA Profile: 147 Blackdowns covers the vast majority of the AONB and much of the East Devon AONB. The NCA documents include environmental data, ecosystem service analysis and statements of environmental opportunity, and as such are pertinent to this plan.

Other significant changes in agenda and context over the past five years (some of them emerging through the above elements) include:

- Localism agenda and Localism Act 2011
- Drive for a low carbon economy
- Renewable energy generation targets
- Public sector budget cuts
- Establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Catchment-based approach to water management
- Formation of Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform post-2013
- Recognition of the value of access to the countryside for health and wellbeing

The broader picture: climate change

Climate change will potentially impact on all aspects of the Blackdown Hills. The precise nature of these changes and the consequent impacts on the special qualities of the AONB is complex and uncertain. However climate change projections for the South West indicate that there are likely to be warmer, wetter winters, hotter summers, and more frequent extreme

weather events such as severe storms, heat waves and torrential downpours. The impact of such changes could be felt in the following ways:

- More frequent flooding from more intensive rain events causing flooding of properties, damage to infrastructure, soil erosion and impact on water quality.
- Increasing occurrences of droughts would lead to increases in water demand for crop growth, business and domestic use, and drying out and erosion of soils.
- Potential impacts and changes to the agricultural and forestry sectors, including flooding/ground saturation and a reduced number of days that land can be worked, greater risk of soil erosion, increase/change in pests and diseases, crop damage, increased need for irrigation, changes in prevalent crops and cropping practices.
- Species migration and loss of small or isolated habitats and populations are likely. There are likely to be changes in the timing of seasonal events leading to a loss of synchrony between species and the resources on which they depend, notably for food and pollination. Composition and productivity of habitats will change and require management.
- The range of tree species may change; with in particular the potential loss of characteristic beech on thinner soils and on exposed sites. Hedges, woodland and veteran trees could be lost through more frequent drought conditions and extreme weather events.

Addressing climate change¹⁵ is a cross-cutting challenge running through this Management Plan. Particular issues, including implications of the responses to climate change, are described further in later specific sections and many of the objectives and policies support adaptation and mitigation measures.



14. www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/

15. Also see <http://climatesouthwest.org/>

A 20-YEAR VISION FOR THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

The Blackdown Hills remains an ancient landscape of small villages and farms, deep valleys and high hedges shaped by its unique geology.

Its sense of tranquil timelessness and lack of change provide reassurance in a polluted, overcrowded world and give a sense of well-being to residents and visitors alike.

Its wildlife is thriving and heritage conserved due to sympathetic management that is keeping alive traditional skills. They are enjoyed and understood by local people and visitors alike.

Vibrant, diverse communities, with a strong sense of identity, live and work sustainably, supporting the local economy and conserving and enhancing the area's rich resources for future generations.

This Management Plan represents the second step towards realising the twenty-year vision for the Blackdown Hills that was agreed in the previous plan back in 2009. The vision sets out a goal that should provide inspiration to all those interested and involved in the future of the Blackdown Hills.



Part 2:

Management framework





INTRODUCTION

This part of the Management Plan sets out the objectives and policies for managing the AONB over the next five years to work towards achieving the longer term vision.

There are three main themes divided into several topics:

Landscape – topics related to the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty:

- Landscape Character
- Cultural Heritage
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Natural Resources
- Farming, Forestry and Land Management

Sustainable Development – topics related to the secondary purposes of recognising the economic and social needs of the local community, promoting sustainability and recreation:

- Access and Enjoyment
- Planning and Development
- Transport and Highways
- Rural Economy and Tourism
- Community and Culture

Communication and Management – the core functions of AONB management:

- Communication, Education and Awareness
- Partnership and Management

Each section starts with the overall aim for that subject. Background information describes the significance to the Blackdown Hills and the local context, along with key issues and opportunities. A set of objectives and policies are identified, and indicators for measuring progress are defined.

The final section of this part is Implementation and Review, which explains the roles and responsibilities of the AONB Partnership and others in delivering the plan, and further information about monitoring and measuring progress.

There is a separate five-year Delivery Plan that forms Part 3 of the Management Plan, which outlines how partner organisations will achieve the objectives and policies through the delivery of specific actions and projects.

Explanation of terms used:

Aim – the overall ambition for this topic area

Objective – what we want to achieve

Policy – what needs to be done to achieve the objective

Indicator – a measurable set of data providing an indication of progress.

THEME 1: LANDSCAPE



THEME 1: LANDSCAPE

1.1 Landscape Character

Aim

The Blackdown Hills remains a relatively isolated and unspoilt rural area, with a diversity of landscape patterns and pictures, a unique geology and buildings of architectural appeal. The area's special qualities are widely understood and referred to. It is a truly 'living landscape' benefiting from its special landscape and history and is appreciated as such.

Background

It is the diverse landscape, the distinctive villages, the historic environment and the tranquil rural setting that gives the Blackdown Hills its special sense of place. The relationship between people and the landscape is enshrined in the European Landscape Convention and recognises that landscapes evolve through time due to natural and human forces. The challenge for the AONB Partnership is to manage change to ensure that the AONB landscape remains special.

One of the special qualities of the AONB is its visual relationship with other landscapes, and in particular the view of the steep escarpment of the Blackdown Hills rising out of the Vale of Taunton. The wooded edge to the plateau provides a relatively wild, uninhabited backdrop to the flatter, low-lying farmed and settled Vale. The juxtaposition of these contrasting characters means that one enhances the other. The Wellington Monument provides a single focus to the scene and enriches the cultural history of this landscape. This scenery can be appreciated from much of the Vale but makes for dramatic views from southern slopes of the Quantock Hills AONB and the eastern fringes of Exmoor National Park. There are expansive and far-reaching views from the Blackdown Hills across much of Devon and Somerset, including views to Dartmoor from Culmstock Beacon and the Jurassic coast from Membury.

Landscape character describes the qualities and features that make a place distinctive. It can represent an area larger than the AONB or focus on a very specific location. The Blackdown Hills AONB displays a variety of landscape character within a relatively small, distinct area which has been analysed and described at a range of levels in a number of different assessments. The studies below have increased understanding of the natural and cultural landscape, provide a sound basis to inform and influence policy and planning, and enable sensitive landscape management to meet the needs of changes in agriculture and climate.

- *Countryside Character Map of England*, 1996, where at the national scale the vast majority of the AONB lies within the 'Blackdowns Character Area'. Now referred to as National Character Areas, an updated profile for the Blackdowns (NCA 147) was published in 2014¹⁶.
- *The Blackdown Hills landscape: A landscape assessment*, Countryside Commission, 1989, undertaken by Cobham Associates to inform the designation. It identified six 'visual character zones'.
- *Historic Landscape Characterisation* Devon County Council/English Heritage, 2006, and Somerset County Council/Exmoor National Park/English Heritage 1999-2000. This is a method for understanding and mapping the landscape of today with reference to its historical development. It was used as a source of data for the assessments described below.
- *Devon Landscape Character Assessment*
 1. Landscape character assessment (LCA) partly funded by Natural England, completed for the East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONBs in 2008 as part of a co-ordinated Devon programme. It identified landscape character types (LCTs) – types

of landscape that share similar characteristics and may occur throughout Devon (and beyond). The Mid Devon LCA, complementary to the above, was completed in 2011¹⁷.

2. Devon Character Areas – work undertaken in 2011, includes the whole of the AONB. Using the earlier work, this identifies unique, geographically specific areas of landscape that are recognisable at a county scale. There are 68 in total; five of them cover the AONB and a very small part of a sixth.

The map on the right shows the landscape character of the Blackdown Hills identified by these assessments.

The Devon Character Areas provide a strategic perspective with an emphasis on local identity. These provide a spatial dimension to this plan in terms of managing the AONB in order to conserve and enhance its landscape character. Descriptive information about the character areas relevant to the AONB can be found in Appendix D. Full details including the landscape strategy and guidelines to protect, manage and plan each of the character areas can be found at www.devon.gov.uk/devon-character-areas.

The LCTs are more applicable to detailed management at a local level. Locally this part of the landscape character assessment and its management guidelines has been used to encourage best practice in maintaining and enhancing the landscape and as a reference tool for development management. More detail can be found on East Devon District Council's website at www.eastdevon.gov.uk/landscapecharacterassessment.

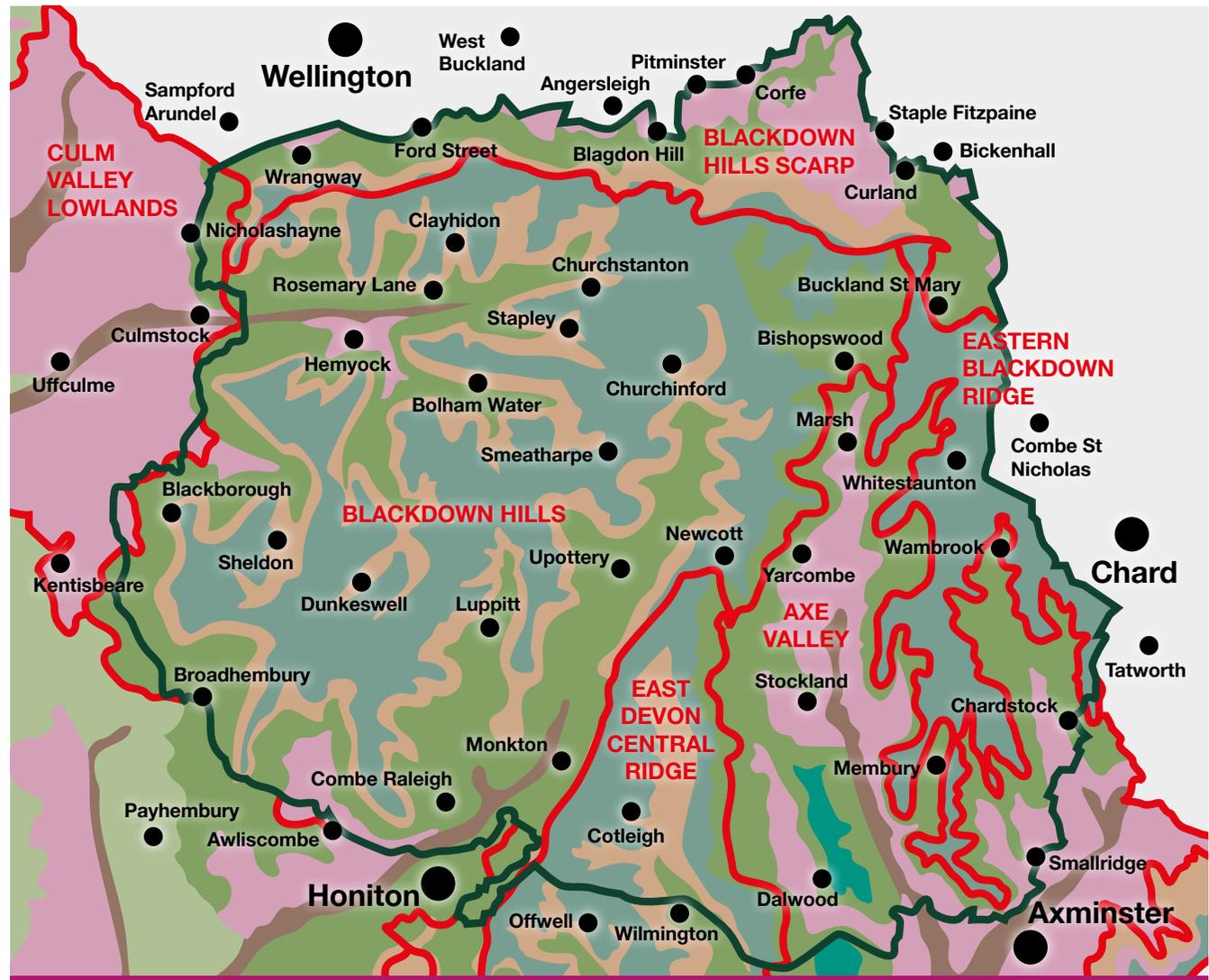
16. www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/

17. www.middevon.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8682

Table 2 overleaf relates to the LCTs found in the Blackdown Hills and demonstrates the area's varied character and distinctive landform.

- *Somerset Landscape Character Assessments* Parts of the AONB are covered by district-based assessments; *The Landscape of South Somerset*, 1993¹⁸, and *Taunton Deane Landscape Character Assessment*, 2011¹⁹.

The distinctiveness of the Blackdown Hills includes the area's relative remoteness, timelessness and tranquillity. Its very character relies on retaining a natural feeling without being over managed. Although hard to quantify it is all too easily lost through, for example, increasing standardisation, creeping suburbanisation, changing agricultural practices and loss of distinctive elements of the natural and historic environment. Each individual case may not have a significant impact, but cumulatively they can erode the area's distinctive character.



18. <http://goo.gl/Rk8zTs>

19. <http://goo.gl/2r47Sr>

Landscape Character Type	Location	Special qualities (including distinctive characteristics and key features)
LCT 1A: Open inland planned plateaux	Extensive areas of high ground throughout the AONB which fan out into narrower ridges. Generally lie with a north/south trend except in the north where they lie east/west.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High open flat plateau • Rectangular field pattern of medium to large scale • Predominantly pastoral farming on heavy soils • Well-trimmed hedges on narrow earth banks • Sparsely scattered boundary trees, usually beech with oak towards plateau edge • Very uniform appearance • Beech, oak and hazel are the dominant species • Occasional copses and small conifer plantations punctuate the open farmland • Long straight roads in centre, with narrow winding minor roads towards the edge • Isolated farmsteads and clusters of buildings at crossroads; 20th century settlement associated with airfields • Extensive views often blocked by woodland on boundary • Series of linked narrow plateaux with gently sloping sides • Regular well-maintained low-trimmed hedges on narrow earth banks • Open farmland punctuated by narrow copses and double hedges along roads, with some beech clumps • Linear pattern of scattered small-scale settlement along roads and clustered at crossroads
LCT 1E: Wooded ridges and hilltops	Outliers at the end of 'fingers' of plateaux LCT. The only area of this type in the Blackdown Hills is the ridge running north/south from Stockland to Dalwood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small hills and associated small ridges, or area of undulating small hills • Irregular fields of variable size. some with springline mires • Species-rich hedgebanks and tree rows, ancient woodland and great species diversity with oak and ash common as hedgerow trees • Mixed woodland and some pasture; hilltop fields may be arable • Sparsely settled • Narrow enclosed winding lanes • Limited views out • High and frequently remote
LCT 2A: Steep wooded scarp slopes	Closely related to the plateaux (LCT 1A) sitting around the edges of the western and central plateau. Absent from the south-east part of the AONB. It is distinguished from the less steeply sloping land below by being generally wooded and lacking settlement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A narrow band of steeply sloping land immediately below a plateaux edge • Mixed woodland and semi improved or unimproved pasture • Pastoral cultivation, with small-scale irregular field pattern • Lightly settled • Narrow winding lanes with well treed banks • Occasional long views out over adjoining valleys • Many patches of semi-natural habitats, including springline mires and scrub
LCT 3A: Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes	Frequently occurring extensive areas along the upper slopes of rivers valley throughout the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undulating or rolling upper valley slopes • Pastoral farmland, with a wooded appearance, and arable cultivation on lower slopes • Small to medium size fields with irregular boundaries • Deciduous woods and copses, especially on hilltops and upper slopes • Very wide, usually low, species-rich hedges with many hedgerow trees • Dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farms and small villages • Very winding narrow lanes • An intimate and intricate landscape with wider views often restricted by vegetation • Frequently remote and tranquil with little modern development

Landscape Character Type	Location	Special qualities (including distinctive characteristics and key features)
LCT 3B: Lower rolling farmed and settled slopes	Occupies a sloping transitional zone above the flat river valleys and tributaries but below the steeper, generally more wooded slopes. In the Blackdown Hills this LCT is mainly confined to the northern fringes and the south-east of the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently rolling lower valley slopes • Pastoral farmland, with a wooded appearance • Variable field patterns and sizes with either wide, low boundaries and irregular patterns or small fields with medium to tall boundaries and a regular pattern • Many hedgerow trees, copses and streamside tree rows • Settled, with varied settlement size, building ages and styles, sometimes with unity of materials in places through use of stone • Winding, often narrow sunken lanes with very tall earth banks. Main roads may dominate locally • Streams and ditches • Some parts tranquil and intimate all year round, except near main transport routes • Enclosed and sheltered landscape and wider views often restricted by vegetation
LCT 3C: Sparsely settled farmed valley floors	The upper parts of the valleys of the Culm and Otter rivers, and most of the Yarty valley.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open flat landform, often with distinct vegetated floodplain edge confined by valley sides • Watercourses screened by riparian vegetation often with low flood-banks • Hedges, not banks, generally on the boundary with rising land. • Pastoral land use, with wet meadows and some arable, with variable field sizes • Sparsely settled • Stone sometimes used for walls, bridges and quays. • Network of narrow winding lanes, sometimes with major roads along boundaries • Open internally, with views out screened by boundary vegetation • Variable field pattern, with some areas apparently unenclosed • Frequently tranquil although main transport routes may occur, reducing tranquillity • River views

Table 2: Landscape character types of the AONB

Facts and figures

- The AONB forms 45% of the Blackdowns National Character Area
- AONB comprises six landscape character types
- Highest point at Staple Hill, 315 metres, compared to heights of around 50 metres in river valleys near Axminster
- In a 2013 survey, the three qualities people love most about the Blackdown Hills are the landscape, the views and the leisure opportunities the area provides
- 71% of respondents said that it will be very important to conserve and enhance views and scenic beauty over the next five years, and 69% said it will be very important to maintain the sense of tranquillity

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- Devon landscape character areas developed, highlighting key characteristics, special qualities, and associated management strategy based on the European Landscape Convention principle of ‘protect, manage, plan’
- *What makes a view?* landscape project captured favourite views to help protect and enhance them for the future
- *Design guide for houses* published, a practical guide for modern development with reference to landscape and historic character of the area’s buildings
- Dark skies awareness – raising awareness of light pollution through star-gazing evenings and fact sheets

Issues and opportunities

Further reform of Common Agricultural Policy and the impact this will have on land management will be a significant factor influencing the opportunities to conserve and enhance the characteristic landscape features of the AONB.

Other changes in farming practice can have landscape and visual impacts, for example Catchment Sensitive Farming requirements to cover cattle yards or fencing of watercourses; waste and water management regulations; the expansion and intensification of existing farms to gain economies of scale, resulting in new, larger buildings or extending the growing season by use of plastic and membrane coverings on fields.

Climate change adaptation is likely to have numerous impacts upon the character and quality of the landscape. Existing and new development will need to adapt to become more energy efficient and resilient to extreme weather events such as flooding. Nature conservation, farming and other land management practices will need to adapt to ensure that the landscape and the ecosystems it supports can continue to function effectively. It may result in the introduction of new grazing regimes and unfamiliar crops that can alter the traditional appearance of the farmed landscape. Climate change may also create changed habitats and the introduction of pests and disease.

Advances in the utilisation of energy crops and renewable energy from wind and solar can all have significant impacts on landscape character.

The current emphasis on growth and a presumption in favour of sustainable development means that there is greater pressure to accommodate development in towns around the edges of the AONB and some villages within it. The sensitive siting and design of development is vital in order to conserve and enhance the landscape

and scenic beauty of the AONB. Light and noise pollution associated with transport and development erodes tranquillity and remoteness and quality of the dark night skies. Both have been mapped nationally in the past²⁰, but up-to-date data to chart further change is not currently available.

There is often no way of controlling the cumulative effects of small-scale incremental change; small highway alterations, new signs, changes to boundaries, inappropriate hedgerow management can all be detrimental to landscape character.

The area has been well covered by landscape character assessments (LCA), however there is a need to ensure that the core information, how it can be applied, and the differences between the various assessments can be readily interpreted and are understood. For example the LCA could help to identify areas where an increase in woodland cover would help to strengthen landscape character.

Resources will be required to update the LCAs as necessary, which will include public participation in both the landscape data and corresponding guidelines in line with the European Landscape Convention (see page 16).

The issues, opportunities and policy responses in each topic throughout this plan will of course each have some bearing on landscape character.



20. See www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside

Management Objectives and Policies	
Objectives	Policies
<p>LC 1</p> <p>The particular features that make the Blackdown Hills landscape distinctive at a national, regional and local level are conserved and enhanced.</p>	<p>LC 1/A</p> <p>Support the development and delivery of environmental schemes and projects that conserve and enhance the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the AONB.</p> <p>LC 1/B</p> <p>Support the development and use of landscape character assessments to inform decision-making affecting the AONB.</p>
<p>LC 2</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>LC 2/A</p> <p>Encourage studies and research that explore and improve awareness of the potential impact of change on the landscape.</p> <p>LC 2/B</p> <p>Encourage opportunities for local people to conserve and enhance their local landscape and celebrate local distinctiveness.</p>
<p>LC 3</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>LC 3/A</p> <p>Support and promote initiatives for the understanding of tranquillity and encourage the quiet enjoyment of the AONB.</p> <p>LC 3/B</p> <p>Support measures to conserve and enhance tranquillity and dark skies.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Area and percentage of AONB in agri-environment schemes (Defra/NE)
- Change in percentage of AONB recorded as 'most tranquil' (NE/CPRE)
- Fixed-point photographic monitoring of key views (one viewpoint per character area) (AONB)

1.2 Cultural Heritage

Aim

The AONB's cultural heritage, from its archaeological sites and historic buildings through to the unique arts and crafts produced today, is recognised as an intrinsic part of the landscape and special qualities of the AONB. It is conserved, enhanced and enjoyed, and adds value to the local economy. Local communities are actively engaged in celebrating the past, keeping the skills and traditions alive and sensitively shaping its future.

Background

The Blackdown Hills AONB retains a strong sense of continuity with the past. Centuries of human activity have created the intricate patterns of woods, heaths and fields, lanes and trackways, and hamlets and villages that contribute greatly to the AONB's unique historic character.

Prehistoric to Roman times There are significant concentrations of early prehistoric evidence in the AONB. Large numbers of Mesolithic flint and chert tools have been found, along with Neolithic causewayed enclosures. Later prehistoric features include Bronze Age round barrow cemeteries and isolated barrows, and large Iron Age hillforts that take great advantage of the local topography. Of the 25 Scheduled Monuments in the area, 10 are Bronze Age barrows or barrow cemeteries and seven are hillforts.

Peat deposits in springline mires provide information back to prehistoric times, and the preserved pollen records show changes from woodland to pastoral and arable farming.

The Roman period is represented by military use of the Iron Age hillfort at Hembury, the later bath-house at Whitestaunton and several 'Romanised' farms.

Medieval period Key medieval sites include Castle Neroche, an early Norman earthwork castle built on an earlier Iron Age defended site, and Hemyock Castle, a fortified manor house of the late medieval period. Dunkeswell Abbey, founded in the 13th century, had a significant influence on the landscape through its grange farms and probable involvement in iron production.

The Blackdown Hills' distinctive field patterns and many dispersed farmsteads and hamlets originate from medieval times. Historic landscape characterisation projects have identified a high proportion of the landscape as being of medieval origin. Enclosed, former medieval strip fields are well preserved throughout the AONB. Irregular fields and massive hedges in the valleys represent land taken directly into cultivation from woodland in the medieval period.

There is an extraordinary concentration of medieval buildings in the villages, as well as many deserted or shrunken medieval and post-medieval settlements, which reflect the ebb and flow of agriculture on marginal land. Ancient woodland, surviving from the medieval period, is still well represented, particularly on the northern escarpment. The Royal Forest of Neroche was finally enclosed in the 1830s but traces of the old woodbanks still survive.

Modern Parliamentary Inclosure of former commons on the plateau tops in the 19th century has created distinctive landscapes of large regular fields with straight roads and beech hedges. Beacon Hill in Upottery was the last area of England to be enclosed some 100 years ago.

The AONB also contains important evidence from World War Two – the three airfields at Culmhead (Trickey Warren), Dunkeswell and Upottery (Smeatharpe). As well as the runways, a wide range of structures still survives at all three sites including pillboxes, aircraft dispersal pen and technical and domestic buildings. Some have

been designated as Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings.

Industry The geology of the area has had a strong influence on the industrial archaeology and landscape. Iron production is thought to have started locally in the later Iron Age, it was an important Roman industry and continued into the Middle Ages. The iron ores were found at the junction of the Upper Greensand and the capping clay layer. The cratered landscape of opencast iron workings can still be seen in places on the plateau tops, such as Culm Davy, and heaps of iron slag are widespread.

Mining of a hard seam of stone within the greensand for whetstone production reached its heyday in the 18th and 19th centuries. Indications of the mines can still be seen on the western escarpment around Blackborough and Broadhembury.

There are claypits associated with medieval and post-medieval pottery production, and a number of largely 18th and 19th century limekilns particularly around the Bishopswood and Wambrook area.

Literature and the Arts Over the centuries the Blackdown Hills landscape has inspired writers and artists who have left a legacy of cultural associations. Celia Fiennes, Daniel Defoe and Rev John Swete all travelled through the area providing informative descriptions and historic perceptions of the landscape.

In the early 20th century the Camden Town Group of artists, including Robert Bevan, Charles Ginner and Spencer Gore used the patterned rural landscape as inspiration for their impressionist paintings that provide records of the past. Today the texture, colour and light of the Blackdown Hills continue to influence artists including the local Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers.

Architecture The AONB has a distinctive local style of architecture. Local materials such as chert, cob, thatch and clay tiles are used extensively, as well as limestone and Beer stone. The large number of surviving late medieval houses is exceptional. Many are Grade II* Listed Buildings and contain particularly fine woodwork screens, ceilings and jetties; there are fine examples in Broadhembury.

Historic farmsteads are a key part of the AONB's architectural, agricultural and social heritage, and they too still survive intact and with unchanged associated farm buildings in exceptional numbers. Most farmsteads and hamlets are in sheltered valleys, often terraced into the hills. Villages are often at river crossings and crossroads in the valley floors, generally clustered around the parish church. Small stone houses often directly front or butt gable-end on to the narrow lanes. Topography often influences settlement pattern, such as Membury where the village straggles along the valley and Blackborough, where it follows the escarpment.

Landscape features Although designed landscapes are not widespread within the AONB, there are some features that make a significant contribution. The Wellington Monument built between 1817 and 1854 is iconic, defining the north-west escarpment. Much of a Victorian designed landscape including walled garden, lakes and leats, still survives on the Otterhead Estate. Similarly the large Victorian manors at Upottery and on the Tracey Estate, Awliscombe have gone, but their parkland, formal garden features and ancillary buildings can still be seen.

Facts and figures

- 25 Scheduled Monuments
- 762 Listed Buildings
- 4961 heritage assets recorded on the Devon and Somerset Historic Environment Records (HERs)
- 9 Conservation Areas

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- Publication of *Along the Wild Edge: a journey through the northern Blackdown Hills* (2011) as part of the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme funded by Heritage Lottery Fund
- Hands on History community archaeology, based on the unexpected discovery in Hemyock of the largest single find ever made of medieval pottery in Devon.
- *Harvesting Voices* audio archive, website featuring the rural memories of people living in and around the Blackdown Hills. www.harvestories.co.uk
- *Dunkeswell War Stories*, interactive learning resource about Dunkeswell in WW2, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund. www.dunkeswellwarstories.com
- Blackdown Hills iron working community archaeology project, detailed surveys of key iron-working sites carried out with the help of local volunteers.
- Blackdown Archives, a collection of historic photos that continues to grow as more material is found and digitised. www.blackdownarchives.org.uk
- *Built on Earth*, photographic archive by Pauline Rook of vernacular farm buildings including a record of the architectural details of the buildings.
- Blackdown Hills Heritage Day 2012 attended by more than 300 people
- *Monitoring Our Monuments: Working with English Heritage* a toolkit has been produced to enable volunteers to monitor scheduled monuments
- Devon and Somerset heritage services have both digitised all their Tithe maps

Issues and opportunities

Inappropriate management of the historic environment – ploughing, planting or overgrazing, can seriously damage historic sites and features.

Agri-environment schemes should seek to secure greater opportunities to improve the management of the

historic environment, in particular archaeological sites, historic buildings and landscape features, such as chert barns and walls, in poor repair or at risk of loss.

Extreme weather caused by climate change – flooding can damage historic bridges, heavy and persistent rain accelerates decay of stonework, while storms and high winds can damage fragile historic buildings and structures.

There is a risk that changes in planning regulations and agricultural diversification could lead to inappropriate conversion of historic farm buildings, a key heritage asset of the AONB.

Careful planning and design is required to ensure that the pressure for development does not adversely affect historic features or the traditional character of historic settlements within the AONB. There is scope for neighbourhood plans, village design statements and conservation area appraisals to inform decision-making.

A wealth of information about local heritage assets is available online through Historic Environment Records (HERs) and Historic Landscape Characterisation held by both county councils. Promoting and making better use of this resource will also aid informed decision-making.

There is limited funding available to safeguard and enhance the historic environment. Much of the funding for this area of work is discretionary. Not all assets are suitable or relevant for agri-environment schemes, and English Heritage funding is targeted at those assets most at risk. There is a need therefore to find creative ways to manage the historic environment.

Recent years have seen great interest in cultural heritage by local communities; greater knowledge and their involvement can help underpin practical action to conserve and enhance the AONB's historic environment.

Management Objectives and Policies	
Objectives	Policies
<p>CH 1 The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Blackdown Hills is conserved and managed.</p>	<p>CH 1/A Support the development and delivery of agri-environment schemes and other initiatives that conserve and manage the historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB.</p> <p>CH 1/B Use the counties' Historic Environment Records and historic landscape characterisation to inform policy-making, and development and land management decisions.</p> <p>CH 1/C Encourage and support training in traditional heritage skills.</p>
<p>CH 2 The historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB is understood, valued and celebrated.</p>	<p>CH 2/A Encourage studies and research of the historic and cultural environment that raise understanding, awareness and appreciation of its significance.</p> <p>CH 2/B Encourage opportunities for local people to participate in exploring their cultural heritage, through historical research and recording, and celebrating local distinctiveness.</p> <p>CH 2/C Actively support volunteer activity to conserve, enhance and learn more about the historic environment.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Change in area of land under agri-environment schemes for the management and protection of historic features (Defra)
- Change in percentage of heritage assets at risk (English Heritage/local authorities)
- Change in number of heritage records for the AONB available on the on-line HERs (county historic environment services)

1.3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Aim

The AONB's nationally important wildlife habitats and unique geology are conserved, and there are thriving populations of important species. All the natural heritage of the AONB is understood and appreciated, and local communities are actively engaged in its conservation and enhancement.

Background

The biodiversity of the Blackdown Hills is intrinsic to the area's character and aesthetic appeal. The wide variety of species and habitats, summarised in Table 3 on the following pages, reflects the complex landscape patterns, unique geology and traditional management of the area.

The AONB is characterised by its intricate patchwork of semi-natural habitats, scattered throughout the landscape. This includes patches of woodland habitat, although there are larger concentrations of woodland to the north of the AONB (much of which is managed by the Forestry Commission). Of particular note are the valuable plant communities that arise along the springlines, where the Greensand meets the clays, supporting wet grassland, heathland, mire (ie purple moor-grass and rush pastures) and woodland habitats. Linear features such as hedgerows, rivers and streams help to link habitat patches, forming a network that allows species to move through the landscape. The majority of habitats are under agricultural or forestry management and in private ownership.

With its mosaic of habitats the Blackdown Hills is noted for its butterflies, in particular marsh fritillary, small pearl-bordered fritillary, Duke of Burgundy, wood white and brown hairstreak. Its rivers contain water vole, white-clawed crayfish and lampreys.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are sites of European importance for nature conservation²¹. There is one SAC in the AONB at Quants in the north of the Blackdown Hills selected for its population of marsh fritillary butterflies. The site is also a SSSI. The integrity of the site requires intensive habitat management. Just beyond the AONB boundary to the south east is the river Axe SAC. The objectives here are to protect the watercourse habitat and key species from increased nutrient levels, most likely coming from surrounding land use.

The geology of the Blackdowns Hills AONB is dominated by one of the finest and most extensive plateaux in Britain – the East Devon Plateau – dissected by the long, deep valleys of the rivers Culm, Otter, Yarty and their tributaries. The AONB has two geological SSSIs covering 3.5ha – Furley Chalk Pit and Reed's Farm Pit.

The AONB might be likened to an irregularly cut layer cake, with near horizontal beds of soft rocks deposited one on top of the other, the youngest at the top. The lower layer, exposed in the river valleys, is marl (red Mercia Mudstone), replaced with Lias in the east. A 30-metre layer of Upper Greensand rests upon this, outcropping as an abrupt rim to the valleys and capping the conspicuous northern scarp slope. The composition of Upper Greensand layer, which underlies much of the East Devon Plateau, is unique in Britain. This is covered by a superficial deposit of Clay-with-Flints-and-Cherts.

The chert-tempered local clay supported a medieval pottery industry around the Membury/Axminster area and later in Hemyock, while the almost indestructible chert is used extensively for buildings and walls. On the western edge of the AONB the Upper Greensand produced well-preserved fossils, and the area around Kentisbeare and Broadhembury was famed for its whetstone industry in the 18th and 19th centuries. Soils provide a strong link between the physical

environment and the wildlife, land use and cultural landscape. For example the dark-topped, organic and peaty soils found on the plateau gives an indication of the former extent of heathland vegetation, small remnants of which persist at Dunkeswell Turbary and North Hill. The freely draining land on the scarp with its dry, acid grasslands and woods, contrasts sharply with the perennially wet ground on the springlines. This supports wet woodlands, acid Rhôs pastures and other wet grasslands, with mire and bog communities in more restricted sites such as Hense Moor.

Facts and figures

- 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) covering 638.9ha (just under 2% of AONB); 18.4% in favourable condition and 68.8% unfavourable recovering (March 2013)
- Within SSSIs, lowland mixed deciduous woodland is the most common habitat covering 236.5ha of which 21% is in favourable condition and 66.2% is in unfavourable but recovering condition.
- Lowland bog (ie purple moor-grass and rush pastures, and lowland fen) are the second most common habitat within SSSIs, with 144.5ha of which 29.8% is favourable and 41.6% is unfavourable but recovering.
- 1 Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Quants (20.29ha) for marsh fritillary butterfly
- 350 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
- 14 Wildlife Trust reserves covering 130.7ha
- 4 Woodland Trust sites
- 5 National Trust sites
- 1 Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

21. <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-23>

Priority* Habitat	Description	Characteristic plant species	Associated priority species*
Lowland meadows	Enclosed, neutral, unimproved grassland. Managed by cutting for hay and/or livestock grazing.	Common bird's-foot-trefoil, common knapweed, common spotted-orchid, corky-fruited water dropwort, cowslip, devil's-bit scabious, green-winged orchid, pepper saxifrage, rough hawkbit, yellow rattle	<p>Insects – beetles Black oil-beetle</p> <p>Insects – moths Cinnabar, shaded broad-bar</p> <p>Plants Greater butterfly-orchid</p> <p>Reptiles Common lizard, slow-worm</p> <p>Mammals Brown hare</p>
Lowland calcareous grassland	Calcareous (pH ≥6), unimproved grasslands. Can be enclosed or unenclosed. Generally managed with livestock grazing. Restricted to sites on Lias Limestone around Pitminster.	Carline thistle, cowslip, hawkweed oxtongue, rock rose, salad burnet, stemless thistle, wild thyme, yellow-wort	<p>Insects – butterflies Dingy skipper, Duke of Burgundy, grizzled skipper, small heath, small pearl-bordered fritillary, wall</p> <p>Insects – moths Autumnal rustic</p> <p>Plants Greater butterfly-orchid</p>
Lowland dry acid grassland	Acidic (pH 4- 5.5), unimproved grasslands. Can be enclosed or unenclosed. Generally managed with livestock grazing.	Bilberry, bristle bent, heath bedstraw, heather, sand sedge, sheep's fescue, sheep's sorrel, tormentil, wavy hair-grass	<p>Amphibians Common toad</p> <p>Birds Lapwing, nightjar</p> <p>Insects – butterflies Small heath</p> <p>Reptiles Adder</p>
Lowland heathland	Broadly open habitat on impoverished, acidic mineral and shallow peat soil. Areas remain such as Blackdown and Sampford Commons SSSI and Stockland turbaries.	Bilberry, bristle bent, bell heather, bracken, cross-leaved heath, heath bedstraw, heather, lousewort, sheep's fescue, tormentil, western gorse	<p>Birds Nightjar, tree pipit</p> <p>Insects – butterflies Dingy skipper, grayling, small heath</p> <p>Insects – moths Autumnal rustic, cinnabar, powdered quaker, shoulder-striped wainscot</p> <p>Reptiles Adder, common lizard, grass snake, slow-worm</p>
Purple moor-grass and rush pastures	Poorly drained, usually acidic land. Includes fen meadows and rush pastures. Also known as Rhôs pastures or in Devon as Culm grasslands.	Common lousewort, devil's-bit scabious, greater bird's foot-trefoil, heath spotted orchid, marsh bedstraw, marsh thistle, marsh violet, meadow thistle, purple moor-grass, sharp-flowered rush, tormentil	<p>Birds Curlew</p> <p>Insects – butterflies Brown hairstreak, marsh fritillary</p> <p>Insects – grasshoppers Large marsh grasshopper</p>

Priority* Habitat	Description	Characteristic plant species	Associated priority species*
Lowland fens	Peatlands that receive water and nutrients from the soil, rock and ground water as well as from rainfall. Includes springline mires and flushes.	Bog asphodel, common cotton-grass, cross-leaved heath, marsh pennywort, pale butterwort, round-leaved sundew, oblong-leaved sundew, Sphagnum (bog-mosses)	<p>Birds Grasshopper warbler, reed bunting</p> <p>Insects – butterflies Wood white</p> <p>Insects – moths Dark-barred twin-spot carpet, knotgrass, rosy rustic, shoulder-striped wainscot, small phoenix, small square-spot</p> <p>Plants Marsh stitchwort</p> <p>Reptiles Adder</p>
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Generally enclosed and restricted to steeper slopes on a range of soils. Much is ancient woodland (ie thought to be in existence before 1600). Largest areas found on north-facing scarp slope overlooking the Vale of Taunton, but also occur on valley sides of the Culm, Yarty and Otter.	Ash, beech, blackthorn, bluebell, cuckoo pint, dog's-mercury, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, pedunculate oak, primrose, red campion, sanicle, wood anemone, and a rich flora of mosses and lichens	<p>Amphibians Common toad</p> <p>Birds Common cuckoo, lesser redpoll, lesser spotted woodpecker, marsh tit, spotted flycatcher, wood warbler</p> <p>Insects – beetles Violet oil-beetle</p> <p>Insects – butterflies Brown hairstreak, dingy skipper, Duke of Burgundy, grizzled skipper, small pearl-bordered fritillary, white admiral, white-letter hairstreak, wood white</p> <p>Insects – moths Autumnal rustic, brindled beauty, buff ermine, centre-barred sallow, dusky thorn, flounced chestnut, oak hook-tip, rustic, small phoenix</p> <p>Mammals Bechstein's bat, noctule bat, brown long-eared bat, lesser horseshoe bat, greater horseshoe bat, common dormouse</p> <p>Plants <i>Usnea articulata</i> (a lichen), white helleborine</p> <p>Reptiles Adder, grass snake</p>
Wet woodland	Poorly drained or seasonally wet land. Mostly secondary woodland that has developed through succession from open semi-natural habitats such as rush pastures, fens and bogs.	Alder, downy birch, greater tussock sedge, grey willow, goat willow, great horsetail, kingcup, pendulous sedge, and a rich flora of ferns, mosses and lichens	<p>Birds Redpoll</p> <p>Insects – flies <i>Lipsothrix nervosa</i> (a crane fly)</p> <p>Insects – moths Minor shoulder-knot, powdered quaker, small square-spot, sallow</p> <p>Mammals Noctule bat, otter</p>

Priority* Habitat	Description	Characteristic plant species	Associated priority species*
Traditional orchards	Open-grown trees set in herbaceous vegetation. Habitat patches generally small-scale. Trees are or were grown for fruit and nut production. Low intensity management such as grazing or annual hay cutting of orchard floor and no use of inorganic fertilisers or pesticides.	Apple, damson, pear, plum, cherry	<p>Birds Bullfinch, lesser spotted woodpecker, spotted flycatcher</p> <p>Mammals Bechstein's bat, brown long-eared bat, lesser horseshoe bat</p>
Ponds	Permanent and seasonal standing water bodies up to 2ha in extent that meet certain criteria (eg presence of priority species, exceptional species diversity and high ecological quality status).	Bulrush, greater bird's-foot-trefoil, great pond-sedge, lesser spearwort, kingcup, marsh violet, meadowsweet	<p>Amphibians Common toad, great crested newt</p>
Hedgerows	Boundary line of trees or shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide, with any gaps no less than 20m long. Includes herbaceous vegetation within 2m of the hedgerow. Characteristically irregular, ancient hedgerows occur in valleys and slopes, with more regular patterns of fields on the plateau, where enclosure occurred more recently.	Ash, beech, blackthorn, bluebell, dog's mercury, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, oak, primrose, red campion, small-leaved lime, wild service tree, willow, holly, wood anemone, wood violet, yellow	<p>Birds Bullfinch, house sparrow, yellowhammer</p> <p>Insects – butterflies Brown hairstreak, white-letter hairstreak</p> <p>Insects – moths Buff ermine, centre-barred sallow, dot moth, fionced chestnut, grey dagger, lackey, shaded broad-bar, white ermine</p> <p>Mammals Bechstein's bat, brown hare, brown long-eared bat, greater horseshoe bat, harvest mouse, lesser horseshoe bat, soprano pipistrelle, common dormouse, hedgehog</p> <p>Plants Marsh stitchwort</p> <p>Reptiles Common lizard, slow-worm</p>
Rivers	Natural and near-natural running water. Includes headwaters of the Yarty, Culm and Otter. Rivers emerge along the springlines near the northern escarpment and flow southwards.	Flowering-rush, greater pond-sedge, reed sweet-grass, yellow flag	<p>Crustaceans White-clawed crayfish</p> <p>Fish Brown trout, lamprey</p> <p>Mammals Otter, soprano pipistrelle, water vole</p> <p>Plants Marsh stitchwort</p>
Other habitats with associated BAP/S41 species			<p>Birds Grey partridge (arable land)</p> <p>Plants Spreading hedge-parsley (arable land)</p>

* Priority habitats and species are derived from Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Until 2012 these were known as UK BAP habitats and species.

Table 3: Habitats and species of the AONB

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- 250ha of pasture woodland created as part of the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme funded by Heritage Lottery Fund
- Supported Devon Biodiversity Records Centre in the monitoring of Devon County Wildlife sites
- Audit of all the county and district Biodiversity Action Plans and Strategies to produce one document covering the AONB
- Parish Biodiversity Audits carried out in six AONB parishes
- Riparian landowners advisory pack published as part of the Devon Water Vole Recovery Project
- Swift survey carried out in partnership with the RSPB and the Devon Wildlife Trust
- Big Bat Surveys carried out in 2011, 2012 and 2013 recording in one night the numbers and species of bats across some 16 transects within the AONB
- Batscapes project mapped habitat suitability for bats and collated bat records
- Public survey on waxcap fungi
- The AONB's Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs) in Devon remapped by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre
- Factsheet produced on the management of hedgerows to help conserve the brown hairstreak butterfly

Issues and opportunities

The new Rural Development Programme (RDP) is due to start in January 2015, with an associated New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS). This scheme, together with any greening of the Basic Payment Scheme (pillar 1) will greatly influence the opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity in the AONB. To maximise benefits clear signposting and co-ordination of advice will be essential.

There has been continued decline in species and habitats despite the Biodiversity Action Plan approach. Biodiversity 2020, the new national strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, has identified the need to focus on whole natural systems and landscapes in order to halt overall biodiversity loss by 2020. This strategy outlines the need to improve quality of existing habitats, create new areas of priority habitats and link together habitats to create new networks for wildlife.

The following priority habitats have been identified as having creation and restoration potential in the *NCA profile 147: Blackdowns*: lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wet woodland, hedgerows, traditional orchards, rivers, ponds, lowland heathland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland meadows, lowland calcareous grassland, and purple moor-grass and rush pastures. As the NCA covers both the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs, work needs to be collaborative to ensure delivery of local objectives as well as contribution to national biodiversity targets.

Agricultural change continues to impact upon biodiversity. Economic pressures, together with changing demographics of the farming community as older farmers retire or die, are likely to have a great impact on the landscape. This change brings both threats to biodiversity as some farms grow larger and more intensive, and opportunities where small parcels of land come into the ownership of smallholders who favour more traditional management. Under-management, such as cessation of grazing, can also reduce the value of sites for species and habitats.

Increased demand for wood fuel will encourage traditional management of small woods and hedgerows thus enhancing their wildlife value.

Promoting sensitive forestry, such as the appropriate management of broadleaved woodlands and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), will benefit biodiversity, but inappropriate forest management can be detrimental to biodiversity and geodiversity.

Poorly managed development (including renewable energy, mineral workings and waste disposal) has the potential to impact negatively on biodiversity and geodiversity. Biodiversity offsetting may offer opportunities to give biodiversity gain to compensate for residual losses caused by development that cannot be avoided or mitigated. This concept was being considered at a national level at the time of publication.

Climate change is predicted to impact upon biodiversity. Drier summers, warmer winters and more weather extremes will affect species in different ways. Some species will change in their range, with changes in seasons also likely to impact both resident and migratory species. Indirect changes will include changes in land use.

Local Nature Partnerships have been set up in both Devon and Somerset. These partnerships are expected to play an important role in protecting biodiversity and geodiversity at a strategic level, including identifying priorities, working with other sectors and connecting people with nature.

Invasive species, such as Himalayan balsam, rhododendron, mink and signal crayfish, continue to threaten local habitats and native species,. Further work is needed to tackle this problem.

Ensuring data is available on the presence and condition of habitats, species populations and geological sites is vital to ensure conservation and restoration efforts are targeted effectively.

Public awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and geodiversity need to be increased to ensure that conservation and enhancement priorities for the area are supported in the long term. The use of iconic species and landscapes are an effective way to achieve this.



Management Objectives and Policies

Objectives	Policies
<p>BG 1 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.</p>	<p>BG 1/A Support the development and delivery of agri-environment schemes and other initiatives to conserve and enhance priority habitats and species within the AONB, including creation of new areas of priority habitat.</p> <p>BG 1/B Identify and implement ways to connect existing patches of habitat to create new networks for wildlife, including cross-boundary linkages and green infrastructure connections.</p> <p>BG 1/C Avoid and reduce the impacts of development on biodiversity and ensure biodiversity enhancements are delivered.</p>
<p>BG 2 Geodiversity within the AONB is conserved.</p>	<p>BG 2/A Ensure sites of geological and geomorphological importance are appropriately managed to conserve their special features.</p> <p>BG 2/B Avoid and reduce the impacts of development on geodiversity.</p>

Management Objectives and Policies

Objectives	Policies
<p>BG 3</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>BG 3/A</p> <p>Encourage and support increased survey and monitoring of habitats and species at key sites and in the wider countryside.</p> <p>BG 3/B</p> <p>Identify and promote priority habitats and species within the AONB, based on survey data and relevant national, regional and local strategies.</p> <p>BG 3/C</p> <p>Ensure the value of the AONB's biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystem services is recognised and understood by decision-makers and land managers.</p>
<p>BG 4</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>BG 4/A</p> <p>Raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity as part of the natural beauty of the AONB and the need for its conservation and enhancement.</p> <p>BG 4/B</p> <p>Promote understanding of how geodiversity has shaped the landscape and influences the distribution of habitats.</p> <p>BG 4/C</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people to actively participate in conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity and geodiversity of the AONB.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Percentage of SSSIs in 'favourable condition' (NE)
- Area and percentage of AONB in agri-environment schemes (Defra/NE)
- Percentage of woodland in management (FC)
- Status of rivers (EA)
- Education and interpretation initiatives (AONB)

1.4 Natural Resources

Aim

The air, land, soils and water of the Blackdown Hills are of a high quality and support healthy ecosystems. They are better valued and are being used sustainably. The impacts of climate change are understood, and local businesses, communities and visitors are all taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the AONB.

Background

The good quality and condition of the land, soils, air and water are the key to the outstanding environment of the Blackdown Hills, as well as contributing to the standard of life enjoyed by residents and visitors. Conserving these natural resources is therefore vital to maintaining the quality and range of habitats and species across the AONB.

The water environment is fundamental to the character of the Blackdown Hills and has wider relevance:

- The plateau landscape dissected by long deep river valleys
- The source of the rivers Culm, Yarty and Otter within a small geographic area
- The steep scarp slope marks the watershed separating streams draining northwards to the Bristol Channel and south to the English Channel.

Much of the wildlife interest of the AONB depends on water quality, the capacity of the aquifer and on the rivers and their tributaries that rise in the Hills. Pollution and over-abstraction can have serious consequences. Surface water run-off can lead to soil erosion and flooding.

The Water Framework Directive²² seeks to ensure clean water across Europe, looking at water management at a river-basin scale in order to achieve a good

environmental status across all water bodies by 2027. In England the implementation is through a catchment-based approach, on the basis that many of the problems facing the water environment are best understood and tackled at a catchment scale. In the East Devon Catchment (the rivers Exe, Otter, Sid and Axe and their tributaries) 27% of water bodies are at good status.

Pollution from rural areas is a significant factor in causing poor water quality in every catchment in the south west river basin district: phosphorus in rivers and sediment from agriculture are particular issues in the East Devon Catchment.

The Catchment Sensitive Farming programme²³ which aims to control diffuse water pollution operates across the area. The programme is delivered in partnership by Natural England, Environment Agency and Defra, and offers practical solutions and targeted support to control pollution.

Parts of the eastern and western fringes of the AONB are within Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, where there are controls on some farming activities, particularly relating to manure and fertilisers, in order to tackle nitrate loss from agriculture.

The rivers running through the AONB also have the potential to offer greater social and economic benefits. For example all streams are classified as trout breeding streams by the Environment Agency, and it is likely that some of the fast-flowing valley-side streams have potential for micro-hydro power generation, subject to avoiding or mitigating any negative impacts on the aquatic environment.

The 2008 Climate Change Act has committed the UK to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 18% from 2008 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050. In 2012, the AONB Partnership commissioned a research project to assess

greenhouse gas emissions in the Blackdown Hills to provide a baseline assessment of which sectors are causing the most serious emissions and how patterns of emissions are likely to change over the coming years.

It showed that in 2009 over 860,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent was emitted from the Blackdown Hills area due to the consumption of energy from fossil fuels, land use and agricultural activity. This equated to 45% from carbon dioxide, 38% from nitrogen oxide and 17% from methane.

The emissions were split into 83% from agriculture and land use, 7% transport, 6% domestic, 3% business and 1% waste.

Facts and figures

- 135.7km of river water bodies (rivers, canals and surface water transfers) of which 29.3% have a 'Good' or 'High' ecological status
- 100% of standing water bodies (lakes and SSSI ditches) have a 'Good' or 'High' ecological status

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- Greenhouse gas assessment carried out to establish baseline data
- *Renewable energy in the Blackdown Hills: constraints and opportunities*²⁴ report produced
- South West Protected Landscape Forum document *Horses, the Landscape and You – Equestrian guide to keeping horses in protected landscapes*²⁵ includes sections on pasture management and waste management

22. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro_en.htm

23. www.naturalengland.org.uk/csf

24. see www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Climate-change.html

25. Available on www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Planning

Issues and opportunities

The *National Ecosystem Assessment*²⁶ carried out by Defra showed that many services provided by nature are in decline, however the value of these ecological services is now starting to be recognised and used in policy development.

Further demands on public water supply through increases in population coupled with possible water shortages from drought and decreased rainfall may well present challenges for the management of water and implications for the natural beauty of the AONB.

Intense rainfall is likely to cause more frequent localised flooding events and contribute to soil erosion and run-off. Improved soil management through the Catchment Sensitive Farming scheme and similar should help to reduce the impacts. Nevertheless, a wider overview is required to avoid unintended consequences, for example measures to improve soil management through subsoiling or addressing soil compaction could have impacts on below-ground archaeology, and the over-roofing of farmyards and the development of other water management infrastructure such as watercourse crossings could adversely affect the character of traditional farmsteads. The creation of wetland habitats to retain floodwater in the upper catchment may also impact on below-ground archaeology.

The area offers potential to create wetland habitats to attenuate and retain floodwater in the upper catchment, reducing and slowing flows further downstream. There would however need to be full consideration of potential impacts of doing so on the historic environment, landscape character and agricultural production. There is scope to contribute to water resource projects beyond the AONB because of the importance of the area to water resources outside its boundaries. The new Catchment Partnerships offer the opportunity to develop projects and initiatives that benefit water quality and broader interests

of both the AONB and a wider geographic area.

The rivers in the AONB provide an opportunity to develop 'source to sea' tourism and recreational opportunities.

'Cross compliance', which require good agricultural and environmental conditions be met for direct farm support payments, sets a marker for how good husbandry and land management help to protect soils and other natural resources.

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Change in ecological status of waterbodies and riparian habitats (EA)

Management Objectives and Policies

Objectives	Policies
<p>NR 1</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>NR 1/A</p> <p>Encourage, support and promote initiatives that safeguard earth, air and water resources, without conflicting with the special qualities of the AONB.</p> <p>NR 1/B</p> <p>Support projects to improve knowledge of the state of the environment, soils and watercourses through research and monitoring.</p> <p>NR 1/C</p> <p>Support a catchment-based approach to the enhancement and sustainable management of the Blackdown Hills water environment.</p> <p>NR 1/D</p> <p>Promote greater recognition of the value of ecosystem services and support the development of a system that rewards land managers for their delivery.</p>

26. See www.gov.uk/ecosystems-services

1.5 Farming, Forestry and Land Management

Aim

The 'living landscape' of the Blackdown Hills AONB is conserved and enhanced by sustainable farming, forestry and land management enterprises. They are key providers of food, fuel and other public benefits, such as carbon reduction.

Background

Farming is fundamental to the character of the Blackdown Hills, as today's landscape is testimony to the stewardship of generations of farmers and landowners. There is a tradition of small-scale family farms based on mixed livestock husbandry.

Agriculture has faced considerable problems in recent years such as disease (bovine TB and Schmallenberg virus), changes in support and reduced profitability. However there are now greater incentives for environment friendly farming through agri-environment schemes and conditions attached to direct farm payments – the main EU support for farming.

Changes in land ownership and farming practices are influencing the landscape. The small dairy farms are declining, and there is an on-going trend towards the division of farm units and the separation of farmhouse from the land. Thus farming is being concentrated on fewer, larger, sometimes dispersed units, while many farms are becoming essentially residential, for keeping horses or as small holdings. This not only reduces the opportunity for younger people to enter farming but also can lead to the countryside taking on a suburban appearance. But these new owners may be keen to deliver more environmental conservation. The pattern of land management may also change as farmers seek new, profitable activities and markets. In particular new

crops for industrial or pharmaceutical uses, such as borage or hemp, or for energy generation, while other land is used for recreation or tourism activities.

Sustainable woodland management provides economic products as well as benefits for wildlife and recreation, and the storage of carbon. Many of the characteristic ancient broadleaved woods, which support priority species, were previously managed as coppice but are now unmanaged or have been planted with conifers. Although the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme has removed large areas of conifers in the northern part of the AONB, there is still such scope elsewhere to enhance the landscape and wildlife through restoration of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). This will also provide increased opportunities for recreation, while still producing timber, wood fuel and other woodland products.

However, productive forestry, including conifer crops where appropriate to the AONB landscape, has a role to play in sustaining economically viable landholdings that can continue to provide a wide range of ecosystem services.

The Blackdowns and East Devon Woodland Association has done much to encourage the cooperative management of smaller woodlands and there is considerable scope for continuing this work. Community woodland schemes, such as Neroche Woodlanders and Culmwoods, are encouraging new ways of working woods, as well as bringing a wide range of other benefits from wood fuel to health and wellbeing.

In a similar way the Blackdown Hills Hedge Association has promoted the traditional management of hedgerows through training courses, hedge-laying competitions and other events. Orchards were a significant element of the Blackdown

Hills landscape and are important for biodiversity especially where old trees survive. But most are no longer managed, surviving only as a few old trees or have disappeared completely. With the increase in interest in local produce, apples, apple juice and cider are all being produced in the AONB. Furthermore changing ownership of farms has caused a renewal of interest in restoring or replanting orchards on traditional sites with local varieties of fruit trees.

Facts and figures

- Total woodland coverage of AONB is 14.6% or 5,381 ha (2012)
- 622 farm holdings of which 313 have grazing livestock
- 63.6% of farms are 50 hectares or less
- 46% of AONB managed under an agri-environment scheme (2013)
- 38.1% of woodland in the AONB is Managed Woodland

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- High Nature Value (HNV) farmland, a partnership project with European Forum Nature Conservation and Pastoralism that produced a pilot study of HNV farmland in the Blackdown Hills as part of wider HNV farmland research. The results have been used as evidence to encourage the 'greening' of the Common Agricultural Policy.
- Working Our Woodlands project encouraged sustainable management of small woodlands and developed a woodland network, thus improving the supply of local wood to local markets.
- Blackdown Hills hedge-laying film produced.
- Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme came second in the Royal Forestry Society's Community Woodland Awards with the Young Wood project.
- Hedges for wood fuel (joint project with Tamar Valley AONB) investigated the potential of hedges for wood fuel, compared management methods and impact on wildlife.
- Two-year forestry apprenticeships for five apprentices leading to a NVQ qualification in Forestry. It combined a structured forestry skills development programme with work place experience and skills consolidation.
- Beef, Butterflies and Trees, a two-part project that:
 - encouraged collaborative grazing among owners of wildlife-rich, marginal land in the Blackdown Hills
 - promoted timber grading and community woodland management through Culmwoods, which brought together volunteers and contractors to find economic ways of managing small woodlands.
- Blackdowns Wood Fair established as an important local event encouraging greater understanding of woods and woodland management.

Issues and opportunities

The AONB's 2013 survey of local farmers to inform the Management Plan review indicated that the main issues concerning them were: animal health (23%), CAP reform (16%), commodity prices (16%), changing weather patterns (15%) and an ageing farming population (10%).

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which steers the agricultural industry, is currently under reform. Increased levels of targeting and reduced resources for agri-environment schemes will mean few incentives coming into the AONB for environment friendly activities.

Changes in farming patterns, including intensification, changes in crops and techniques impact on the landscape character and wildlife of the AONB.

Impact on landscape of large-scale, on-farm renewable energy generation – wind turbines and photovoltaic arrays.

Changes in land ownership, farm size and diversification of farm businesses could influence the character of the AONB, as could loss of traditional land management skills, such as stock management and hedge-laying, due to an ageing farming population and limited young farmers entering the industry.

Impacts of widespread diseases – Bovine Tuberculosis, BSE, Foot & Mouth, etc – could affect the viability of livestock farming in the AONB.

Increasing interest in local produce, on-farm marketing and farmers markets could help increase profitability of smaller farm holdings and lead to employment opportunities.

Establishment of the Blackdown Hills Rough Grazing Association (BHRGA) offers opportunities for knowledge

exchange and support for traditional farming practices on marginal land.

Many woodlands are either under-managed or not managed at all. The increasing wood fuel market offers opportunities to bring more small woodlands into positive management.

Increasing prevalence of tree pests and diseases, such as ash dieback caused by *Chalara fraxinea*, and Ramorum disease of larch, caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*, resulting primarily from increased global trade and travel, the import of diseased material, and made worse by climate change.

Hedges are key features of the Blackdown Hills landscape but many are either frequently flailed or under managed. Greater opportunities to encourage traditional management could enhance landscape and biodiversity, as well as provide wood fuel and employment.

Increased recognition of the role of farmers, foresters and land managers have to play in the delivery ecosystem services.

Biodiversity offsetting may provide opportunities for woodland creation but it needs to be of the right species mix, appropriate to the landscape character and avoid sensitive sites such as archaeology and wildlife-rich habitats.

Mitigation for climate change will be a driver for more woodland planting.



Management Objectives and Policies

Objectives

FLM 1

Sustainable farming practices conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB, and deliver ecosystem services.

Policies

FLM 1/A

Seek to influence future agri-environment schemes, so they are appropriate to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB and reward farmers and land managers for this role and for delivering ecosystem services.

FLM 1/B

Support and promote sustainable farm management, especially through agri-environment schemes and farm diversification, to benefit the landscape, wildlife and historic environment of the AONB.

FLM 1/C

Encourage and support the sensitive management of important landscape features, watercourses and habitats such as hedgerows, trees, heathland and unimproved grassland.

FLM 1/D

Encourage and support training in traditional land management skills.

FLM 1/E

Encourage the production and marketing of local food and other agricultural products where these are compatible with the AONB designation.

Management Objectives and Policies	
Objectives	Policies
<p>FLM 2 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.</p>	<p>FLM 2/A Support and promote initiatives that encourage sensitive environmental management of woodlands, particularly those that conserve ancient woodland and veteran trees, and restore the original broadleaved character of plantations on ancient woodland sites.</p> <p>FLM 2/B Promote initiatives that encourage sensitive environmental management of woodlands and hedgerows to deliver economic benefits and promote business opportunities, and that conserve and enhance natural beauty.</p> <p>FLM 2/C Support the planting of trees and new woodland that conserve and enhance the landscape character and cultural heritage of the AONB, benefits wildlife, water quality and locks up carbon.</p> <p>FLM 2/D Encourage the use of sustainably produced woodland products locally, where it is compatible with the AONB designation.</p>
<p>FLM 3 Restoration and management of orchards as an element of the landscape and biodiversity of the AONB.</p>	<p>FLM 3/A Encourage and support the restoration and management of orchards where they will enhance the landscape character and biodiversity of the AONB and provide a source of local produce.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Percentage of land managed under all agri-environment schemes (NE)
- Percentage change in farm number and size (Defra)

THEME 2: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



THEME 2: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Access and Enjoyment

Aim

Residents and visitors gain inspiration and wellbeing by engaging with the unspoilt landscape of the Blackdown Hills through a range of quiet leisure activities. They are able to appreciate and enjoy the tranquillity and other special qualities of the AONB. The network of public rights of way is well maintained and promoted, and the area can be accessed by sustainable transport.

Background

Access to the countryside is important for physical and mental health and wellbeing²⁷. The challenge is to provide for the recreational activities in a way that is consistent with conserving natural beauty and without damaging the environment and tranquillity people come to enjoy. In close proximity to several market towns and within easy reach of larger centres such as Exeter and Taunton, the Blackdown Hills offer a range of opportunities for recreation. Walking, cycling and horse riding are popular, but many people come to the area for activities as diverse as sky-diving, gliding, motor sports and bushcraft.

The public rights of way (PRoW) network in the AONB is extensive but fragmented with limited off-road routes for horse riders and cyclists, however there have been some successes in promoted circular routes. The local road network provides other opportunities but the twisting, narrow lanes raise safety concerns for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Opportunities for access to 'open countryside' on foot is relatively limited in the area, although the Public Forest Estate adds to the extent of accessible land. The majority of the open access sites are registered commons, in some cases also SSSIs or Local Wildlife Sites.

The county councils have prepared and reviewed Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs) for their networks that reflect the modern patterns of demand and land use. They identify how the PRoW network will be managed to meet the needs of all users. Each county has committed and active Local Access Forums that bring all interested parties together to improve opportunities and promote responsible access to the countryside for recreation and enjoyment.

Facts and figures

- 429km of Public Rights of Way across the AONB
- 79% footpaths, 19% bridleways, 1.5% road used as a public path, 0.5% byway open to all traffic
- 641ha (1.7% of AONB) total of publicly accessible land
- Registered common land 482ha

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- Valleyheads Way, a new promoted footpath linking Hemyock to Staple Hill and the circular Herepath, created
- New walks guides for the Neroche and the Chard areas
- Access to Blackdown Common from Culmstock improved by creating boardwalk
- On-road cycle routes in the AONB updated and added to the AONB website
- Bridleways in the AONB mapped under the 1SW off-road cycling project
- A stretch of the Culm Valley Trail, for walkers only, completed from Culmstock towards Uffculme
- Two all-ability trails added to the Fieldfare Trust's Phototrails website, allowing users to view routes through photographs and descriptions
- Feasibility study completed on a multi-user trail linking Taunton with the Blackdown Hills and Quantock Hills AONBs

Issues and opportunities

The AONB has not worked in partnership with the health sector, in particular, the new health and wellbeing boards, and professionals may not be aware of the opportunities the AONB offers for health and wellbeing. Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) should be able to help facilitate this new relationship, for example Devon LNP has a task group to develop a 'natural health service'.

Managing the demand for recreation in a landscape designated for its natural beauty but which is also a working environment with the majority of land in agriculture and in private ownership is challenging, for example needing to deal with numerous diverse landowners and managers over new routes.

More work is needed to develop dedicated safe routes for horse riders and cyclists, whether for leisure or utility (eg commuting). Other opportunities could be developed for multi-user routes and all-ability access, for example short routes around villages.

Rural roads offer an extensive network to explore the AONB, but there are safety and amenity issues from traffic volumes and speed.

Devon County Council has a long established Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme, involving communities in looking after their rights of way network. However reductions in Public Rights of Way budgets will mean a greater reliance on local communities and volunteers to carry out practical work to maintain networks in good order.

27. See www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/linkingpeople/health

Areas of conflict have arisen where activities impact on tranquillity. There is scope to engage positively with these audiences, to seek agreement to manage such activities, and to engender greater understanding and respect for the special qualities of the AONB among these user groups.

There can also be conflict among user groups on certain sites or routes (eg walkers, horse riders, cyclists, motorised vehicles) with some users causing damage particularly in wet areas, or where surface and ground conditions are not suitable for the potential user.

Although public transport is limited, some of the bus routes that cross the area have the potential to provide access for walking, visiting sites and attending events. Green infrastructure provision offers an opportunity to create physical links with surrounding towns via footpaths or multi-user routes, opening up new recreation and tourism opportunities, and may be secured through the planning process. There is also potential to link the area with nearby long distance recreational routes such as the Stop Line Way, a long distance walking and cycling route in development, running from Seaton to Weston-Super-Mare.

Management Objectives and Policies

Objectives

AE 1

Sustainable opportunities to explore and enjoy the Blackdown Hills countryside and special qualities are in keeping with AONB purpose, improve understanding of the area, and benefit the local economy.

Policies

AE 1/A

Work with highway authorities, parish councils and land managers to achieve an accessible, connected and above-minimum-standard network of Public Rights of Way across boundaries throughout the AONB that also conserves and enhances the special qualities of the AONB.

AE 1/B

Seek an appropriate balance between providing and promoting access and the conservation of the landscape and tranquillity of the AONB to avoid impact on sensitive sites and minimise conflict between different interests.

AE 1/C

Work with relevant groups to ensure a wide range of sensitive and sustainable access opportunities for users of all abilities to enjoy the special qualities of the AONB.

AE 1/D

Promote and develop the AONB's role in supporting health and wellbeing.

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- % of AONB that is publically accessible (NE)
- Number of people participating in local health walk scheme (local provider)

2.2 Planning and Development

Aim

All planning policies and strategies recognise the national importance of the AONB designation and all development is in harmony with the landscape. New development, conversions and extensions are in keeping with the strong local architectural style of the Blackdown Hills, and are designed and built to the highest sustainable standards. Affordable housing is available where needed.

Background

Villages, hamlets, individual buildings and their settings form a vital element of the character of the Blackdown Hills, particularly because of the widespread use of chert and the area's distinctive architecture. The planning and design of development, both within the AONB and around it, is of key importance in maintaining the landscape and scenic beauty of the area. Decision-making is the responsibility of the local planning authorities within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Local Plans/Core Strategies and Neighbourhood Plans. All local authorities also have a duty of regard to AONB purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

The NPPF provides specific planning guidance for plan-makers and decision-takers in relation to AONBs and confirms that great weight should be given to conserving their landscape and scenic beauty²⁸. Planning permission should be refused for major developments in AONBs except in exceptional circumstances, and only where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest²⁹.

The NPPF confirms that local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for their areas within Local Plans and accordingly deliver the conservation

and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape³⁰. The NPPF also confirms that:

- allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value (counting the AONB as the highest value),
- local planning authorities should set criteria-based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting landscape areas will be judged (development affecting AONBs includes impact on their setting), and
- planning should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment³¹.

National policy also emphasises the importance of using the highest standards of design and materials that reflect the identity of the local built and natural environment³². Scale and siting are essential considerations, alongside the provision of a high standard of amenity. The avoidance and reduction of noise and light pollution is encouraged in order to protect the sense of tranquillity and intrinsically dark skies³³ that are special qualities of the AONB. Sustainable construction methods also offer the potential to reduce the wider environmental impacts on the area.

The Management Plan provides supporting evidence and complementary policy guidance for local plans. This is supplemented by topic-specific guidance, such as the AONB's *Design guide for houses* and *What makes a view?* It aims to promote consistency and co-operation between authorities, both in setting policy and dealing with planning applications within the AONB, in order to conserve and enhance natural beauty across the area. AONB Management Plans can be a material consideration in planning decisions.

The Localism Act 2011 introduced Neighbourhood Planning which gives people greater power to influence development within their local area. There is some

interest in Neighbourhood Plans within the AONB area. They are required to be consistent with national and strategic local planning policy, and the policies in this Management Plan can help guide communities to identify local issues and develop innovative solutions, while conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of their area.

Development proposals need to be of an appropriate form, scale and materials and in appropriate locations. This will enable them to integrate with landscape character both within and adjacent to the AONB. The sense of place is easily lost: suburbanisation and the cumulative effect of 'permitted development' break down local distinctiveness; replacing small-scale, locally distinct features with ones of a standard design erodes local character – for example the choice and style of fence, wall or hedge around a house, or pavements, kerbs and driveways in new development.

Dealing with waste is an important issue in relation to sustainable lifestyles within the AONB. In Devon each person throws away approximately half a tonne of rubbish of which some 55 per cent is recycled, the remainder going into landfill. In addition there is a whole variety of commercial waste and inert waste generated from development. In the AONB the aim should be to minimise the amount of waste going to landfill by following the waste hierarchy – reduce, reuse, recycle. Waste management and disposal is primarily the responsibility of the two county councils.

28. Paragraph 115

29. Paragraph 116

30. Paragraph 17

31. Paragraphs 110, 113, 118 and 126

32. Paragraph 58

33. Paragraph 123

Facts and figures

- 400-500 planning applications in the AONB each year
- House price to household income ratio for Blackdown Hills is 7.3:1 (2011)
- In a 2013 Blackdown Hills AONB survey, 61% said that the planning and landscape advice provided by the AONB team to both local authorities and communities or parish councils was 'very valuable'

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- *Blackdown Hills AONB Design guide for houses*³⁴ published
- *Renewable energy in the Blackdown Hill AONB*³⁵ commissioned by the AONB Partnership to investigate the constraints and opportunities and identify key landscape and planning considerations for each technology
- South West Protected Landscape Forum document *Horses, the Landscape and You – Equestrian guide to keeping horses in protected landscapes*³⁶ includes sections on planning and development
- Supported parish plans in Neroche, Sheldon, Combe Raleigh, Broadhembury and Dunkeswell
- *Blackdown Hills Community Plan* produced by Blackdown Hills Parish Network, focusing on priorities and common issues that are particularly important to local communities
- *What makes a view?*³⁷ Planning and Management toolkit providing 'Protect, Manage, Plan' recommendations for protecting important views in each of the five Landscape Character Areas

Issues and opportunities

Village design guides and parish plans remain important tools for communities to identify and plan for their own needs. Meeting local housing needs should be the priority for new housing developments in the AONB.

The availability of a range of affordable housing types is a high priority in some local communities due to the limited choice of accommodation available and lack of affordability. Support is available to rural communities to identify local housing needs and to seek appropriate solutions.

In more rural areas of the AONB, agricultural buildings and development are significant issues and can be detrimental to natural beauty if not handled sensitively. As some agricultural practices continue to intensify with an increasing awareness of animal welfare, the demand for modern large-scale agricultural buildings is rising. The introduction of new regulations regarding the management of agricultural nitrates has imposed the requirement for large-scale slurry storage facilities often in isolated and elevated locations with associated landscape and visual impacts. The need to manage surface water has resulted in the enclosure of open yards, often infilling the gaps between existing structures resulting in the visual massing of buildings.

The use of redundant farm buildings offers opportunities for diversification of the rural economy, but requires careful consideration in order to safeguard local character and heritage interests of the AONB.

New developments should incorporate sustainable technology, renewable energy sources, and energy and water efficiency as standard; the use of locally sourced materials should be encouraged. However this needs to be balanced with retaining a locally distinctive built environment with a strong local vernacular. There may also be implications related to sourcing local materials, for example quarrying building stone.

Noise and activity arising from developments together with lighting can have an adverse impact on the area's tranquillity and dark skies – key aspects of the AONB's special qualities. Both have been mapped in the past,

but up-to-date data to chart further change is not currently available. This would allow areas of tranquillity to be defined and protected as described in the NPPF (paragraph 123).

Large-scale renewable energy developments can have a negative impact on landscape and scenic beauty, presenting potential conflicts between the need to tackle climate change and the statutory purposes of the AONB. Already the AONB and its surroundings have attracted proposals for significant wind and solar energy developments. Small-scale individual or community-based renewable energy schemes may be suitable provided there is no significant detrimental effect on the environment. Several resources are available to inform consideration of the impact of renewable energy developments on the AONB, including *Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Onshore Wind Energy and Large Scale Photovoltaic Development in Mid Devon*³⁸ and *Devon Landscape Policy Group Advice Note 2. Accommodating wind and solar pv developments in Devon's landscape*³⁹, both 2013.

The application of the NPPF, allied to the economic climate and growth agenda, is presenting new challenges to the interpretation of planning at district level, which has potential to increase pressure for development in or affecting the AONB.

34. www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Planning

35. www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Climate-change

36. www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Planning

37. www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/views

38. www.middevon.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=21185&p=0

39. www.devon.gov.uk/devon-guidance-v6-june-2013-final-report.pdf

Implementation of Community Infrastructure Levy by district planning authorities provides opportunities to fund delivery of appropriate green infrastructure and other environmental enhancement schemes within the AONB and its setting. There is a need therefore to work with local planning authorities to identify suitable infrastructure projects.

Management Objectives and Policies	
Objectives	Policies
<p>PD 1</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>PD 1/A</p> <p>Seek to ensure that all local plan documents and decision making has regard to the AONB purpose, the management plan and other AONB statements and guidance, and ensure that the importance of conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB is fully reflected in the land-use planning framework.</p> <p>PD 1/B</p> <p>Seek to ensure that any necessary new developments or conversions within the AONB or affecting its setting conserve and enhance natural beauty and special qualities, particularly by respecting the area's landscape character and the local character of the built environment, reinforce local distinctiveness and seek to enhance biodiversity.</p> <p>PD 1/C</p> <p>Protect the AONB from inappropriate and unnecessary development, including promoting the use of existing buildings to accommodate new uses where appropriate and compatible with current planning policies and the special qualities of the AONB.</p>
<p>PD 2</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>PD 2/A</p> <p>Encourage new developments or conversions to use traditional and local materials, to be as carbon-neutral and water-efficient as reasonably practicable, and to incorporate appropriate renewable energy sources where these do not cause visual intrusion or detract from historic character.</p>

Management Objectives and Policies (continued)	
Objectives	Policies
	<p>PD 2/B</p> <p>Support and encourage appropriate, small-scale renewable energy schemes to help achieve carbon reduction and energy security that do not conflict with the special qualities of the AONB or the conservation of natural beauty.</p>
<p>PD 3</p> <p>Waste is reduced and waste management does not impact on the natural beauty of the AONB.</p>	<p>PD 3/A</p> <p>Reduce the production of waste and ensure that waste management does not conflict with conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the AONB.</p>
<p>PD 4</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>PD 4/A</p> <p>Support initiatives that provide affordable housing to meet identified needs for local people in locations with access to employment and local services, ensuring that developments conserve and enhance natural beauty, particularly by respecting landscape and settlement character and avoiding impacts on nature conservation and historic interests.</p>
<p>PD 5</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>PD 5/A</p> <p>Encourage quiet enjoyment of the AONB and avoid or restrict developments, activities and events, including artificial light installations, which detract from the tranquillity of the Blackdown Hills.</p> <p>PD 5/B</p> <p>Support recreational development only where it is in keeping with the purpose and the special qualities of the AONB.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Number of affordable homes built annually (local planning authorities)
- Change in % of settlements with neighbourhood plan, parish plan or village design statement (AONB/local authorities)
- Change in % of AONB recorded as 'most tranquil' (NE/CPRE)

2.3 Transport and Highways

Aim

Sustainable transport options are available in the area and used as an alternative to the private car, thus improving the tranquillity and natural environment of the AONB. The road system is maintained and in keeping with the unspoilt rural landscape of the AONB.

Background

In reality most people in rural areas need a car for accessing employment, services and other opportunities. 94% of households in the Blackdown Hills have at least one car (Census 2011). Nevertheless, reduction of unnecessary car use will contribute to both quality of life and conservation of the area's natural beauty. Much of the road network is made up of rural roads and lanes, not built or maintained for the volume, traffic size and use which they now have to sustain. Devon County Council and Somerset County Council, as the highway authority, are responsible for the repair and maintenance of most roads in the AONB. Budget cuts will continue to affect their ability to effectively manage the rural road network. County council local transport plans (currently LTP3) play a key role in developing opportunities to address many of the identified transport issues, setting priorities for delivery and identifying actions.

Traffic speed and volume are a real concern in many communities, as evidenced by the *Blackdown Hills Community Plan* (see section 2.5). Routes across the AONB are frequently used as short cuts by through traffic, affecting both tranquillity and the environment. Although necessary, lorries and other large vehicles travelling to and from farms and small businesses along narrow lanes cause noise, risk to other users and damage to the roads, verges and hedgebanks.

The availability of public transport is limited in the AONB, which can leave those without access to a car at a serious disadvantage. Where there are bus services, they can be expensive, infrequent and do not operate at off-peak times. Also services are often supported financially by the highway authority and vulnerable to budget reductions. Nevertheless, certain routes that cross the area could provide better opportunities for tourism and recreation. In some places voluntary community transport schemes provide a valuable service. Rail services can be accessed at the nearby towns of Taunton, Tiverton, Honiton and Axminster.

Both county councils have an approach of reducing unnecessary road signage where possible, which will have a positive impact on the landscape. However loss of traditional roadside features, like fingerposts and milestones, and urbanising changes to the streetscape of villages, are detrimental to the AONB's local character and distinctiveness.

The Highways Agency looks after the M5 and A35 trunk road, both of which partly bound the Blackdown Hills, and the A303/A30 which passes through the middle of the AONB. At the time of writing in 2014, studies are underway to examine potential options for the A303/A30 in the Blackdown Hills, as part of a wider package of measures to improve the strategic national road network to the South West. Other major roads on the periphery are the A373 and A358, which are not part of the national strategic network, and are looked after by the respective county council.

Alterations or improvements to any of the above routes could have an impact on the special qualities and setting of the AONB, and affect local communities. Full consideration of the environmental and landscape impacts would be required as part of the feasibility and scheme development. Highway authorities and the Highways Agency have a duty of regard to AONB

purposes in carrying out their functions. Other strategic decisions regarding road and rail resilience in the South West could in time also have implications for traffic and transport in the AONB, for example, improvements and upgrades to rail lines could shift passenger and freight traffic off the major roads.

Facts and figures

- Traffic counter data⁴⁰ indicates average annual daily traffic flows of:
 - 13,000 on the A30 north of Honiton
 - 12,000 on the A35 between Honiton and Axminster
 - 4,000 on the A30 west of Chard
 - 3,500 on the A373 near Broadhembury
 This compares to 24,000 on the A30 west of Honiton and 22,000 on the A358 northwest of Ilminster
- 10 bus routes in the AONB (at least one journey per week)

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- Devon's protected landscapes established a protocol and good practice guide with Devon County Council highways department addressing the impact of highways management on protected landscapes.
- AONB gateway signage installed at Wrangway, Ford Street, Corfe, Culmstock, Broadhembury and Smallridge.
- New route for Somerset Tourism *Car-free days out* series (Chard to Castle Neroche).

40. www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts

Issues and opportunities

Traffic and transport is a significant issue in relation to climate change. There is a need to reduce emissions by decreasing traffic growth, use less damaging fuels and adapt the way roads and other infrastructure are managed in response to its impact. For example, recent years have seen an increase in surface water and flooding on roads resulting in severely damaged surfaces and potholes, putting a greater burden on already reduced highway budgets; prioritising effort may leave many rural roads in very poor condition.

County councils are currently producing flood risk management strategies as part of their duties under the Flood and Water Management Act. Devon County Council foresee that this will influence the way flooding issues will be managed on the road network and the type of proposals to resolve these problems, for example soft landscaped solutions instead of hard civil engineering type works.

The AONB is likely to see increases in road traffic from the expansion of nearby towns and the growth of the new community at Cranbrook, east of Exeter.

There is a continued need for an efficient, affordable and reliable public transport network, complemented by community transport solutions, which is integrated with tourism and recreation destinations and provides for rural commuters.

Increase in both traffic volume and vehicle size on minor roads reduces their suitability and safety for other more sustainable uses, such as walking, cycling and horse riding.

Having developed a protocol between protected landscapes and Devon highways, there is more scope to engage further with highways departments and agencies in relation to landscape and historic

environment impacts of proposed road schemes, traffic and highway management matters and signage.

The Blackdown Hills Parish Network has an action group that focuses on highways, traffic and transport. This provides an opportunity to identify common and recurring issues across the AONB, work together to seek to address them, and seek to inform and influence decisions.

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Traffic counts at locations in/near AONB (county councils)
- % of settlements served by daily bus service (AONB)

Management Objectives and Policies

Objectives	Policies
<p>TH 1</p> <p>The impact on the AONB landscape and environment is considered in the planning and provision of transport networks and services.</p>	<p>TH 1/A</p> <p>Work to ensure road and transport schemes (including road design, maintenance, signage, landscaping and safety measures) within or affecting the AONB have regard to the purpose of AONB designation and conserve and enhance the area's special qualities.</p>
<p>TH 2</p> <p>Public transport services and community transport schemes are maintained and improved and provide an integrated service throughout the AONB.</p>	<p>TH 2/A</p> <p>Support and promote initiatives that provide sustainable solutions to local transport needs.</p>
<p>TH 3</p> <p>Manage the minor road network to encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport.</p>	<p>TH 3/A</p> <p>Work with highways authorities to implement agreed traffic management techniques to reduce traffic volume and speed on minor roads to provide a safer environment for walking, cycling and horse riding.</p>

2.4 Rural Economy and Tourism

Aim

The thriving Blackdown Hills economy provides jobs for local people, makes wise use of local resources, benefits local communities while conserving and enhancing the outstanding landscape.

Background

The high quality landscape has an integral part to play in sustaining economic growth, generating income, local jobs and products⁴¹. The key is for these aspirations to be consistent with the area's unique qualities.

The area is typically characterised by high numbers of small and micro enterprises and a high level of self-employment. Agriculture accounts for 40% of businesses. Many of those who have established small businesses were attracted to the area by the high quality of life provided by the AONB environment.

There is a common desire across the area to develop a diverse local economy that is not over reliant on one particular sector, particularly one that could be heavily affected by external factors. As has been seen over recent years, agriculture and tourism are both examples of this, having been affected by national and worldwide events. One of the implications of this, therefore, is a need to identify and support the training and development of new skills required to meet the needs of local employers and take advantage of new economic opportunities.

The Blackdown Hills are not a self-contained economic area, and are heavily influenced by surrounding market towns with many residents commuting further afield. These towns are inextricably linked with their rural hinterlands, both culturally and economically. They provide important opportunities and potential markets

that can benefit small businesses within the area and in doing so contribute to and gain from market town regeneration.

Rapidly evolving technology is creating new economic opportunities and ways of working that have a minimal environmental impact, as well as enabling rural businesses to link up for promotion and co-operation. Therefore it is important to ensure that the Blackdown Hills are not disadvantaged by poor communications infrastructure, in particular the availability of high speed broadband. Generally current broadband services across Devon and Somerset are poor in terms of speed, reliability and bandwidth, and the market will not deliver the level of service needed by rural businesses and communities. In response the Connecting Devon and Somerset project aims to provide faster broadband across the whole area: access to improved broadband speeds of at least 2Mbps by the end of 2016 and superfast broadband of at least 24Mbps by 2020. Information provided to date however indicates that very rural areas, including many parts of the AONB, will not fully benefit from the initial phase of the project. This project is a top priority of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSWLEP).

This LEP was formed under the leadership of the private sector supported by the local authorities from Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay and district councils from throughout the area in June 2011. LEPs are unique due to the direct involvement from the business community – HotSWLEP is a partnership managed by a voluntary board consisting of business leaders, alongside representatives from local government and educational institutions. They work together to lead and influence the local economy by improving economic growth and job creation.

Locally it is well established that there is a balance to be struck between realising the economic benefits of

tourism and conserving the environmental wealth that is the attraction to visitors. Tourism in the AONB is largely characterised by high quality accommodation and quiet countryside pursuits. The desire is to encourage and develop sustainable tourism, linked to local products and services that do not compromise the landscape and environment. This would bring benefits by encouraging visitors to explore the area; increasing their understanding and enjoyment, lengthening their stay and increasing the income for local businesses from both day and staying visitors. The Blackdown Hills are promoted as a tourist destination through the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership and Visit Somerset, and there is potential to improve the links between attractions, events and places, and to establish links with other tourist areas, for example the East Devon coast.

The Blackdown Hills Business Association (BHBA) aims to promote the interests of all businesses in the Blackdown Hills area. It is a not-for-profit membership-based organisation which was set up in the early 1980s in order to bring together small businesses that were finding promotion difficult and saw the value of working collectively. This need remains the core of the BHBA's activities today. As at March 2013 membership stood at around 200 from across a broad spectrum of businesses.

41. See for example www.heartofswlep.co.uk and www.naturaldevon.org.uk

There is considerable local experience of the LEADER approach to rural development, with successful programmes operating in the area since 2002. The *Making it Local* programme sought to strengthen the connections between the business sector, local services and markets and landscape management in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs⁴². More than 70 projects were funded. At the time of writing in 2014 work is underway gathering evidence for the application to the next round of LEADER funding, which runs from 2015. It will build on the achievements and experience of *Making it Local*.

Facts and figures

- Census 2011 shows 12% employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing; 12% in health and social work and 15% employed in wholesale, retail and vehicle repair
- Household income is 98.6% of the regional average (2011)
- Overall house prices are 28.2% higher than regional average, and 6.4% above the average for rural parts of the region (2011)
- Annual value of agri-environment agreements in AONB is £1 million (2013)

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- *Making it Local*, the five-year locally managed £1.74million grant scheme in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs and the surrounding area. The 38 projects in the Blackdown Hills received grants of just over £900,000 and had a total value of some £1.7m. These included:
 - Building Sustainable Networks, enabling businesses to improve their prospects and long term viability by providing support in the workplace.
 - Digital Mentors project providing ICT support to local businesses, organisations and individuals

through a network of Digital Mentors.

- Taste the Harvest, a two-day food and farming event for local primary school children
- Working our Woodlands which developed a network of woodland owners to improve management and the supply of wood fuel
- Forestry Apprentices: two-year forestry apprenticeships for five young job-seekers
- Blackdown Hills Business Association helped to promote local artisan businesses in the AONB through an artisan trail and open weekend
- Promotional activity connected with the cycling Tour of Britain
- A set of oak leaflet dispensers commissioned and made by a local craftsman to hold tourist information at key local outlets

Issues and opportunities

There is a need to seek a balance between encouraging economic activity while maintaining the inherent natural beauty and tranquillity of the AONB.

Interest in sustainable and organic farming, regionalised and branded foods, quality niche markets, direct selling and farmers markets could help to sustain small family farms in the AONB.

The proximity of market towns and larger settlements offer a market place and audience for the products and services of the area, with potential for mutual economic benefits.

The evolution of communications and new digital media, and the desire to adopt more sustainable lifestyles offer opportunities for more flexible working patterns and employment opportunities in rural areas, such as the AONB, provided the communications infrastructure is in place.

In AONBs there is scope to explore the opportunities for a more direct economic relationship between tourism spending and resources to manage the landscape that people come to enjoy.

Rural development funding is increasingly being channelled through Local Enterprise Partnerships. Within the HotSWLEP area there are nine AONBs, which suggests there is an opportunity to develop a beneficial relationship collectively and individually.

42. See www.makingitlocal.org

Management Objectives and Policies

Objectives	Policies
<p>RET 1 A sustainable rural economy that is based on the resources of the AONB and conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills.</p>	<p>RET 1/A Support rural diversification which contributes to business viability, develops local markets and adds value to local products without compromising the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the special qualities of the AONB.</p> <p>RET 1/B Encourage the development of sustainable employment opportunities that are compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty and the special qualities of the AONB, and encourage people to continue to live and work within their communities.</p> <p>RET 1/C Support the development of sustainable tourism activities within the AONB that are compatible with conserving and enhancing natural beauty and the special qualities of the AONB, increase understanding and appreciation of the Blackdown Hills and benefit the local economy.</p> <p>RET 1/D Support sustainable initiatives that encourage and develop economic links, which also support social and environmental objectives, between the AONB and the surrounding market towns.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Total annual values of agri-environment agreements (NE)
- Percentage of area that has access to faster broadband (DCC/SCC)

2.5 Community and Culture

Aim

The outstanding environment of the Blackdown Hills is home to flourishing communities, with a cohesive and diverse population who are able to access a range of services and facilities. The commitment of local people helps to conserve and enhance the high quality environment and distinct landscape of the AONB, maintaining the beauty of villages and countryside for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Background

Residents within the AONB identify strongly with the area and readily describe themselves as living in the Blackdown Hills. There is a strong sense of the timelessness and traditions, expressed through community activities, events, fairs, fetes, clubs, arts, crafts and trades. Although sparsely populated with small settlements – the two largest are Dunkeswell and Hemyock, each with a population of some 2,000 – most are active communities with many social and interest groups and events, centred around parish halls, community centres, churches, schools and pubs.

The landscape of the AONB has in the past been an inspiration to artists and writers, and the present day Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers (BHAAM) group keeps this tradition alive and strengthens the cultural associations with the landscape. Through a variety of projects they continue to open people's eyes to the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills.

There is a particularly strong collaborative spirit among like-minded people in the area. The Blackdown Hills Business Association and Blackdown Hills Hedge Association are long established networks, but also more recent and emerging groups include a diversity of interests such as the BHAAM, Blackdown Hills

Transition Group and Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association.

Parish councils in the AONB form a collective voice through the Blackdown Hills Parish Network⁴³. The parish network produced a community plan in 2011 that pulled together social and economic information about the area and identified priority issues among local communities. The focus of the network is on finding ways to address some of these issues.

Several villages have completed, or are developing, parish plans and village design statements to inform and influence planning and other decisions, and some have now embarked on neighbourhood plans. Many communities have also produced village guides, walks leaflets and taken part in heritage and environmental projects.

Access to services and facilities such as health, libraries, childcare and shopping varies considerably but is generally limited, as might be expected in a rural area. While village shops and post offices are invaluable, maintaining their long-term viability remains a real issue. There are several examples of community-run shops and pubs in the AONB, for example shops at Churchinford and Dalwood, and the provisions of the Localism Act should enable this to become a more common delivery model. Secondary schools are all located around the periphery, resulting in protracted journeys to and from school, and a need to travel or leave the area for further/higher education.

Facts and figures

- Total population 13,400
- Census 2011 age breakdown of population as follows:

0-15	16%
16-29	11%
30-44	15%
45-59	23%
60-74	24%
75+	12%
- 43 parishes entirely or partly in the AONB

43. www.blackdownsonline.org.uk/

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- The AONB's Sustainable Development Fund supported a variety of community and environmental projects

Year	No of projects	Grant given (£s)	Total project cost (£s)
2009-10	19	41,315	383,040
2010-11	17	44,547	256,262
2011-12	19	41,251	149,209
2012-13	12	27,360	99,343
	67	154,473	887,854

- Devon Dance Compass, a community dance project in partnership with Dance in Devon that encouraged dance activities for adults and children and brought high quality dance performance to the AONB
- Local people in Ford Street converted an unused phone box into a village information point on a gateway to the Blackdown Hills AONB
- Blackdown Hills Transition group supported with training, the purchase of a community apple press and apple trees for each parish
- Local community shops supported with new equipment in Payhembury and Churchinford, and the production of calico bags for Dalwood Community Shop to encourage a 'plastic free' initiative
- Blackdown Hills AONB Countryside Fund established with a charitable status to accept donations and legacies for future community work within the AONB

Issues and opportunities

There is great potential to use people's interest in natural and cultural heritage to do more and develop skills to manage the AONB. There is also scope for assisting communities to influence decisions and contribute to the protection and enhancement of the AONB through better understanding of the designation, its boundary and special qualities.

With on-going cuts in local authority budgets, innovation and alternative methods of delivering public services need to be found, if they are to be maintained in rural areas.

Closure of local facilities, such as village shops, post offices and pubs, threatens the sustainability of communities. However the Localism Act offers the opportunity for communities to register these services as community assets and there is a plethora of support for local people to run the facilities themselves from government initiatives and national organisations, such as the Plunkett Foundation and Somerset and Devon Community Councils.

The ability of individual communities to access the range of schemes, organisations and funding that can help support and develop skills and self-help projects varies enormously and often depends on the time and interest of a few key individuals.

Art can provide a valuable mechanism for exploring, celebrating and helping to define what is special about the local landscape.



Management Objectives and Policies	
Objectives	Policies
<p>CC 1 Community-led initiatives encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of local communities.</p>	<p>CC 1/A Support local communities in taking action to identify and plan for their own needs, in celebrating their achievements and strengths and in undertaking community activities which reinforce the cultural traditions of the AONB.</p>
<p>CC 2 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.</p>	<p>CC 2/A Encourage and support local communities in the development of community-based plans and guides that are in keeping with the AONB's objectives.</p>
<p>CC 3 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.</p>	<p>CC 3/A Support local community engagement in cultural and natural heritage initiatives within the AONB.</p>
<p>CC 4 Local communities in the Blackdown Hills have access to appropriate local facilities, services and amenities.</p>	<p>CC 4/A Support the retention or enhancement of community facilities, services and amenities where compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the special qualities of the AONB.</p> <p>CC 4/B Support community-based initiatives that promote sustainable measures and lifestyles to minimise waste and use of water, and promote reuse, recycling, composting, energy efficiency and community transport, where these are compatible with the purpose of the AONB and its special qualities.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Number of parishes with neighbourhood plan, up-to-date parish plans or equivalent (local authorities, community councils)
- Percentage of key settlements with core services* (AONB)

** Core services include: post office, village store, community hall, primary school, pub, regular bus service.*

THEME 3: COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT



THEME 3: COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 Communication, Education and Awareness

Aim

Local people, visitors and decision-makers are actively involved in caring for the countryside and heritage of the Blackdown Hills and there are diverse opportunities for enjoyment and learning. The relevance of the AONB designation is well understood and widely appreciated.

Background

The continued protection and enhancement of the Blackdown Hills' landscape, biodiversity and historic assets can only be achieved by successful communication of their value. Among partners there are several ways to address this, all of which ultimately aim to influence behaviour and ensure that the significance of the Blackdown Hills AONB is widely understood and valued among a variety of audiences:

- Equipping audiences with high quality, targeted information and interpretation resources
- Enabling outdoor learning and enjoyment to suit many different interests and needs
- Offering space for people to respond to places, record memories and share experiences
- Creating opportunities for people to contribute knowledge, time and labour
- Stimulating collective conversation and debate

One of the specific roles of the AONB Partnership is to communicate the purpose of designation, and to promote awareness of the AONB and its special qualities. The main tools available to the AONB Partnership in carrying out this work are:

- Outdoor events and activities
- Volunteering opportunities
- Social networking and media presence

- Online and print information
- On-site interpretation, both static and live

As well as being the central public point of communication about the Blackdown Hills, the AONB team facilitates communication between the member organisations of the Partnership.

Facts and figures

- 102 events promoted through Countryside Events programme 2012/13
- AONB has over 1400 followers on social networks

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- Launch of a volunteering hub on the AONB website which co-ordinates all conservation volunteering opportunities throughout the Blackdown Hills AONB
- Blackdown Young Environmentalists, a Somerset Rural Youth project involving one hundred 12-25 year olds, carried out practical environmental tasks (500 hours), training and qualifications
- Families in the Forest workshops for families in the Taunton area encouraging them to explore their local woodland
- Uffculme school, Hemyock and Culmstock primary schools supported with outdoor classroom improvements and woodland enhancement to further education opportunities
- AONB website mapping shows all walks, horse riding and cycling routes, places of interest and events
- Year-round countryside events programme in partnership with local organisations
- Interpretation board about Dumpdon Hill installed at local food producer adjacent to A30, Monkton

Issues and opportunities

Increasing interest in volunteering for career development and health demands more diverse opportunities. However it is equally the case that a disconnection with the countryside means many people need support and encouragement to visit and enjoy the AONB.

Reduced resources necessitate greater targeting and more effective communication. One tool for this is the use of digital and online media, but the social networking revolution requires a continually evolving online presence, with corresponding resources and expertise, and is restricted in its audience.

People's expectations regarding availability of information is rapidly changing, as are the ways they access it, with users seeking a more immediate and interactive experience. The AONB Partnership needs to be able to respond in a positive way to this. This is not without issues though, for example the potential to deliver interpretation in the field through mobile applications is dependent on 3G and 4G mobile coverage which is not widely available in the AONB at present.

The knowledge held by older generations of conservationists, farmers and others is at risk of being lost if not passed on and collected in some way.

The heritage and natural environment of the Blackdown Hills offer a great educational resource for local schools, whether that is outdoor learning or topic-based projects.

Within easy reach of the surrounding towns, the Blackdown Hills provide opportunities for broader educational activities, both practical and academic. This, together with burgeoning relationships with academic bodies, suggests there is considerable scope to draw on the rich cultural and natural resources of the AONB to further develop knowledge and understanding of the area.

The roles and responsibilities of partner organisations working in the AONB are often confusing and need to be better communicated.

Management Objectives and Policies	
Objectives	Policies
<p>CEA 1 A wide range of opportunities exist for active engagement with the countryside, wildlife and heritage of the Blackdown Hills AONB.</p>	<p>CEA 1/A Promote existing countryside and heritage volunteering opportunities and facilitate the creation of new and diverse opportunities that will contribute to the positive management of the AONB.</p> <p>CEA 1/B Promote and provide events and activities that offer outdoor experiences and learning.</p> <p>CEA 1/C Use a range of techniques and settings to interpret the AONB's natural, cultural and built heritage for diverse audiences.</p> <p>CEA 1/D Encourage and facilitate community groups in organising projects and events which engage people with landscape, wildlife and heritage.</p>
<p>CEA 2 Relevant information about the Blackdown Hills AONB is freely available and easily accessible to organisations and individuals.</p>	<p>CEA 2/A Ensure that all relevant authorities and organisations with responsibilities towards the AONB have access to relevant, up-to-date, technical information so that decisions are made in the light of good knowledge and understanding of the AONB.</p> <p>CEA 2/B Ensure that non-professional audiences have access to engaging information in a wide range of formats.</p>

Management Objectives and Policies (continued)**Objectives****CEA 3**

Educational and research activities improve understanding of the AONB's special qualities.

Policies**CEA 3/A**

Encourage the appropriate use of the AONB for a wide range of education and research initiatives that will contribute to its conservation and enhancement.

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Numbers of people engaged with social networks and attending events
- Numbers of people participating in voluntary activities in the AONB
- Evaluation of shifting opinions and attitudes among targeted audiences (all AONB)



3.2 Partnership and management

Aim

The organisations that make up the AONB Partnership work together to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills. They also encourage sustainable development for the local communities and economy of the AONB.

Background

The AONB Partnership is made up of organisations and interest groups that work together to deliver the aims and objectives of the Management Plan. Policy direction and implementation of the Management Plan is guided by the Partnership Management Group. This is comprised of appointed representatives from the funding agencies and a number of representatives elected from the statutory and non-statutory organisations, local groups and parish councils within the AONB.

The Partnership is supported by a core staff team of two full-time and two part-time posts. The AONB manager is supported by an Officer Support Group, consisting of officers from the local authority funding partners and the AONB chairman, who advise on technical issues such as resources and staff.

To co-ordinate action and help to deliver projects that conserve and enhance AONB, the Partnership has a series of topic-specific working groups drawn from the local community, interest groups, businesses, and the statutory and non-statutory agencies. The diagram on page 68 illustrates the structure of the Partnership.

The funding arrangements for the AONB Partnership are detailed in a four-year Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the seven funding partners: Defra, Devon and Somerset County Councils, East Devon,

Mid Devon and South Somerset District Councils and Taunton Deane Borough Council. The current MoA comes to an end in March 2015.

In recognition that the Blackdown Hills AONB is a nationally important landscape the majority of AONB funding comes from Defra. Core funding, which maintains the staff team and services of the Partnership, is matched by the six local authority partners in the proportion 75% Defra: 25% local authorities. Other Defra funding is allocated to projects; it is used by the team to draw down match from a variety of sources to co-ordinate and deliver projects and other initiatives, and provides a grant pot, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), to which organisations and individuals can apply to deliver sustainable initiatives throughout the AONB.

In 2008 the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB Partnerships jointly applied for the then new round of funding from the Local Action part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) to invest in projects benefitting communities, economy and environment of the area. The five-year *Making it Local* programme came to an end in December 2013 (see under Rural Economy and Services) and then received transitional funding for the interim period (2014) up to the next programme due to start in January 2015.

Joint working between the AONBs in Devon, in particular the adjoining East Devon AONB, and Somerset in the delivery of projects with common objectives is supported and encouraged. A Devon AONBs adaptation plan was produced in 2011 in response to the comprehensive spending review and continues to influence joint working; while Somerset County Council carried out an independent review of its three AONB in the same year.

Regional and national AONB operations have been

restructured with the South West Protected Landscapes Forum (SWPLF) co-ordinator now working nationally, providing more resources for the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) that works at the strategic level to influence policy. The SWPLF continues to meet regularly, bringing together all the protected landscapes in the South West, including the two national parks, to work collaboratively and learn from best practice.

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership also works with a range of external partnerships, such as Devon and Somerset Local Nature Partnerships, East Devon Catchment Partnership and Devon Landscape Policy Group, to streamline overlapping activities and explore areas where joint working would be beneficial.

Facts and figures

- 46 statutory, non-statutory organisations and other groups in the AONB Partnership plus 43 parish councils
- Members of the Partnership Management Group meet three times a year
- 3.1 full-time equivalent staff in the AONB team
- 2012/13 core funding approximately £195,000. £60,000 for projects, which secured an additional £165,000 external funding. £27,000 SDF pot supported 12 projects worth over £99,000.

Achievements 2009 – 2013

- Preparation, publication and implementation of Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-14
- Memorandum of Agreement between funding partners renewed and rolled forward to 2015 with updated Terms of Reference
- Two new local organisations joined the AONB Partnership
- Two topic-specific (renewable energy, heritage) community forums held and attended by more than 400 people
- More than 25 Biodiversity, Heritage, Access and Low Carbon working group meetings facilitated

Issues and opportunities

The continuing impact of government comprehensive spending reviews (CSRs) is causing reductions in Defra and local authority funding to the AONB Partnership, and yet there is an ongoing role for the AONB Partnership to maintain a co-ordinated, consistent and comprehensive approach to management of the area.

The success of the Plan depends upon good relationships and joint working at all levels and across boundaries between public bodies, statutory and non-statutory organisations, farmers and land managers, community groups and interest groups. It will be increasingly important throughout this next plan period to retain existing partners and to develop relationships with new partners.

The commitment and ability of partners to deliver Management Plan objectives varies widely among the partner organisations, and there is a need to improve understanding and commitment to the statutory duty to 'have regard' to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty among relevant members of the Partnership.

With reductions to core funding and the staff team it is vital that as many people as possible are engaged in helping to achieve the Plan's objectives; the Partnership Management Group need to play a more active role in the promotion and delivery of Management Plan objectives. More emphasis will also be placed on encouraging volunteers, communities and interest groups to become more involved.

Joint working with East Devon AONB and the other protected landscapes in Devon and Somerset offers opportunities to pool resources and share expertise, and address common issues at a local level.

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) provides a focus for the AONB family exchanging information, promoting best practice and raising awareness of AONB issues especially with national decision-makers.



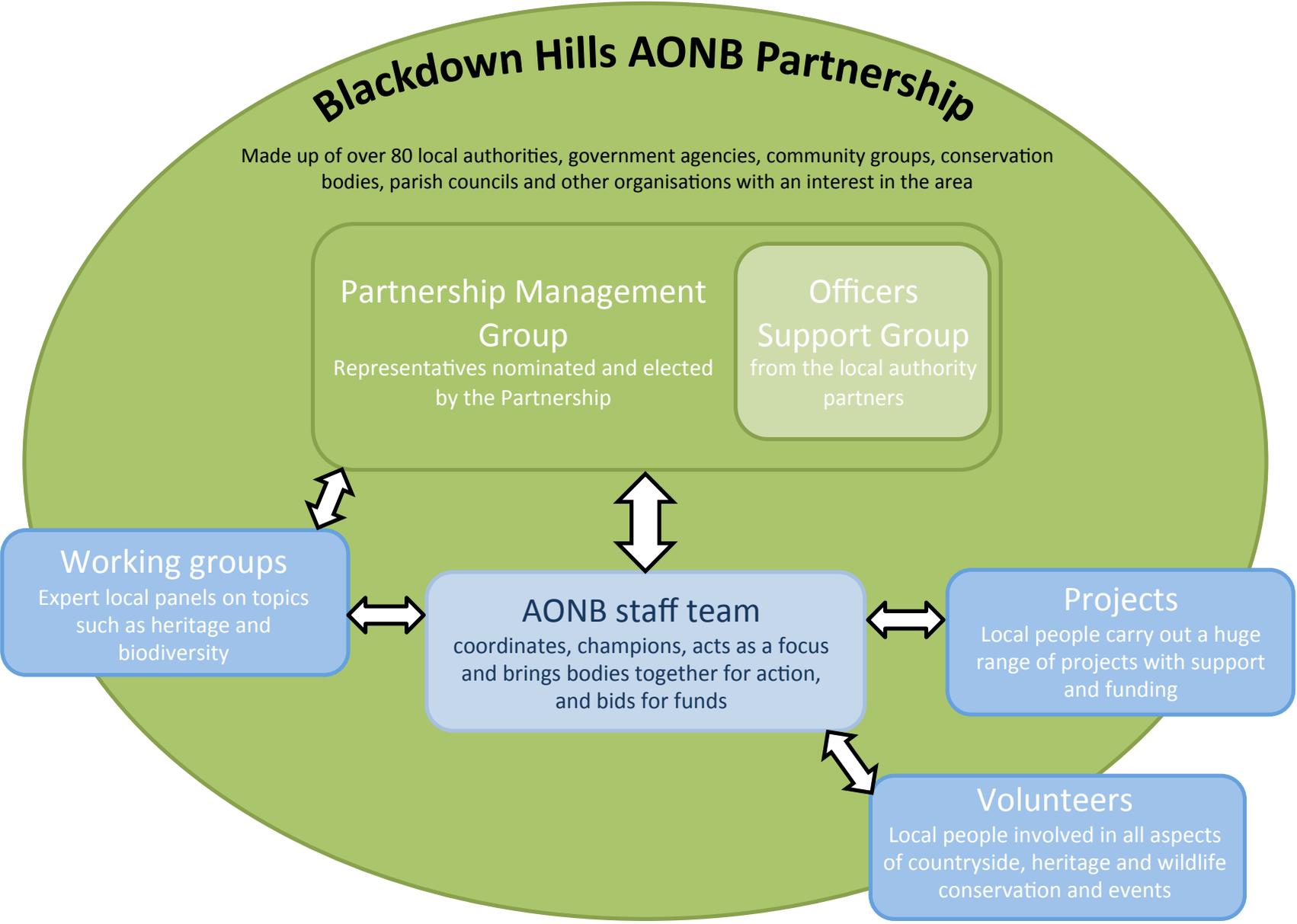
Management Objectives and Policies	
Objectives	Policies
<p>PM 1</p> <p>The special qualities of the AONB are conserved and enhanced through effective joint working within AONB Partnership co-ordinated by the Partnership Management Group and the AONB team.</p>	<p>PM 1/A</p> <p>Encourage joint-working to deliver the objectives of the Management Plan by all members of the AONB Partnership.</p> <p>PM 1/B</p> <p>Encourage all members of the AONB Partnership to enhance the status, identity and awareness of the Blackdown Hills AONB.</p> <p>PM 1/C</p> <p>Seek to ensure that funding programmes, such as Heritage Lottery Fund, RDPE and European Union programmes, are used to their fullest extent to further the purposes of the Blackdown Hills AONB.</p> <p>PM 1/D</p> <p>Promote the Blackdown Hills AONB as a test bed for new ideas and projects that will benefit natural beauty and communities, and are compatible with the AONB purpose.</p> <p>PM 1/E</p> <p>Promote joint working with East Devon AONB and other protected landscapes within Devon and Somerset to achieve the purposes of the AONB.</p> <p>PM 1/F</p> <p>Monitor and report on the progress of actions, and their effects, on the natural beauty and communities of the Blackdown Hills.</p>

Measuring progress

Indicators for this theme:

- Blackdown Hills AONB Annual Review produced and publicly available
- Amount of funding brought in by the AONB team
- Percentage attendance by members at Partnership Management Group meetings (all AONB)

Structure of the AONB Partnership



IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW



IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

Delivering the Plan

The member organisations of the AONB Partnership play a key role in implementing the Management Plan through individual action as well as partnership working.

Indeed it is intended that the plan will be embraced and acted upon by all those that have an active interest and role in the management of the Blackdown Hills landscape and in supporting the communities that live and work within it. This includes parish councils, landowners and managers, voluntary organisations and interest groups, local authorities, statutory agencies, advisory bodies and government departments – whether individually or as part of other partnerships. It is hoped the comprehensive and integrated approach of the plan will help demonstrate potential for new and innovative working relationships among partner and other organisations and individuals.

The plan provides a focus to identify priorities and for organisations to target resources appropriately, ensuring efficiency and value for money. It takes a realistic approach, knowing that local authorities and other public agencies have limited resources, legal constraints and obligations, and central government expectations and targets to meet. The plan has been developed against a backdrop of ongoing challenges and changes, which will continue to have a bearing on its subsequent implementation, for example;

- Continued reduction in government funding
- Diminishing local authority and public sector financial and staff resources
- Uncertain scale and scope of rural development and agricultural support
- Increasingly competitive nature of external grant programmes

The AONB Partnership, both directly through the work co-ordinated by the AONB staff team and through its member organisations, will seek to achieve the vision for the AONB in the following ways:

- educating, communicating, advising and informing
- improving understanding of the AONB and the value of the designation
- providing leadership and co-ordination of the work of others locally
- using this plan to influence and inform decision making
- encouraging others to put the wellbeing of the AONB at the core of their strategies, plans and actions
- working jointly with the National Association for AONBs
- undertaking project work
- securing new grants and funding
- developing partnerships and co-operative programmes
- commissioning research and survey programmes

Partner organisations may also:

- allocate grants and funding streams
- lobby for change at local, regional, national and international level
- Exercise statutory and regulatory functions, such as local authority planning and development management, or Environment Agency pollution control

By helping to implement this plan, government, local authorities, public bodies and other ‘relevant authorities’ will be contributing to their ‘Section 85’ duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Blackdown Hills AONB. It is therefore important that the strategies, plans and action plans of key local, regional and national authorities,

agencies and organisations take account of and reflect the vision, objectives and policies of this plan.

The fundamental reason for this plan is to encourage co-ordinated action in the Blackdown Hills and ensure an integrated policy context. Sitting as it does across four districts and two counties, activities in the Blackdown Hills are often delivered by several different organisations – or different parts of the same organisation – based on administrative boundaries. This can lead to local issues being marginalised, different approaches being taken in neighbouring areas, and divergence of policy, for instance.

As such, one of the most important roles of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership, supported by other AONB-wide groups such as the Parish Network and Business Association, is to co-ordinate information and facilitate action across administrative boundaries to ensure that organisations collectively are able to meet the needs of the environment, landscape and communities of the Blackdown Hills. This will support local authorities and other public bodies in their ‘duty to co-operate’, and help to develop integrated, effective collaboration at a landscape-scale through the Local Nature Partnerships and Catchment Partnerships, for example.

Part 3 of this Management Plan is the Delivery Plan, which is available as a separate document. The Delivery Plan sets out the strategic priorities for the next five years necessary to achieve the aims, objectives and policies across this plan and outlines the programmes, projects and partners that will help to make them happen.

Given the increasingly tight financial circumstances there will be a need for partners and the AONB team to prioritise actions and workloads to ensure they relate closely to the core AONB purpose – to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

Monitoring and evaluation

It is the role of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership to monitor and evaluate the actions that happen as a result of the implementation of this plan. It is important to demonstrate and highlight where management actions are actually making a difference on the ground in the Blackdown Hills, but without the monitoring process being overly burdensome.

There are three strands to this monitoring:

1. National framework for monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes

Natural England is overseeing the development of a national monitoring framework for AONBs and National Parks which will provide a consistent annual data set to help guide future management. The first set was provided in 2013 to help inform this suite of management plans (see Appendix B).

2. Measuring progress indicators

The Management Plan contains a series of ‘Measuring progress’ indicators for each set of objectives through which the AONB team will seek to monitor progress in delivering the plan. Where possible these use the national framework datasets.

3. Management reporting

Qualitative monitoring of action is relatively straightforward; partners regularly report to the AONB Partnership Management Group. This is the opportunity to highlight the work they are doing throughout the year. In addition the AONB Partnership Annual Review is the mechanism for reporting on implementing the Management Plan.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Organisations represented on the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

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

Appendix B: Framework for Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes

Statistics available to each AONB and National Park at May 2013 from Natural England

1. Interactive spread sheets enabling protected landscape bodies to calculate the uptake of Environmental Stewardship (ES) field parcel options and 'numbers of' items eg trees, which can be tailored to local circumstances

2. The uptake of six themed groups of ES options that contribute to conserving and enhancing landscape character:
 - Area of land under ES specifically for the management & protection of archaeological features
 - Number of hedgerow trees and in-field trees managed under ES
 - Area of woodland managed and created under ES
 - Area of low input grassland managed, restored or created under ES
 - Area of land under ES for the management, restoration or creation of lowland heathland
 - The area of land under ES for the maintenance, restoration or creation of moorland

3. Percentage of area of woodland that is managed

4. Area managed under agri-environment agreements, ie Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and the different levels of Environmental Stewardship (ES). Expressed as a percentage of the protected landscape and as a percentage of the draft Utilisable Agricultural Area within it

5. Percentage of heritage assets that are 'at risk', including buildings at risk (excluding grade II listed), monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and places of worship

6. Condition of broad habitats within SSSIs

7. Number of geological SSSI unit features, and percentage in favourable or recovering condition

8. Land Cover Map 2007 - the area under each of its 20 broad habitat classes

9. Percentage of the protected landscape that is relatively tranquil for its area

10. Area of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in favourable or recovering condition

11. Area and percentage of ancient woodland

12. Number of heritage assets, including the number of listed buildings (including grade II listed), scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields

13. Length of Public Rights of Way, sub-divided into footpaths, bridleways, Byways Open to Traffic and restricted byways

14. Length of National Trails

15. Percentage of the protected landscape as 'accessible natural environment'

16. Area of woodland (sub-divided into broadleaved, conifer, mixed, shrub land, young trees, felled woodland, ground prepared for new planting and coppice)

17. Ecological status of, and objectives for, rivers, standing water bodies, coastal water bodies and groundwater bodies

18. Total annual values of agri-environment agreements (CSS, ESA and different levels of ES)

Appendix C: Additional Data and Information

	Area		
AONB Area	370 sq km	(36958.7 ha)	<i>Data source: Natural England, 2013.</i>
Devon	260 sq km		
Somerset	110 sq km		

Landscape

Landscape character types **% area of AONB** *Data source: Devon AONBs, 2011.*

LCT 1A Open inland planned plateaux	35%
LCT 1E Wooded ridges and hilltops	3%
LCT 2A Steep wooded scarp slopes	13%
LCT 3A Upper farmed and wooded slopes	37%
LCT 3B Lower rolling farmed and settled slopes	11%
LCT 4A Unsettled farmed valley floors	1%

Historic Environment

Heritage asset **Number** **Notes**
Data source: ©English Heritage, 2013.

Scheduled Monuments	25	
Listed Buildings: Total	762	
Listed Buildings Grade I	13	
Listed Buildings Grade II*	46	
Listed Buildings Grade II	703	
Registered Parks and Gardens	0	
Battlefields	0	
Protected wrecks	0	

Heritage assets at risk **Number** **Notes**
Data source: ©English Heritage, 2013 Figures for 2012.

Scheduled Monuments (archaeology)	7	
Scheduled Monuments (building)	1	
Listed Buildings Grade I	0	
Listed Buildings Grade II*	0	
Listed Buildings Grade II	NA	excluded from register
Registered Parks and Gardens	NA	
Places of worship	0	

Historic Environment Record (HER) for the AONB

Data source: Derived from HER database, Devon County Council and Somerset Heritage Centre.

Total number of heritage assets					
	4961				
Class	Number	%	Broad Period	Number	%
Agriculture and subsistence	1010	20.4%	Early Medieval	766	15.44%
Civil	37	0.7%	Medieval	896	18.06%
Commemorative	17	0.3%	Modern	2204	44.43%
Commercial	14	0.3%	Post Medieval	262	5.28%
Communications	34	0.7%	Prehistoric	807	16.27%
Defence	188	3.8%	Roman	122	2.46%
Domestic	838	16.9%	Unknown	1047	21.10%
Education	15	0.3%			
Gardens, parks and urban spaces	71	1.4%			
Health and welfare	6	0.1%			
Industrial	936	18.9%			
Maritime	28	0.6%			
Monument	1308	26.4%			
Object	259	5.2%			
Recreational	26	0.5%			
Religious ritual and funerary	285	5.7%			
Transport	278	5.6%			
Unassigned	361	7.3%			
Water supply and drainage	142	2.9%			

Please note that each heritage asset can be of more than one class or broad period, increasing number and % totals. Actual total number of heritage assets is stated above.

Biodiversity and Geology

	Area	% or Grid Ref	Number	Notes
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	Total SAC	20.29 ha	1	<i>Data source: JNCC, 2013.</i>
	Quants	20.29 ha		Marsh fritillary is the Annex II species that is the primary reason for selection of this site as a SAC
		ST 186178		
	Dry grassland Steppes	15%		
	Broadleaved deciduous woodland	35%		
	Coniferous woodland	25%		
	Mixed woodland	25%		
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Total SSSI	638.9 ha	16	<i>Data source: Natural England, 2013. Discrepancies in total SSSI area are due to GIS processing.</i>
	Devon	330.0 ha	8	
	Ashculm Turbary	6.5 ha	ST 146156	Lowland bog; lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland
	Blackdown and Sampford Commons*	156.5 ha	ST 115161	Lowland dwarf shrub heath; lowland bog; lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland
	Furley Chalk Pit	2.7 ha	ST 275041	Earth heritage
	Hense Moor	93.4 ha	ST 173079	Lowland fen, marsh and swamp
	Hense Moor Meadows	3.1 ha	ST 173069	Lowland neutral grassland
	Quarry Fields Farm	5.4 ha	ST 275013	Lowland neutral grassland
	Reed's Farm Pit	0.8 ha	ST 212003	Earth heritage
	Southey and Gotleigh Moors*	61.6 ha	ST 192110	Lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland; lowland bog

* Partly in Somerset.

	Area	% or Grid Ref	Number	Notes	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest continued	Somerset	308.9 ha	8		
	Deadman	29.9 ha	ST 234157	Lowland bog	
	Freshmoor	7.7 ha	ST 279124	Lowland bog	
	Long Lye	11.2 ha	ST 265121	Lowland bog; lowland neutral grassland; lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	
	Long Lye Meadow	3.2 ha	ST 267118	Lowland neutral grassland	
	Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood	101.1 ha	ST 221170	Lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland; lowland fen, marsh and swamp	
	Quants	54.8 ha	ST 185177	Lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland; lowland neutral grassland	
	Ringdown	4.2 ha	ST 177154	Lowland bog	
	Ruttersleigh	96.8 ha	ST 263162	Lowland bog; lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland; lowland fen, marsh and swamp; lowland neutral grassland	
	Condition of SSSI			<i>Data source: Natural England, March 2013.</i>	
	Favourable	117.6 ha	18.4%	8	Percentages show proportion of SSSI s in each condition. Total number SSSIs in AONB is less than the sum of SSSIs of different conditions. This is because some SSSIs are broken down into areas of different condition and each area is counted separately. Therefore "Number" for each condition is number of whole or part SSSIs.
	Unfavourable recovering	438.4 ha	68.8%	11	
	Unfavourable no change	56.8 ha	8.9%	5	
	Unfavourable declining	24.5 ha	3.8%	1	
	Not assessed	None	None	None	
	Part destroyed	None	None	None	

	Area	% or Grid Ref	Number	Notes
Sites of Special Scientific Interest continued	Condition of broad habitats within SSSI			<i>Data source: Natural England, 2013.</i>
	Lowland bogs		144.5 ha	
	Favourable	43.0 ha	29.8%	
	Unfavourable recovering	60.1 ha	41.6%	
	Unfavourable no change	16.9 ha	11.7%	
	Unfavourable declining	24.5 ha	17.0%	
	Lowland broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland		236.5 ha	
	Favourable	49.6 ha	21.0%	
	Unfavourable recovering	156.6 ha	66.2%	
	Unfavourable no change	30.3 ha	12.8%	
	Unfavourable declining	0.0 ha	0.0%	
	Lowland dwarf shrub heath		113.4 ha	
	Favourable	0.0 ha	0%	
	Unfavourable recovering	113.4 ha	100%	
	Unfavourable no change	0.0 ha	0%	
	Unfavourable declining	0.0 ha	0%	
	Earth heritage		3.5 ha	
	Favourable	0.0 ha	0%	
	Unfavourable recovering	0.0 ha	0%	
	Unfavourable no change	3.5 ha	100%	
	Unfavourable declining	0.0 ha	0%	

		Area	% or Grid Ref	Number	Notes
Sites of Special Scientific Interest continued	Lowland fen, marsh and swamp	102.6 ha			
	Favourable	3.2 ha	3.1%		
	Unfavourable recovering	93.2 ha	90.8%		
	Unfavourable no change	6.2 ha	6.0%		
	Unfavourable declining	0.0 ha	0.0%		
	Lowland neutral grassland	36.9 ha			
	Favourable	21.8 ha	59.1%		
	Unfavourable recovering	15.1 ha	40.9%		
	Unfavourable no change	0.0 ha	0.0%		
Unfavourable declining	0.0 ha	0.0%			
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Otterhead Lakes Local Nature Reserve	21.5 ha	ST 244141	1	<i>Data source: Taunton Deane Borough Council, 2013. Owned by Wessex Water and managed by the Otterhead Estate Company Ltd.</i>
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	Total LWS	3216.7 ha		350	
	Devon	1217.2 ha		145	Local Wildlife Sites are termed County Wildlife Sites (CWS) in Devon. <i>Data source: Devon Biological Records Centre, 2013.</i>
	Somerset	1999.5 ha		205	<i>Data source: Somerset Environmental Records Centre, 2013.</i>
Undesignated wildlife sites	Devon				<i>Data source: Devon Biological Records Centre, 2013.</i>
	Other Site of Wildlife Interest (OSWI)	399.3 ha		74	Sites that are of local interest but not of CWS standard.
	Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites	2108.6 ha		186	
	Somerset				<i>Data source: Somerset Environmental Records Centre, 2013.</i>
	Undesignated sites	1118.4 ha		93	

		Area	% or Grid Ref	Number	Notes
Wildlife Trust Reserves	Total Wildlife Trust Reserve	129.7 ha		14	
	Devon	27.7 ha		4	<i>Data source: Devon Biological Records Centre, 2013.</i>
	Somerset	102.0 ha		10	<i>Data source: Somerset Wildlife Trust, 2013.</i>
Woodland Trust sites	Total Woodland Trust sites	60.2 ha		4	<i>Data source: Woodland Trust, 2013.</i>
	South Plantation	12.2 ha	ST 110090		Mixed woodland, parking
	Three Corners Common	1.3 ha	ST 210119		Grassland, woods-on-your-doorstep
	Rhododendron Wood	10.5 ha	ST 094071		Mixed woodland, parking
	Adcombe Wood and Woodram Copse	36.2 ha	ST 222178		(Part of SSSI above) Broadleaved woodland, grassland, parking
National Trust sites	Total National Trust sites	61.6 ha		5	<i>Data source: National Trust, 2013.</i>
	Wellington Monument	4.8 ha	ST 137172		Obelisk built 1817-1818 to commemorate Duke of Wellington. A County Wildlife Site.
	Quarts Moor	24.4 ha	ST 151171		Semi-natural woodland, wet woodland, mire, wet heath
	Dumpdon Hill	25.1 ha	ST 175043		Managed by dung spreading, hay/silage cut and grazing aftermath by Commoners association
	Coombe Wood	7.3 ha	ST 162106		Woodland
	Loughwood Meeting House		SY 254993		17th century Baptist Meeting House
Forestry Commission sites	Public forest estate managed by Forest Enterprise England	1040.3 ha			<i>Data source: Forestry Commission.</i>

	Area	% or Grid Ref	Number	Notes
Local Geological Sites (LGS)	Total LGS	36.6 ha	8	
	Devon	13.7 ha	4	<i>Data source: Devon Biological Records Centre 2013.</i>
	Blackborough Common	SY 096090		Scarp hillside covered in bracken & woodland
	North Hill	ST 096063		Hillside track along Upper Greensand scarp
	Tolcis Quarry	ST 280009		Quarry with section in Lower Lias mudstones and limestones
	Hutchins Pit	ST 212003		Chalk resting on Wilmington Sands
	Somerset	22.9 ha	4	<i>Data source: Somerset Environmental Records Centre 2013</i>
	Buckland Wood Cutting	ST 180174		Foxmould Member of Upper Greensand at side of track with overlying chert-rich head
	Gortnell Common Landslip	ST 168178		Fine example of one of many landslips on Blackdown Hills escarpment
	Staple Hill Backscar	ST 227164		Tertiary remnant of marine/fluviatile beds found widely scattered over Cretaceous hilltops of Somerset and Devon
	Otterhead Quarry	ST 224140		Upper Cretaceous Foxmould Greensand and Chert Beds with overlying Head

Natural Resources - Water

	Area/ Length	% length with 'Good' or 'High' ecological status	Number	Notes
Ecological status of water bodies				<i>Data source: Environment Agency, 2012.</i>
River water bodies (rivers, canals and surface water transfers)	135.7 km	29.3%		100% aiming for 'good' or 'high' status by 2027.
Standing water bodies (lakes and SSSI ditches)		100.0%		
Coastal water bodies		0.0%		
Transitional water bodies		0.0%		
Groundwater water bodies		85.7%		100% aiming for 'good' or 'high' status by 2027.

Farming, Forestry and Land Management

	Area	% or farms	Number	Notes
Number of farm holdings	Total		622	<i>Data source: Agricultural census 2010, Defra.</i>
	Cereals	2.4%	15	
	General cropping	14.5%	90	
	Horticulture	1.3%	8	
	Specialist pigs	1.9%	12	
	Specialist poultry	2.7%	17	
	Dairy	21.7%	135	
	Grazing livestock (lowland)	50.3%	313	
	Mixed	3.7%	23	
	Other	1.4%	9	

	Area	% or farms	Number	Notes
Farm size	Total		622	<i>Data source: Agricultural census 2010, Defra.</i>
	< 5 ha	10.3%	64	
	≥ 5 ha to < 20 ha	28.9%	180	
	≥ 20 ha to < 50 ha	24.4%	152	
	≥ 50 ha to < 100 ha	22.2%	138	
	≥ 100 ha	14.1%	88	
Agricultural holding land-use	Total area	31,271.8 ha		<i>Data source: Agricultural census 2010, Defra.</i>
	Rented land	6726.9 ha		
	Owned land	22,282.1 ha		
	Crops and bare fallow	3812.2 ha		
	Temporary grass	3697.4 ha		
	Permanent grass	21,537.6 ha		
	Rough grazing (sole right)	503.6 ha		
	Woodland	1387.8 ha		
	Other	333.1 ha		
Livestock numbers	Total		1,113,406	<i>Data source: Agricultural census 2010, Defra. Data relate to 'commercial' holdings above the EU's thresholds that can be viewed.</i>
	Cattle		52,130	
	Pigs		9993	
	Sheep		43,460	
	Poultry		1,006,928	
	Goats		174	
	Horses		721	

	Area	% or farms	Number	Notes
Agricultural labour	Total		1378	<i>Data source: Agricultural census 2010, Defra.</i>
	Full time (farmers, salaried managers and employees)		696	
	Part time (farmers, salaried managers and employees)		627	
	Casual workers		55	
	Area	% of AONB or Grid Ref	Number	Notes
Land in agri-environment schemes	Total area under agri-environment agreement	16,907.5 ha	45.7%	<i>Data source: Natural England, 2013.</i>
	% of Utilisable Agricultural Area (UAA) under agri-environment agreement (Environmental Stewardship, CSS, ESA)		57.9%	UAA of AONB is 29,205.2 ha (79.0%).
	Total area managed under Environmental Stewardship (ES) agreements	15,159.3 ha	41.0%	319
	Entry Level Scheme (ELS)	11,746.9 ha	31.8%	248
	Organic Entry Level Scheme (OELS)	361.0 ha	1.0%	5
	Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	674.2 ha	1.8%	23
	ELS and HLS	1989.2 ha	5.4%	37
	OELS and HLS	389.1 ha	1.1%	6
	Total area under classic schemes	1748.2 ha	4.7%	
	Countryside Stewardship Scheme	0 ha	0 %	
	Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)	1748.2 ha	4.7%	

		Area	% of AONB or Grid Ref	Number	Notes
National Forest Inventory (NFI) Indicative Forest Types	Total woodland	5381 ha	14.6%		<i>Data source: Forestry Commission, 2012. (uncertain/ cloud/shadow/low-density and assumed woodland areas omitted).</i>
	Broadleaved	3776.8 ha	10.2%		
	Coniferous	1086.4 ha	2.9%		
	Felled	39.6 ha	0.1%		
	Coppice	0 ha	0.0%		
	Ground prepared for planting	10.6 ha	<0.1%		
	Mixed	337 ha	0.9%		
	Shrub	15.8 ha	<0.1%		
	Young trees	77.9 ha	0.2%		

Access and Enjoyment

		Area/Length	% of AONB	Number	Notes
Rights of Way	Total rights of way	428.9 km			<i>Data source: Natural England, 2008.</i>
	Footpaths	337.6 km			
	Bridleways	83.4 km			
	Byway open to all traffic	0.9 km			
	Road used as a public path	7.0 km			
	Unknown	0 km			
	Unmetalled unclassified county road	0 km			
Publicly accessible land	Total (with inaccessible land removed)	640.6 ha	1.7%		<i>Data source: Natural England, 2013. All figures draft and proxy. Excludes land exempted from open access due to military byelaw or serving as racecourses and aerodromes, plus land subject to CROW S28 restrictions for defence/national security.</i>
	Registered common land	481.7 ha			
	Open country	51.5 ha			Mountain, moor, heath and down.
	Other open access land	131.9 ha			Section 16 dedicated land (land which public and private landowners have chosen to dedicate for access for the purposes of CROW eg Forestry Commission) and Section 15 land (land with open access rights that existed prior to the CROW Act).
	Area of 'accessible natural environment'	1110.9 ha	2.7%		Area of each protected landscape that is accessible to the public including open access land, Wildlife Trust Reserves, National Trust accessible land, Local Nature Reserves, Forestry Commission woodlands, Woods for People and Woodland Trust land.

Planning and Development

	Area/Length	% of AONB	Number	Notes
Conservation Areas	Number of Conservation Areas		9	Broadhembury, Buckland St Mary, Chardstock, Corfe, Higher Wambrook, Pitminster, Staple Fitzpaine, Stockland, Whitestaunton. <i>Data source: local authorities</i>

Community and Culture

	Area/Length	% of AONB	Number	Notes
Population	Census 2011 population within AONB		13,392	<i>Data source: Devon County Council, 2013.</i> Methodology based on deriving a weighting from postcode data to apply to Census output areas relevant to the AONB.

Appendix D: Landscape Character Areas of the AONB (See section 1.1)

Blackdown Hills

This landscape at its core comprises a central plateau landscape which is elevated, exposed and open in character and which fans out into narrow ridges at its edges where it is fringed by steeply sloping wooded greensand edges and farmed slopes which descend into river valleys. The interplay of open, elevated plateau (with its regular enclosure pattern and beech hedges, outgrown beech hedges and pine shelterbelts), the steeply sloping fringes (which are cloaked in woodland), and the farmed valleys (with small scale irregular enclosures) gives this landscape its distinctiveness. The expansive plateau and prominent beech shelterbelts, in particular, distinguish this area from the East Devon Central Ridge found further south and east. In places there is a sense of bleakness about the longer views across unbroken stretches of plateau.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Elevated plateau underlain by clay-with-flints fringed by steep slopes of Upper Greensand.
- Landscape drained by streams and springs radiating out from the plateau area and draining into the Culm or Otter valley.
- Higher ground sparsely wooded with characteristic beech hedgebanks and some pine shelterbelts.
- Steep scarp slopes that are densely wooded – ancient oak with bluebells and primroses; and some conifer plantations which extend onto the ridges.
- Regular modern and Parliamentary fields of large and medium scale on the plateaux, reflecting late enclosure of common land, contrasting with smaller curving fields of medieval origin on valley slopes.
- Low narrow earthbanks with hedges on plateaux; with wider historic banks in the upper farmed valleys;

and more species-diverse Devon hedges (e.g. beech, sycamore, ash, hazel and gorse) with flower, fern and moss-rich banks on lower slopes.

- Mainly pasture (often improved) and dairy farming with some mixed farming on heavy brown soils.
- Remnant areas of gorse, heathland and bracken on the plateau; ancient semi-natural and broadleaved woodlands on the scarp slopes; semi-improved and unimproved acidic and neutral grassland and springline mires (including carr woodland) occurring mainly on the scarp slope and in the upper farmed valleys.
- Bronze Age barrows in elevated positions on ridges; former castle sites in prominent locations at the ends of narrow ridges overlooking valleys; ancient settlement remains; remains of Cistercian abbey at Dunkeswell, all lending strong time-depth.
- Clustered hamlets and villages at road crossings and spring lines. Farmsteads scattered throughout, nestled in dips with beech shelterbelts.
- Straight roads with verges on narrow ridges descending abruptly and steeply to sinuous lanes defined tightly by close hedgebanks.
- Very distinctive building tradition that uses local cherts (flint-like nodules occurring occurs within greensand) with red brick detailing and slate roofs.
- Strong overarching perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness in many areas.

Special Qualities and Features

- Distinctive, unspoilt, and very exposed skylines often looking over the crowns of woodland on the steep greensand slopes with some views of the Wellington Monument in adjacent character area.

- High scenic quality reflected in the area forming part of the Blackdown Hills AONB.
- Outstanding views across East Devon and across the Otter and Culm valleys; northern vantage points offer extensive views across Somerset.
- Sense of isolation and remoteness, enhanced by exposure of the plateau; tranquillity provided by the dense woodland of the greensand scarps; one of the most tranquil areas in East Devon.
- Many CWSs and SSSIs including ancient semi-natural woodland e.g. Bywood Copse; semi-improved and improved acidic and neutral grasslands and springline mires (eg Southey and Gotleigh Moors); and extensive areas of heathland and gorse scrub particularly on Blackdown and Sampford Commons.
- Prominent Bronze Age barrows on Brown Down; earthwork remains of former castles eg Castle Neroche, Dumpdon Camp and Hembury Fort.
- Picturesque villages with traditional buildings linked by narrow winding lanes; many listed buildings.
- Early 20th century artist Robert Bevan and the Camden Group of artists associated with Clayhidon.

Overall Strategy

To protect the interrelationship and contrasts between open plateau, wooded scarp and intimate valley farmland which underpin the high scenic quality of this area. Opportunities are sought to restore conifer plantations to broadleaves and heathland habitats, reinforcing the distinction between the landscape types that make up this character area and strengthening the network of valuable heathland habitat. Field patterns are reinforced through the restoration and management of distinctive hedgebanks and shelterbelts. Scarp woodlands are managed and valley side wetlands

are expanded to help prevent downstream flooding and protect water quality. The landscape's time-depth continues to have a strong influence, whilst opportunities for sustainable recreation and limited low-carbon development are sensitively accommodated. The open expansive views from the plateau landscape and its unfettered skylines are protected.

East Devon Central Ridge

This landscape comprises a narrow, elevated, rolling ridge fringed by steep scarp slopes and upper valley farmland. The main ridge forms a distinctive spine to East Devon, fanning out into a series of narrow fingers that have distinctive southerly aspect and are flanked to the south by wooded slopes, which give way to small scale farmland in the upper and tributary valleys of the Axe and Sid. The northern finger of the ridge sits between the upper Otter valley and the Yarty valley. The river valleys drain southwards, forming steep sided and often remote-feeling valleys, whose sides are clothed with ancient oak woodlands. The Sid valley is the major landscape feature of the southern part of the area; further east the valleys are shorter, steeper and narrower. Views from the open upland ridges, particularly in the north, are extensive, often looking over the tree tops on the steep greensand scarps to other ridges beyond and into the visually strong field pattern of the valley slopes. The area is sparsely settled, with individual farmsteads and small hamlets in the valleys and vernacular buildings mainly of stone and red brick. Seen from the south, the area forms a backdrop to the valleys, separating the coastal plateau and Axe valley from the Blackdown Hills to the north.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Elevated narrow ridge with a rolling topography underlain by clay-with-flints or Upper Greensand.
- Landscape crossed by streams and springs draining into the adjacent steeply incised wooded valleys.
- Higher ground sparsely wooded with grown-out beech hedgebanks and some pine shelterbelts.
- Steep scarp slopes that are densely wooded – ancient oak with bluebells and primroses; and some conifer plantations which extend onto the ridges.
- Regular modern and Parliamentary fields of large and medium scale on the ridges, reflecting late enclosure

of common land (e.g. Stockland Hill), contrasting with smaller curving fields of medieval origin on valley slopes.

- Low narrow earthbanks with hedges on the ridgetop, with wider historic banks in the upper farmed valleys and more species-diverse Devon hedges (e.g. beech, sycamore, ash, hazel and gorse) with flower, fern and moss-rich banks on lower slopes.
- Mainly pasture (often improved) and dairy farming with some mixed farming on heavy brown soils.
- Remnant areas of gorse, heathland and bracken on the ridges; ancient semi-natural and broadleaved woodlands on the scarp slopes; semi-improved and unimproved acidic and neutral grassland and springline mires occurring mainly on the scarp slope and in the upper farmed valleys.
- Bronze Age barrows in elevated positions on the ridges; hillfort sites on upper slopes of valleys; ancient settlement remains that also lend strong time-depth.
- Clustered hamlets and villages at road crossings with little 20th century development. Farmsteads scattered throughout, nestled in dips with beech shelterbelts.
- Straight roads with verges on ridges change abruptly to sinuous lanes defined tightly by close hedgebanks, with steep descents.
- Very distinctive building tradition that uses local chert (flint-like nodules occurring occurs within greensand) with red brick detailing and slate roofs.
- Strong overarching perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness in many areas.

Special Qualities and Features

- Distinctive, unspoilt, and very exposed skylines.
- High scenic quality reflected in the north half of the area forming part of the Blackdown Hills AONB and the southern half part of the East Devon AONB.

- Outstanding views across East Devon, mainly southwards to the coast but also northwards into the Blackdowns.
- Sense of isolation, tranquillity and remoteness, enhanced by natural qualities of the rivers and scarp woodlands.
- Many CWS sites comprising ancient semi-natural woodland; semi-improved and improved acidic and neutral grasslands; springline mires; and extensive areas of heathland and gorse scrub particularly on Gittisham Hill and Broad Down and Dumpdon Hill.
- Prominent Bronze Age barrows on Gittisham Hill and Farway Hill; earthwork remains of former castles eg Stockland Little Castle, Stockland Great Castle and Farway Castle hillforts.
- Combe House Registered Park and Garden, including historic wood pasture and parkland.
- Picturesque villages with traditional buildings linked by narrow winding lanes crossing historic stone bridges; many listed buildings.

Overall Strategy

To protect the distinctive and highly scenic interrelationship of narrow ridge, wooded scarp and intimate upland valley. Opportunities are sought to restore conifer plantations to broadleaved and heathland habitats reinforcing the distinction between the landscape types that make up this area and strengthening the network of valuable heathland habitat. Field patterns are reinforced through the restoration and management of distinctive hedgebanks. Scarp woodlands are managed and valley side wetlands expanded to help prevent downstream flooding and protect water quality. The landscape's time-depth continues to have a strong influence, while opportunities for sustainable recreation and limited low-carbon development are sensitively accommodated. The peaceful and historic character of the valley settlements is enhanced whilst providing recreational spaces in less prominent locations.

Axe Valley

This is a broad, distinctive lowland river valley landscape with a wide floodplain, tightly meandering river course and valley sides which are formed by surrounding higher land. The valley sides have a strong hedgerow pattern with hedgerow trees coupled with small broadleaved woods and occasional farm orchards which give rise to a generally wooded character overall. Land use is mainly pastoral set within small fields in the upper tributary valleys, with larger fields and some arable within the main Axe Valley. The open valley floor and relatively loosely defined valley sides make the character of this valley rare in a Devon context. The tributary valleys of the Coly and Yarty are narrower and therefore more enclosed and intimate although they also have notable floodplains. Drainage channels are a feature, particularly in the central part of this character area, and settlement is focused on the river corridor at key crossing points just above the flood risk areas. During the autumn, winter and spring this area has a 'watery' ephemeral and timeless quality. Towards its southern end the valley is closely flanked by steep wooded greensand scarp slopes and assumes a more tidal character where it cuts through the coastal plateau to the sea. In contrast, moving northwards, there is a more gradual transition from river valley to upland open ridge.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Geology comprises underlying mudstone, siltstone, limestone and sandstone bedrock on the valley sides with sand and gravel alluvial deposits within the floodplains.
- The middle and lower reaches of the valley floor are typically broad and open while further north the valley floor narrows becoming more undulating.
- Distinctive valley of the River Axe and its tributaries the Coly and Yarty which penetrate into the surrounding greensand ridges particularly to the north.

- Meandering course of the river Axe and network of drainage ditches are features of the floodplain and maritime tidal marsh at the estuary and coast.
- Strong hedgerow pattern with hedgerow trees coupled with small broadleaved woods, occasional farm orchards, and carr woodlands along tributary rivers particularly north of Axminster, give rise to a generally wooded character overall.
- Mainly pastoral landscape within small fields in the upper tributary valleys; larger fields within the main Axe Valley and some arable farming on the floodplains and lower slopes.
- Semi-natural habitats include water meadows, unimproved river banks, carr woodlands and species-rich pastures on the valley sides.
- Many historic features including the Fosse Way Roman road and Roman town of Axminster, ancient lanes and greenways and the historic ruins of Colcombe Castle, Newenham Abbey and Second World War defences.
- Historic settlements sited at old river crossing points just above the floodplain including Axminster, Seaton and Colyton and the villages of Whitford, Maidenhayne, Musbury, Kingsdon and Colyford
- Elsewhere, a dispersed pattern of farmsteads scattered across the valley sides, often nestling next to spinglines.
- Local vernacular includes cob and thatch buildings.
- Generally open character with views across valley floor to gentle valley sides with more intimate, enclosed tributary valleys.

Special Qualities and Features

- Nationally valued landscape of high scenic quality, much of the area being AONB (northern section part of the Blackdown Hills AONB and southern section part of East Devon AONB).

- High degree of tranquillity and remoteness in the tributary valleys.
- River Axe is SSSI and SAC along its entire length; two further large SSSI sites on the valley floor (wet grassland).
- Estuary habitats valued for their saltmarshes and mudflats (Seaton Marshes CWS) and waders.
- Ancient woodlands, many of which are CWSs, on the valley sides particularly north of Axminster.
- RIG site on former sand and gravel workings at Kilmington (terrace gravels containing exotic pebbles).
- 17th and 18th century country houses including Stedcombe House; and Woodend Park which contains notable veteran trees of national importance for their wood decay invertebrates and lichens.
- Vernacular buildings of cob and thatch and village church towers that add to the picturesque qualities of the area.
- Cultural associations with WG Hoskins who described Colyton as ‘singularly beautiful, with rolling green hills and deep combes’.
- Second World War pillboxes within flood plain form a distinctive landscape feature.
- Important area for recreation including walking and horse riding – area includes the East Devon Way long distance footpath which runs through the valley.

Overall Strategy

To protect the landscape’s watery and open character, historic settlements and pastoral valley sides and its important picturesque qualities. Opportunities to manage and extend areas of water meadow and distinctive features such as traditional orchards are sought. Views to church towers are retained along with the historic character and form of the villages; with any new development or infrastructure carefully sited and sensitively integrated.

Eastern Blackdown Ridge

This landscape of gently undulating elevated ridge is similar in character to other Blackdown ridges comprising an open and exposed plateau landscape with regular field boundaries reflecting late enclosure of wasteland. However, it lacks the fringing wooded greensand scarp that characterises the other Blackdown ridges. Instead the edge of the ridge connects directly with the farmed slopes of the upper river valleys. Hence there is a smoother transition between exposed open upland and the valleys below, and contrasts in land form and land cover are less pronounced. This landscape has a strong time-depth reflected in its historic enclosures, archaeological sites and settlement pattern, which comprises small hamlets and dispersed farmsteads. The small villages (e.g. Buckland St Mary and Whitestaunton) are often surrounded by trees and their associated church towers act as landmarks within the open elevated landscape.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Elevated, gently undulating ridge of mudstone, sandstone and limestone fringed by upper farmed slopes.
- Limited watercourses on the plateau but occasional farm ponds, which are characteristic.
- Regular modern and Parliamentary fields of large and medium size on the ridges, reflecting late enclosure of common land.
- Contrasting smaller curving fields of medieval origin on adjacent valley slopes.
- Low narrow earthbanks with hedges on ridgetop with wider historic banks in the upper farmed valleys.
- Mainly pasture (often improved) and dairy farming with some mixed farming on heavy brown soils.
- Historic hamlets nestled into gentle folds of the landscape.

- Semi-natural habitats limited to small areas of unimproved marshy grassland and semi-improved acid grassland.
- Strong local vernacular of chert buildings with slate roofs, with more use of Hamstone detailing and local Lias than elsewhere in the Blackdown Hills.

Special Qualities and Features

- High scenic quality reflected in the area’s inclusion in the Blackdown Hills AONB.
- Outstanding views southwards across the Axe Valley, and eastwards across a wide panorama from the A303 at Ham.
- Bronze Age barrows; Iron Age hillforts (south-east of Four Gates and south of Howley Farm); Membury Castle; and site of Roman villa at Whitestaunton – all SMs.
- Intact historic hamlets centred on churches, with many listed buildings and little or no modern development, adding to local distinctiveness and sense of place.
- Flower-rich meadows.
- Strong overarching perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness in many areas.

Overall Strategy

To protect the open elevated character of the ridge and its historic hamlets surrounded by woodland and with distinctive church towers. Field patterns are reinforced through the restoration and management of distinctive hedgebanks. Small woodlands and the settings to settlements are managed and field ponds maintained. The landscape’s time-depth continues to have a strong influence, whilst opportunities for sustainable recreation and limited low-carbon development are sensitively accommodated. Opportunities are sought to remove conifer plantation and extend broadleaved woodland.

Blackdown Hills Scarp

This landscape forms a wide band of scarp woodlands and farmed slopes which are orientated east-west, and which face northwards over the Vale of Taunton. Historically this area has divided the counties of Somerset and Devon. This is a dramatic landscape that is very prominent, particularly in views from the north. It stands out from the land that surrounds it; and has considerable visual interest and texture due to its diverse land use and woodland cover. The Wellington Monument, a key landmark, is located on the north-facing slopes which are gently undulating, rising to Staple Hill. The western end of the scarp is most pronounced; to the east the slopes become broader and gentler. There is dense semi-natural woodland cover on the steepest slopes, along with patches of gorse and scrub. Vegetation patterns are often irregular, reflecting variations in the underlying landform, although in some areas these variations are masked by conifer plantations. The wet pastures associated with spring lines add further interest and texture to this landscape.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Steeply sloping scarp comprising unstable greensand on Keuper Marl and Lower Lias Clays on the lower slopes and valleys.
- Springs emerge from the interface of greensand and clays resulting in numerous streams flowing northwards with associated areas of mires, willow carr and rushy grassland.
- Sloping landform and indented topography as well as extensive belts of oak-ash woodland and some areas of conifer plantation lend visual enclosure.
- Woodlands separated by small fields of improved and semi-improved pasture; occasional arable land and in-field copses on the lower slopes.
- Magnificent beech avenues on parts of the escarpment crest, particularly towards its eastern end.

- Habitats that include many ancient woodland sites, areas of semi-improved and rushy grassland, and heathland commons.
- Range of historic features including the Wellington Monument, small quarries, hillforts and medieval field patterns.
- Limited settlement on steep scarp slopes; dispersed pattern of small springline villages and farmsteads with associated orchards and little to no modern development.
- Local vernacular buildings of chertstone with slate roofs.
- Roads frequently run north-south and are often narrow and incised into the landscape.

Special Qualities and Features

- Distinctive north-facing scarp marked by the Wellington Monument, lending a strong sense of place and widespread visual influence across the Vale of Taunton.
- Outstanding views northwards across the Vale of Taunton but also to Quantock Hills, Exmoor National Park and the Culm valley.
- High scenic quality reflected in the area's inclusion in the Blackdowns AONB.
- SSSIs including ancient woodland e.g. Quants (SAC), Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood (providing important habitats for bats), and heathland commons eg Blackdown and Sampford Commons at the western end of the scarp.
- Important historic landscape around Neroche, at the eastern end of the scarp, site of an Iron Age hillfort and motte and bailey castle (SM), and part of a royal hunting forest in medieval times.
- Extensive areas of open access land eg Staple Hill and Blackdown Common.

Overall Strategy

To protect the landscape's distinctive scarp slopes, well wooded character and iconic Wellington Monument which contributes a strong sense of place. Opportunities are sought to restore conifer plantations to broadleaves and heathland habitats and strengthening the network of valuable heathland habitats. Field patterns are reinforced through the restoration and management of distinctive hedgebanks. Scarp woodlands and beech avenues are managed; and valley side wetlands are expanded to help prevent downstream flooding and protect water quality. The landscape's time-depth continues to have a strong influence, whilst opportunities for sustainable recreation and limited low-carbon development are sensitively accommodated. The peaceful and historic character of the area is enhanced whilst providing recreational opportunities in less prominent locations.

Culm Valley Lowlands

The colourful patchwork of fields, thick hedgerows and distinctive red soils visible in this area combine to form a quintessential ‘Devon’ scene. The area is the ‘gateway’ into Devon when viewed from the major transport corridors (road and rail) which pass through it. Its sense of history as a transport corridor is apparent in the Grand Western Canal, which flows serenely through the area, crossed by distinctive bridges. Despite the presence of busy transport routes and several large settlements, the valley of the River Culm retains a peaceful atmosphere, with the tree-lined river meandering through a wide floodplain.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Varied underlying geology, comprising red Permian sandstones in the western part of the area, Permian mudstones and Triassic sandstones in the central part, and Triassic mudstones in the eastern part, with localised limestone outcrops elsewhere.
- Relatively low and gently undulating landform, separating the wide, flat-bottomed valleys of the rivers Culm, Tone and Lowman.
- Relatively few woodlands, but abundant hedgerows, hedgerow trees and riparian vegetation, giving the landscape a well-treed appearance.
- Predominantly pastoral use on medium-quality soils in the east of the area; more widespread arable cultivation in the western part of the area where soils are more fertile.
- Field boundaries consisting of thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees including numerous oaks.
- Fields generally semi-regular in shape, with surviving areas of medieval fields and post-medieval ‘Barton’ fields, particularly west of Halberton, and in the northern and eastern parts of the area.
- Valley-bottom wetlands and occasional blocks of woodland and surviving heathland; hedgerows

and verges that also provide wildlife habitats and corridors.

- Numerous surviving orchards, particularly around Holcombe Rogus and Halberton, which are characteristic landscape features and add biodiversity value.
- Archaeological and historic sites from many periods, including prehistoric barrows, Roman forts, and medieval buildings (e.g. village churches and Cannonsleigh Abbey) that lend a sense of time-depth.
- Parkland estates locally influencing landscape character.
- Grand Western Canal and other historic river features including weirs, bridges and large mill buildings.
- Relatively densely settled with towns and large villages along the rivers (Cullompton, Willand, Uffculme, Sampford Peverell) and near Tiverton; smaller nucleated villages and scattered farms throughout.
- Local vernacular buildings of local stone or white-rendered cob, with slate or thatched roofs.
- Extensive modern development around the peripheries of larger settlements, including industrial development associated with transport routes.
- Extractive industries, including stone quarries and sand and gravel workings.
- An important transport corridor between Devon and Somerset, containing historic and modern routes including the Grand Western Canal, the London-Exeter railway line, the A38 and the M5.
- A network of steep, narrow lanes enclosed between high hedgebanks connecting villages and farms.
- By Devon standards, a ‘busy’ landscape but with some parts retaining a more remote and peaceful feel, particularly in the northern part of the area.
- Unexpected long views e.g. to the Sidmouth Gap

from the Swan’s Neck on the Grand Western Canal near Halberton.

Special Qualities and Features

- A very important ‘gateway’ into Devon for people arriving by car on the M5 and A38, and also by train.
- A landscape contributing to the setting of several settlements including Tiverton and Cullompton.
- Several SSSIs, including geological exposures and fossil-bearing rocks; Maiden Down lowland heath, and Tidcombe Lane fen, a wetland site containing over 100 species of flowering plants.
- CWSs including small blocks of ancient woodland and grassland sites.
- Several Scheduled Monuments – including prehistoric barrows, Roman forts, Roman camps and Cannonsleigh Abbey – indicating the importance of this area as a routeway and for settlement for thousands of years.
- Bridwell Park (west of Uffculme) listed grade II on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens for its late 18th century park and pleasure grounds, including woodland and lake with views across the Culm valley.
- Numerous Conservation Areas (reflecting the dense settlement) including historic cores of Burlescombe, Holcombe Rogus, Halberton, Kentisbeare, Sampford Peverell, Uffculme, Smithincott and Ashill.
- Grand Western Canal from Taunton to Tiverton (opened 1838); associated industrial archaeology, LNR and linear Country Park providing historic, wildlife and recreational interest.
- Grand Western Canal Towpath and National Cycle Route 3 as well as small areas of common land (such as Maiden Down) with public access.

Overall Strategy

To protect the area's characteristic Devon agricultural landscape, and enhance its role as a gateway into Devon. Agricultural land use is encouraged, and associated features such as hedgerows are well-maintained. The biodiversity of agricultural land is increased. Development in the form of settlements and transport corridors is sensitively accommodated. Links between settlements and the countryside are encouraged, and the recreational, historic and wildlife values of the river valleys are enhanced.

Appendix E: Glossary

Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
CRoW	Countryside and Rights of Way Act
CWS	County Wildlife Site
Defra	Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs
ELS	Entry Level Scheme
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
HER	Historic Environment Record
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
HNV	High Nature Value
HotSWLEP	Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
LAF	Local Access Forum
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
LCT	Landscape Character Type
NAAONB	National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
NE	Natural England
NPPF	National Policy Planning Framework
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
RCC	Rural Community Councils
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SDF	Sustainable Development Fund
SM	Scheduled Monument
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SWPLF	South West Protected Landscapes Forum
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Explanation of terms

Affordable housing – housing provided for rent or sale at a price level which can be sustained by local people in housing need.

Ancient woodland – defined as land that has been continually wooded since at least 1600AD. From 1600, planting of woodland became more common, so woodland that pre-dates this is more likely to have grown up naturally. Some ancient woods may even link back to the original wildwood that covered the UK around 10,000 years ago.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – designated landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them by law.

Biodiversity – the common term for 'biological diversity', the range of plant and animal species present in an area.

Biodiversity 2020 – a national strategy for conserving and enhancing England's wildlife and ecosystem services. It sets out the government's ambition to halt overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020, support healthy well functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Biodiversity Action Plan – Action Plans concerned with protecting biodiversity, from international to national and local levels.

Biomass – living matter, for example plant material, vegetation or agricultural waste, used as a fuel or energy source.

Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership – partnership of local authorities, local and national organisations and local

community interests with responsibility for managing the Blackdown Hills AONB.

Blackdown Hills Parish Network – a group of local parish councils formed to develop a cohesive voice for Blackdown Hills parishes, interested in working collectively and collaboratively.

Campaign to Protect Rural England – a charity that campaigns to protect and enhance our landscape heritage for the benefit of all, focussing on landscape, planning and development, farming and food.

Catchment Sensitive Farming – a programme that aims to develop measures to tackle diffuse water pollution from agriculture.

Category V Protected Landscapes – refers to category of lived-in landscapes in the United Nations list of protected areas. These areas are characterised by their scenic beauty.

Common Agricultural Policy – European-wide policy that supports agriculture through price support, market management and measures to improve the agricultural industry.

Communications infrastructure – sometimes referred to as ‘digital communications infrastructure’, it includes fixed and mobile phone networks, television and radio, internet and satellite.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – allows local authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers undertaking certain new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development.

Conservation Areas – areas of special architectural

or historic interest, with a character or appearance considered desirable to preserve or enhance.

County Wildlife Site – non-statutory designation used to identify sites of important nature conservation value.

Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) – government department responsible for dealing with environmental issues, agriculture, food and rural affairs.

Entry Level Scheme (ELS) – Entry Level of Environmental Stewardship (ES), an agri-environment scheme launched in 2005 where land managers receive payment for simple, effective environmental management.

Environment Agency – the principal environmental regulator in England and Wales, relating to pollution, waste and the water environment.

Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) – the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme was introduced in 1987 to offer incentives to encourage farmers to adopt agricultural practices which would safeguard and enhance parts of the country of particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value. The scheme has now closed and was superseded by the Environmental Stewardship scheme.

Geodiversity – the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils, landforms and natural processes.

Habitat – the place where a particular animal or plant lives, or the wider interaction of plants and animals that are found together.

Health and Wellbeing Board – a forum for key leaders from the health, public health and care systems to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of the population and reduce health inequalities. Health and

Wellbeing Boards were formally introduced in April 2013 as part of the Health and Social Care Act.

Heritage Lottery Fund – the National Lottery distributor responsible for giving grants to projects which preserve or explain heritage.

Higher Level Scheme (HLS) – Higher Level of Environmental Stewardship (ES), an agri-environment scheme launched in 2005 where land managers receive payment for more complex management of specific types of landscape and features considered particularly valuable.

Historic Environment Record – a system for recording information about the historic environment, such as archaeological sites and finds, designated sites, historic landscapes, historic buildings and other features in the landscape. These records were previously known as Sites and Monuments Records (SMR).

Historic Landscape Characterisation – analysis of the countryside looking at the land uses and historical influences which have created modern components of the landscape.

Indicators – ways of quantifying and measuring the impact of policy objectives.

LEADER – a well-established method of delivering Rural Development Programme (RDP) funding across Europe, using local knowledge to promote an integrated ‘bottom up’, community-led delivery approach targeted on rural areas with particular needs or priorities.

Listed Buildings – buildings of special architectural or historic interest listed by the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Local Access Forum – formed under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, with a statutory remit to give independent advice on improving recreational access and enjoyment. Voluntary members are appointed by local highway authorities.

Local Nature Partnership – partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment, arising from the Natural Environment White Paper, 2011.

Making it Local – a grant scheme that ran from 2009 to 2013 in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs area with funding from the Rural Development Programme for England. The aim was to make the most of local resources, improving the connections between businesses, communities and natural resources.

Natural England – the government's adviser on the natural environment for England. Its remit is to ensure the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Neroche Scheme – a Landscape Partnership Scheme covering the northern part of the Blackdown Hills and surrounds supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and a range of local organisations, led by the Forestry Commission that ran from 2006 to 2011.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zone – area designated to help limit and reduce the amount of water pollution caused by losses of nitrates from agriculture.

Parliamentary Inclosure (also spelled enclosure) – enclosure or hedging off of open fields, common and waste ground resulting from Acts of parliament from 1750 into the 19th century.

Priority species/habitats – key species and habitats listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 also known as habitats/species of principal importance in England. Until 2012 these were known as UK BAP habitats and species.

Protected landscapes – Collective term for AONBs and National Parks.

Public Rights of Way – routes over which the public have a right to pass by designated means.

Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) – the mechanism for delivering money allocated to England from the EU and Defra via the European Fund for Rural Development; aims to safeguard and enhance the rural environment, improve the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and foster competitive and sustainable rural businesses and thriving rural communities.

Scheduled [Ancient] Monument – a protected archaeological site or historic building of national importance.

Single Payment Scheme – the principal agricultural subsidy scheme in the European Union. Subsidies are not linked to production and environmentally friendly farming practices are better acknowledged and rewarded.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Areas designated by Natural England or its predecessors as being of special interest because of their flora, fauna, geomorphological or physiological features.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive providing statutory protection for habitats and species of European importance.

Springline mires – the point on the valley side where the permeable greensand rock meets the impermeable clays and where water emerges in a series of constantly wet springs.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) – grant scheme in AONBs and National Parks to support projects that bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the area.

Sustainable tourism – tourism committed to generating a low impact on the surrounding environment and community by acting responsibly while generating income and employment for the local economy.

South West Protected Landscapes Forum – informal association that encourages networking and exchange of information and ideas between the AONBs and National Parks in the south west region.

Tranquillity – the quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from man-made ones (as defined by CPRE).

Turbary – a place (heathland) where traditionally peat or turf was dug for fuel. The right to dig from common land was often attached to properties, hence common land is often known as a turbary locally.

Appendix F: Summary of Review Process

Review Task	Timetable	Review Task	Timetable
AONB Partnership considers scale and scope of review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to management group Meetings with local authority (LA) officers Management group workshop National Association of AONBs workshop Devon AONBs meetings 	July 2012 – January 2013 July 2012 August – December 2012 October 2012 November 2012 October 2012 and January 2013	Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) Scoping Report consultation	May – June 2013
Formal notifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement sought from LAs to undertake review LAs confirm agreement Notify Natural England of intention to undertake review 	June 2012 – December 2012 June 2012 July – December 2012 December 2012	Prepare draft of revised plan for consultation	June – October 2013
Identification of issues: consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public workshop (wildlife/land management) Public online questionnaire Farmers online questionnaire Farmers questionnaires from FWAG event Discussions with working groups and relevant officers (heritage, biodiversity, rights of way officers, planners) Public workshop (rural economy) 	March – June 2013 March 2013 March – April 2013 March – April 2013 April 2013 April – May 2013 June 2013	SEA developing and undertaking assessment, preparing Environmental Report	August – October 2013
		Consultation 6 week public consultation on draft plan SEA environmental report and Appropriate Assessment screening report available for comment	October – December 2013
		Analysis of responses received and consideration of necessary changes Amendments made	January – March 2014
		Approval and Adoption Formal consultation with Natural England Adoption by LA partners Endorsement by AONB Partnership	April – June 2014
		Publish AONB management plan 2014-19 Send copy to Secretary of State	July 2014
		Delivery Preparation of Delivery Plan Promotion, implementation, monitoring	May 2014 onwards

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