

What makes a view?



Front cover 'postcard' images, left to right:

- 'Stockland' from an original acrylic painting by contemporary local artist Andrew Bell
- View north-west from Culmstock Beacon. Photo: Fiona Fyfe
- 'Clayhidon, Devon' by Charles Ginner (1913). © Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter. Reproduced with permission
- Spring in the Otter Valley. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project was commissioned by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and undertaken by Fiona Fyfe Associates between November 2012 and June 2013. It has been funded by the European CORDIALE project, under the INTERREG IVA France (Channel) – England Programme, and forms a field trial within the CORDIALE Landscape Mapping Studio.

The project has five key elements:

- A report describing the views within the Blackdown Hills AONB: where they occur; how they are experienced; how they are portrayed; how they relate to landscape character; and the forces for change currently acting on them.
- Undertaking a variety of community engagement and consultation throughout the project.
- A planning and management tool to be used to retain and enhance the area's views in the future.
- A framework for enabling members of the local community to monitor landscape change.
- Production of a whole-project methodology report to enable the project to be replicated elsewhere.

Views are fundamental to the character of the Blackdown Hills landscape. They have been appreciated by travellers and artists (as well as by local people) for well over 300 years. Their structure, patterns, light and atmosphere remain a source of inspiration to artists to this day. Views occur throughout the Blackdown Hills. Some views are wide and panoramic; others are glimpsed along lanes or through field gates. The combination of topography (ridges and valleys) and historic landscape features (particularly the surviving field patterns) give the views their variety and distinctiveness. One of the reasons for designation of the Blackdown Hills AONB is its 'diversity of landscape patterns and pictures'.



'Birchwood from above Rull' from an original acrylic painting by Andrew Bell

The Devon County Landscape Assessment has identified five Landscape Character Areas within the Blackdown Hills AONB. Each one has a distinct sense of place which arises from its pattern of landscape elements. Views contribute to the distinctive characteristics of all five of these Landscape Character Areas, and intervisibility between the Landscape Character Areas means that one can impact on the character of another.

The visual impact of the Blackdown Hills extends over a considerable distance beyond the AONB boundary, particularly to the north where the Blackdown Hills Scarp is a prominent local landmark providing a setting and sense of place to the Vale of Taunton and the Quantock Hills AONB. By the same token, views from the top of the Blackdown Hills Scarp are panoramic and extend over a very wide area. The Blackdown Hills also provide settings to land (including the East Devon AONB) to the east, south and west.

Local people care deeply about their landscapes, and this is reflected in the numbers of local people who have contributed to the project: submitting their favourite views through the online public consultation; completing questionnaires at AONB events and community centres; taking part in special projects in schools; and contributing to the AONB's landscape photography competition. Several local artists have also been involved.

Despite the timeless feel of much of the Blackdown Hills AONB, landscapes are dynamic and reflect changes in agricultural practices, environmental changes (eg climate change and tree disease), built development, energy production and transport needs. By identifying the special qualities of the views within each of the AONB's Landscape Character Areas, it is possible to positively influence many of these changes to ensure that the distinctive character of the AONB is retained and enhanced. This is the purpose of the *Planning and Management Tool* (Part 3 of this document), which sets out recommendations for each of the Landscape Character Areas under the European Landscape Convention headings of *Protect, Manage and Plan*.

Long-term monitoring of incremental changes in the landscape will be undertaken by volunteers, using the *Landscape Monitoring Toolkit*. Five monitoring points have been chosen that are representative views of each of the Landscape Character Areas within the AONB.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The report

This report was commissioned in November 2012 by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as a field trail in the CORDIALE project. It was written by Fiona Fyfe Associates, in association with Debbie Soloman of Sological Solutions (GIS and ground modelling) and Robin Lines of Robin Lines Landscape (fieldwork and public consultation). The author would like to acknowledge and thank all members of the project team, the staff at the Blackdown Hills AONB, all the local artists who have contributed their work, and the many residents of the Blackdown Hills – including schools and community groups – who have contributed to the public consultation and the AONB's on-going photographic competition.



'Looking east from Combe Hill Road' by Clive Lloyd (photographic competition entry)

The report is divided into three parts. **Part 1 (Introduction and context)** contains a summary of the project methodology (Section 2.0); an introduction to the landscape character of the Blackdown Hills AONB (Section 3.0); a look at the different places and means in which these landscapes and views can be experienced (Section 4.0); and an exploration of the long history of appreciation of views of the Blackdown Hills and their expression through art (Section 5.0).

Part 2 (Landscape Character Area profiles) contains a series of profiles (one for each Landscape Character Area within the AONB) which presents the key characteristics of the views, the location of key views, the extent of visibility and people's reaction to the views.

Part 3 (Planning and management tool) explores the forces for change which are currently acting on views associated with the Blackdown Hills AONB (Section 11.0) and provides guidance on how views can be retained and enhanced through sympathetic planning and land management.

The **Appendices** contain references and further reading, and short biographies of the locally based contemporary artists whose work illustrates this report.



'Watercolour of trees in the Yarty Valley' by Jack Forster, Buckland St Mary Primary School

1.2 CORDIALE

This project is funded through the CORDIALE project, under the European Cross-border Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVA France (Channel) – England, co-funded by ERDF. CORDIALE is a partnership between protected landscapes in south-west England and northern France (Finistère and Basse-Normandie). Its vision is: *The adoption of a common standard for informing and assisting the management of Protected Landscapes in the cross-border region in furtherance of the European Landscape Convention and in the context of climate change.* See www.cordialeproject.eu

Its objectives are:

- a) To build deeper understanding of the distinctive character of landscapes in the cross-border region.
- b) To inspire stakeholders and communities to engage with their landscapes.
- c) To demonstrate the multiple functional benefits provided by adapted and resilient landscape management.
- d) To support integrated decision-making.

The Blackdown Hills AONB is one of five AONBs in Devon participating CORDIALE. This project forms a 'field trial' within the 'landscape mapping' studio. The field trials provide an opportunity to explore new and innovative methodologies for achieving the CORDIALE objectives. Various field trials were undertaken by CORDIALE partners in England and France, and the results shared at the end of the project. The aim is for best practice in landscape management and community engagement to be brought together in an online atlas and toolkit, so that successful methodologies can be used by other partners in the future.



CORDIALE was selected under the European Cross-border Cooperation Programme INTERREG IV A France (Channel) - England, co-funded by the ERDF.

'It is the first view I really notice when travelling into the Blackdown Hills from Wellington. I like the interlocking valleys and the variety of greens in the landscape. I also like the field patterns and how rural the area is.'

Where's your favourite view? Public consultation response

2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE VIEW: Project methodology

Key to the success of the ‘What Makes a View?’ project is the wide range of skills and techniques employed within it. For example, this report combines the results of landscape architects’ analysis with the reactions of members of the public whilst experiencing that landscape. Similarly, images generated using computer ground-modelling technology sit comfortably beside the paintings of historic and contemporary artists. They are all different ways of expressing the landscapes and views of the Blackdown Hills and all add value to our understanding.

The project took place over a number of months (November 2012 - June 2013) and comprised several phases, as described below. A more detailed methodology can be obtained from the Blackdown Hills AONB. The methodology is in accordance with the current Best Practice Guidelines on Landscape Character Assessment¹, and with the holistic and people-focussed definition of landscape endorsed in the European Landscape Convention: ‘*Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/ or human factors.*’²

2.1 Desk studies

The initial phase of the project required extensive background reading on the landscapes and views of the Blackdown Hills AONB. Sources included the online Devon Landscape Character Assessment, the Historic Landscape Characterisations for Devon and Somerset, AONB publications such as the Management Plan, art history books and websites, local guidebooks, Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photos. See Section 8.0 for a full list of references.

2.2 Computer modelling

ArcGIS Spatial Analyst software was used to create 3D ground models and a Zone of Theoretical Visibility map for each of the Landscape Character Areas. These maps use digital ground-modelling techniques to indicate the extent of visibility (ie from where a point or area of ground can be seen). These maps aid our understanding of where views occur and help to focus the fieldwork.

¹ The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002), *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*

² The European Landscape Convention (2000), Ch 1: General Provisions

2.3 Fieldwork

The main fieldwork took place in early December 2012, during a period of clear weather and bare trees. There have also been several subsequent visits during and following the public consultation exercise. Key viewpoints were visited and photographed, and new viewpoints were noted. Numerous photographs were taken, and fieldwork sheets completed which described the characteristics and elements of views within each Landscape Character Area, along with forces for change visible in the landscape.

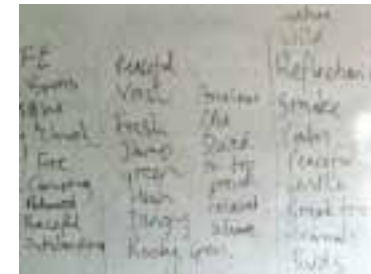
2.4 Public consultation

Public consultation has been an essential part of this project, and has taken a number of forms.

- *Collaboration with local artists.* Members of the Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers have been generous in their time and provision of images which visually portray the views within the Blackdown Hills.
- *Working with local schools to explore children's responses to landscape and views.*
- *Meeting with community groups of all ages to find their favourite views.*
- *Online survey to identify people's favourite Blackdowns views and why they like them.*
- *Completing landscape response questionnaires at events in different parts of the AONB.*
- *Trialling the Landscape Monitoring Toolkit.*

2.5 Writing-up

The findings from the desk studies, computer modelling and fieldwork were written up as a draft report which included general chapters and a series of profiles, one for each Landscape Character Area. Client comments and illustrations have been incorporated into the final report, and the Landscape Monitoring Toolkit.



Exploring landscape descriptions and responses with local primary school children



Interviewing users of the Blackdown Healthy Living Centre to find their favourite views



Fieldwork with the Membury Local History Society

3.0 LANDSCAPES AND VIEWS OF THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

3.1 The Blackdown Hills AONB

The Blackdown Hills AONB is located on the Devon-Somerset border, and covers an area of 370 km² (143 square miles) between Taunton to the north and Honiton to the south (see map 1206/01). It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1991 on the grounds of its subtle combination of four characteristics: an isolated, unspoilt rural area; diversity of landscape patterns and pictures; unique geology; and landscape with architectural appeal. The first two of these characteristics are particularly relevant to this study.

3.2 Landscape character

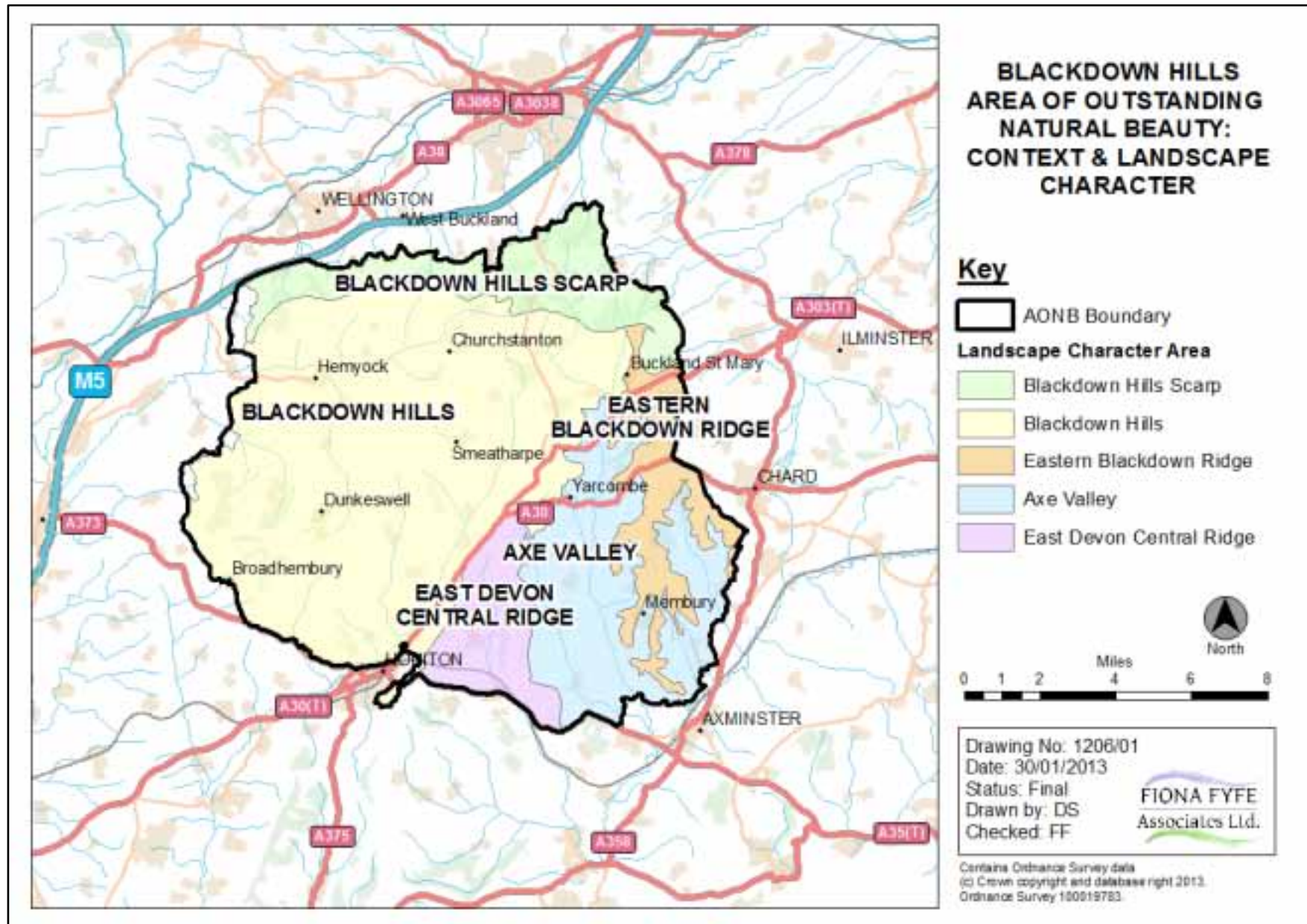
Landscape character may be described as *a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. Particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement create character. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct, and gives each its particular sense of place*³.

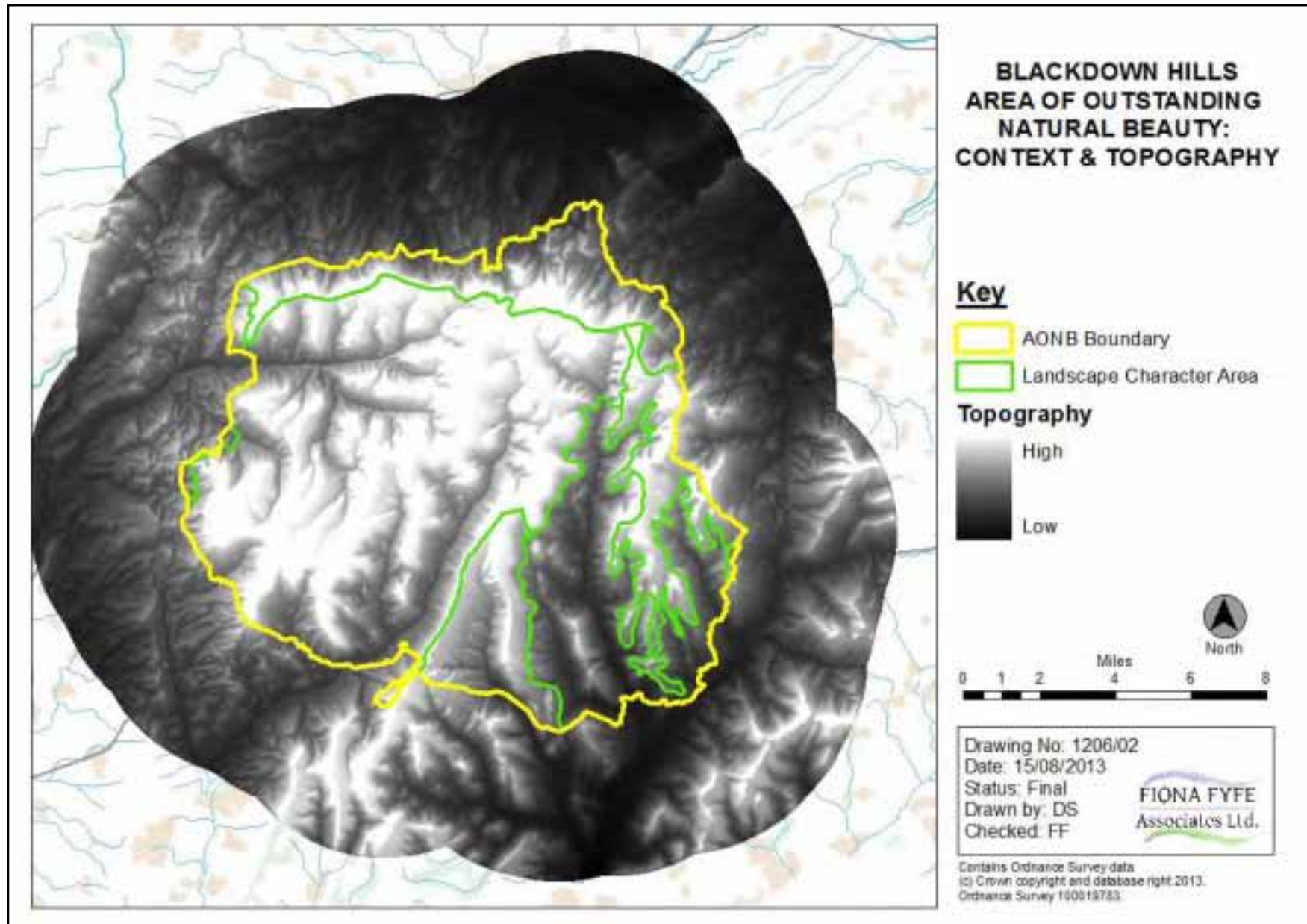
In 2012, Devon County Council published its County Landscape Character Assessment, see www.devon.gov.uk/landscapecharacter. This piece of work identifies 64 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) across the county, each one with a unique sense of place. The identification of the County LCAs took into account the landscape's physical qualities (eg geology; topography; vegetation), cultural qualities (eg historic landscapes; field patterns; settlement patterns) and perceptual qualities (eg tranquillity; remoteness). It was closely based on existing landscape character assessments which had already been undertaken at district level. Although part of the Blackdown Hills AONB is in Somerset, the entire AONB was included within the Devon Landscape Assessment.



Diagram showing the components of landscape character. Reproduced from Countryside Agency/SNH (2002) p2

³ *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*, The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002), p9





The Devon County Landscape Assessment identified five Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) either fully or partially within the Blackdown Hills AONB. These are shown on map 1206/01 and are called:

- Blackdown Hills Scarp LCA (located fully within the AONB)
- Blackdown Hills LCA (located fully within the AONB)
- Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA (located fully within the AONB)
- The Axe Valley LCA (located partially within the AONB: the Yarty and Kit valleys are tributaries of the Axe and therefore included within this LCA, but the main Axe Valley continues southwards to the coast)
- The East Devon Central Ridge (located partially within the AONB: only the northern tip of this ridge is within the AONB – the majority of the LCA extends southwards to the coast)

Part 2 of this report describes the character and views associated with each of these LCAs in more detail.

3.3 Key factors affecting views

In the Blackdown Hills, views are a key component of landscape character. One of the special qualities on which its AONB designation is based is the 'diversity of landscape patterns and pictures'.⁴

The Devon County Landscape Assessment mentions views in the distinctive characteristics and/or special qualities of all the five LCAs above. The outstanding views associated with the Blackdown Hills AONB are largely the result of two key factors: topography (landform) and the historic landscape.

Capturing landscape character through art:



'Yellow fields near Ashculme' from an original oil painting by Liz Gregory

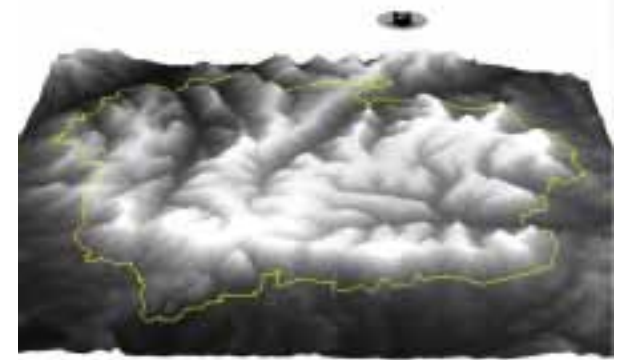


'North from Westfield' from an original acrylic painting by Andrew Bell

⁴ Countryside Commission (1989), *The Blackdown Hills Landscape* CCP 258

3.4 Topography

To the right is a 3D model of the Blackdown Hills' landform. It shows the highest land towards the north of the AONB (at the bottom of the image), which falls steeply away to create a north-facing scarp. The high land extends southwards to create a plateau which fans out into a series of flat-topped ridges. These ridges often have steep sides where woodland has survived. Below the steep woodlands the ground levels out into a series of valleys, shown as darker shading on the 3D model. The steepness of the valley sides and the way the ridges extend between the valleys mean that there are a variety of views: from ridge to valley, from valley to ridge, from ridge across to ridge, along valleys, etc. These views occur in all directions within the AONB and across the land beyond the AONB boundaries.



3D model of the Blackdown Hills landform looking south

3.5 The historic landscape

The landscape which we see today in the Blackdown Hills is the result of centuries of settlement, agriculture and land management. Among the oldest features are the Iron Age hillforts which are prominent features in the Blackdown Hills landscape. Several villages are mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) including Luppitt, Hemyock and Upottery. The forest of Neroche is also mentioned, which was the biggest concentration of woodland in southwest England at that time, and which extended for a considerable distance to the east of the Blackdown Hills. In medieval times, Neroche was a hunting forest comprising woodland and parkland, and clues still exist in village place names such as Buckland. Other place names reflect land uses of wood, common and enclosures.

'A far reaching view – it takes one back in time – I imagine horsemen galloping along to deliver messages.'

Where's your favourite view? Public consultation response



Winter sunlight illuminating earthworks at Neroche forest. (Photo: Fiona Fyfe)

Fundamental to the Blackdown Hills' distinctive and outstanding views is the survival of historic field patterns. The mosaic of fields, hedgerows and woodlands tells the story of the gradual enclosure of the landscape over several hundred years. This is explained in more detail in Devon and Somerset's Historic Landscape Characterisations (see www.devon.gov.uk/landscape-characterisation and <http://webapp1.somerset.gov.uk/her/sop.asp?flash=true>). The valley-side fields are predominantly medieval in origin, often arranged in an irregular patchwork pattern and creating a strong texture and sense of enclosure in the landscape. Steep, winding lanes run between high hedgebanks and connect ancient farms and villages. In contrast, the ridge tops were enclosed relatively late (mostly in the 17th to 19th centuries, having been left as common land up until this time). They contain straight roads (often lined with beech hedges or avenues) and straight-edged fields with few farms or settlements, and have a notable sense of openness and exposure.

As noteworthy as the field patterns themselves is the fact that they have survived so intact. Indeed, the Blackdown Hills contain some of the best preserved field patterns in Devon. These field patterns, along with other historic features such as hillforts, beacons, monuments, churches, villages and farmsteads are so important to both views and landscape character that in many cases it is difficult to differentiate 'enjoying the view' from 'appreciating the past'.

'A patchwork of fields and hedges in the foreground with flat-topped hills that seem to go on in the distance for ever.'

Where's your favourite view? Public consultation response



The straight roads and beech hedges of the ridge tops (above) contrast with irregular patchworks of fields and woodland on the valley sides. The lower picture shows ancient fields and farms on the western slopes of Dumpdon Iron Age hillfort. (Photos: Fiona Fyfe)



4.0 TYPES OF VIEWS IN THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

4.1 'Official' viewpoints

The 1:50,000 scale Ordnance Survey map shows only one 'official' viewpoint in the entire AONB, at the Wellington Monument. The more detailed 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map shows two such viewpoints, at the Wellington Monument and Castle Neroche, both views north from the Blackdown Hills Scarp Landscape Character Area. But despite their lack of publicity on maps, in reality the Blackdown Hills AONB contains many outstanding viewpoints. Several of these are located near OS trig points, including Culmstock Beacon and Dumpdon Hillfort, and are only accessible on foot. Many of these isolated sites with outstanding views also have a strong sense of history, having been used as defensive or look-out sites. The Iron Age hillforts at Neroche, Membury, Dumpdon and Hembury all have commanding views over the surrounding landscape, as does the Armada beacon at Culmstock Beacon. The effort required to reach these sites on foot adds to the sense of achievement and appreciation while enjoying the view.

Car parks for those wishing to stop and appreciate the view from their vehicles are limited to the Blackdowns Ridge: there are car parks near the Wellington Monument and Castle Neroche, and also a National Trust car park at Quarts Moor, to the east of the Wellington Monument, that has panoramic views over the Vale of Taunton to the Quantocks. Lay-bys on the more major roads enable drivers to stop and admire the views in safety.

4.2 *Passive enjoyment of the scenery*

Hundreds of people drive through the Blackdown Hills AONB every day, the majority on main roads including the A30 and A303. Many do not stop, but nevertheless they do appreciate the scenery through which they are passing. This scenery is quite varied – a driver travelling on the A303/A30 from Horton to Honiton will pass through four of the five LCAs within the AONB. Some of the views from the main roads are stunning, such as the view south down the Yarty Valley from the A30 at Yarcombe, and the view west from the A35 east of Honiton.



View northwest from Culmstock Beacon viewpoint towards Exmoor. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



'Quantock 4' - view north from the Blackdown Hills Scarp across the Vale of Taunton - from an original painting by John Nutt

4.3 *Glimpsed views from lanes and footpaths*

One of the joys of experiencing views within the Blackdown Hills AONB (whether travelling on foot, bike or by car) is the unexpected, sudden views which appear through gateways or open up along lanes as they descend into valleys. The suddenness and impact of these views is enhanced by the depth of many of the lanes, running between their high, ancient hedgebanks. Many of these views are framed by woodland or trees; either seen in gaps between trees, or over the tops of woodland growing on the steep valley sides.

4.4 *Views towards the Blackdown Hills*

The Blackdown Hills Scarp, and specifically the Wellington Monument, is a landmark for motorists on the M5 and passengers on the Taunton-Exeter railway line. It dominates the skyline over a distance of several miles and provides a strong sense of place. It also contributes to the setting of the Quantock Hills AONB and Exmoor National Park. The AONB appears as a less dramatic but still distinctive landform in views eastwards from the A358 around Chard and the A373 around Cullompton. From the high land of central Devon it appears as a wooded, incised plateau.

4.5 *Favourite Views*

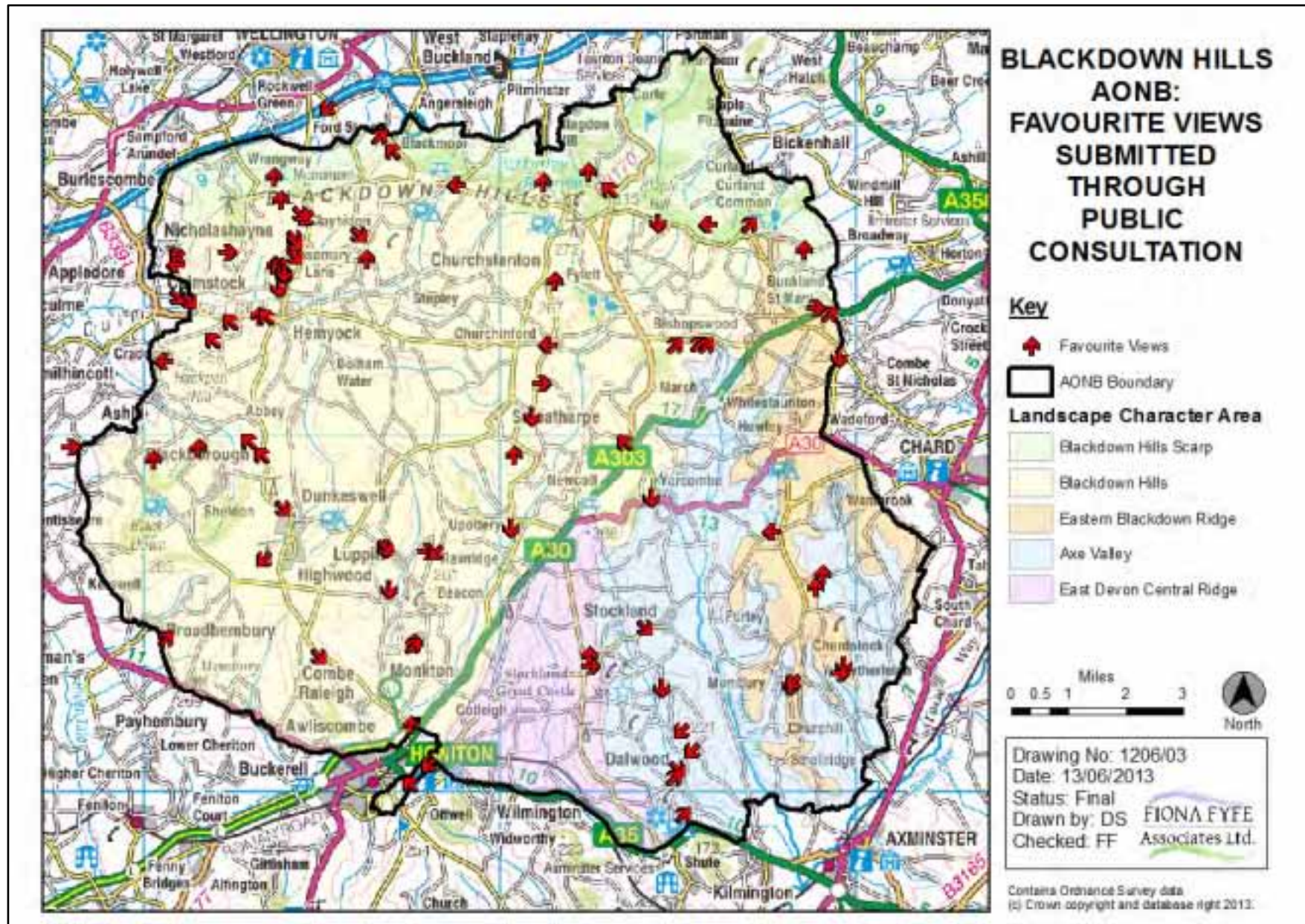
Approximately 100 people responded to the public consultation asking the location of their favourite Blackdowns view, and the results are shown on the following pages. The views identified represent all types of views described above, and all the Landscape Character Areas (see drawing 1206/03). As diagram 1206/04 shows, many of the favourite views are from ridges, looking across lower land. When asked why a particular view was special, the most frequent responses were the wideness of the views, their suddenness, their association with home, the patchwork of field patterns, and their sense of history. The views associated with each Landscape Character Area are described more fully in Part 2. The positive emotional responses demonstrate the importance of landscapes and views to people's health and well-being.

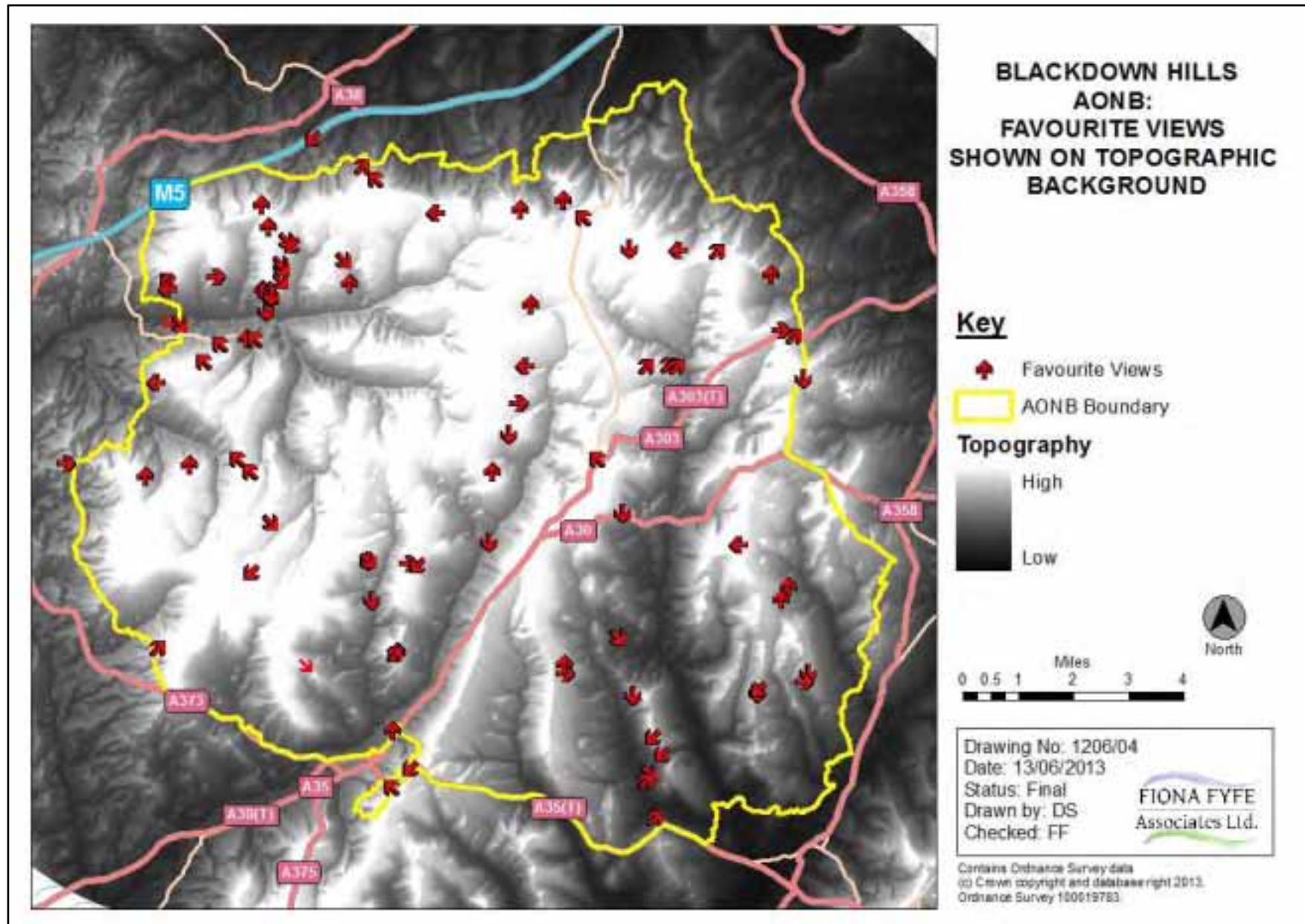


'Blackdown Hills Lane' from an original acrylic painting by Andrew Bell



The Blackdown Hills Scarp as seen from the train near Taunton. A similar view is seen from the M5 motorway. Photo: Fiona Fyfe





5.0 EXPRESSING VIEWS OF THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

5.1 *The 17th and 18th centuries: travellers' descriptions*

The earliest known records of travellers describing the Blackdowns landscape date from the late 17th century. Even at this time, the Blackdown Hills were noted for their views, particularly views from high land over surrounding enclosed countryside. In 1695 Celia Fiennes visited the Blackdown Hills and wrote: *I entred into Devonshire 5 mile off from Wellington just on a high ridge of hills which discovers a vast prospect on each side full of inclosures and lesser hills, which is the description of most part of the West; you could see large tracts of grounds full of enclosures, good grass and corn beset with quicksetts and hedge rows, and these lesser hills, which are scarce perceivable on the ridge of the uppermost yet the least of them have a steep ascent and descent to pass them*⁵.

Some 30 years later, in 1724, Daniel Defoe travelled from Dorset through Honiton to Exeter. He wrote: *I cannot but recommend any gentlemen that travel this road, that if they please to observe the prospect for half a mile, till their coming down the hill, and to the entrance to Honiton, the view of the country is the most beautiful landskip in the world, a mere picture; and I do not remember the like in any one place in England...from Honiton the country is exceeding pleasant still, and they have a good prospect almost all the way to Exeter...*⁶

5.2 *The 19th century*

The Blackdown Hills did not possess the dramatic landscapes which were made popular by the picturesque movement. Nevertheless, the local picturesque traveller Rev John Sweete visited the Blackdowns in 1794 and 1801. He was interested primarily in the panoramic views and the ruins of Dunkeswell Abbey. A few years later in 1856, Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Devon and Cornwall* described the views of the secluded valleys as seen from the hills, and also

⁵ Morris, C (ed) *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes 1685 – c1712* Part 111 'My Great Journey to Newcastle and to Cornwall' (1698), p196

⁶ Daniel Defoe (1724), *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* Pat Rogers [ed] 1989, p77



'A good prospect almost all the way to Exeter' view from the A35 looking west over Honiton. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Dumpdon Hill as sketched by Hutchinson in 1865, the field pattern is largely unchanged today. Image courtesy of East Devon AONB/Devon Record Office

praised the Otter Valley at Honiton: *A valley remarkable for its graceful lines and rich culture, and bordered by detached eminences pleasingly grouped.*⁷

Nineteenth century novelist R D Blackmore grew up in Culmstock, on the edge of the Blackdown Hills and set his novel *Perlycross* partly in Culmstock and Hemyock. The novel contains some evocative descriptions of the Blackdowns landscape:

*...The land rises to the barren height of Beacon Hill...and is by its conical form distinct from other extremities of the Black-down chain. For the southern barrier of the valley (which is about three miles wide at its mouth) is formed by the long dark chine of Hagdon Hill, which ends abruptly in a steep descent...*⁸

In 1911 Snell described the area and its views in *The Blackmore Country*:

*The Blackdowns, generally, have been enclosed and turned into farms; and although one sometimes stumbles on desolate fields with patches of gorse, mindful of their ancient savagery, this does not affect, to any appreciable extent, the character of the country. On the whole, a ride or a walk across the long level chines is not especially delightful, save indeed for the wholesome air and an occasional glimpse of a fairy-like 'mappa mundi' spread out at their base. It is only when one descends into charming little villages, like Hemyock, or Dunkeswell or Broadhembury, with their orchards fair, and hollyhocks, that complete satisfaction is attained.*⁹

'The view overlooking Honiton and the Blackdown Hills to the right and East Devon AONB to the left is just a great welcoming sight.'

Where's your favourite view? Public consultation response



Hackpen (Hagdon) Hill, as seen from Culmstock Beacon: 'A long, dark chine, which ends abruptly in a steep descent'. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Broadhembury village. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

⁷ Quoted in Countryside Commission (1989), *The Blackdown Hills Landscape*, p24

⁸ Blackmore, R D (1894), *Perlycross: A Tale of the Western Hills*, p12-13

⁹ Quoted in Countryside Commission (1989), *The Blackdown Hills Landscape*, p24

5.3 The 20th century and the Camden Town Group of artists

In the early 20th Century, artist Robert Bevan visited and lived in the Blackdown Hills, in the Culm Valley and Luppitt. He had studied with Gauguin in Paris, and was one of the first English painters to use rural landscapes as inspiration for semi-abstract use of patterns and colours. His output was prolific, including many images of the panoramic views from high land across valleys, and also of vernacular buildings and farms. His geometric portrayal of field patterns and his imaginative use of light and colour were scorned by critics at the time. However they had a strong influence on subsequent painters of the English landscape, and today Bevan's work is highly regarded. Bevan was joined at Applehayes for painting holidays by other members of his artistic circle (known as the Camden Town Group) including Spencer Gore and Charles Ginner. As well as exploring the portrayal of landscape structure, the Camden Town Group also helped popularise views of rustic pastoral scenes including vernacular structures such as cottages and barns. More examples are given in Part 2 of this report.

The popularity of the Blackdown Hills with visitors began to rise due to the area's quietness and solitude, and combination of impressive views and rustic charm. In 1934 Maxwell Fraser wrote:

*The villages are as unselfconscious as they are lovely in their rural simplicity...the hills are quiet and serene...Apart from their remoteness from the bustle of modern life, the charm of these hills lies in their woods and the wonderful views across the fair counties of Somerset and Devon...*¹⁰

5.4 Artists in the Blackdown Hills today

Today the Blackdown Hills' landscape and views remain a place of inspiration to a wide variety of artists. The form and patterns of the landscape - its texture, colours, atmosphere and light - continue to inspire artistic responses. The Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers (BHAAM) is a thriving group of locally based artists and craftspeople, many of whom regard their surroundings as a source of their creativity. Examples of the work of members of BHAAM are included throughout this report and show how views of the Blackdown Hills continue to be expressed through a wide range of media and artistic styles.

¹⁰ Quoted in Countryside Commission (1989) *The Blackdown Hills Landscape*, p 29



'Burford Farm' by Robert Bevan (1918).

Photo © Offer Waterman and Co/The Bridgeman Art Library. Reproduced with permission



'Evening in the Culm Valley' by Robert Bevan (1912). Reproduced from Bevan, R A (1965) 'Robert Bevan: A Memoir by his Son', pl 41

PART 2

PROFILES FOR EACH OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS WITHIN THE AONB

6.0 BLACKDOWN HILLS SCARP LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



Location and context

This area comprises the north-facing, wooded greensand scarp slope of the Blackdown Hills AONB which overlooks the Vale of Taunton. Its northern and eastern edges are marked by the AONB boundary, while to the south its boundary is clearly defined by the start of the central plateau of the Blackdown Hills LCA. The western edge is also clearly defined by the greensand scarp.

Summary description (from Devon Landscape Assessment)

This landscape forms a wide band of scarp woodlands and farmed slopes that are orientated east-west and face northwards over the Vale of Taunton. This is a dramatic landscape that is very prominent, particularly in views from the north, and from which there are panoramic views. 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 (towards the western end of the scarp) is a key landmark, visible over a very wide area. The western end of the scarp is most pronounced; to the east the slopes become broader and gentler. Vegetation patterns are often irregular, reflecting variations in the underlying landform, although in some areas these subtle variations are masked by conifer plantations.



Panorama looking west near Hayne, showing the mosaic of woodland, parkland and farmland which makes up the Blackdown Hills Scarp landscape. Note the conifer plantations on Staple Hill dominating the horizon. The Vale of Taunton and the Quantock Hills are visible in the distance at the right-hand side of the picture.

Photo: Fiona Fyfe

WHAT MAKES THE VIEW? Key characteristics of the views associated with this Landscape Character Area

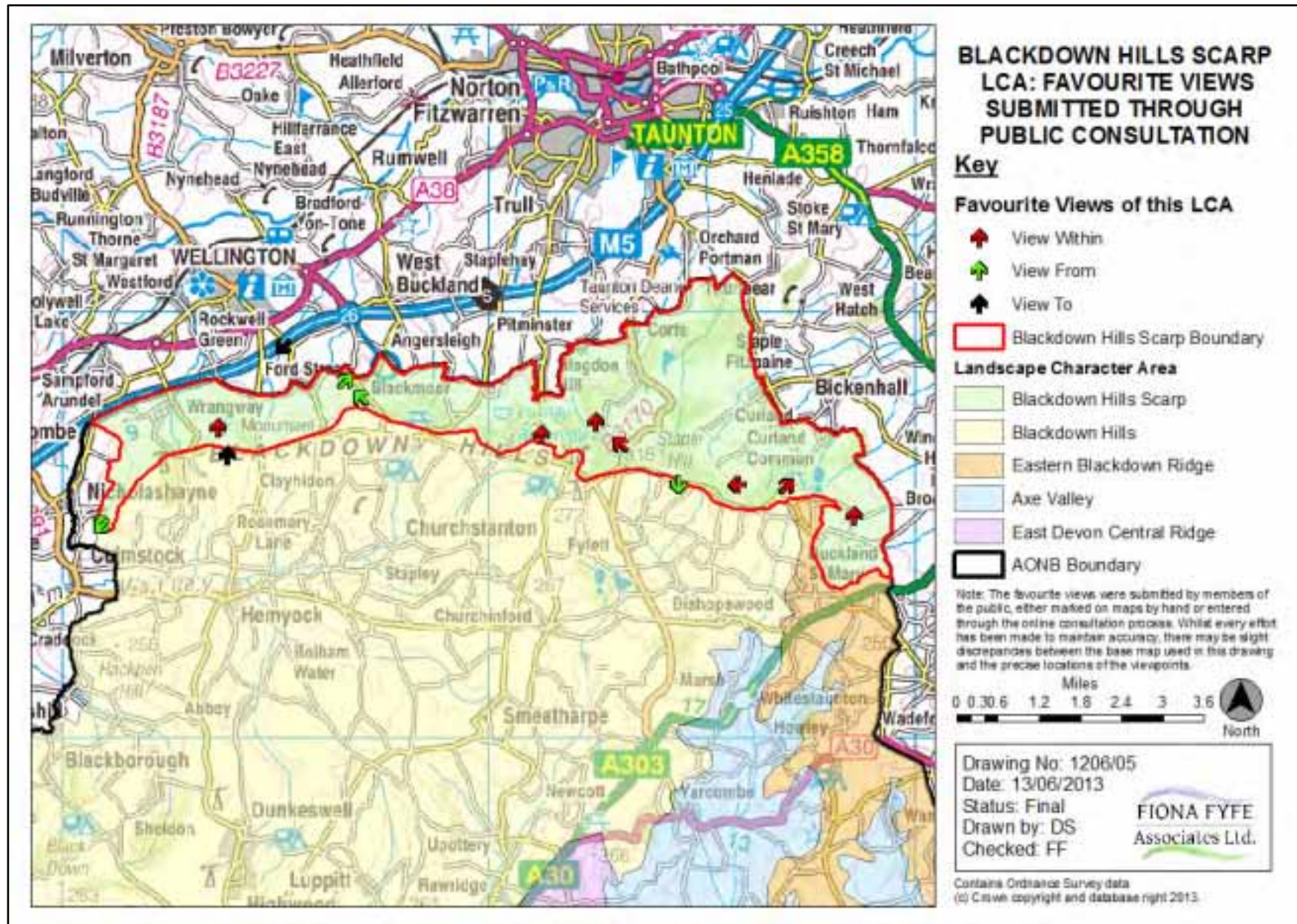
- Views within the LCA dominated by steep, dramatic landform and a mosaic of farmland and deciduous and coniferous woodland, giving the landscape a strong and varied texture.
- Official viewpoints marked on Ordnance Survey maps at Castle Neroche and Wellington Monument. Culmstock Beacon is also a popular viewpoint.
- Long, panoramic views north across the Vale of Taunton to the Quantock Hills AONB are distinctive features of the LCA. The ends of the scarp also have magnificent views east over Somerset and west over central Devon. Views from the southern edge of the LCA look southwards across the Blackdown Hills LCA.
- Many views within and out of the LCA framed by (or seen over) woodland or trees. Popular views occur along the ridge and from the scarp.
- Wellington Monument a prominent landmark on the skyline in views from a very wide area. Other historic features include Castle Neroche, Culmstock Beacon, woodland, parkland and lanes.
- Scarp is highly visible in long views from the Somerset Levels, the Vale of Taunton and the Quantock Hills. It contributes to the setting of Taunton and is a prominent landmark from the M5 and Taunton - Exeter railway line.
- Elevation creates a sense of detachment from surrounding towns and countryside, especially in views to the north and from Culmstock Beacon. Woodland creates a more intimate and enclosed quality which contrasts with the open views.
- Strong seasonal variations in colour and texture due to extensive deciduous woodland and beech trees. Seasonal leaf loss also opens up views in winter.

A window on the past

The Historic Landscape Characterisation illustrates that this LCA is predominantly woodland (including ancient replanted woodland), and land enclosed before the 17th century. There are also historic parks, land enclosed between 18th and 19th centuries, and (particularly in the east of the LCA), land enclosed in the 17th to 18th centuries.



3D aerial image of the Blackdown Hills Scarp LCA, showing steep topography and extensive woodland cover of this Landscape Character Area



WHERE ARE THE KEY VIEWS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BLACKDOWN HILLS SCARP?

Both the fieldwork and public consultation identified the importance of long views to the character of this Landscape Character Area.

Many views were identified within this LCA, with the varied fields and woodlands of the scarp being particularly appreciated. However these views also often contain distant glimpses across the surrounding landscapes. The scarp is a popular place to walk with many footpaths including forest walks at Neroche.

There are fabulous views from the high land of the scarp across the surrounding countryside. Many 'favourite views' are to the north over the Vale of Taunton to the Quantock Hills, but people also recorded views south over the Blackdown Hills LCA, and along the ridge road itself. The greatest concentration of favourite views is from Culmstock Beacon, where the steep path culminates in magnificent views in all directions. Other favourite views from the scarp are from the Wellington Monument (official viewpoint), the car park at Quart's Moor and Castle Neroche (official viewpoint). The way in which many of these views are framed by trees add to their composition and increases their sense of depth.

The topography of the Blackdown Hills Scarp means that it can be seen from a very long distance (described more fully in the next section) and forms an important backdrop and setting to settlements in the Vale of Taunton. The 'favourite views' recorded through the public consultation included the view of the scarp and Wellington Monument from the M5 – a landmark associated with being 'nearly home'.



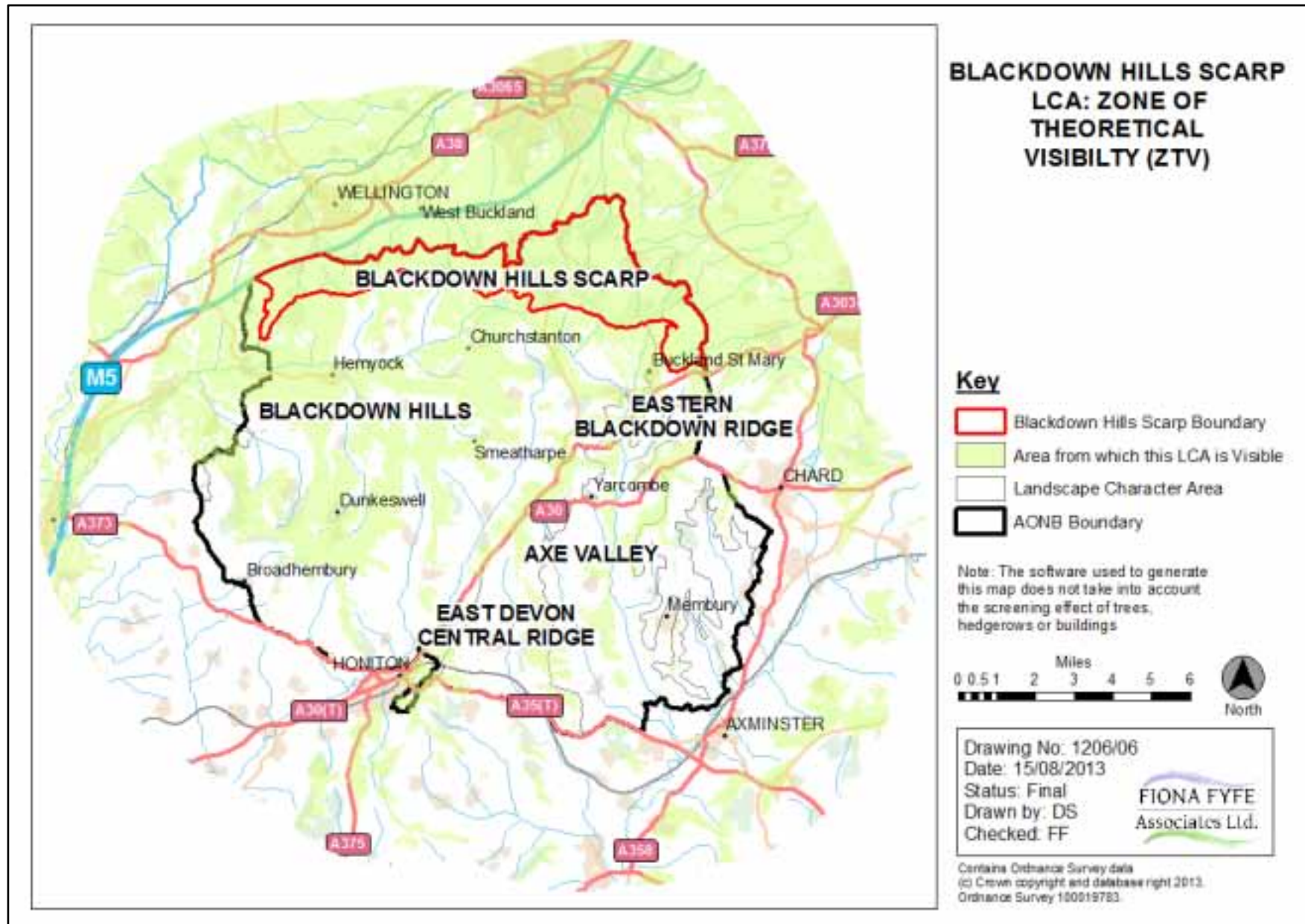
View within the LCA: A typical scarp view south of Staple Fitzpaine. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



View from the LCA: View north across the Vale of Taunton to the Quantock Hills and Exmoor. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



View south towards the Blackdown Hills from Cothelstone Hill in the Quantock Hills AONB. Photo: David Lloyd



EXTENT OF VISIBILITY: From where can the Blackdown Hills Scarp LCA be seen?

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map is generated using computer software. The software uses a 3D base map to calculate from where a particular point or area can be seen (see Section 2.2 for more details).

The ZTV map shows the extensive area to the north, east and west from where the Blackdown Hills Scarp LCA can be seen. In views from the Vale of Taunton, the Somerset Levels, the Quantock Hills AONB and Exmoor National Park, the Blackdown Hills Scarp forms a long ridge on the horizon, often seen in profile with the sun behind it. This ridge forms an important setting and backdrop in these views. Views of the Blackdown Hills Scarp are also seen from the Taunton - Exeter railway line, the M5, and from settlements including Taunton and Wellington. The Wellington Monument (an obelisk which sits on the top of the scarp towards its western end) is a very prominent landmark.

Close to the AONB boundary, for example in views from the A358, the quality of the foreground (which often includes farmland, woodland and historic parkland) adds to the setting of the AONB.

This LCA's visibility in views from LCAs to the south is limited by the landform. However the Wellington Monument (which has a height of 53.3m) can be seen over a much larger area.



Winter view of the Wellington Monument, the Vale of Taunton and the Quantock Hills as seen from the Blackdown Hills Scarp at the National Trust car park and viewpoint at Quarts Moor. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

A word cloud of adjectives describing a landscape. The words are arranged in a roughly circular shape. The largest word is 'blue' at the top. Other large words include 'view' on the right, 'clouds' in the center, 'trees' on the left, and 'woodland' at the bottom. Smaller words include 'green', 'bushy', 'natural', 'open', 'rolling', 'beautiful', 'panoramic', 'multicoloured', 'gentle', 'grassy', 'stripy', 'free', 'valley', 'birds singing', 'brilliant', 'bright', 'populated', 'weird', 'fields', 'marshy', 'leafy', 'underfoot', 'windy', 'open views', 'hedges', 'towers', 'steep slopes', 'peaceful', 'fantastic', 'dark', 'sharp', 'big', 'skin', 'fairy', 'picturesque', 'freaky', 'fuzzy', 'far reaching', 'atmospheric', 'fresh', 'Blackdown', 'dull', 'vast', 'dark', 'planned', 'distance', 'rolling hills', 'misty', 'tracks', 'as far as the eye can see', 'hills', 'rolling farmland', 'fairy', 'fuzzy', 'far reaching', 'atmospheric', 'fresh', 'Blackdown', 'dull', 'vast', 'dark', 'planned', 'distance', 'rolling hills'.

From Blackmoor towards West Buckland:
Our favourite walk: so much variety.

The words and images on these pages all demonstrate how much local people value views from, within and towards the Blackdown Hills Scarp, and its importance as a local landmark. The area's height and its exceptionally long views are very much appreciated, evoking a wide range of positive emotional responses and an important sense of well-being. The first recorded description of these views was by Celia Fiennes in the 17th century (see Section 5.0) and they continue to inspire today. The distinctive colours and textures of the woodland (coniferous and deciduous) on the scarp are an important element of views. They provide a source of pleasure to walkers and inspiration to artists, as well as being of high biodiversity value.



'Quantocks 5' from an original painting by local artist John Nutt



'Landscape from butterfly field – Red' from an original painting by local artist Liz Gregory



'Path through Beechwoods to the Wellington Monument' by Verity, Churchstanton Primary School

7.0 BLACKDOWN HILLS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



Location and context

This LCA is located in the western and central parts of the AONB and is the largest LCA in the AONB. The northern boundary to this area is formed by the Blackdown Scarp LCA, and to the east it is defined by the East Devon Central Ridge LCA and the upper slopes of the Axe Valley LCA.

Summary description (from Devon Landscape Assessment)

This landscape at its core comprises a central plateau landscape that is elevated, exposed and open in character. The plateau fans out into narrow ridges where it is fringed by steeply sloping wooded, greensand edges and farmed slopes that descend into river valleys. The interplay of elevated, open plateau (with its regular enclosure pattern, beech hedges and occasional 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. In places there is a sense of bleakness about the longer views across unbroken stretches of plateau, which contrasts with the intimacy and enclosure of the valleys.



Winter view of the Culm Valley from Pencross Hill. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

WHAT MAKES THE VIEW? Key characteristics of the views associated with this Landscape Character Area

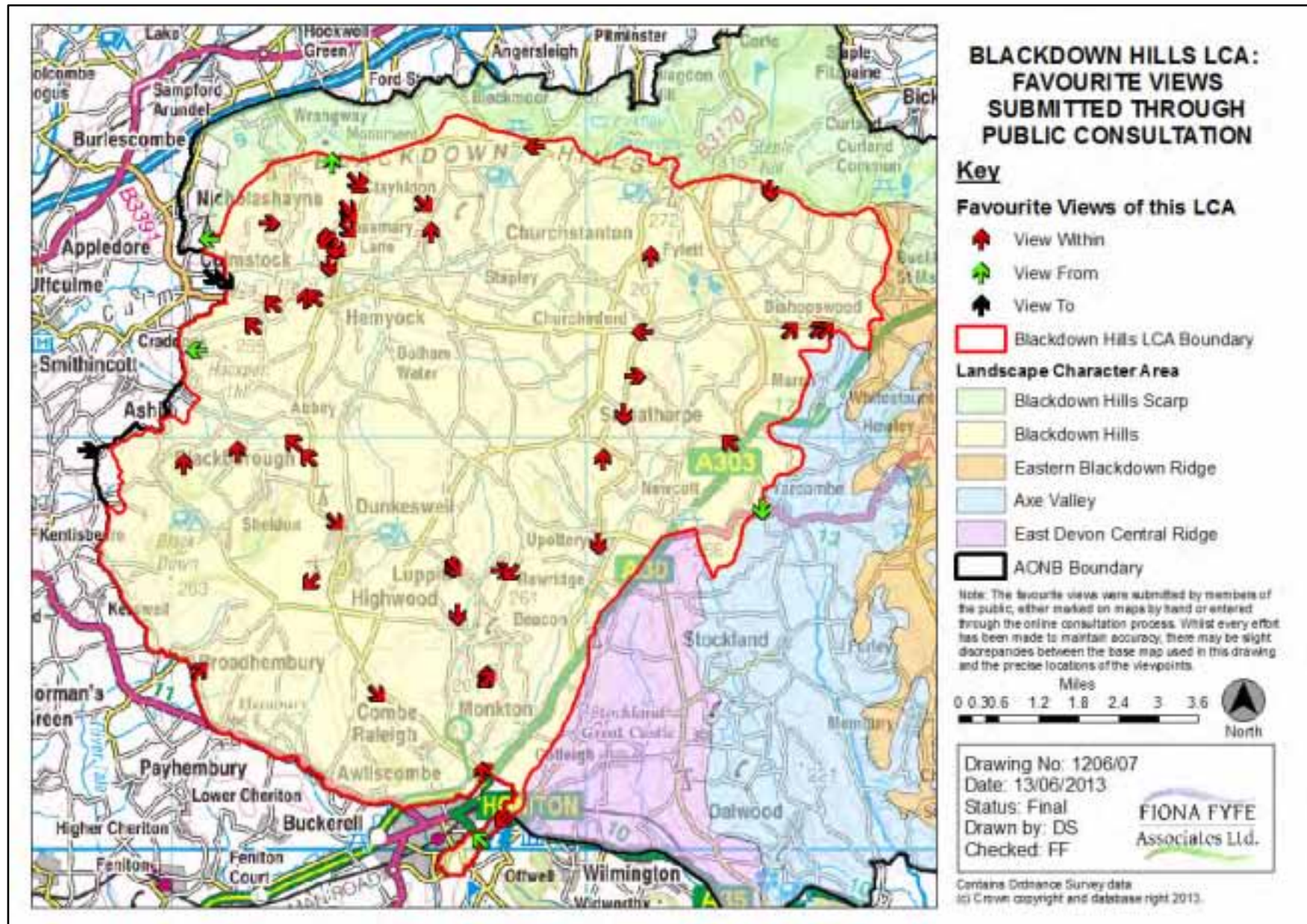
- Ever-changing views of valleys and ridges with their patchwork of fields and woodland.
- Within the LCA, views contrast between the regular enclosures and straight roads of the plateaux/ridges, and the winding lanes and irregular enclosures of the valley sides.
- A relatively settled landscape with a strong sense of time-depth. Most views contain farms and small, scattered villages (many with stone church towers) nestling into valley sides. Hillforts (eg Dumpdon Hill) are prominent features at the ends of ridges.
- Development associated with wartime airfields prominent in views from ridge tops.
- A relatively self-contained LCA in terms of its views, with other LCAs generally only visible from its edges.
- LCA visible as a wooded and incised plateau that forms the skyline in long views from high ground in central Devon.
- Eastern side of the LCA visible from the East Devon Central Ridge and Axe Valley LCAs; northern edge visible from the Blackdown Hills Scarp LCA.
- Landmarks in adjacent LCAs (the Wellington Monument and Stockland Hill TV transmitter) aid orientation.
- Strong cultural associations with the Camden Town group of artists, who painted landscapes here in the early 20th century, experimenting with the semi-abstract treatment of field patterns and topography.
- Contrast in feel between open and exposed plateau, and enclosed and intimate wooded valleys. Valleys generally have a strong sense of tranquillity and timelessness.
- Seasonal change resulting from extensive deciduous woodland and hedgerows.
- An attractive and appreciated landscape containing many favourite views.



3D aerial image of the Blackdown Hills LCA, showing the central plateau radiating out into a series of ridges

A window on the past

The Historic Landscape Characterisation for this LCA shows very few modern enclosures (especially in the north of the LCA) indicating an intact historic field pattern. The Historic Landscape Characterisation also illustrates the contrast between the surviving medieval enclosures which dominate the valleys, and the extensive post-medieval enclosures on the ridge-tops. Second World War airfields on flat, ridge-top sites at Dunkeswell (still in use), Smeatharpe and Trickey Warren also show on the Historic Landscape Characterisation.



WHERE ARE THE KEY VIEWS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BLACKDOWN HILLS?

The fieldwork and public consultation revealed literally hundreds of viewpoints within the Blackdown Hills LCA; indeed, the presence of views is integral to its character. Many (but not all) of the public's favourite views are from ridge-tops, looking across and down into the surrounding valleys. These views comprise topography, field patterns, woodland and settlements in very pleasing compositions. The ancient quality of this landscape, with its deep lanes and irregular, hedged fields adds to its special character, and many of the favourite views identified in the public consultation are either from, or of, Iron Age hillforts such as Dumpdon Hill. There is a notable cluster of favourite views around Hemyock and Clayhidon (which is also the area most strongly associated with the Camden Town group of artists).

Several favourite views were recorded around the periphery of the LCA, with the preferred direction of view outside the AONB. From high points at the edges of the AONB, there are far-reaching views over southern and central Devon. These include the views from the main road to the east of Honiton (now the A35) that were so admired by Daniel Defoe in the 17th century.

Some key views were recorded looking towards the Blackdown Hills LCA from surrounding LCAs. These include views westwards across the Yarty Valley from high land to the east, and also looking southwards into the LCA from the ridge road to the north.

The favourite views within the Blackdown Hills LCA represent views from main roads, lanes and footpaths. Some are panoramic, while others are glimpsed.



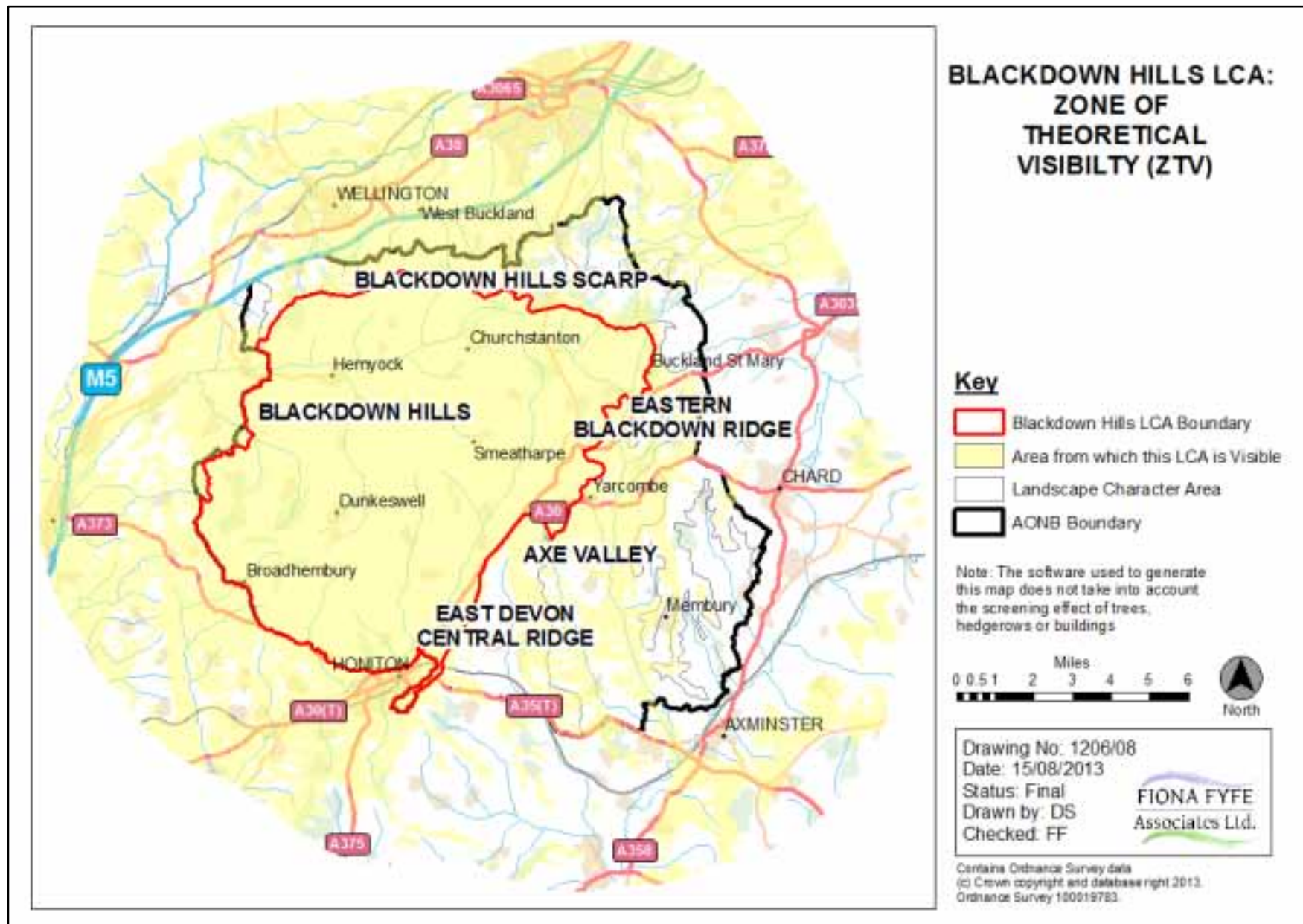
Winter view of the Otter valley from Dumpdon Hillfort ramparts. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Spring in the Otter Valley. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Field patterns near Hemyock. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



EXTENT OF VISIBILITY: From where can the Blackdown Hills LCA be seen?

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map is generated using computer software. The software uses a 3D base map to calculate from where a particular point or area can be seen (see Section 2.2 for more details).

The ZTV map of the Blackdown Hills LCA shows that it can be seen from the adjacent LCAs on all sides, although generally not from far beyond its boundaries. The highest land (for example Dumpdon Hill) is generally the most visible over a long distance but, in views from the adjacent Landscape Character Areas, both the patchwork of fields on valley sides, and the more regular fields and woodland on ridge tops can be seen. From the Blackdown Hills Scarp LCA to the north, the Blackdown Hills LCA appears as a relatively open plateau landscape of large regular fields and prominent beech trees.

The highest parts of the Blackdown Hills LCA can also be seen from further afield, particularly from the west and south beyond the AONB boundary. On clear days it is visible from high land in central Devon, from where it appears as a wooded and incised plateau on the skyline. The northernmost edge of the LCA (where it runs along the ridge of the Blackdown Hills Scarp) can be seen from a considerable distance northwards across the Vale of Taunton.



View of the Blackdown Hills LCA looking west from the A35 above Honiton. The nearest ridge is St Cyres Hill and Luppitt Common, with Hembury Hillfort visible at the end of the ridge beyond. To the left of Hembury can be seen the hills of central Devon as far as Dartmoor. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

EXPRESSING VIEWS OF THE BLACKDOWN HILLS THROUGH WORDS AND IMAGES



Word clouds showing people's descriptions of views of the Blackdown Hills (above), and emotional responses to views (below), as expressed through public consultation questionnaires. The larger the word, the greater its frequency of use



Selected public consultation responses:

**Where is your favourite Blackdowns view?
Why do you like it?**

From the churchyard at Luppitt:

*Two thousand years of history at a glance.
Having moved from the city 22 years ago I can
still hardly believe that I'm lucky enough to live
here.*

Culm Davy, looking down the valley:

*It's magical, and I lived in Hemyock for 4 years
before I discovered it. Now it's my favourite spot
to walk, especially as the sun is going down.*

Lay-by near entrance of Manor House School,
east of Honiton:

*Truly expansive views of the Blackdowns, and
westwards to other parts of Devon.*

The view northwards from Dumpdon Hill:

*'Cos the views from here sum up the character of
the Blackdown Hills. It's lovely!*

Combe Hill looking towards Honiton:

A nice view. I look out for it from the bus.

Luppitt valley from Hartridge:

*...high, exposed, remote, and the views are just
stunning; really special.*

The historic features of this landscape create a sense of timelessness, and the lack of development enables a sense of peace and quietness that is much appreciated by many people, shown by the prominence of the word 'relaxed' in the word cloud. The undeveloped quality of the landscape is apparent in the landscape description word cloud, which highlights adjectives including *green*, *peaceful*, *grassy* and *hilly* to describe the views. The responses also illustrate the close personal connection which many people have with this landscape.

This LCA has an important role in the development of early 20th century English art, as the Camden Town painters (including Robert Bevan) based themselves at Applehayes, Clayhidon. Like several contemporary artists, they were inspired by the patterns within the landscape, and the opportunities they afforded for experimentation with semi-abstract treatment. Often built forms including villages, churches and farms form focal points and contribute to compositions. Further examples of Robert Bevan's paintings around Applehayes are given in Section 5.0.



'Blackwater evening' from an original acrylic painting by contemporary local artist Andrew Bell



'Haze over the valley' by Robert Bevan (c1913). Image © Tate, London. Reproduced with permission



'Clayhidon, Devon' by Charles Ginner (1913). Image © Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter. Reproduced with permission

8.0 EASTERN BLACKDOWN RIDGE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



Location and context

This area comprises a north-south orientated ridge fringed by farmland on the upper slopes of the river valleys which feed into the Axe. This landscape continues across the Devon county boundary into South Somerset District. Its eastern edge is therefore defined by the county (and AONB) boundary, while to the north it is fringed by the distinctive Blackdown Hills Scarp; and to the south and west by the tributary valleys within the Axe Valley.

Summary description (from Devon Landscape Assessment)

This landscape of gently undulating elevated ridges comprises an open and exposed 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, creating a smoother transition between exposed ridge and valley sides. The landscape's strong time-depth is reflected in its historic enclosures, archaeological sites and settlement pattern of small hamlets and dispersed farmsteads. The small villages (eg Buckland St Mary, Whitestaunton) are often surrounded by trees, and their associated church towers act as landmarks within the open elevated landscape.



*Panorama looking south from Beacon Hill, near Combe St Nicholas.
Photo: Fiona Fyfe*



Typical winter ridge-top view near Bewley Down. Note the straight road, beech hedges and regular field pattern. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

WHAT MAKES THE VIEW? Key characteristics of the views associated with this Landscape Character Area

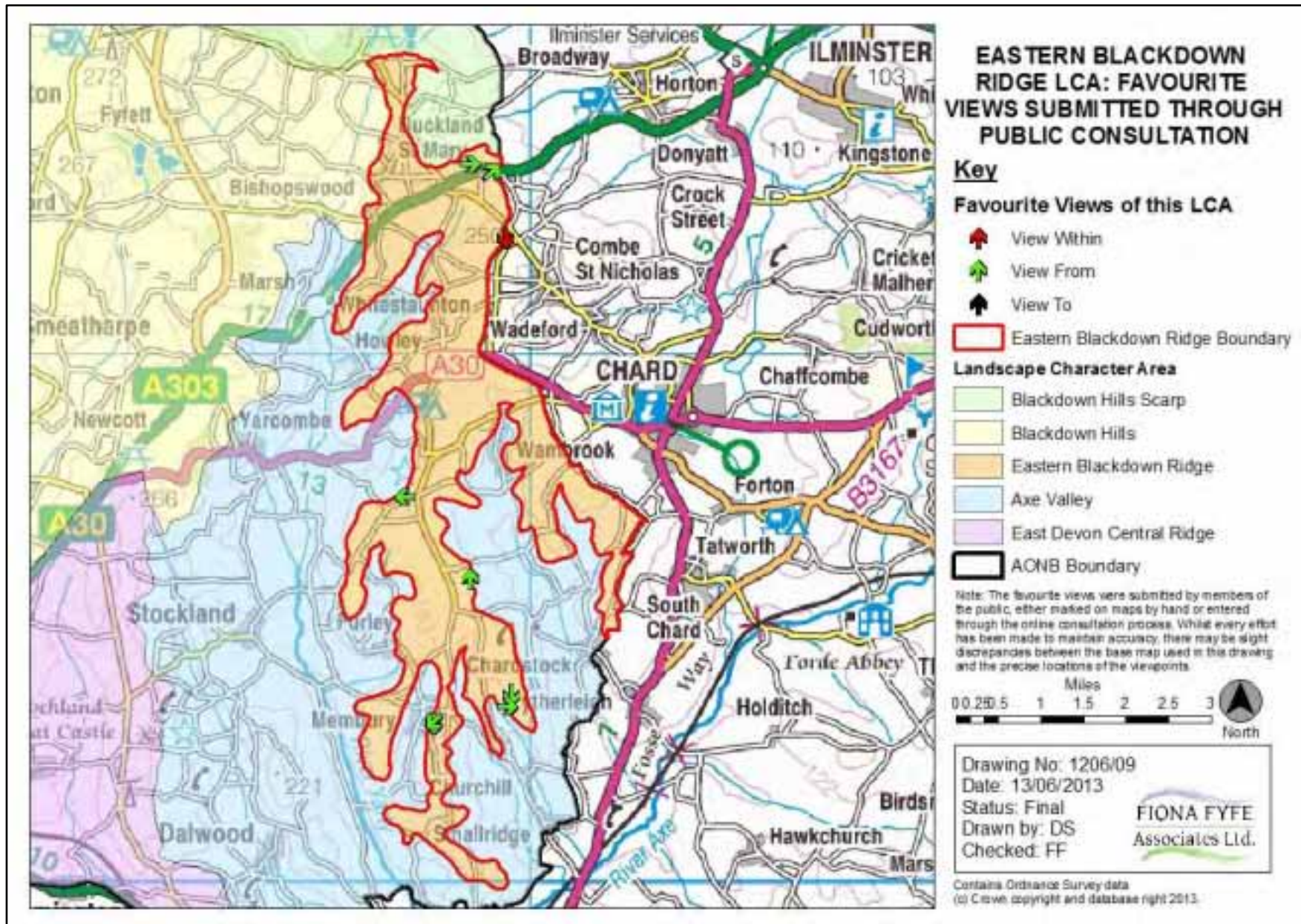
- Wide, open and expansive views across the ridge and down into neighbouring, lower landscapes. Several such elevated views from the ridge were recorded as 'favourite views' in the public consultation.
- Sudden expansive views out (often glimpsed through gateways and framed by valley-side woodland) emphasise the contrast between the open, elevated ridge and surrounding intimate, enclosed valley landscapes.
- Intervisibility with other LCAs within and beyond the AONB: This LCA forms the skyline in views from the east beyond the AONB boundary, and in views from the Axe Valley LCA and East Devon Central Ridge LCA to the west.
- Long views north to the Quantocks, east to higher land in Dorset AONB and south across East Devon AONB to the sea.
- Within the LCA, views are generally open and elevated, often with straight, beech-lined roads running between regular, straight-edged fields.
- Sense of time-depth afforded by hill-top sites, such as Membury Castle and prehistoric barrows.
- Landmarks include occasional church towers, wind-blown beech and hill-top clumps of trees.
- Sense of openness and exposure, heightened by the contrast with views into the surrounding valleys.
- Ridge-top landscape has a sense of remoteness and detachment from the surrounding more settled valleys.



3D aerial image of the Eastern Blackdown Ridge, looking south, showing its straight roads, regular fields, and the way in which it forms the higher land above surrounding valleys

A window on the past

The Devon Historic Landscape characterisation shows a variety of field patterns and ages within the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA. There are many modern and post-medieval fields (reflecting the relatively late enclosure of the land) but there are also pockets of 'Barton Fields' (dating from the 15th to 18th centuries) and examples of Medieval enclosures, particularly around historic farms. There are also small surviving areas of rough ground which add to the texture and variety of the landscape. Place names (eg Turf Moor; Buckland) also provide clues to earlier land uses such as peat digging and hunting.



WHERE ARE THE KEY VIEWS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EASTERN BLACKDOWN RIDGE?

Public consultation and fieldwork identified a number of key views within this LCA. The public consultation revealed clusters of ‘favourite views’ around Membury Castle and Beacon Hill, as well as views from the ridge road along Bewley Down and from high land in the northern part of the LCA looking east across Somerset.

The elevated topography of this LCA, and its ‘fingered’ shape means that almost all views are over surrounding lower land, usually with open fields in the foreground (rather than the fringing woodland associated with other elevated LCAs within the AONB). From some viewpoints within the Eastern Blackdown Ridge, it is possible to see across intervening valleys to another ‘finger’ of the ridge on the opposite side.

Views entirely within the LCA are relatively rare and often include straight roads lined with beech shelter belts and hedgerows, with straight-edged fields on either side.

Although the public consultation did not reveal any favourite views looking towards the Eastern Blackdown Ridge from close viewpoints, it does in fact form the horizon in a number of more distant viewpoints in the Blackdown Hills, Axe Valley and East Devon Central Ridge LCAs and therefore contributes to a number of favourite views.



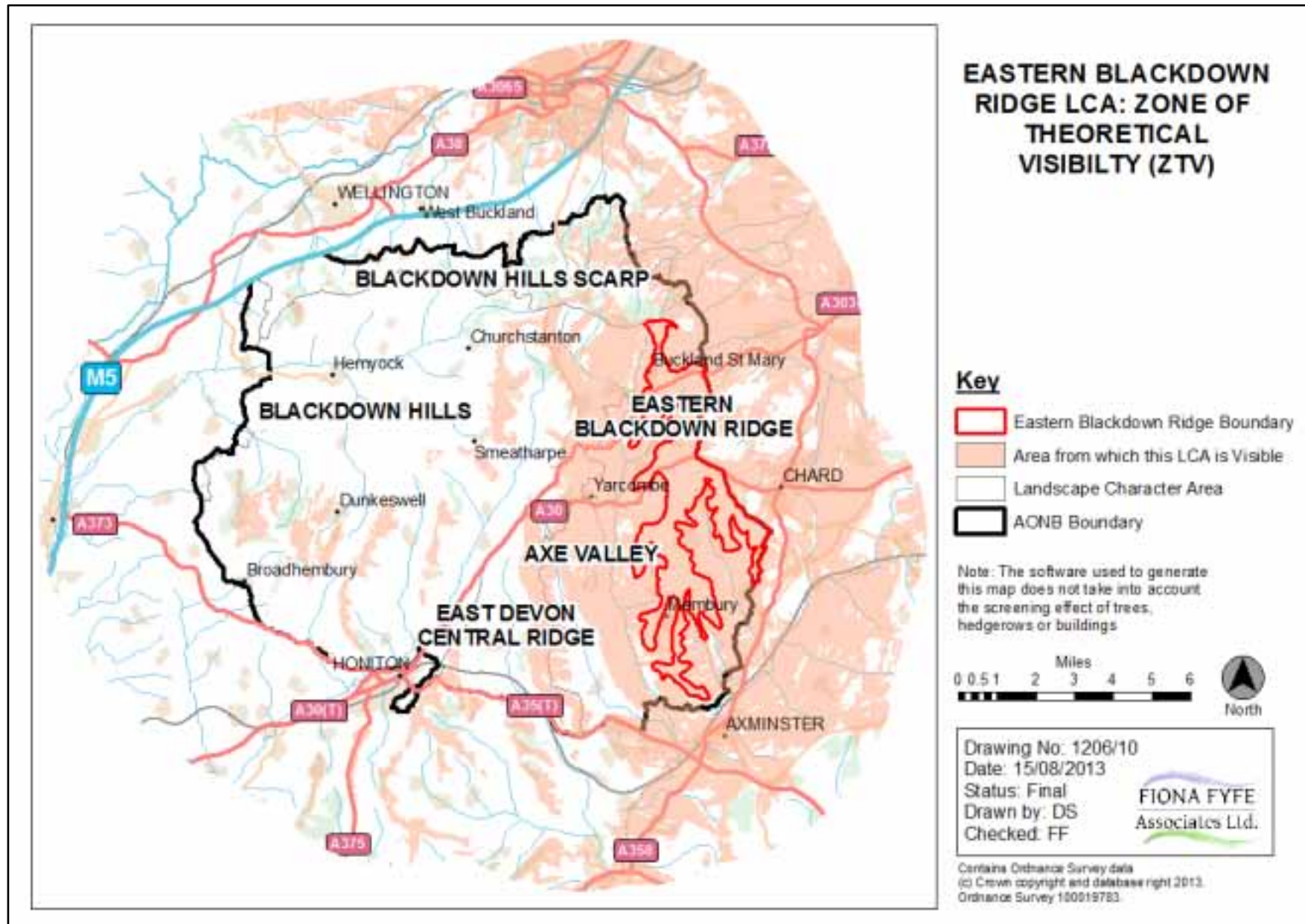
View east from Bewley Down (within the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA) across the Kit Valley (Axe Valley LCA) with the Eastern Blackdown Ridge on the horizon. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Historic earth bank and beech shelter-belt, with the Axe Valley LCA landscape around Membury village visible between the trees. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Buckland St Mary Church is a prominent landmark on the valley side in views from Bishopswood. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



EXTENT OF VISIBILITY: From where can the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA be seen?

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map is generated using computer software. The software uses a 3D base map to calculate from where a particular point or area can be seen (see Section 2.2 for more details).

This ZTV map of the Eastern Blackdown Ridge shows how it can be seen from the surrounding lowland areas (within the AONB and beyond it to the north, east and south) and from high land including the ridges of the Blackdown Hills LCA and the eastern part of the East Devon Central Ridge LCA. The Eastern Blackdown Ridge influences the character of these surrounding Landscape Character Areas through its contribution to their views.

In many of these views, the Eastern Blackdown Ridge forms the skyline and backdrop. Its relative lack of woodland cover means that it often forms a simple, horizontal skyline, occasionally broken by trees growing alongside the ridge-top roads.

As a result of this intervisibility between LCAs, views *from* the Eastern Blackdown Ridge are long and varied. They often occur across valleys (with their extensive woodland and intricate field patterns) towards higher land beyond. Many of the roads and footpaths within the Eastern Blackdown Ridge are lined with hedgerows, and so views often occur suddenly, glimpsed through gateways or along lanes.



Typical view from the open fields of the Eastern Blackdown Ridge into the Yarty Valley (Axe Valley LCA) with Stockland Hill (East Devon Central Ridge LCA) beyond. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



The Eastern Blackdown Ridge forming the horizon as seen from the A358 looking west. Photo taken from outside the AONB boundary. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

[illegible]

A word cloud of adjectives describing feelings. The words are arranged in a roughly circular shape. The most prominent words are 'lonely' and 'happy', both in large, dark green font. Other words include 'relaxed', 'exhilarated', 'fresh', 'brilliant', 'healthy', 'calm', 'tired', 'anxious', 'proud', 'free', 'open', 'angry', 'buzzy', 'satisfied', 'tranquil', 'cleansed with fresh air', 'crazy', 'safe', 'fuzzy', 'involved with farming', 'largeness of sky', 'purposeful', 'awake', 'fresh air', 'small', 'near the sky', 'remote', 'quiet', 'bright', 'comforting', 'silly', 'high', 'delated', 'amazed', 'dull', 'clear', 'alive', and 'structured'. The words are in various colors including green, orange, brown, and purple.

From Bewley Down towards Wambrook: *Top of my ground - especially in winter.*

The descriptive word cloud illustrates the dominance in views of hedged fields and roads, and the geometric pattern resulting from its late enclosure; highlighting words include *straight*, *trees*, *branchy*, *hedgerows* and *road*. Other words such as *man-made*, *electricity poles* and *tidy* also emphasise the strong human influence on this landscape. The open, exposed character of the ridge-top, combined with its lack of woodland and very limited settlement, give this LCA a relatively bleak character. It also has a greater sense of remoteness than many other parts of the AONB, due largely to its sense of distance and detachment from the more settled and verdant valleys which surround it. The varied response to this landscape is reflected in the word cloud, with *lonely*, *exhilarated* and *remote* coming through strongly as well as *relaxed*, *happy* and *fresh*. Responses of *energetic*, *purposeful* and *near the sky* are unique to this LCA.

The views from the ridge to the valleys below are very important to local people, who often walk up to viewpoints such as Membury Castle and Beacon Hill to appreciate the views. The views from the A303 are also appreciated by people travelling by car.

The illustrations below capture two of the distinctive qualities of the Eastern Blackdown Ridge: Its sense of spaciousness, and the strong textures of its beech shelterbelts and hedges that are especially apparent in winter.



'Buckland from the west' from an original acrylic painting by local artist Andrew Bell



'Branchy winter beech trees on the ridge road' by Harry Hawkins, Buckland St Mary Primary School

9.0 AXE VALLEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



Location and context

This LCA is located in the south-east of the AONB and continues south and east beyond the Blackdown Hills AONB into the East Devon AONB. It comprises the broad river valley of the Axe and its tributaries, including the Yarty and Kit. The Axe Valley is orientated north-east to south-west and the tributary valleys penetrate as a series of fingers into the East Devon Central Ridge and the Eastern Blackdown Ridge. This higher land gives the area containment and visually defines the valley landscape unit.

Summary description

(from Devon Landscape Assessment)

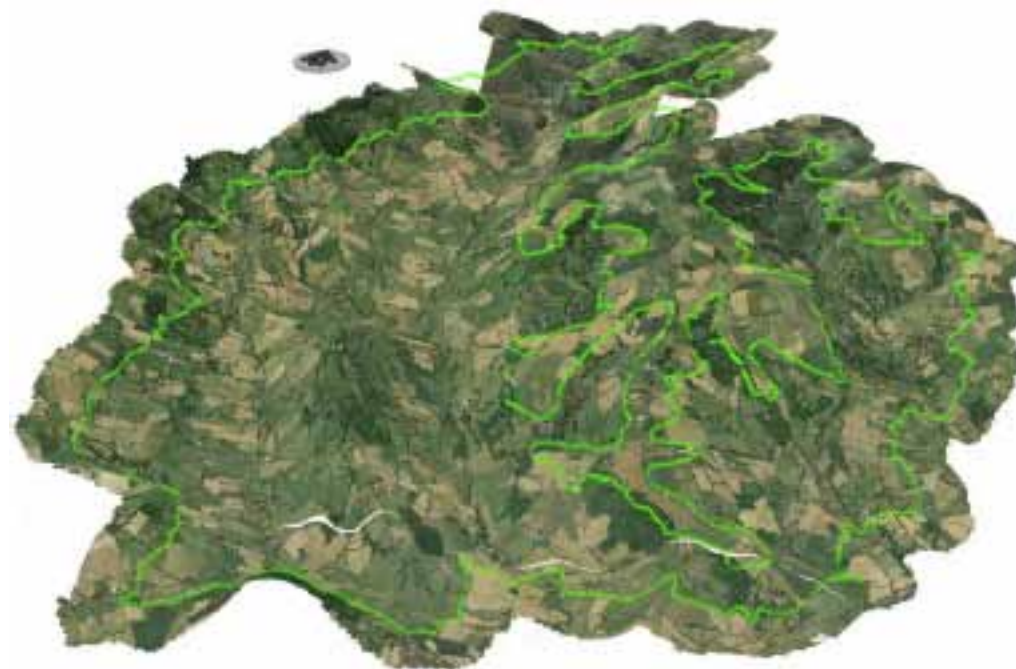
This is a distinctive river valley landscape with a wide floodplain, tightly meandering river course and valley sides which are formed by surrounding higher land. The valley sides have a strong hedgerow pattern with hedgerow trees coupled with small broadleaved woods and occasional farm orchards, giving rise to a generally wooded character overall. Land use is mainly pastoral set within small fields, which give an enclosed and intimate character, although they have notable floodplains. Settlement is focused on the river corridor at key crossing points just above the flood risk areas, and there are also scattered farms often located on the edges of floodplains. At certain times of year this area has a 'watery', ephemeral and timeless quality.



Panorama looking south down the Yarty Valley from Yarcombe. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

WHAT MAKES THE VIEW? Key characteristics of the views associated with this Landscape Character Area

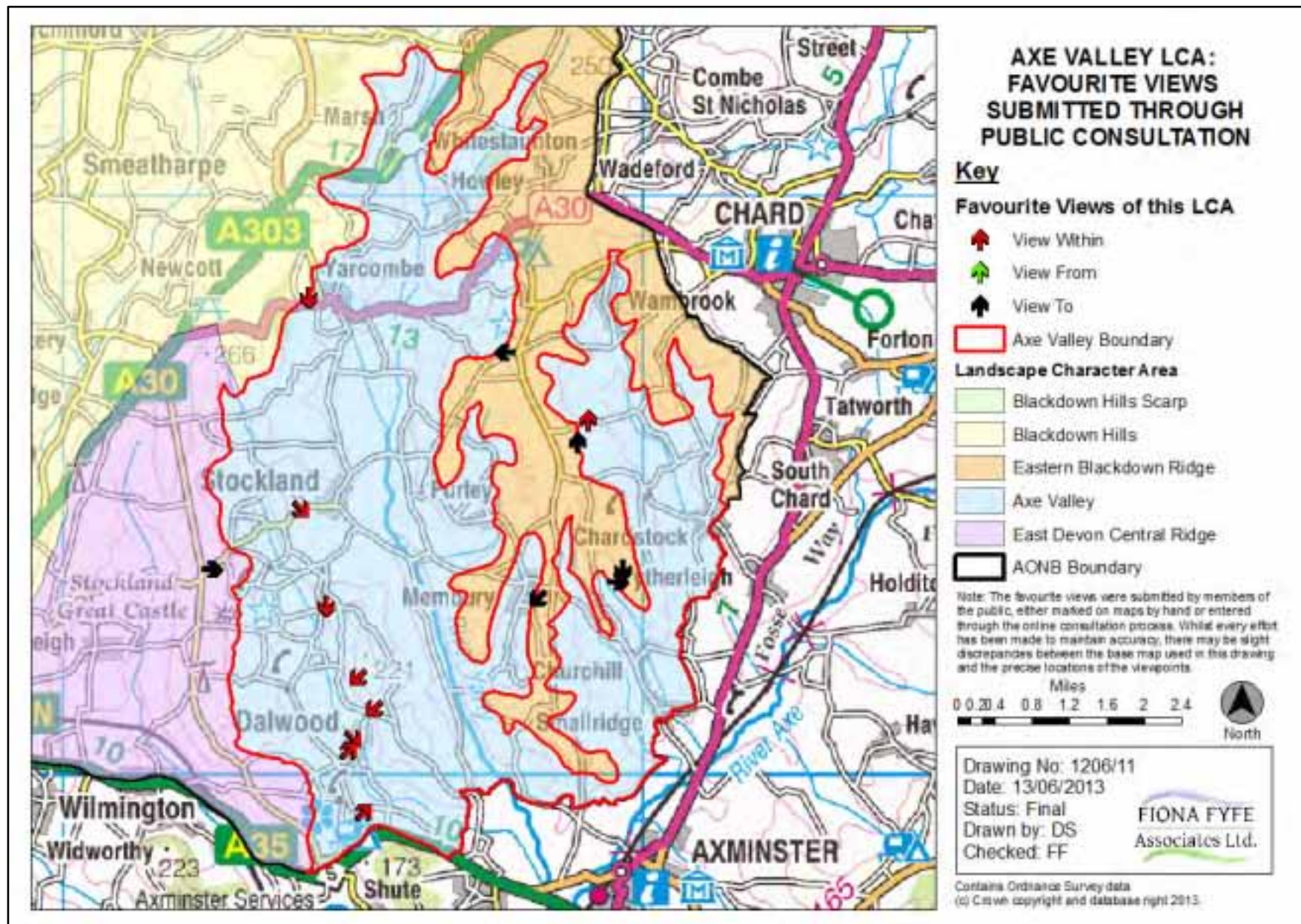
- Within the valleys, views are contained by the surrounding higher land, with the ridges of adjacent LCAs creating distinctive skylines. Occasional longer views occur down valleys and these are often popular viewpoints with local people.
- A generally well-wooded landscape with views often framed by trees creating picturesque compositions.
- Views from valley floors often contain bridges, winding tree-lined streams and farms at the edge of the valley-floor floodplains. Valley sides dominated by woodland and small-scale patterns of hedgerows and fields.
- Views are of a long-settled landscape with historic villages (some with church towers) on valley sides connected by winding lanes, paths and scattered farms.
- Wide, panoramic views across the Axe Valley LCA seen from adjacent higher land. These views contribute to the sense of place of adjacent LCAs, particularly the Eastern Blackdown Ridge.
- Views of the Axe Valley LCA often experienced from main roads (A303, A30 and A35 all pass through the LCA).
- Much of the LCA has a strong sense of tranquillity and timelessness, although the power of flood water is apparent at certain times of year.



3D aerial image of the Axe Valley LCA, showing (from left to right) the valleys of the Corry Brook, Yarty and Kit

A window on the past

The Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation for this area shows a very high proportion of Medieval enclosures based on strip-fields, especially in the south. There are also water-meadows (which are likely to date from the Medieval period), woodland, post-Medieval enclosures, Barton Fields (large fields dating from the 15th to 18th centuries) and modern enclosures. Together they form an enclosed landscape with a 'patchwork' appearance.



WHERE ARE THE KEY VIEWS ASSOCIATED WITH THE AXE VALLEY?

Public consultation and fieldwork revealed many viewpoints within or overlooking the Axe Valley LCA. The public's favourite views within the LCA are generally in the area to the south of Stockland village, looking east across the Yarty Valley and west over the valley of the Corry Brook. People also appreciate the long views seen from these viewpoints, with the sea visible on clear days. Views south along the Yarty valley from Yarcombe (including the view from the A30) are also appreciated by the public.

The Axe Valley LCA is also a key component of many favourite views from surrounding higher land, including views from the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA and the East Devon Central Ridge LCA.

Fieldwork revealed many more excellent views within the valleys themselves and also looking into the valleys from surrounding high land. These views are generally dominated by the patchwork field patterns on the valley sides, and have a strong pastoral quality and a sense of time-depth. In the valley bottoms views are dominated by the rivers, which meander through flat water-meadows, often lined with riparian trees. Farms (many with historic farmhouses and buildings) are located near the bases of the valley sides above the level of seasonal floods.



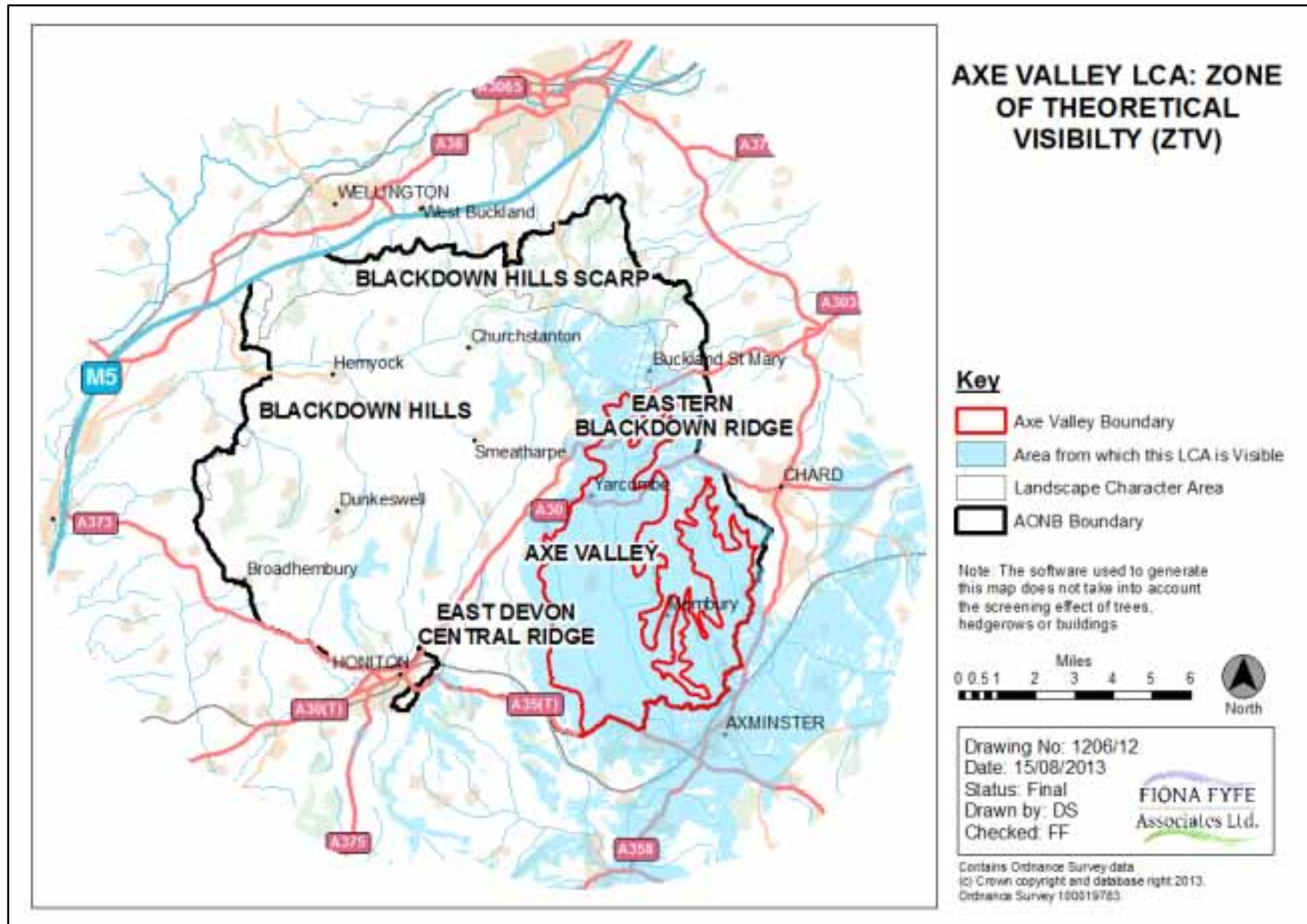
Rainbow in the Yarty Valley. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Looking down on Membury from the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



The River Yarty and its floodplain west of Membury. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



EXTENT OF VISIBILITY: From where can the Axe Valley LCA be seen?

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map is generated using computer software. The software uses a 3D base map to calculate from where a particular point or area can be seen (see Section 2.2 for more details).

The ZTV map opposite shows how visible the Axe Valley LCA is from the surrounding higher land of the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA and the edges of the East Devon Central Ridge LCA. There are also views southwards into the Axe Valley LCA from the eastern part of the Blackdown Hills LCA. This intervisibility is an important component in the views and the landscape character of all these LCAs.

Topography restricts the visibility of the Axe Valley LCA from the north and west, but it is visible from elevated land to the south-east (beyond the Blackdown Hills AONB boundary) over a considerable distance.



Valley-side woodland and fields to the south of Stockland village. The Eastern Blackdown Ridge forms the horizon. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



View south from Chardstock along the Kit valley towards Axminster, with high hills to the south of the AONB visible on the horizon. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

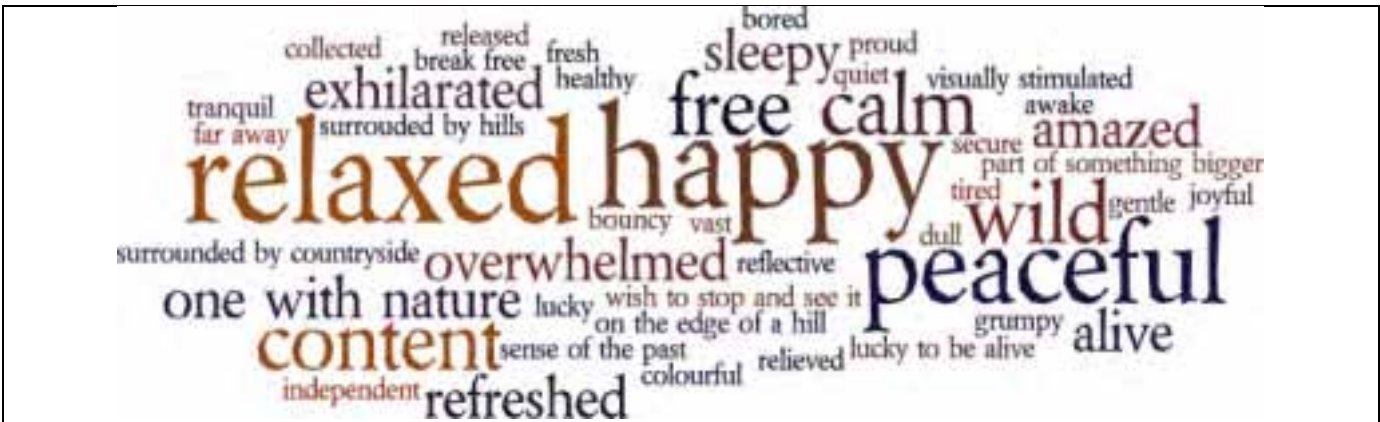


Northern end of the Yarty Valley as seen from the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

EXPRESSING VIEWS OF THE AXE VALLEY THROUGH WORDS AND IMAGES



Word clouds showing people's descriptions of views of the Axe Valley LCA (above), and emotional responses to views (below), as expressed through public consultation questionnaires. The larger the word, the greater its frequency of use



Selected public consultation responses:

**Where is your favourite
Blackdowns view?
*Why do you like it?***

Heathstock:

We can see down the valley, over the fields and to the sea on a clear day.

Danes Hill from the lane just south of Dalwood:

*With sheep, and preferably with
daffodils on the verge bank.*

From the Yarcombe area, looking south:

A wonderful patchworked valley.

Footpath on Horner Hill (turbary land):

The view across the valley to Stockland Hill and also down to the sea (on a clear day!)

The descriptive word cloud emphasises the pastoral quality of this LCA; its patchwork of fields and its strong sense of time depth. *Patchwork* and *sheep* were the most frequently mentioned descriptions followed by *farms*, *hedgerows*, *valley*, *fields* and *trees*. Words such as *pastoral*, *peaceful* and *ancient landscape* also appeared in responses. The emotional response to the softness of this landscape is apparent through the frequency of words such as *relaxed*, *happy*, *peaceful*, *calm*, *free* and *content*.

The public consultation responses on why people like their favourite views within this LCA emphasised the length of the views down the valley (the sea is visible on a clear day), the patchwork patterns of the fields, and the presence of animals and wildflowers.

Artists' responses to views in the Axe Valley LCA capture the texture and sense of depth within the valley landscape, as well as its field patterns and changing light and weather. Water and trees are key elements of views in the valley bottoms and have been utilised in the creation of artworks which are intended to evoke the qualities of this landscape.



'Rain approaching' from an original painting by local artist Liz Gregory



'Rainbow in the Yarty Valley' by Jess, Churchstanton Primary School



Art in the landscape:

After initially painting on raw canvases, inspired by the art of fly-fishing and the markings on brown trout, I placed them into or on the banks of the Yarty for a period of time to allow nature to have an effect on paint and canvas before returning them to my studio to produce finished artworks.
Local artist Bronwen Gundry

10.0 EAST DEVON CENTRAL RIDGE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA



Location and context

This landscape shares many of the characteristics of the Blackdown Hills LCA and is physically separated from that area by the upper Otter valley. It comprises a greensand ridge, which forms a central spine to East Devon, that continues south of the A30 and Honiton, and that narrows at its northern end to form a triangle-shape within the AONB. To the east is a gradual transition to lower lying farmland and the River Axe's tributary valley the Yarty.

Summary description (from Devon Landscape Assessment)

This landscape comprises an elevated, rolling ridge fringed by steep, scarp slopes and upper valley farmland. The main ridge forms a distinctive spine to East Devon, with its northern finger sitting between the upper Otter valley and the Yarty valley. 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. The TV transmitter on Stockland Hill is a prominent local landmark.



Panorama looking north over the East Devon Central Ridge LCA, near Royal Oak Cross. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

WHAT MAKES THE VIEW? Key characteristics of the views associated with this Landscape Character Area

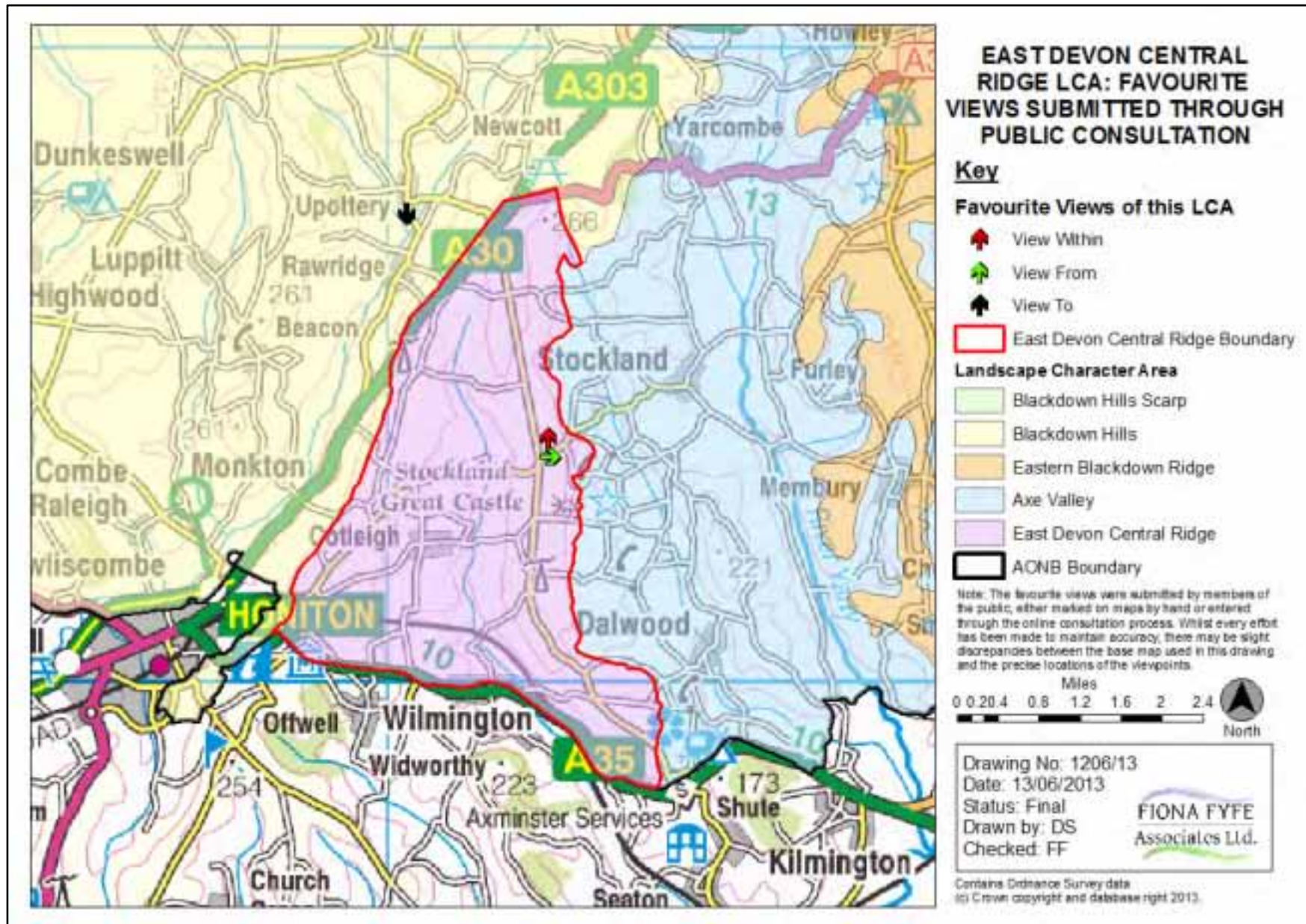
- Views within this LCA include the higher, slightly rolling land of the ridge dominated by straight roads and field patterns, and linear blocks of woodland. Stockland Castle adds a sense of time-depth.
- LCA visible from the east across the Yarty valley and also from the north. Landform reduces its visibility in views from the west.
- Southern part of the LCA appears as a more wooded horizon than the northern part.
- LCA forms the setting to Honiton and to the Yarty and Otter river valleys. In these views the LCA forms an elevated backdrop and also contributes to their sense of enclosure.
- Location of the ridge easily identifiable in views from other LCAs by the prominent TV transmitter on Stockland Hill. However, while the TV transmitter is visible over a wide area, the ridge itself is often less apparent.
- Views out from the LCA (particularly from ridges) often have long, plateau-like foregrounds and look across to distant high ground (with regular field patterns and an open quality) rather than down into adjacent valleys. Many views seen over the tops of the woodland on the sides of the ridge.
- Views within and out of the LCA often glimpsed through field gates and along roads. Wide hedgerows lining the roads often create a sense of enclosure and a lack of awareness of the landscape beyond the ridge.
- Long views south from the southern part of the LCA, over East Devon AONB to the sea and west as far as Dartmoor.
- A strong sense of elevation and a lack of settlement in much of the area lending a sense of isolation.



3D aerial image of the East Devon Central Ridge LCA, showing the main ridge (Stockland Hill) on the right, and the secondary ridge east of Monkton on the left. Between them is the valley of the Umborne brook.

A window on the past

The Historic Landscape Characterisation shows this LCA to be dominated by straight-edged 18th and 19th century fields, particularly along Stockland Hill road. This reflects the extensive enclosure of upland common land that took place at this time. There are also extensive areas of modern enclosures adapting Medieval fields, and smaller pockets of Medieval enclosures particularly on valley sides. Around Cotleigh there are small areas of 'Barton Fields' thought to date from the 15th to 18th centuries. There are also scattered, small areas of ancient woodland and rough ground particularly on steep valley sides.



WHERE ARE THE KEY VIEWS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EAST DEVON CENTRAL RIDGE?

Two 'favourite views' from this LCA were submitted by members of the public, both from the high point of Royal Oak Cross. One was a view northwards into this LCA, and one was a view eastwards over the adjoining Axe Valley LCA.

Fieldwork revealed that while there are many good views from the East Devon Central Ridge, views are often restricted by topography (the broad, relatively flat summit of the ridge can limit the visibility of views out) and also by the presence of hedgerows which block views from lanes and often only enable glimpsed views through gateways. Some views are only apparent in winter when the beech trees and hedges have lost their leaves. These factors may account for the low number of favourite views recorded in this LCA in the public consultation.

Although views out from the East Devon Central Ridge LCA may be limited, views towards it are very frequent, and it forms an important skyline to many views within the AONB. The nearest favourite view recorded in the public consultation is the view south from Upottery (in the Blackdown Hills LCA), but the East Devon Central Ridge (locally known as Stockland Hill) forms an important feature on the horizon of many more favourite views within the Blackdown Hills, Axe Valley and Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCAs.



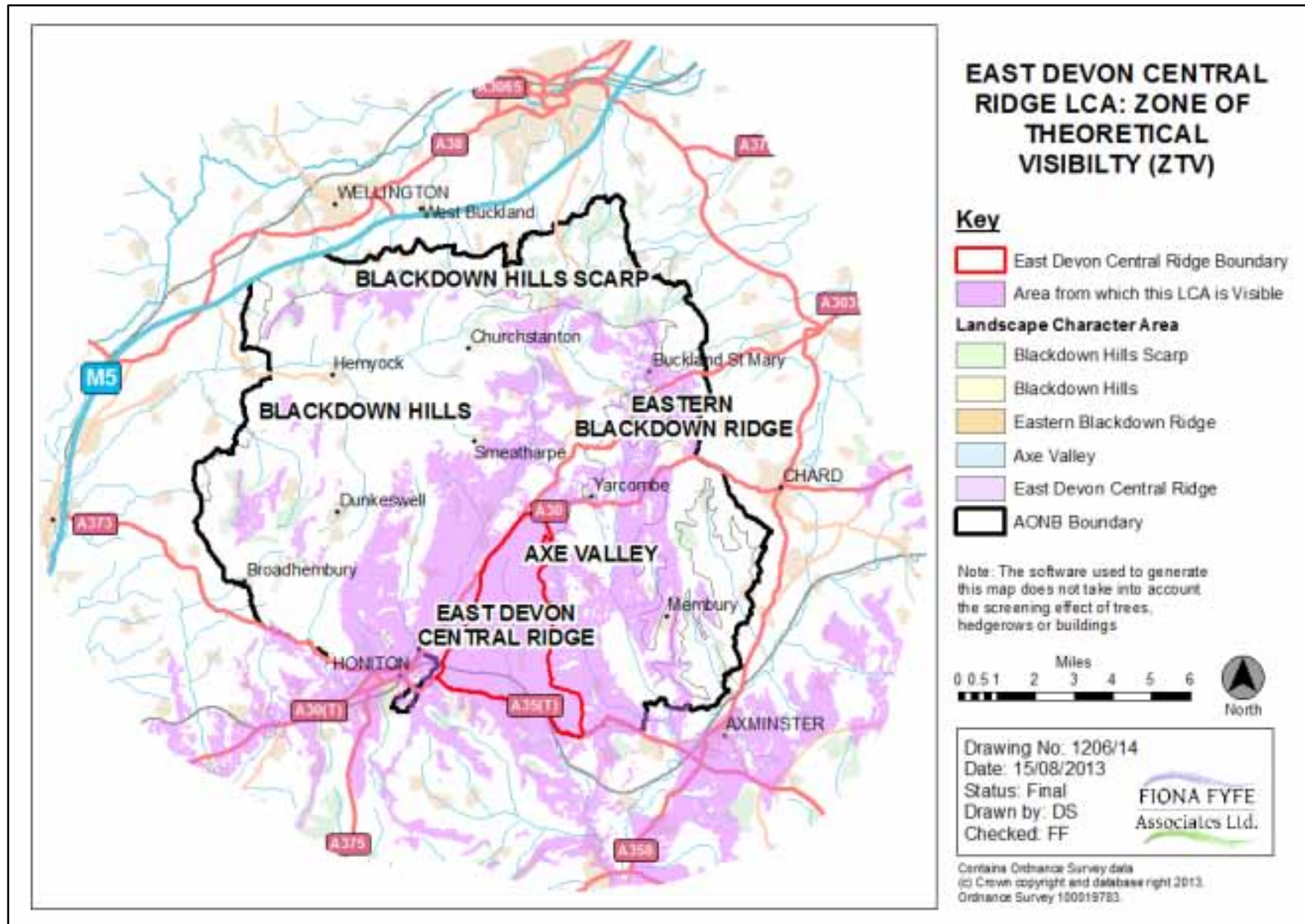
A typical roadside view, showing Stockland Hill road near the TV transmitter. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



A glimpsed winter view from Stockland Hill road into the adjacent valley. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



View into the Yarty Valley (Axe Valley LCA) from near Royal Oak Cross. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



EXTENT OF VISIBILITY: From where can the East Devon Central Ridge LCA be seen?

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map is generated using computer software. The software uses a 3D base map to calculate from where a particular point or area can be seen (see Section 2.2 for more details).

The map shows how the East Devon Central Ridge is visible in views to the north, east, west and south. However its visibility is limited by the surrounding landform of high ridges.

This LCA has a strong influence on views from the adjacent Axe Valley LCA, from which it forms the backdrop. It is also an important component in views across the Axe Valley LCA from the Eastern Blackdown Ridge LCA beyond.

The elevation of the East Devon Central Ridge LCA means that it forms the skyline in views from the surrounding area, with the TV transmitter on Stockland Hill a prominent feature.

Its height means that it is intervisible with all the LCAs within the AONB (to varying extents). From the northern part of the East Devon Central Ridge LCA it is possible to see the Wellington Monument which is located in the Blackdowns Scarp LCA.



Stockland Hill forms the horizon in views from Beacon Hill in the Axe Valley LCA. Note the TV transmitter on the horizon. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Stockland Hill TV transmitter is visible over the trees from this lane on the eastern side of Stockland Hill. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



View into the Blackdown Hills LCA from the northern end of Stockland Hill road. Buildings on Dukeswell airfield, and the Wellington Monument, are visible from this point. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

EXPRESSING VIEWS OF THE EASTERN BLACKDOWN RIDGE THROUGH WORDS AND IMAGES



Word clouds showing people's descriptions of views of the East Devon Central Ridge LCA (above), and emotional responses to views (below), as expressed through public consultation questionnaires. The larger the word, the greater its frequency of use



Selected public consultation responses:

Where is your favourite Blackdowns view? Why do you like it?

The view as you turn to Stockland from the Royal Oak Crossroads and go a couple of hundred yards down the hill to the bend:

Because all of a sudden there is the most amazing view of the Blackdown Hills lying below and afar.



'View from Stockland Hill' by Alex Albon, Buckland St Mary Primary School

The simple and open qualities of views in this LCA are reflected in the descriptive word cloud: *hilly, green, grassy, open* and *trees* being the most frequent responses. Structures stand out in this relatively uncluttered landscape and their presence is apparent through the inclusion of words such as *telephone pole* and *electricity lines*. Emotional responses such as *calm* and *relaxed* may well be due to the stillness of the landscape away from Stockland Hill road and the lack of development, although *overwhelmed* also features perhaps as a result of the scale of the views. The inclusion of words such as *spacious, free* and *unrestricted* emphasise the landscape's open qualities and long views.

There were relatively few 'favourite views' recorded in this LCA, but those submitted refer to the expansiveness of views into adjacent LCAs.

The paintings below by Andrew Bell capture the simple, convex landform, its sense of openness and its distinctive field patterns. They also give a sense of the LCA's elevation in relation to the surrounding land, and how it is often viewed across lower lying valleys.



'Towards Stockland' an original acrylic painting by local artist Andrew Bell



'Stockland' an original acrylic painting by local artist Andrew Bell

PART 3

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT TOOL

11.0 USING THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT TOOL

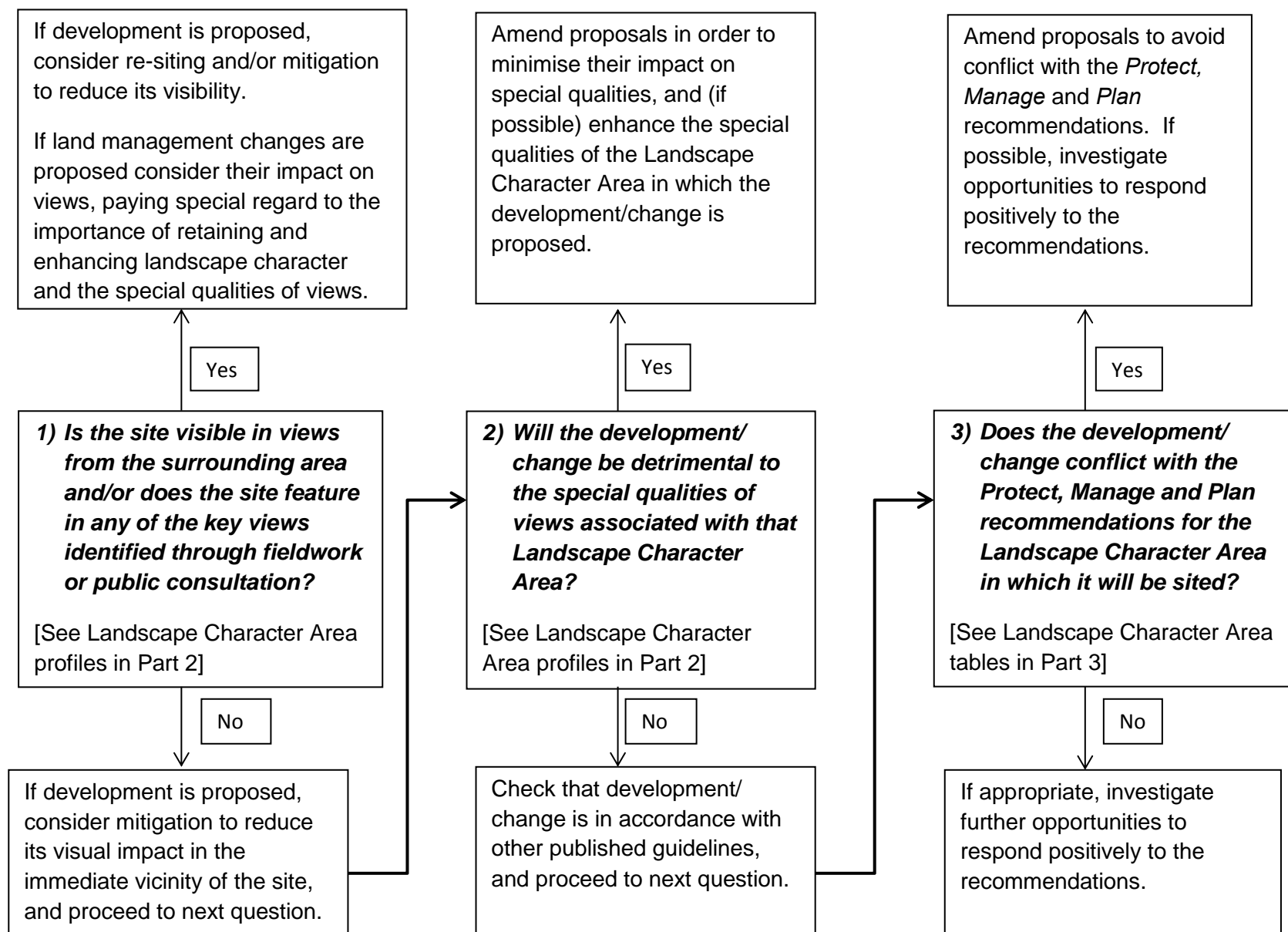
This part of the report follows on from the analysis of views set out in the previous section. It provides a series of positive recommendations for planning and management in order to retain and enhance the special qualities of the AONB's views. It is intended for use (in conjunction with other relevant documents such as the *AONB Management Plan*, *Design Guide for Houses* and *The Devon Landscape Assessment*) by a wide variety of users including:

- AONB staff
- Farmers and land managers
- Private developers
- Parish councils
- Governmental bodies (for example Defra; the Highways Agency; Forestry Commission)
- Utility and energy companies
- Local authorities (including planners, highways departments, rights of way officers, etc)

It begins with an overview of the forces for change acting on views within the Blackdown Hills and then sets out a series of planning and management recommendations on a Landscape Character Area basis. A series of special qualities relating to views are identified for each of the five Landscape Character Areas within the AONB, along with their sensitivities in relation to forces for change. Recommendations are then made to protect and enhance these special qualities in accordance with the European Landscape Convention approach of *Protect*, *Manage* and *Plan*.

The Planning and Management Tool acknowledges that the Blackdown Hills are a working and dynamic landscape, with a need to respond to 21st century issues. At the same time it aims to protect and enhance the views that make the Blackdown Hills so special and worthy of protection.

The following flowchart contains a series of questions which should be addressed when considering new development or land management changes in relation to conserving and enhancing the special qualities of views in the AONB, demonstrating how this document may be used:



12.0 CHANGING VIEWS OF THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

The AONB Management Plan 2009 - 2014 lists a number of Forces for Change acting on the landscapes of the Blackdown Hills. These changes take a variety of forms and result from land management changes (eg changes in agricultural subsidies and agri-environment schemes), environmental changes (eg climate change; tree disease) and developmental changes (eg demand for new roads, housing, industrial infrastructure, etc). Because of the extensive nature of views from the Blackdown Hills (particularly towards the north) they are affected by changes over a large surrounding area, as well by as changes within the AONB itself.

12.1 *Agricultural change*

These changes are largely either politically or economically driven and result from changes in European funding for farmers and other land managers . Because of the close relationship between agriculture and the appearance of the land, these changes can have fundamental impacts on landscape character and views. The current Environmental Stewardship (ES) scheme, which followed the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme, comes to an end in 2013. There will be a 12-month interim period during which the next agri-environment scheme is designed. There is concern that the lack of smooth transition from one scheme to another could have a detrimental impact on the landscape. The detail of the new environmental land management scheme is not yet known but it will incorporate ES, Catchment Sensitive Farming and the English Woodland Grant Scheme. The changes from the ESA scheme to ES scheme saw a decrease in the availability of capital grants for repairs to landscape features such as hedgerows and historic farm buildings. These are only available through the Higher Level Scheme, which is open to a limited number of farmers. Also the uptake of agri-environment schemes in the Blackdown Hills has been lower than in other protected landscapes in the South West.



'Blackdowns Farm' from an original painting by local artist John Nutt



'Blue tractor' from sketchbook of local artist Liz Gregory. The size of the tractor (and the bales) are becoming things of the past

Therefore there is a real risk that traditional landscape features will be lost because it is not in farmers' interests to keep them in good repair. Nor is there currently any special protection for road verges, ponds or streams making them vulnerable to damage, removal or poor management.

The Blackdown Hills AONB is within a Catchment Sensitive Farming target area, and this may also have impacts on the traditional appearance of the area's agricultural landscapes. Catchment sensitive farming requires the minimisation of pollution of watercourses and to achieve this it may be necessary to cover cattle yards, fence watercourses, etc.

Changes in land ownership often result in the amalgamation of several smaller holdings into a single large farm unit. Such farms require larger infrastructure, buildings, etc and these can impact on views and landscape character. Agricultural diversification schemes (such as the conversion of barns to holiday lets, or the use of land for caravan sites) can also affect the appearance of the landscape.

Changes in crops and farming techniques, for example bio-fuel crops, oil-seed rape, flax, crops under fibre membranes or plastic, etc all affect the pattern and appearance of the landscape and may require the construction of new large buildings. Insensitive equine-related activity can also result in poor fencing, rank grassland and a loss of landscape quality. The movement away from grazing of animals on commons and other open areas is also a barrier to managing and maintaining characteristic landscape and biodiversity features such as lowland heaths and unimproved/ semi-improved grassland.

However the practical applications of the European Landscape Convention are increasing understanding of the relationship between agricultural management and landscape character. National agencies are now using Landscape Character Assessment to guide landscape-scale change and initiatives, and this will hopefully enable traditional landscape management techniques to be financially sustainable.



'Blackdown barns' from an acrylic painting by local artist Andrew Bell



'Seed drill' by Liz Gregory, painted as part of a Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers project to record changes in farming in the AONB

12.2 Landscape and environmental change

Many key landscape features are vulnerable to climate change. For example, changes in temperature and/or humidity are likely to affect the species composition of woodlands, grasslands and other habitats. They may well also affect farmers' choices of crops and stock types, and this will have impacts on the appearance of the landscape. If storms increase in frequency and intensity, then trees are at risk, especially mature specimens on ridge tops, and the loss of the skyline shelter belts would change the appearance of the Blackdown Hills ridges.

Changes in environmental conditions may also lead to new types of tree disease. The current outbreaks of *Phytophthora* pathogens (particularly affecting larch and oak) and *Chalara fraxinea* affecting ash trees are a cause of major concern, and their potential impacts on the woodlands of the Blackdown Hills are not yet known. Changing weather patterns can also cause damage to other landscape features. For example, flooding in autumn 2012, which followed a period of unusually intense rainfall, caused damage to roads and historic valley features such as fords and bridges, as well as undercutting hedgebanks alongside narrow lanes on valley sides.

Other environmental changes have occurred as a result of past and recent land management decisions. For example, forestry planting, mineral workings, hedgerow removal, and the draining and improvement of heaths and wetlands for agriculture have all affected the appearance of the landscape and fragmented its habitats.

In places some of these past changes are being addressed through the restoration and management of heathland, scrub, grassland, woodland and mire habitats through grant schemes and projects, including Environmental Stewardship, which should have positive impacts on the area's distinctive landscape character and views.



Beech trees (such as these on the path to the Wellington Monument on the top of the scarp) are potentially vulnerable to climatic changes.
Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Flood damage in the Yarty Valley, December 2012. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

12.3 Built environment change

As well as being a protected landscape with exceptional views, the Blackdown Hills AONB is also home to a living and working community, and so a balance must be struck between the social and economic needs of the area's residents and its traditional appearance.

Providing for the on-going need for housing presents a challenge to communities within and outside the AONB. Some villages in the AONB (eg Hemyock) have seen housing infill within the historic core of the settlement, while others (eg Dunkeswell) have large estates on their outskirts. Throughout the AONB there is a risk of creeping suburbanisation as a result of (for example) small-scale domestic extensions and alterations, barn conversions, street lighting, visibility splays, non-native planting, etc.

There is also a potential conflict between increasing economic activity in the area and maintaining the natural beauty and tranquillity of the AONB. For example, the large-scale buildings associated with industrial uses around Dunkeswell airfield are highly visible in the landscape. Increased need for communications masts (for new generation mobile phone networks for example) may also impact on views, particularly if they are sited in prominent skyline positions.



The village of Hemyock has expanded considerably in recent years. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Industrial development at Dunkeswell airfield. Photo: Fiona Fyfe

12.4 Energy and transport change

Increasing traffic levels and the upgrading of roads will impact on views and tranquillity. The use of unnecessarily intrusive road signage and the introduction of suburban-style traffic calming schemes, for example can also impact on views and erode the character of rural roads.

The need for renewable energy is also affecting the landscapes and views of the Blackdown Hills. Small-scale schemes (eg small wind turbines and domestic solar panels) can have cumulative impacts, while larger schemes such as wind and solar farms (including sites beyond the AONB boundary) introduce features that can impact on views and landscape character. The interest in growing wood as a sustainable fuel source may potentially affect landscape patterns and textures, as does the growing of bio-mass crops.

High-voltage electricity cables and their associated pylons cross the southern part of the Blackdown Hills AONB, and have a strong impact on views in their vicinity, particularly where they are seen against the sky. Future changes to the National Grid could require additional electricity transmission lines.



The A303 at Marsh. Photo: Linda Bennett



Pylons crossing the Yarty valley near the southern boundary of the AONB. Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Domestic photo-voltaic solar panels

Examples of existing small-scale renewable energy schemes in the Blackdown Hills AONB. Photos: Fiona Fyfe



Wind turbine

12.5 Addressing change

Some of these issues are already being addressed, for example through the production of design guidance for the AONB that advises on incorporating traditional materials, methods and siting into new housing developments, thereby enabling development to enhance landscape character and built form where it appears in views. Current levels of tranquillity and dark skies are also being safeguarded through planning considerations.

Addressing leisure and recreation needs in the Blackdown Hills creates an opportunity to provide safe routes for horse riders, cyclists and the less mobile to experience and enjoy the area's views. These routes (which must be created in a sensitive way which is not detrimental to the landscape) also provide an opportunity to promote the Blackdown Hills to specialist recreational groups such as artists and photographers.

The following pages set out the particular sensitivities of views associated with each of the Landscape Character Areas within the AONB and provide a series of recommendations for retaining and enhancing the special qualities of these views.

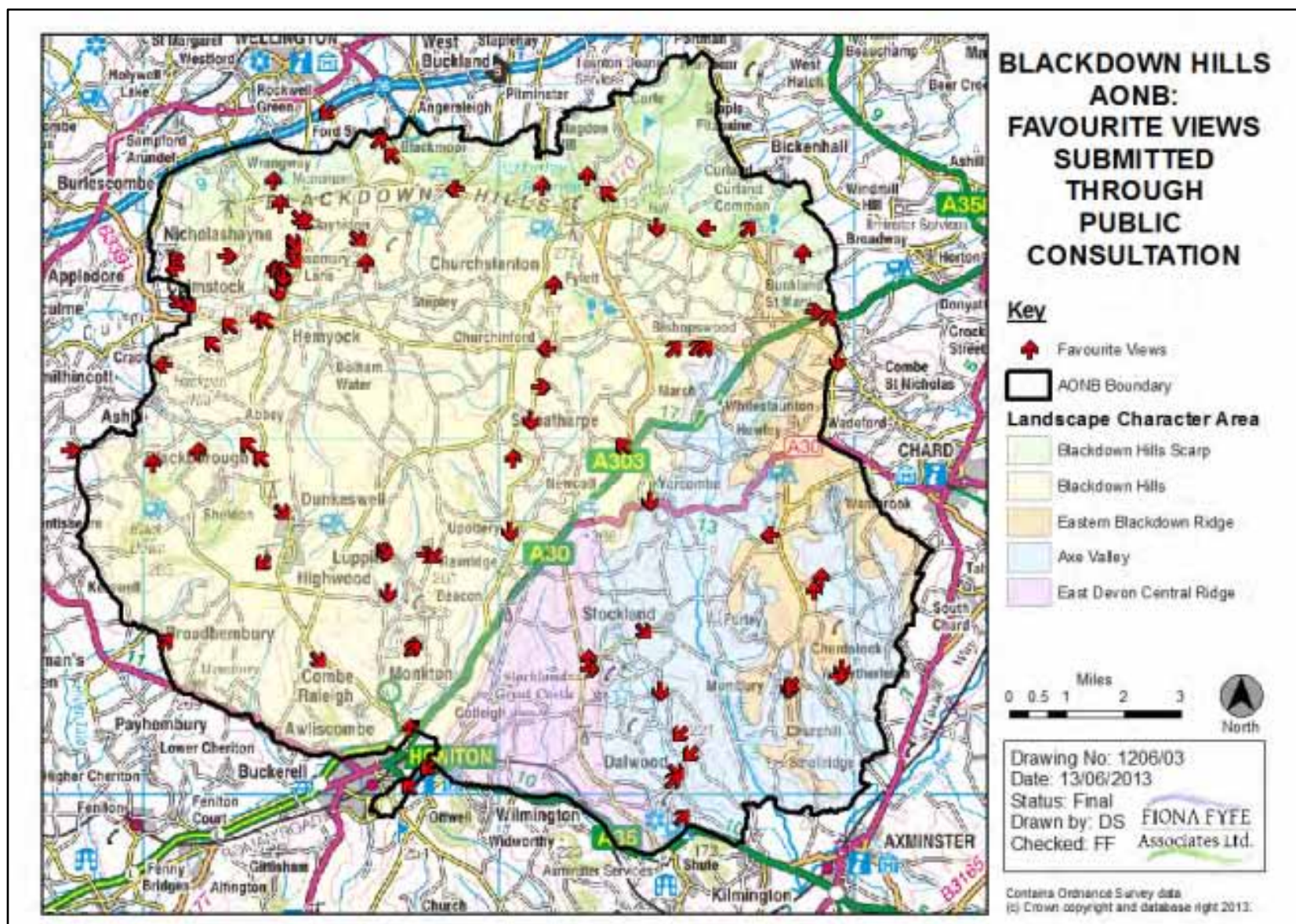


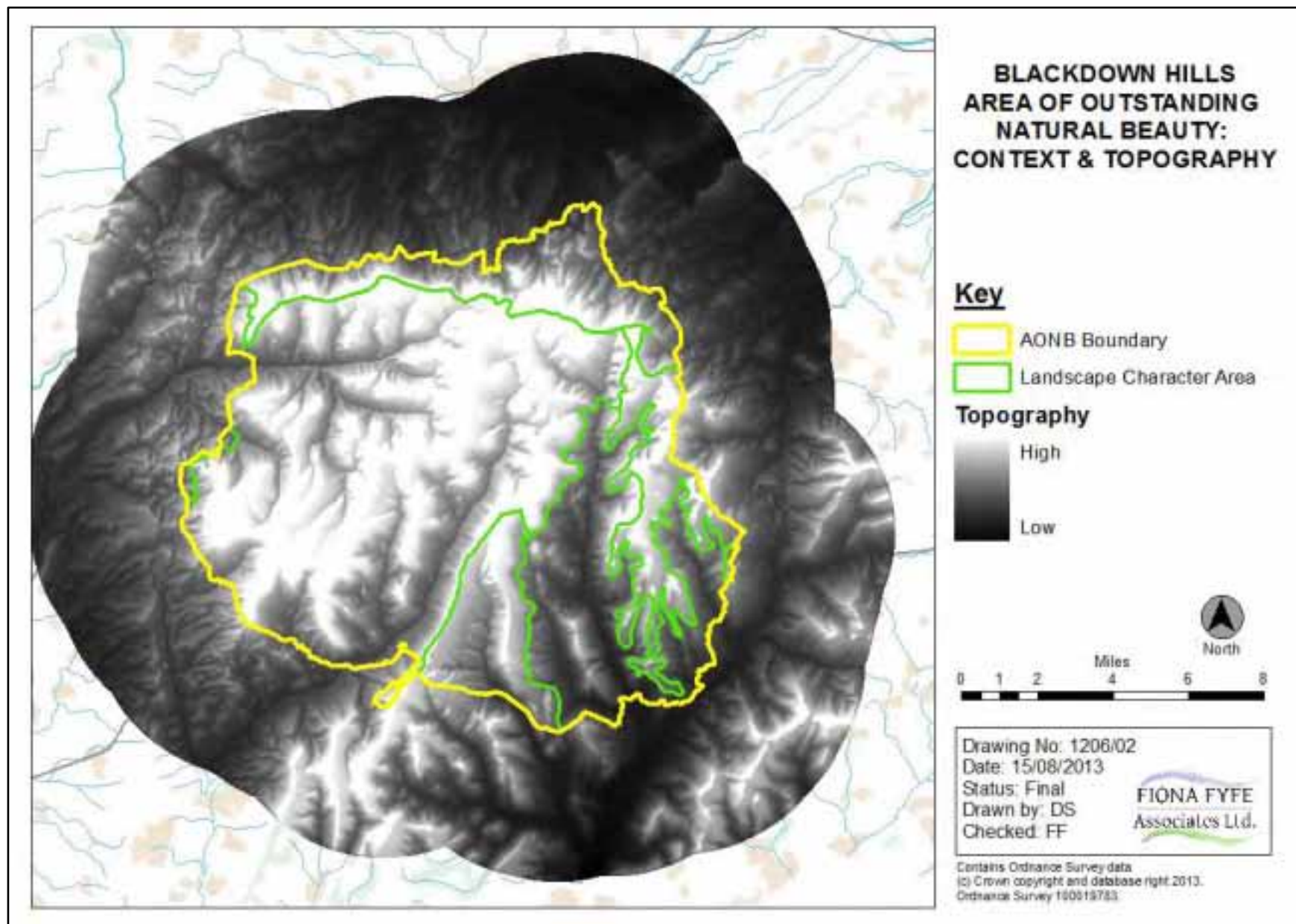
Sympathetic modern development using traditional materials and techniques at Bishopswood.

Photo: Fiona Fyfe



Traditionally laid hedge with standard beech trees near Membury. Photo: Fiona Fyfe





BLACKDOWN HILLS SCARP LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

SENSITIVITIES OF VIEWS

Special qualities of views	Sensitivities of views in relation to forces for change
A prominent, undeveloped skyline, particularly in views from the north, and also to the east and west.	Introduction of built structures onto the skyline which would potentially be visible over a very wide area.
Long views across the Vale of Taunton, the Somerset Levels and central Devon.	Development in the surrounding area changing the character of views from the scarp, for example through the extension of urban areas.
A sense of detachment from surrounding settlements and transport corridors.	Traffic noise, particularly from the ridge road within the AONB and the M5 beyond the AONB boundary.
Avenues of beech trees, and beech hedges along the ridge road and the top of the scarp.	Loss of trees due to over-maturity and vulnerability to future changes in climatic conditions.
Extensive blocks of deciduous and coniferous woodland.	Changes in forestry management (particularly when trees are felled/reach maturity) potentially affecting the composition of the landscape. Woodlands are also sensitive to changes in management, climate and tree disease.
A richly-textured landscape including woodland, scrub, rushy pasture along spring-lines and meadows.	Changes in agri-environmental grant schemes, potentially affecting traditional agricultural practices and the appearance of the landscape and views.
Time-depth afforded by prehistoric earthworks, historic parkland, ancient woodland, Culmstock Beacon and the historic Wellington Monument.	Loss of, or damage to, archaeological and historical sites through natural processes (eg scrubbing-up, erosion of stonework) and erosion through visitor pressure. Loss of veteran trees through over-maturity, and lack of replacement parkland trees in the landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Protect

- The outstanding views to and from the Vale of Taunton.
- The distinctive undeveloped skyline which forms a setting to Taunton, Wellington and the surrounding area.
- Historical features but encourage public access and interpretation of views where possible.

Manage

- Woodland (including though traditional techniques such as coppicing) to retain a good age and species diversity and ensure their continued presence in views.
- Forestry plantations, particularly on reaching maturity/felling, in order to ensure that views within and to the LCA are enhanced.
- Farmland, in particular the ecologically rich marginal land which contributes to the texture and variety of views.
- Avenue, parkland and veteran trees, and planting of replacement specimen trees to ensure their continued presence in the landscape and views.

Plan

- To ensure that expansion of towns and transport routes is sensitive to the impact on views from the Blackdown Hills Scarp.
- To encourage the residents of the surrounding settlements to experience the views from the Scarp.

BLACKDOWN HILLS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

SENSITIVITIES OF VIEWS

Special qualities of views	Sensitivities of views in relation to forces for change
Skylines currently contain few vertical features (for example there are no pylon lines within this part of the AONB).	The introduction of vertical elements would introduce new and potentially incongruous components into the landscape.
Ridge tops are highly visible from high land (within and outside this AONB) and occasionally in views from valleys.	Large-scale development, such as that associated with the WW2 airfields, can be prominent in the landscape and visible from a wide area. Past conifer planting on ridges is also visually prominent and reduces the openness of the ridge-tops.
Very strong pattern of woodland (particularly at the tops of valley sides) and hedgerows. Hedgerow patterns within the LCA are very distinctive in views, with small irregular enclosures of mixed hedgerows on valley sides contrasting with larger, regular fields and hawthorn hedges on plateaux and ridge-tops.	<p>Past hedgerow loss and current poor management (including over-trimming) is apparent, especially on ridges. The surviving field patterns on valley sides are vulnerable to declining management and to loss of hedgerow trees.</p> <p>Woodland loss due to disease, climate change, storm damage and/or poor management affecting the character of the valley sides and their distinctive views.</p> <p>Selective felling of beech shelterbelts without replanting leading to loss of character, particularly along the boundary with the Blackdowns Scarp LCA.</p>
Distinctive settlement pattern, with villages nestled in valley floors and valley sides.	Insensitive growth of villages, not respecting their setting or their traditional relationship with surrounding landscape, which causes them to become increasingly visually prominent in views.
A sense of timelessness and tranquillity, particularly in valleys.	Increased traffic and insensitive highways measures (eg visual clutter from signage, suburban-style traffic calming in villages) and increased levels of light pollution potentially reducing the LCA's senses of tranquillity and timelessness.
A productive agricultural landscape.	Introduction of industrial-scale agricultural buildings/facilities that are not always well-integrated into the surrounding landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Protect

- The distinctive, unspoilt and exposed skylines of the central plateau and radiating ridges and the views afforded from these elevated locations.
- Sensitive locations from visually-intrusive development, particularly prominent sites visible from a wide area and which form a backdrop or skyline to views.
- Protect and enhance village settings to ensure that settlements are well integrated with their surrounding landscape.
- The qualities of tranquillity and timelessness which can be experienced in many parts of the LCA.
- Historic lanes and trackways and their associated species rich hedgerows that are a feature of valley views. Carefully restore damaged hedgerows ensuring that any highway measures respect the lanes' historic character.

Manage

- Historic and archaeological sites and their settings encouraging sensitive interpretation of views where appropriate.
- Farmland, enabling farm businesses to develop in a way that is sensitive to their landscape setting and their role in views.
- Hedgerows and distinctive field patterns in order to retain these unique features in views.
- Woodland and shelterbelts ensuring that mixed deciduous woodlands and beech trees/shelter-belts remain key components in views within and towards this LCA.

Plan

- Settlement expansion to respect historic settlement patterns, and the relationship between settlements and their surrounding landscape.
- To design and site agricultural buildings/facilities in a sensitive way, minimising their impact in views (especially on skylines) and using non-intrusive materials.
- To soften the edges of airfield development to minimise visual impacts of large buildings in prominent locations.
- Any highway improvements very carefully, in order to ensure that roads are well integrated into the landscape and respect its character and views.
- Where it can be done sensitively and safely, to open up occasional views from main roads to enable motorists to experience and enjoy the landscape.
- To avoid insensitive development in neighbouring LCAs (particularly on ridge tops) which will be detrimental views from the Blackdown Hills LCA.

EASTERN BLACKDOWN RIDGE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

SENSITIVITIES OF VIEWS

Special qualities of views	Sensitivities of views in relation to forces for change
Prominent horizontal and generally smooth skyline, particularly in views from the east and west.	Introduction of new built features onto skyline (eg pylons, large agricultural buildings) that are likely to be prominent in views over a wide surrounding area.
An open, elevated landscape with a sense of spaciousness, isolation and detachment.	Incursion of visually intrusive development into the LCA and increased levels of traffic impacting on its perceptual qualities. New woodland planting would also reduce the sense of openness of this landscape and its contrast with surrounding landscapes.
Beech trees (often wind-sculpted) in hedgerows, along roads and occasional hilltop clumps, form distinctive features on the horizon.	Loss of beech trees due to over-maturity, poor management or disease resulting in loss of local distinctiveness, particularly where they appear on the horizon in views from nearby LCAs.
Straight roads and field boundaries are key components of ridge-top views with occasional older elements such as barrows or hillforts.	Suburban-style traffic calming and signage affecting the distinctive character of ridge-top roads. Loss of hedgerow pattern as a result of poor management or deliberate removal. Damage to the landscape settings of historic sites (and their appearance in views) by insensitive development, planting or poor management resulting in scrub growth.
Occasional church towers are landmark features in the landscape.	Intrusive new development in the immediate vicinity of church towers that may affect their settings.
Sudden, glimpsed views into contrasting valley landscapes.	Loss of special qualities in adjacent valley LCAs (eg loss of woodland, field patterns, etc) potentially affecting the composition of views from higher land.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Protect

- The distinctive, unspoilt, and exposed skylines of the ridge, and views to church tower landmarks.
- Backdrops to views from other LCAs.
- The area's outstanding views across the Axe Valley LCA.
- The special qualities of adjacent LCAs (eg woodland, hedgerow patterns, etc) that contribute to views from the Eastern Blackdown Ridge.

Manage

- Hedgerows, hedgebanks, hedgerow trees and isolated hilltop tree clumps, particularly where they have a sculptural quality.
- Historic hill-top sites and their settings.
- Farmland, maintaining public rights of way, so views can be easily appreciated on foot.
- Surviving patches of semi-natural vegetation (eg acid grassland) to retain colour, diversity and texture in views.

Plan

- To minimise visual incursion of roads, buildings and settlements that will detract from the area's sense of remoteness.
- To retain the area's sense of openness and its long views, avoiding the plantation of extensive woodland on ridge summits.
- To avoid visual harm to the settings of distinctive landmarks such as church towers, particularly where they are a feature of views.
- To design and site agricultural buildings/facilities in a sensitive way, minimising their impact in views (especially on skylines) and using non-intrusive materials.
- Any highways improvements very carefully, in order to ensure that roads are well integrated into the landscape and respect its character and views.

AXE VALLEY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

SENSITIVITIES OF VIEWS

Special qualities of views	Sensitivities of views in relation to forces for change
Valleys, with their associated small-scale field patterns, woodland, villages and farms are key components in views from surrounding higher land.	Changes in agricultural/land management practices (for example loss of hedgerows, decline in woodland management and changes in crops) affecting views, particularly from higher land.
Small-scale and historic patterns of fields and settlements.	The insensitive introduction of large-scale buildings or other development into this relatively small-scale and irregular landscape, potentially affecting landscape character and views.
A strong sense of tranquillity over much of the area.	Increased visual and noise impacts from traffic and associated road or development infrastructure.
A sense of time-depth and continuity of settlement and land use.	<p>Damage to historic fabric (eg bridges, lanes and hedgebanks) by seasonal flooding that may increase due to climate change. Ad hoc flood defence works and repairs following flooding may also affect views.</p> <p>Expansion of settlements within and in close proximity to the LCA, such as Axminster, may also have an impact on views.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Protect

- Views to village church towers that stand out as key landmarks across this landscape.
- Views from main roads opening up gaps (where this can be done sensitively) so that the views can be fully and safely appreciated.
- The settings of historic villages ensuring that any new development is integrated into the surrounding landscape.

Manage

- Hedgerows and woodlands using traditional techniques, such as hedge-laying and woodland coppicing, where appropriate.
- Farmland to enable farm businesses to thrive and develop, while maintaining the scale and historic fabric of the landscape and its appearance in views.
- Traditional lanes and hedgebanks restoring hedgebanks damaged by flooding, and ensuring that any highways works are undertaken sensitively.
- Watercourses to minimise damage by seasonal flooding.

Plan

- To ensure that future development of settlements and roads is undertaken in a sensitive manner that respects the scale and pattern of the landscape and its visibility including in views from higher land.
- To design and site agricultural buildings/facilities in a sensitive way minimising their impact in views and using non-intrusive materials.

EAST DEVON CENTRAL RIDGE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA**SENSITIVITIES OF VIEWS**

Special qualities of views	Sensitivities of views in relation to forces for change
Prominent skyline, particularly in views from the east and north.	The introduction of additional vertical structures or prominent buildings onto the ridge that would be visible over a wide area.
Distinctive straight roads lined with beech hedgerows and trees.	A change in the character of roads from rural to urban as a result of traffic calming measures and prominent road signs. Loss of management of hedgerows and hedgerow trees affecting the character of roads and the rhythm of the field patterns.
Woodland blocks on the top and sides of the ridge are a distinctive feature.	Vulnerability to changes in woodland planting and management policies, and to tree disease and climate change.
A sparsely settled landscape with a sense of isolation.	Prominent development within the LCA or visible from it affecting its sense of isolation. Increase in traffic levels on roads within or visible from the LCA will further erode the area's sense of tranquillity and remoteness.
Long views across to other high land and ridge tops.	Visually prominent development on high ground (eg airfield sites) affecting views out from this LCA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Protect

- The simple, rolling skylines characteristic of this LCA.
- The setting of the Yarty valley and Honiton.
- Views towards adjacent LCAs, particularly the field patterns and the open qualities of higher ground visible in views across from the ridge top.

Manage

- Hedgerows and field boundaries to ensure their continued presence in the landscape and to retain the landscape structure.
- Woodland considering the possibility of reverting coniferous plantations to native deciduous woodland on maturity/felling.
- Farmland enabling farm business to thrive whilst being sensitive to the impacts of agricultural change on views.
- Traffic and signage with the aim of achieving safe traffic speeds without compromising the LCA's rural character.
- Historic sites and their settings enabling public access and interpretation of views where possible.

Plan

- To design and site any new development within this LCA to minimise its impact on views including from surrounding settlements and LCAs.
- To design and site agricultural buildings/facilities in a sensitive way, minimising their impact in views (especially on skylines) and using non-intrusive materials.
- Any highways improvements very carefully in order to ensure that roads are well integrated into the landscape and respect its character and views.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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APPENDIX B: ABOUT THE ARTISTS

All the contemporary artists featured in this report are members of the Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers www.bhaam.org.uk

Andrew Bell

Andrew lives in the Blackdown Hills and the area provides inspiration for many of his landscape paintings. On his travels to Wales, France and further afield he has painted landscape and urban scenes, working from sketches done on the spot. His pictures are made mainly with acrylic on paper or in oils, building up thin layers of colours to preserve luminosity. Sometimes he adds charcoal or ink to contrast with the vibrant colours in the landscape.

Andrew is a member of the Blackdown Hills Artists and Makers, and the Neroche Artists. He exhibits his work regularly with these groups in the local area, and with the Armed Forces Art Society each summer in the Mall Galleries, London.

He has painted since childhood but in the last 25 years, after leaving his professional career in the Royal Air Force, he has been able to spend more time on artwork.

Other work can be seen on www.somersetartworks.org.uk and www.afas.org.uk

John Nutt

John moved from London to the West Country where he now works as a full time painter located at the foot of the Blackdown Hills. He retired from working as an art education consultant in 2004.

For the past three years John has been working as an artist on Somerset and Devon landscapes. He sees himself as a serious painter, concerned with carefully recording what he feels about the changing seasons in the Quantocks, Blackdowns, and more recently Exmoor and Dartmoor. His primary influences are Stanley Spencer, Cézanne and he admires the stillness of Edward Hopper's later paintings.

Other works can be seen at www.john-nutt.co.uk

Liz Gregory

Liz Gregory is a painter and printmaker who lives and works in the Blackdown Hills. She uses bold colours, experiments with materials and is always looking for new ways to make marks and extend the ways she paints.

Other works can be seen at www.somersetartworks.org.uk/node/4106

Bronwen Gundry

Bronwen is primarily a painter but her work also involves print making and more recently working on canvases which are then placed into the landscape. She thinks of these works as a 'conversation with nature'. These canvases are initially worked on, influenced by the site, before being placed within the landscape for a period of time to allow flora and fauna and the effects of natural elements to become part of the artwork. She then brings them back into the studio to produce finished works.



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