# BLACKDOWN HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP

# Minutes of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership Management Group held on Thursday, 1st July 2021, 9.30am – 11.15am, online via Teams

# Present:

Bruce Payne Special Appointee (Chair)

Cllr Bob Nelson Blackdown Hills Parish Network (Vice Chair)

Cllr Martin Wale South Somerset District Council

Cllr Graham Long Blackdown Hills Parish Network

Cllr Mike Canham Blackdown Hills Parish Network

Cllr Ross Henley Somerset West and Taunton Council

David Northcote-Wright Somerset Wildlife Trust

Elaine Hayes Special Appointee

Gavin Saunders Special Appointee

Jennifer Ash Blackdown Hills Transition Group

Mark Edwards Natural England

Jon Burgess Forestry Commission

Emma Magee Environment Agency

Peter Chamberlain Devon County Council

Jon Doyle Somerset County Council

Alison Blom-Cooper Somerset West and Taunton Council

Blackdown Hills AONB staff team: Tim Youngs **(TY),** Lisa Turner **(LT)**

**Apologies:** Cllr John Thorne (Somerset County Council); Kristina Luxton (National Trust); Cllr Paul Hayward (East Devon District Council); John Greenshields (Blackdown Hills Trust); Heather Stallard (Co-opted); Cllr Simon Clist (MDDC), Jackie Vaughan (staff)

**Members of the public:** None

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| **ITEM 1 Welcome and Introductions** | **By whom** |
| **1.1:** The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were given.  **1.2:** Declarations of interest: None. |  |
| **ITEM 2 WORKSHOP: Farming in Protected Landscapes Delivery**  Paper circulated with Agenda prior to meeting |  |
| Presentation given on delivery of the new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme in England’s National Parks and AONBs.  3-year investment programme by Defra from July 2021 to March 2024 to deliver on their objectives of:  **Climate** - delivery of net zero through nature based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change  **Nature** - delivery of the Nature Recovery Network and commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030  **People** - provide a natural health service to improve the nation’s public health and wellbeing through increased access to nature  **Place** - protected landscapes as: centres of excellence and green innovation; flourishing places to live and work; strong identity and cultural heritage; attractive visitor destinations  Blackdown Hills allocation for 2021/22 is £309,628, of which:  maximum of £24,451 may be spent on admin, and  maximum of £41,566 may be spent on advice and guidance,  leaving a grant pot of c£245,000.  Will be delivered by Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer supporting farmer clusters and individuals with applications, with support from Farm Ambassadors, also a Project Administrator to be recruited.  A Local Assessment Panel will be formed to determine applications.  In conclusion:   * Management Group members indicated that they endorse the approach to delivery. * BP encouraged members to get involved with the programme. MW willing to be on the Local Assessment Panel if needed. * Key points raised on being kept informed of progress:   - BP recommended that as reporting and monitoring requirements for Defra will be considerable, this could be shared with Management Group rather than requiring an additional reporting system.  - EH highlighted that she would be keen to see a monthly overview of pipeline projects  - PC noted the importance of Management Group having oversight of the programme to ensure that it is delivering the AONB Management Plan.  **ACTION: TY to share the local targeting statement currently under development with Management Group.** | **TY** |
| **ITEM 3 Questions from the public** |  |
| No questions received. |  |
| **ITEM 4 Minutes and matters arising from 4th March 2021**  Minutes circulated prior to the meeting |  |
| No matters arising.  **Actions:**  **ITEM 1.3:** Register of Interest (RoI) form: as per the Terms of Reference each member of the management group should complete a RoI form at the beginning of each financial year. The chair reminded all members that these should have been returned by the end of May and any that are still outstanding should be returned to TY as soon as possible.  **ITEM 3:** Follow up with Catherine Bass regardingParish Network to promote AONB meetings on their website.  **ITEM 6.1.1**: Climate change draft report not yet added to the AONB website, discussions ongoing with the Parish Network and others about taking work forward.  **ITEM 7.1**: Cllr Haywood had not followed up, TY to make contact.  The minutes will be signed by the chairman as a true record when appropriate to do so. | **ALL**  **BN/GL/MC**  **TY**  **TY** |
| **ITEM 5 Climate Change parish level carbon toolkit and county scale climate emergency work** |  |
| **GL** gave an update on Impact, the parish-level carbon emission tool developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (Bristol) and the University of Exeter. The tool can be found at <https://impact-tool.org.uk>.  The calculator identifies the main sources of carbon emissions in a locality, to help communities focus their actions to have greatest impact on reducing their carbon footprint.  **PC** gave a report on the approach and priorities of the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership, which has two key threads; development of a Devon Carbon Plan and role of a Citizens Assembly to move towards net zero, and adaptation measures required to deal with the already unavoidable consequences; alongside promotional and educational work to encourage individuals and organisations to take immediate action.  Further information at: [www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/](http://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/)  **JD** gave a presentation on the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy, developed collectively by the five local authorities with the ambitious aim of net zero by 2030.  Further details at: [www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/) and copy of presentation to be circulated with minutes.  There was a discussion on how the Impact tool could be used to greatest effect locally, with the idea of combining data to form an AONB-wide overview being suggested. The creators should be approached to see if they could do this.  There is a balance between understanding and interrogating the data, understanding what it is possible to influence at various scales, understanding what actions would be most effective and getting on with actions deemed to be broadly helpful in reducing carbon footprint.  **TY** highlighted that the SDF Challenge Fund this year would be focused on supporting projects that are tackling the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis – see  <https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/get-involved/find-funding/blackdown-hills-challenge-fund/>  **ACTION: TY and BP to pick up points from discussion and draw together various elements into action plan.** | **TY/BP** |
| **ITEM 6 AONB Team**  Papers circulated prior to the meeting |  |
| **ITEM 6.1 Team report** |  |
| **6.1.1:** No questions were raised prior to the meeting.  Presentation given on key points and priorities, including updates not included in report:  - Government have recently responded to the Glover Review, including announcement of 2 new AONBs and extensions to two existing ones. They will be giving further consideration to a new National Landscape Service. Also announced Farming in Protected Landscapes, and recognition of role of protected landscapes in climate resilience and nature recovery.  - Opportunity to attend virtual NAAONB Conference on 7-8 July (Devon hosting).  - Highlighted proposal for Blackdown Hills Way, a new route linking Axminster to the north part of the AONB and beyond, as part of a longer coast to coast route via Taunton and Quantocks utilising existing trails. A local volunteer has been working up route proposal and has prepared a short promotional video: <https://youtu.be/lVyIVYQeR-M> Further local interest and input welcome.  **ACTION: Contact TY if anyone has further questions or comments.**  Actions in Team Report:  **ACTION 1: The Partnership Management Group are asked to help promote the SDF grants via their local channels**  Low uptake of SDF grants this year, so please encourage local groups and organisations to get in touch (see website for details of the type of projects that can be supported <https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/get-involved/find-funding/sustainable-development-fund/> )  **ACTION 2: Partnership Management Group members to endorse the approach being taken and recommend pipeline projects (Farming in Protected Landscapes)**  Covered in Item 2 workshop.  **BP: note of thanks to core team for all their efforts and for the participation of members of management group.** | **ALL**  **ALL** |
| **ITEM 6.2 Financial summary to end of May 2021** |  |
| TY highlighted that underspend from last year was reallocated into this year’s budget for project work. Some of this year’s core costs will underspend (e.g. travel, events) and this sum has been reallocated in-year to support the Challenge Fund.  No questions raised. |  |
| **ITEM 7 AONB Partnership** |  |
| **7.1 Briefings from partners**  **Written update received from PC:**  The Devon Local Nature Partnership (LNP) has just launched its ‘Wild About Devon’ initiative, which is designed to help community groups and Town/Parish Councils to take action for wildlife.  It does this by providing:   * A series of online resources and sign-posting to help and guidance available through others; * A discussion forum to encourage sharing of good practice and self-help between community groups; * An interactive community activity map, so that groups can records their own projects across the county; * A specific network for Parish and Town Councils, with a dedicated newsletter; * Specially arranged training and support through a programme of webinar.   At the same time, the Devon LNP has also launched the ‘Devon Wildlife Community of the Year Awards 2021/22.  This competition has two categories: 1) Wildlife Community of the Year Award;  2) Parish and Town Council Wildlife Award.  Each of these will be judged against the wildlife initiatives that have been undertaken by the relevant groups or councils over the coming 12 months.  It would be great to see entries from those involved in the Blackdown Hills Parish Network.  See: [www.devonlnp.org.uk/take-action/communities/](http://www.devonlnp.org.uk/take-action/communities/) |  |
| **ITEM 8 Any Other Business** |  |
| * Items covered under ITEM 6.1 Team report presentation. |  |
| **Date of next meeting** |  |
| Next meeting will be held on **Thursday 4th November 2021,** details to be confirmed. |  |

**Signed as a true record:**

**Chairman………………………………… Date………………….**