**2nd YEAR FIPL NATIONAL REPORT**

**CASE STUDY - BLACKDOWN HILLS AONB**

**Lower Shelvin Farm, Luppitt**

Lower Shelvin is a 136 hectare pasture farm in the valley of the River Love in the Blackdown Hills AONB. Three generations of the Sage family have farmed the land, with a deep commitment to wildlife and sustainable farming.

Lower Shelvin contains many kilometres of hedgerow, and on three occasions over the last 20 years the farm has hosted the annual Blackdown Hills ‘Skills of the Hills’ hedgelaying event, when hedgelayers from across England converge on the Blackdown Hills to practice this traditional form of hedge management.

In March 2023, Farming in Protected Landscapes supported Fred Sage to host the hedgelaying event, enabling 620 metres of mixed hazel, willow, maple and hawthorn hedge to be expertly layed, in sections divided amongst more than 60 competitors. In addition FiPL funded fencing of the layed hedges and coppicing and gapping up of a further 240 metres of overstood hedge on the farm.

Alongside this, FiPL also supported the Blackdown Hills Hedge Association, which organises the ‘Skills of the Hills’ event, in updating their first aid qualifications and acquiring new outdoor catering equipment. The latter meant that competitors in the hedgelaying event were able to enjoy a bacon buttie and a steaming cup of tea after their hard work.

Through FiPL’s support, the farming and rural crafts community of the Blackdown Hills came together at Lower Shelvin to re-affirm the value of our landscape’s hedgerows and hedgelaying skills.

FiPL award to Lower Shelvin Farm: £21,778

FiPL award to Blackdown Hills Hedge Association: £3,504

FiPL Themes addressed: Nature, People and Place

 