

Blackdown Hills National Landscape

**Minutes of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership Management Group
held on**

Thursday 6th November 2025 at Hemyock Parish Hall

Present:

Cllr Bob Nelson (BN) (Chair)	Blackdown Hills Parish Network
Cllr Graham Long (GL)	Blackdown Hills Parish Network
Cllr Natasha Bradshaw(NB)	Mid Devon District Council
Pat Lehain (PL)	Natural England
David Northcote-Wright (DNW)	Somerset Wildlife Trust
Jonathan Farey (JF)	Co-opted Member
Gordon Field (GF)	Blackdown Hills Artist & Makers
Daniel Lazar (DL)	Co-opted Member
Cllr Yehudi Levine (YL)	East Devon District Council
Carolyn Dare (CD)	Blackdown Hills Transition Group
Stephen Dury (SD)	Somerset Council
Sarah Jennings (SJ)	Devon County Council
Vanessa De Haan (VDH)	Blackdown Hills Nature Connections Network

Blackdown Hills National Landscape staff team:

Tim Youngs **(TY)**, Lisa Turner **(LT)**, Hannah Metson **(HM)**, Clare Groom **(CG)**, Di Weeks **(DW)** (Minutes)

Apologies: Robert Derryman (National Farmers Union), Fiona Rew (National Farmers Union), Tommy Muncie (National Trust), Alex Swan (Environment Agency), Cllr Martin Wale (Somerset Council), Paul Spearing (Co-opted Member), Charlie Plowden (East Devon District Council), Tristan Peat (Mid Devon District Council), Ross Henley (Somerset Council), Jon Burgess (Forestry Commission), James Divall (Somerset Council), Janette Ward (Campaign to Protect Rural England), Phillip Hackett (The British Horse Society), Martin Turner (Blackdown Hills Hedge Association), Doug Eltham (Devon County Council), Cllr Mike Canham (Blackdown Hills Parish Network), Cllr Sarah Wakefield (Somerset Council), Adam Powell (Co-opted Member).

Members of the public: None

ITEM 1 Welcome and Introductions	By whom
Welcome, introductions and apologies were made, no members of the public. The Chair explained that need 11 to be Quorate for the meeting to take place and have 12 present so thanked those for attending today. Declarations of interest: None. The Chair reminded members to complete an updated Register of Interest form which had been circulated with the previous minutes (regardless of whether they have one for their own organisation).	BN

ITEM 2.1 Questions from the public	
No members of the public present.	BN
<u>Action: Contact Parish Councils to make them aware of further PMG meetings so can be advertised.</u>	DW
ITEM 2.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 26th June 2025	
The minutes of the meeting held on 26 th June 2025 and any matters arising - The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.	ALL
ITEM 3 Presentations	
Nature Connections Vanessa introduced the Nature Connections Network and explained the massive impact they are having across the Blackdown Hills. In particular green prescribing and how this is having a massive impact and potentially saving the NHS a large amount of money. <u>Action: to look at further ways to support this project going forward.</u>	VDH
Nature Calling Clare introduced the project and explained that there was a total budget of £8,000 which was made up with £2,000 from BHNL, £2,000 EDNL and the rest from Nature Calling. Working alongside EDNL made the project more adaptable. BN commented that the work on the website is looking great, in particular the OS of walks and rides. <u>Action: Circulate Film from presentation.</u>	TY/HM CG
The Yarty – river restoration works & project updates Hannah showed a number of slides, showing the huge amounts of work that have been on-going on The Yarty and described a number of other projects that she is currently working on. Discussions continued about Himalayan Balsam and DNW asked if there are still volunteer groups which work on areas to clear it. CD commented that there are lots of individual groups doing it but it needs to be co-ordinated.	CG
Devon Local Nature Recovery strategy (LNRS) Sarah explained that the Devon consultation has actually ended but they are keeping it open until Monday 10th November, Somerset's consultation ends on Friday 7th November.	HM SJ

	Discussions continued regarding the fact that Devon’s strategy may take longer to sign off because of the number of local authorities within Devon. NB commented that MDDC had asked how more opportunity areas could be taken into consideration as risk of information not being captured. SJ asked that if any information seems incorrect then needs to be raised with Natural England. Must be a joined up approach. Discussions continued about planning/ house building and how this LNRS impacts planning decisions. SJ directed us to the supporting information on the website and to read the Planning paper. Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Devon County Council	
	Item 4 National Landscape Team	
	TY gave an overview of the Team report and explained that Defra core funding is in place until 31/03/2026, after this date, we don’t know what we will be getting. Defra gives us about 200k which equates to about 10% of our turnover which now sits at 2 million. Levelling up and regeneration Act is still in place but rumours are that this could be reviewed. Blackdown Hills National Landscape team currently stands at 11, with 2 recent young team members joining. Management plan is now live on our website. TY showed the meeting the Projects map and this will be circulated with these minutes. <u>Action: Circulate Projects map from presentation.</u> BN commented about the large budget that we are currently working with and the need to closely continue to manage this from a Risk Management perspective. Financial summary – TY confirmed that we are working on a balanced budget	TY DW

ITEM 5 Terms of Reference (ToR)	
BN asked are we doing what we should be doing? JF commented that he thinks we need more reporting on what is going on, like Vanessa's presentation, very informative. BN replied that we often have 2 guests per meeting to present. JF commented that even if it was short videos to circulate, explained that he uses You Tube to promote the work he is doing. CG commented that not everyone has the equipment/ experience to create videos, but may help if we had equipment we could loan out (microphone/ portable camera) and/or run a workshop to help technical skills. BN/ NB continued discussions about risks and the need for succession planning. NB suggested a risk meeting. <u>Action: Risk meeting to be discussed with TY/ BN/ NB and Doug Eltham.</u> Discussion continued about promoting the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, DL suggested a promotional video that could be shared/ played at events. NB commented that she had seen the new visitor guide and it's in Culmstock stores. BN commented about the general attendance at the PMG meetings and the need for someone to be sent as a replacement if you are unable to attend. <u>Action: BN to share Management Plan information previously circulated by Broadhembury Parish Council.</u>	TY TY/BN BN
ITEM 6 National Landscape Partnership – briefings from Partners	
DNW talked about currently working with Forestry England and the Reptile and amphibian group, looking at the Adder population as it is thought to have declined. Last survey was completed in 2019, early Spring 2026 this will be completed again to see if the suggestion of a decline in numbers is accurate. GF talked about his involvement with the Rivers Run Through us project and had a great meeting with all the artists, was great to pull together the creative thinking to share with the RRTU project. SJ commented again about the LNRS and asked for case studies that could be shared. SJ confirmed she would be leaving DCC in January 2026, 2 new posts have been created and are currently advertised. BN thanked SJ for all her support and in particular the great work completed for the LNRS. SD added if anything he feels relevant comes up from the Somerset LNRS then he will share this with us. Somerset have recently taken on 2 new graduates and will bring them along to a future meeting to meet everyone. JF nothing to add. VDH nothing to add. NB discussed Rural Hierarchy, and said that it is in early discussions but for everyone to be aware that it relates to a mechanism for delivering houses, by dispensing houses to local communities	ALL

based on areas that potentially wouldn't have had new housing before and also could affect the Mid Devon focused areas like Tiverton/ Cullompton. It is currently all under discussion but is worth being aware of. GL commented about East Devon District Council's sustainability ruling, where certain areas have been ruled as unsustainable. YL commented that 2/3rds of EDDC area covered by National Landscapes (Blackdown Hills and East Devon NLs). CD mentioned a number of projects that she is currently working on, one being a Biochar workshop with the mare and foal sanctuary to try and avoid pollution from dung heaps and looking at a project which will make biochar from cow manure. DL said that 'Hunt the Heat' project is going strong with 4-5 Parishes signed up so far, this involves a infra-red camera being used to see what heat is being lost from someone's home. Also been doing some water quality monitoring in Broadhembury, quite happy to come out and demonstrate, and get involved with this. RRTU lent DL a microscope and ran a workshop at Denningsdown Farm, which was fantastic, a real asset. Also keen to do a survey in the Axe catchment. PL commented that they are waiting for Defra Ministers to confirm the priorities to see where money will be directed, and explained that lots are very reliant on the outcomes.	
ITEM 7 Any other Business	
Next meeting will be held on Thursday 5th March 2026 from 9.15am – 12pm, venue to be confirmed.	ALL

Signed as a true record:

Chairman.....

Date.....