

**BLACKDOWN HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP**

**Minutes of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership Management Group held on Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at Blackdown Healthy Living Centre, Hemyock**

**Present:**

Cllr Frank Rosamond  
Cllr Martin Wale  
Cllr Dave Durdan  
Cllr John Thorne  
Donna Gowler  
Graham Long  
Simon Larkins  
Heather Stallard  
Bob Nelson  
Elaine Hayes  
John Greenshields

Mid Devon District Council  
South Somerset District Council  
Taunton Deane Borough Council  
Somerset County Council  
Natural England  
Blackdown Hills Parish Network  
National Trust  
Blackdown Hills Business Association  
Blackdown Hills Parish Network  
Special Appointee  
Blackdown Hills Woodland Association

**Also present:**

Blackdown Hills AONB staff team: Tim Youngs (TY), Jackie Vaughan (JV), Lisa Turner (LT), Peter Chamberlain (Devon County Council)

**Apologies:** Cllr Paul Diviani (East Devon District Council); Cllr John Berry (Devon County Council); Martin Turner (Blackdown Hills Hedge Association); David Northcote-Wright (Somerset Wildlife Trust); Bruce Payne (Special Appointee); Mark Pope (National Farmers Union); Penny Mills/Chris Lewis (CPRE, Devon/Somerset); Gordon Field (Blackdown Hills Artist & Makers); Jocelyn Pritchard (Blackdown Hills Parish Network); Clare Groom (Blackdown Hills AONB); James Maben (Culm Community Crayfish Project),

ITEM 1 Introduction	By whom
<p>Cllr. Rosamond acted as chair in the absence of Cllr Diviani &amp; Bruce Payne. The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were carried out.</p>	
<p><b>Workshop: Blackdown Hills AONB Alignment with Defra’s 25-year environment plan</b> Paper circulated at the meeting</p>	
<p><b>Discussion on how the AONB’s work will support the delivery of Defra’s 25-year environment plan through the AONB management plan, core &amp; project work.</b> Discussion papers attached to the minutes for reference. <b>EH: 1.</b> AONB Planning Officer should meet with newly appointed local authority planners and discuss best practice for working with the AONB. <b>2.</b> The AONB 2019-2024 Delivery Plan should include an extra column showing how it relates to Defra’s 25-year Environment Plan. <b>JG: 1.</b> Agreed to join any groups discussing woodland activity. <b>2.</b> Column needs to be added to the paper to include villages &amp; settlements as these are an important part of the landscape. <b>MW:</b> How to attract funding for all the projects needs to be included in the plan.</p> <p><b>Ecosystem Approach paper:</b> A subgroup including TY, LT, EH, BP &amp; DNW looked at the ecosystem approach within the AONB Partnership and as part of this outlined the natural capital we have in the AONB and what we know about it. This will then inform the 2019-2024 AONB Management Plan.</p>	

<p><b>ACTION: TY to send the Management Group members the following papers with the minutes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Blackdown Hills AONB response to the Government’s Health and Harmony consultation on the future of food &amp; farming</b></li> <li>2. <b>The National Association proposal to Defra regarding tests &amp; trials in preparation for the new Environment Land Management Scheme (ELMS)</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>TY</b></p>
<p><b>ITEM 2 Questions from the public</b></p>	
<p>No questions were raised.</p>	
<p><b>ITEM 3 Minutes and matters arising from 22<sup>rd</sup> March 2018</b> Minutes circulated prior to the meeting</p>	
<p><b>Minutes</b> The minutes were signed by the acting chairman as a true record.</p> <p><b>Matters arising</b> <b>4 EH</b> can provide written articles/blog for the new AONB website when prompted by the AONB Communications Officer. An amendment to the minutes were noted: <b>6.2 EH:</b> amendment to read; Ferne Animal Sanctuary is to provide access to their land for Natural England to carry out surveys on Great Crested Newts.</p>	<p><b>CG</b></p> <p><b>JV</b></p>
<p><b>ITEM 4 State of the Blackdown Hills Report</b> Report circulated prior to the meeting</p>	
<p>The report was drafted by the Somerset Environmental Record Centre and will be used as a starting point to identify key trends in data and as a result, changes to policies/ targets required in the 2019-2024 AONB Management Plan. It also provides a summary of progress against indicators in the current management plan (2014-2019). The following points were noted:</p> <p><b>JT</b> questioned the statement that only 3% of land within the AONB is accessible to the public. It was explained that these figures only represent the land covered by nature reserves, National Trust sites, Forestry Commission land and open access land and not rights of way paths. <b>EH:</b> Numbers on accessible land do not give a true indication on their own and further information such as the potential land available and comparisons to other areas are needed to understand the context for the figures. Baseline figures are needed. Offered support in putting data together. <b>LT:</b> In the past Natural England have provided data for free to AONB’s but there is now proposed to be a charge. <b>FR</b> is chair of the scrutiny committee at Mid Devon District Council and Neil Parish MP is questioned as part of the committee meeting. If members have relevant questions that they would like asked to Neil Parish please email them to <b>FR</b>.</p> <p><b>ACTION: EH to email FR with question on why Natural England no longer provide free data and why the 34 AONB’s in England should now pay for this information.</b></p> <p><b>EH:</b> We cannot manage change without data; can it be obtained from any other source? <b>SL:</b> National Trust has lots of data and is willing to share this with the AONB.</p> <p><b>ACTION: TY to contact SL about the sharing of data.</b></p> <p><b>GL:</b> Two measures have no readily available data 1. Number of affordable homes 2. Broadband speeds. Information can be provided for these from local authorities (1) and Connecting Devon &amp; Cornwall (2).</p>	<p><b>ALL</b></p> <p><b>EH</b></p> <p><b>TY/SL</b></p>

<p><b>PC</b> advised <b>TY</b> to contact Doug Eltham at Devon County Council as he will have environmental information available to share with the AONB.</p> <p><b>ACTION: TY to contact Doug Eltham to ascertain what information is available to the AONB.</b></p> <p><b>FR</b> referred to the recent article on the TV news about the status of rivers in the South West. <a href="http://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2018-07-04/scientists-find-29-pesticides-in-single-devon-river/">http://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2018-07-04/scientists-find-29-pesticides-in-single-devon-river/</a></p>	<p><b>TY</b></p>
<p><b>ITEM 5 AONB Team</b></p>	
<p><b>5.1 AONB Team report</b> (Report circulated prior to the meeting)</p>	
<p><b>TY</b> gave a presentation on the work of the AONB team; presentation is attached to the minutes for reference.</p> <p><b>PC</b> congratulated the team on a good portfolio of projects.</p> <p><b>JT</b> asked how the team were coping with the amount of work for such a small team. <b>TY</b> noted the point and explained that not all projects were led/ administered by the AONB, for example the Facilitation Fund is administered by the Butterfly Conservation team and the project is facilitated by Gavin Saunders. If successful with the Culm Interreg bid a team will be employed to run the project.</p> <p><b>Blackborough House planning application update: BN, TY &amp; LT</b> met on 4<sup>th</sup> July to discuss 2 areas relating to the application:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Content - <b>BN</b> felt that the AONB written response to the application did not give enough of an opportunity for the developer to provide an updated submission</li> <li>2. Process – <b>BN</b> made recommendations regarding elements of the consultation process that can be considered as part of the review into the Partnership Management Group’s Terms of Reference due to take place before November’s meeting.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>5.2 2017/18 Financial Statement, 2018/19 Financial Summary to end of May 2018, 2017/18 SDF Project Summary</b> (Papers circulated prior to the meeting)</p>	
<p>No questions raised on the financial reports.</p>	
<p><b>ITEM 6 AONB Partnership</b></p>	
<p><b>6.1 Management Group chair/vice chair elections</b> (Report circulated at the meeting)</p>	
<p>Nomination forms for the position of chairman and vice-chairman were handed out. Any Management Group member who wishes to stand for either position needs to complete a nomination form with the names of a proposer and seconder and return the form to the AONB office in Hemyock by <b>Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018</b>. In the case of more than one application being received for each post a secret ballot will be held at the next Management Group meeting in November. <b>Nomination papers are attached to these minutes.</b></p>	<p><b>ALL</b></p>

<p><b>6.2 Review of Protected Landscapes, 25 YEP and new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) tests &amp; trials, National Association of AONB's update (national conference)</b></p>	
<p><b>Review of Protected Landscapes</b> is being led by Julian Glover. Howard Davies, CEO NAAONB has met with Julian Glover to discuss the content of the review.</p> <p><b>NAAONB Conference</b> is being held from 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July in Canterbury, <b>TY, BP &amp; CG</b> are attending on behalf of the Blackdown Hills AONB.</p> <p><b>ACTION: CG to share information on the conference with the Management Group</b></p>	<p><b>CG</b></p>
<p><b>6.3 Making it Local programme update</b></p>	
<p>Funding of £176K is available of which £96K has an expression of interest, £52K was allocated at the last meeting leaving £28K still available for projects. Contact Linda Wilson at Making it Local for more information.</p>	
<p><b>6.4 Briefings from partners</b></p>	
<p><b>John Greenshields:</b> National Trust (<b>NT</b>) has appointed a new community fund raising &amp; engagement officer for the Wellington Monument project called Emma Jones. NT are headlining the monument restoration project this year to raise the profile and obtain funding for the work.</p> <p>Woodland Assoc. is working with the AONB on the Facilitation Fund. Blackdown Hills Trust is grazing 160 Longhorn cattle on Blackdown Hills sites; the cattle were part of the Forestry Commission Neroche project.</p> <p><b>Donna Gowler:</b> Natural England are processing Countryside Stewardship applications that have a January 2019 start date.</p> <p>There is an issue with payments on the agri-environment schemes and they are currently working on end 2017 schemes.</p> <p>In future all agri-environment schemes are going to be administered through the Rural Payments Agency (<b>RPA</b>) and therefore some Natural England staff are expected to move to the RPA.</p> <p><b>Simon Larkins:</b> Various bids have been submitted for funding for the Wellington Monument restoration project and are awaiting a response.</p> <p>NT needs to raise £4M for restoration work on the monument of which £2M has already been raised and it is hoped a further £1M will be raised this year. Next spring improvements will be made to the car park with the possibility of a mobile catering unit being located on the site to bring in income.</p> <p><b>Peter Chamberlain:</b> DCC are working with the AONB on the Historic England &amp; Catchment projects and the Landscape Character Assessment review.</p> <p>A free photographic exhibition of the floods of 1968 (including Otterhead Lakes) will be on display at Kennaway House, Sidmouth on 7<sup>th</sup> &amp; 8<sup>th</sup> July.</p> <p><b>Bob Nelson:</b> Enquired on the progress of the Apple Trail, an external project mentioned at a previous meeting. <b>HS</b> advised that the project is looking for funding.</p> <p><b>Cllr John Thorne:</b> An attempt to change the name of the Blackdown &amp; Neroche wards to Neroche &amp; Wellington East was unsuccessful.</p> <p>No properties in Somerset have yet been connected to faster broadband as part of the CDS phase 2 project.</p>	

**Heather Stallard:** In 2008 the BHBA took a lease out on buildings on the Dunkeswell Airfield industrial site and turned them in to low cost business units for rent. Congratulations go to Richard Evans who has kept the units occupied for 10 years.

The Blackdown Hills Business Association marquee will be at the Honiton Show on Thursday 2nd August.

The previous Blackdown Artisan Trail will be run again next year but called the Blackdown Experience and will incorporate a range of things to do as well as artisan businesses.

100-year anniversary of the Calf Club in 2020 (now YFC).

Parish Network AGM at 7pm on 6<sup>th</sup> July at Throgmorton Hall, Dunkeswell.

**Graham Long:** Churchinford, Churchstanton & Clayhidon have now been connected by Gigaclear to superfast broadband.

Update given on the seven recommendations made by the Devon County Council scrutiny committee on the Connecting Devon & Somerset contract These recommendations were rejected by Connecting Devon & Somerset.

**ACTION: GL to pass details of the DCC scrutiny meeting and actions to FR who is meeting with Neil Parish MP on 1<sup>st</sup> August.**

GL

**Cllr Dave Durdan:** Taunton Deane BC and West Somerset DC have now merged and a shadow board has been set up with a chair and vice chair appointed. New boundaries will be announced in October and 20% of officer posts will be lost. The local boundary consultation has started and details can be found at

<https://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/consultations/ward-boundaries-consultation/>

**Cllr Martin Wale:** South Somerset District Council are going through a transformation and funding for the AONB could be more difficult in the future.

**Elaine Hayes:** The National Lottery has awarded £8,700 to Ferne Animal Sanctuary for a new natural heritage project that aims to educate and inspire. 'Discovering Dragonflies' launches on 22nd July with a day of activities at Ferne Animal Sanctuary, near Chard. Major building project will start in the Autumn to improve the agricultural infrastructure at Ferne.

Two beehives have been established at Ferne and **EH** suggested to **HS** that these could be part of the Blackdown Experience event next year.

**EH** offered to display AONB promotional leaflets at Ferne's events.

**ACTION: CG to give Ferne promotional material to display at their events.**

CG

**Frank Rosamond:** With the absence of a 5-year land supply policy at Mid Devon District Council there are speculative planning applications being submitted within the AONB.

**Charlotte Russell (by email):** Hembury Hillfort site is no longer at risk and has new interpretation signage. Heritage England(HE) funded repairs and improvements to the access track to enable future management and the site has been nominated for a Heritage Angels award.

The fabric of Dunkeswell Abbey has been secured with a substantial grant from HE and the building has been removed from the heritage at risk register. The archaeology remains at risk from decay.

Trickey Warren air field improved with substantial grant from HE, the landowners continue to keep on top of the vegetation management so that the fighter pens etc are no longer at risk.

A solution for the watch office and control tower have not been found

Stockland Great camp; attempts are being made to offer a grant to improve this at-risk site.

Casework reports regarding issues at Beckford Bridge were attended by HE Inspector and issues resolved with county highways.

<p>The appointment of a new building conservation project officer at Taunton Deane with support from HE capacity building grant is proving successful. The remit includes some support for the Wellington monument.</p> <p>Several applications for countryside stewardship have been received for sites at risk in the AONB and HE are pursuing means to improve these sites with stewardship grants.</p> <p>HE has been engaging in the AONB field boundaries pilot project at steering group level.</p> <p><b>Bruce Payne (by email):</b> Good attendance at the Community Nature Projects network meeting which is a great example of the Natural Futures legacy and highlights the ongoing need to support and provide guidance to local projects especially with volunteering recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Ongoing member of the Nature &amp; Wellbeing steering Group and the Culm Community Crayfish steering Group.</p>	
<b>ITEM 7 Any Other Business</b>	
<p><b>Terms of Reference:</b> TY will review the AONB Partnership Terms of Reference and produce a draft copy for the next meeting in November.</p> <p><b>ACTION: JG requested that all members should be invited to comment on the suggested amendments as they are being developed.</b></p> <p><b>East Devon Catchment Partnership conference</b> will be held on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at The Deer Park Hotel near Honiton and parish representatives will be invited.</p> <p><b>South West Woodland Directory</b> has been produced by the Forestry Commission and can be found at <a href="https://www.woodland-directory.org.uk/">https://www.woodland-directory.org.uk/</a></p>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>ITEM 8 Date of the next meeting</b>	
<p>Next meeting will be held on <b>Thursday 8th November 2018 from 9:30am – 1:30pm at Broadhembury Village Hall.</b></p>	

Signed as a true record:

Chairman.....

Date.....