

Blackdown Hills National Landscape

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

Thursday 5th March 2026 at Yarcombe Jubilee 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
Robert Derryman (RD)	National Farmers Union
Yehudi Levine (YL)	East Devon District Council
Stephen Dury (SD)	Somerset Council
Tommy Muncie (TM)	National Trust
Cllr Martin Wale (MW)	Somerset Council
Janette Ward (JW)	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Phillip Hackett (PH)	The British Horse Society
Josh Bennett (JB)	Devon County Council
Cllr Simon Clist (SC)	Devon County Council member

Blackdown Hills National Landscape staff team:

Tim Youngs **(TY)**, Lisa Turner **(LT)**, Amy Taverner **(AT)**, Di Weeks **(DW)** (Minutes)

Apologies: Hannah Metson (BHNL), Daniel Lazar (Co-opted member), Fiona Rew (National Farmers Union), Alex Swan (Environment Agency), Paul Spearing (Co-opted Member), Charlie Plowden (East Devon District Council), Tristan Peat (Mid Devon District Council), Ross Henley (Somerset Council), Chris Gibbard (Forestry Commission), James Divall (Somerset Council), 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), Carolyn Dare (Blackdown Hills Transition Group).

Members of the public: Jan & Sarah from Broadhembury Parish Council, Caroline & Liz from Yarcombe Parish Council, Cliff, Peter & John members of the public from Yarcombe area.
David Allen and Peter Derryman – Stockland Turbaries presentation.

ITEM 1 Welcome and Introductions	By whom
<p>Welcome, introductions and apologies were made, 9 members of the public present. Bob asked for questions to be raised as the meeting progresses rather than at the start.</p> <p>Declarations of interest: None.</p> <p>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).</p>	BN

ITEM 2.1 Questions from the public	
<p>Bob asked for questions to be raised as the meeting progresses rather than at the start.</p> <p><u>Action: Contact Parish Councils to make them aware of further PMG meetings so can be advertised.</u></p>	<p>BN</p> <p>DW</p>
ITEM 2.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2025	
<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2025 and any matters arising - The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.</p>	<p>ALL</p>
ITEM 3 Presentations	
<p>Stockland Turbaries</p> <p>David Allen and Peter Derryman introduced the Stockland Turbaries and showed part of their video. Discussion continued about the RSPB placing 10-15 ponies on the Turbaries each year which has worked very well. Robo Flail mentioned to be used in the future. Peter mentioned that the Stockland Turbaries film will be uploaded to You Tube.</p> <p>Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)</p> <p>Di and Amy presented on a summary of the last 5 years and plans and opportunities for the next 3 years.</p> <p><u>Action: Circulate presentation slides.</u></p> <p>Planning updates / NPPF</p> <p>Lisa read through some headlines and highlights of the draft NPPF in relation to protected landscapes. The key issues were discussed, and Lisa explained that there is a shift in policy wording which reinforces the need to have very solid Management Plan statements explaining and defining ‘natural beauty’ to assist plan making and decision taking. The consultation closes next week and Natasha asked to see our response before it’s submitted.</p>	<p>DW /AT</p> <p>DW</p> <p>LT</p>

Item 4 National Landscape Team	
<p>TY gave an overview of the Luppitt Landscape Partnership and their current bid which is in progress for a 20 year scheme and Tim showed part of the Connecting the Culm presentation.</p> <p>Team Report: our project budgets £330k FiPL, £157k capital uplift (30x30, invest to save) and £88k (access).</p> <p>TY gave an update that Clare Groom, our Communications Officer had left and there is a job advert currently running to fill this post. Tim also explained that there is a FiPL Officer role that closes on Sunday for a full time FiPL Officer for 3 years.</p> <p>Tim explained we are on track for a balanced budget and do have the option to roll some money if required.</p> <p>Blackdown Hills National Landscape team currently stands at 10 members of staff with 2 posts advertised.</p>	TY
ITEM 5 National Landscape Partnership – briefings from Partners	
<p>MT sent his apologies but wanted to make us aware of the Skills of the Hills Event on Saturday and is in the process of registering Devon style hedgelaying with the UNESCO living heritage inventory which they are looking for public support towards this. The Blackdown Hills Hedge Association will be interviewed on Radio 4 on Thursday afternoon (5th March) at 3pm</p> <p>DL sent his apologies but wanted to mention that the thermal imaging camera has made its way to Churchstanton, Dalwood, All Saints and Otterford over the winter. Buckland St Mary will be the first people to use it next winter.</p> <p>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, next survey Spring 2026 with training planned for 14 March, looking to get as many volunteers involved as possible. Also mentioned some great new technology which will be used to monitor Lesser Spotted woodpeckers in conjunction with the RSPB.</p> <p>PH mentioned the Oter Valley landscape recovery scheme which he is currently supporting and was particularly interested in the mention of the RSPB placing ponies for grazing on the Stockland Turbaries.</p> <p>SD added the Somerset LNRS goes before the committee on 11 March.</p> <p>JF explained has been working very closely with the Blackdown Hills Nature connections network, and Watch Chard and currently looking at a mini-bus to support getting people around the Blackdown Hills, Jonathan explained that due to the wet weather his pond works will be delayed.</p> <p>NB added that there is huge pressure to identify potential housing sites in Mid Devon in order to meet the 5 year target. There is lots of work being done to identify sites, work has started on the</p>	ALL

<p>new Cullompton relief road which is certainly required with the new housing and this housing will also put pressure on the culm catchment.</p> <p>GL commented about East Devon District Council’s facilitating an emergency resilience programme where Parish councils can come together to address issues using the Bellwin scheme from 1982 which is a process to ask for funds from central government, which is a complicated process but they are meeting with MP’s soon to discuss.</p> <p>YL commented that the 5 year land supply is difficult and hard and fear that it may worsen if Devon goes Unitary. Yehudi also commented about a refusal of a planning application at Dunkeswell raceway. The Panel members thanked Yehudi for his support for the NL.</p> <p>TM no comment</p> <p>RD no comment</p> <p>JW commented that the Somerset CPRE is celebrating its 100th anniversary, they have also been looking at the draft NPPF, looking at maize growing and soil issues and concerned about the amount of land being used for growing of maize.</p> <p>PL commented that there has been a huge uptake in Agri-environment schemes.</p> <p>JB introduced himself as the new Natural Environment Manager at DCC and explained he would be attending meetings now. Beth Bird has been appointed as the Local Nature Partnership & Nature recovery Manager and they will be interviewing for a support officer to support Beth. There will also be a GIS & Mapping system officer to be appointed.</p> <p>GF commented that the Blackdown Hills artists and makers are busy preparing art works for an exhibition in Chardstock on 18 April – 31 May, the exhibition is based on the theme of water.</p> <p>MW mentioned Somerset and how they have progressed with being a Unitary and explained that yes it has its challenges but it is evolving and it will change things, Buckland St Mary paid a contractor to sort their drains, it will end up with Parish’s often resolving problems themselves.</p> <p>SC commented that DCC are working on a balanced budget, 80% of the budget is with children’s services and there will be 15 million extra investment in Highways, ditches and drainage. 6 county farm estates were advertised, 5 taken and often farmed organically, SFI/ CS schemes, BNG options on some and the average age of a farmer in the UK is 60 years old, these farms have been taken on by people in their 30s which is very positive.</p>	
<p>ITEM 7 Any other Business</p>	
<p>Next meeting will be held on Thursday 25th June 2026 from 9.15am – 12pm, venue to be confirmed.</p>	<p>ALL</p>

Signed as a true record:

Chairman.....

Date.....