

Blackdown Hills National Landscape

Minutes of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership Management Group
held on
Wednesday 24 June 2026 at The Beehive, Honiton

Present:

Cllr Bob Nelson (BN) (Chair)	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
Stephen Dury (SD) (<i>Teams</i>)	Somerset Council
Cllr Martin Wale (MW) (<i>Teams</i>)	Somerset Council
Phillip Hackett (PH) (<i>Teams</i>)	The British Horse Society
Josh Bennett (JB)	Devon County Council
Jasmine Sheppard (JS) (<i>Teams</i>)	Somerset Council
Jan Keeling (JK)	Blackdown Hills Parish Network
Daniel Lazar (DL)	Co-opted member / Blackdown Hills Parish Network
Carolyn Dare (CD)	Blackdown Hills Transition Group
David Rolls (DR)	Devon Wildlife Trust
Mish Kennaway (MK)	Tale Valley Trust
Jason Ball (JB)	Mid Devon District Council
Graham Guyett (GG)	Environment Agency

Blackdown Hills National Landscape staff team:

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

Apologies: Cllr Graham Long, Janette Ward, Cllr Simon Clist, Gordon Field, Tommy Muncie, Yehudi Levine, Robert Derryman, Hannah Metson (BHNL), 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 Sarah Wakefield (Somerset Council), Adam Powell (Co-opted Member).

Members of the public/ Parish Councillors: Sarah from Broadhembury Parish Council, Liz Ross from Yarcombe Parish Council.

ITEM 1 Welcome and Introductions		By whom
Welcome, introductions and apologies were made, 2 members of the public present. Bob asked for questions to be raised as the meeting progresses rather than at the start.		BN
Declarations of interest: None.		
The Chair reminded members to complete an updated Register of Interest form (regardless of whether they have one for their own organisation).		
<u>Action: Circulate ROI form.</u>		DW

ITEM 2.1 Questions from the public		
Bob asked for questions to be raised as the meeting progresses rather than at the start. <u>Action: Contact Parish Councils to make them aware of further PMG meetings so can be advertised locally.</u>		BN DW
ITEM 2.2 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2026		
The minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2026 and any matters arising - The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.		ALL
ITEM 3 Presentations		
Restoration of the river Tale Himalayan Balsam removal dates July 16, August 5, August 27. Amy gave a brief summary on the works that have been done on the Tale funded by FiPL (site visit location) and we will re-visit this site after the next PMG meeting on 5th November. Handout and slides will be circulated. Targeting Funding 2026/27 Amy circulated the Project delivery flow-chart and showed slides. Amy confirmed the guidance document is on our website. <u>Action: Circulate presentation slides.</u> <u>Amy to speak to Carolyn Dare ref funding & circulate Viewer to all.</u>		DR / MK AT DW / AT
ITEM 4 Workshop/ discussion		
BHNL Engagement and Communication Strategy Cat explained the reason behind the strategy that was last updated in 2024. <u>Action: Circulate presentation slides.</u> <u>Action: Cat to circulate draft strategy to PMG members when ready.</u>		CF DW CF
ITEM 5 National Landscape Team		
Tim gave an update on our Core work and reminded the group to publicise our available funding. Tim referred all to look at the Team report, circulated with the Agenda. <u>Action: Circulate presentation slides.</u>		TY DW

Lisa explained that Mid Devon District Council and Somerset Council have both commenced Consultation on their Local Plans, this is a short consultation period: Deadline 10 July 2026 Mid Devon District Council Deadline 24 July 2026 Somerset Council Lisa mentioned that both are broad scoping consultations, and that the Local plans do not restate or alter the National policies. The proposed response to MDDC will also be similar for Somerset. It is an opportunity for us to give clear and helpful messages about what we want to see in the Local plans. The structure of our response will be: 1. Set out legislative context and associated guidance. 2. Principles/ key messages 3. General asks Tim gave an update on Connecting the Culm (CTC) looking for funding of £36m in total for Phase 2 and 3. Going to London to an investment summit on 25/06/26 to pitch to investors for CTC. Action 1 - LURA (Levelling Up and Regeneration Act) actions – discussion continued about keeping LURA actions at the front of our minds. JF mentioned it would be a good idea for all Parishes to have a list of features, e.g. stone walls, architecture, and special features which make that area important. NB mentioned the Design Guide will also cover this and this is why this is an important document. Action: Circulate LURA actions. Action 2 – Undergrounding proposal at Broadhembury – National Grid Electricity Distribution regional scheme to underground lower voltage lines in protected landscapes. This scheme will be put forward in July as a potential site for these works. Agreement asked from PMG group if happy to go forward – All agreed ok to proceed. JK confirmed that Parish Councillors very positive so far, just require more information of what is involved if this progresses. Action 3 – Members reminded to come and talk to us about any project ideas and promote the funding we have available. Action 4 – Members reminded to help promote FiPL, BN asked how much currently committed, AT confirmed 1/3 of the budget. Action 5 – Rivers Run Through Us (RRTU) Members reminded that matched funding of £17,500 has been requested from the three relevant Local Authority Partners. SD commented that it is looking positive for Somerset Council. DCC contribution looking hopeful. Action: TY to chase East Devon District Council. Discussion continued about finance and NB suggested a simpler graphic to be produced that illustrates the available funding pots and circulate to the Parish Councils to spread the message. Action: Funding options to be circulated to Parish Councils.	LT TY DW LT/ ALL TY DW	
ITEM 6 National Landscape Partnership – briefings from Partners		
JF explained has been working very closely with the Blackdown Hills Nature connections network which is working really well and all very positive, and Watch Chard and currently in the process of buying a mini-bus to support getting people around the Blackdown Hills.		ALL

CD mentioned on 10th July they have a meeting about More resilience around foods, working closely with the community gardens and food larders. JK & DL Blackdown Hills Parish Network AGM is 22 July 6:45 for a 7pm start at The Sidmouth Arms, Upottery. NB mentioned that an important part to note from the Local Plan is that any development with less than 9 houses won't be able to be called to Planning committee so will be decided by the Planning Officer. Also mentioned the CRAP project and Jo in the Water film being shown on 27 June 2026 at Culmstock Village hall. JB confirmed that the LNRS has now been fully published and available on the website, welcomed everyone to have a look at the site. Have a new team, Beth Bird is the Local Nature Partnership & Nature recovery Manager and a Comms Intern called Robyn Dean. Josh mentioned a Farming Facilitation fund which isn't out yet but possible opportunities to use this fund when it becomes available. PL explained lots of Agri-environmental schemes are coming up for expiry, the new Sustainable farming incentive scheme will be launched and the Countryside Stewardship scheme is up and running. GG no comment. JB no comment. DNW talked about currently working on a mid-point review of their 10 year strategy, which hasn't changed dramatically, one positive is refreshed community engagement and a new team is being recruited for this.		
ITEM 7 Any other Business		
Bob reminded all that Chairman and Vice Chairman roles are both up for election. Both Natasha and Bob are happy to stand again but anyone else interested should notify Di or Tim. Mike Canham's retirement from the Blackdown Hills Parish Network and Jan Keeling has been successfully nominated to replace Mike. Next meeting will be held on Thursday 5 November 2026 from 9.15am – 12pm at Kentisbeare Village Hall EX15 2AA, with an optional site visit after the meeting to land at Lane End House, Broadhembury, EX14 3LU.		ALL

Signed as a true record:

Chairman.....

Date.....