

BLACKDOWN HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership Management Group held on Thursday, 2nd November 2017 at Ferne Animal Sanctuary, near Chard

Present:

Cllr Paul Diviani (chairman)	East Devon District Council
Bruce Payne (vice-chairman)	Special Appointee
Cllr John Berry	Devon County Council
Cllr John Thorne	Somerset County Council
Cllr Martin Wale	South Somerset District Council
Cllr Dave Durdan	Taunton Deane Borough Council
Gordon Field	Blackdown Hills Artist & Makers
Heather Stallard	Blackdown Hills Business Association
Chris Lewis	CPRE, Somerset
Simon Larkins	National Trust
David Northcote-Wright	Somerset Wildlife Trust
Graham Long	Blackdown Hills Parish Network (BHPN)
Elaine Haynes	Special Appointees
John Greenshields	Blackdown & East Devon Woodland Association

Also present:

Blackdown Hills AONB staff team: Tim Youngs **(TY)**, Jackie Vaughan **(JV)**, Lisa Turner **(LT)**,
Blackdown Hills Natural Futures Manager: James Maben **(JM)**

Members of the public: One member of the public was present

Apologies: Cllr Frank Rosamond (Mid Devon District Council); Rachel Williams (Natural England); Mark Pope (National Farmers Union); Clare Groom (AONB staff team); Martin Turner (Blackdown Hills Hedge Association); Jocelyn Pritchard (Blackdown Hills Parish Network); Peter Chamberlain (Devon County Council); Bob Nelson (Blackdown Hills Parish Network)

ITEM 1 Welcome, introductions and apologies	
The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were carried out.	
ITEM 2 Questions from the public	
Cllr Diviani was asked to leave the room and Bruce Payne chaired the discussion.	
Question: Does the AONB committee consider Councillor Paul Diviani a fit person to chair the AONB, when he actively campaigned for, and voted for, a new, off existing line, 3 lane highway through the Blackdown Hills AONB designated land, rather than improvements or upgrades to the existing A303 around Monkton?	
The Management Group commented that Cllr Diviani brings a wide breath of experience to the Blackdown Hills AONB Management Group from his roles within other committees and has a large network in the area and nationally that helps support the work of the AONB. He is a very useful chair of the committee. As a committee, the AONB looked at the impact of the proposed plans for the A30 and decided to respond on impact and mitigation of both routes rather than chose an option. There is a clear governance point that as a chair of a committee, Paul Diviani is appointed to pull together the views of the Management Group and as an individual his views are least observed.	

<p>Proposal by Cllr Martin Wale: The Blackdown Hills AONB Management Group has confidence in Councillor Paul Diviani’s chairmanship and wish him to continue in the post.</p> <p>Seconded by Cllr Dave Durdan.</p> <p>A vote was taken on the proposal and all present were in agreement.</p> <p>Cllr Diviani was invited back in to the room to continue as chair of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership.</p>	
<p>ITEM 3 Minutes and matters arising from 6th July 2017</p>	
<p>The minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting.</p> <p>Matters arising: 5.3: A map on the Forestry Commission website shows the current situation of Ash Dieback in the UK http://tinyurl.com/yc8uvkn3</p>	
<p>ITEM 4 New Blackdown Hills AONB Website</p>	
<p>A presentation was given by Tim Youngs on the development of a new AONB website.</p> <p>EH: Are Twitter and Facebook on the front pages as this pushes you up the list on Google searches? Referencing/linking to destination websites on the outskirts of the AONB such as Taunton Museum and Forde Abbey will help search engine optimisation. Will the website have an enquiry form where the public can raise questions?</p> <p>SL: Management Group organisations will support the launch of the new website by sharing it with their networks.</p> <p>ACTION: CG to advise Management Group members of the new AONB website launch date.</p>	<p>CG</p>
<p>ITEM 5 AONB Team Report circulated prior to the meeting</p>	
<p>5.1 AONB team report, SDF and finances</p>	
<p>5.1.1 Wellington Monument The National Trust’s second application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of the monument was unsuccessful and the board are now looking at how to take this forward. SL informed the group that the bid was not successful due to the fact that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been swamped with applications and the monument is a local structure competing with national monuments and projects. BP was disappointed that the AONB weren’t engaged in putting the HLF bid together and this was acknowledged by SL.</p> <p>5.1.2 National Mapping Programme Bill Horner, County Archaeologist, will be attending the AONB Heritage Working Group on Tuesday 21st November to give a talk on the National Mapping Programme. Members of the public can look at the details of the map at: https://new.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/projects/national-mapping-project/</p>	

<p>5.1.3 Facilitation Fund The AONB is part of a farmer-led group applying for funding from the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund. If successful the funding will provide a number of workshops and demonstrations for the farming community each year for 3 years. Gavin Saunders is the named facilitator for the bid which to date has 54 farmers signed up covering 4,300 hectares of rough ground and spring-line mires. Applications have to be submitted by 14th November and the outcome will be notified by Christmas.</p> <p>5.1.4 Connecting Actively to Nature Devon’s Local Nature Partnership has been awarded £500,000 of National Lottery funding from Sports England to deliver a 5 year programme that will support older people in Devon to connect actively to nature. All Devon AONB’s have signed up as delivery partners to encourage older people to maintain/increase their activity levels. If members meet the age criteria (born before 1962) and live in Devon they are encouraged to complete the online survey before 8th December 2017: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeqaScGZuA8uf_lyPihT4RKhlYOLgih3ePNJ7wxUmX6QKgtzQ/viewform</p> <p>5.1.5 Health & Wellbeing Officer Kristen Lambert will be commencing her maternity leave from the 14th December and Chris Edwards (Somerset AONB Manager) is actively recruiting for a part time officer to cover the role in Kristen’s absence.</p> <p>5.1.6 Community Rebecca Pow MP & Neil Parish MP will be meeting the Blackdown Hills Parish Network Steering Group on Friday 10th November at Culmstock Village Hall.</p>	
<p>5.2 17/18 Financial Update – including SDF & project pot</p>	
<p>No questions raised.</p>	
<p>5.3 Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project (BHNF)</p>	
<p>Three year project ends in January 2018 and a celebration event will be held on Friday 24th November 2017 at the Healthy Living Centre in Hemyock. All members have been invited and will have the opportunity to view the schools art project. http://blackdownhillsnaturalfutures.org/news/natural-futures-school-art-exhibition A three month period of evaluation of the project has begun and will include landowner surveys, Community Nature project surveys and volunteer surveys. The feedback to date has been excellent especially from landowners.</p>	
<p>5.4 Culm Community Crayfish Project</p>	
<p>A presentation was given by the project manager, James Maben.</p>	

ITEM 6 AONB Partnership	
6.1 Making it Local (MiL) programme update	
All current applications have now been approved and all funding has been spent. Rural Payments Agency has asked the Making it Local board to put more projects forward for approval as further funds are available. Making it Local are the top performing LAG in the UK.	
6.3 Briefings from partners	
<p>Heather Stallard: Blackdown Support Group has appointed a new co-ordinator. Blackdown Hills Business Association (BHBA) will be organising an Artisan Trail next May which will involve local artists and shops. Upper Culm Community Land Trust are about to commence the building of more affordable homes in Hemyock.</p> <p>Chris Lewis: A new CPRE planning officer and three new trustees have been appointed. CPRE will be commenting on the South Somerset Local Plan. At the recent CPRE AGM it was agreed that new roads are not the answer and that when commenting on schemes in the future they will be looking to improve existing roads instead of building new ones.</p> <p>Cllr Dave Durdan: A decision has not yet been made by government on the application to merge West Somerset and Taunton Deane councils. West Somerset & Taunton Deane Borough Council has launched a weekly online lottery to support local good causes with a top prize of £25,000. More details can be found at somersetwestlottery.co.uk</p> <p>Graham Long: Upton, Yarcombe, Smeatharpe and Churchinford will soon all be live on ultrafast broadband and will have better internet connection than Exeter and Bristol. Rural Services Network is being sponsored by Amazon to help support development of the digital economy in rural Britain. Amazon has announced a new academy dedicated to rural businesses, following a reported growth in small and medium-sized enterprises in the countryside.</p> <p>Cllr Martin Wale: South Somerset is undertaking an early review of the Local Plan that was adopted in March 2015 due to having problems with housing land supply; this review will cover the period to 2034. Consultation runs to 11th January.</p>	
7. Any Other Business	
7.1 Meeting Dates for 2018	
<p>7.2 Blackdown Hills Repair Café</p> <p>A talk by Trisha Comrie, from the Blackdown Hills Transition Group, on the benefits of setting up a repair café in the Blackdown Hills. Trisha has contacted parish councils and local groups about the idea and the response has been positive. The café would run every two months on a Saturday morning and be held at different places around the AONB. The Transition Group is currently looking for volunteers to help run the scheme, particularly to do repairs and mending, and funding to cover the cost of equipment and insurance. It was suggested that an SDF application could be submitted.</p>	

Date of the next meeting	
Next meeting will be held on Thursday, 1st March 2018 from 10am – 1pm	

Signed as a true record:

Chairman.....

Date.....