

Annual Review 2010/2011 Summary

From our chairman

2010 – 2011 was a tough year for all publicly funded bodies, and I am very proud of the way the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership and the staff team responded to the challenge.

By being prepared to adapt, we managed not only to continue our existing work, but achieve great results in new areas such as green energy.

We secured core funding for the next four years from Defra, albeit with a marginally reduced budget. The support of our two county councils and four district councils was also vital and was much appreciated again this year.

Our priority now is to reach for new sources of income and to find fresh ways of working, in tandem with local communities. I know that local people care deeply about the landscape and wildlife, and their involvement will be crucial to the future conservation of the Blackdown Hills.



Cllr Paul Diviani, Chairman,
Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

Landscape



- We achieved greater understanding of the landscape through in-depth assessment of different 'landscape characters' as part of a Devon county-wide project
- A Blackdown Hills case study was part of the High Nature Value farmland scheme which aims to 'green' EU agriculture policy
- We funded expert organisations such as Butterfly Conservation and the Devon Wildlife Trust to undertake a range of projects to benefit bats, butterflies and hedgerows
- We supported local projects to collect historical photographs and oral recordings and make them easily available to everyone
- We addressed the problem of light pollution with new guidance on our website

Sustainability



- We produced a detailed report on renewable energy which backed small-scale installations. It was launched at the Green Energy for a Living Landscape conference which attracted a large audience of residents and professionals
- 900 children learnt about food and farming at Taste the Harvest, supported by the AONB and Making it Local
- We supported green enterprises including forestry, fish farming and local crafts
- We drove forward the Blackdown Hills community plan to help parishes achieve common goals
- We achieved better access to recreation through development of cycling, horseriding and walking routes



- Our popular Countryside Events programme promoted 94 enjoyable outdoor events
- The first Blackdowns Woodland Fair was a great success
- We funded an outdoor classroom at Hemyock Primary School, created by children, parents and staff
- Improvements to our website made it easier to plan days out with interactive maps

The Blackdown Hills is one of the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – landscapes protected for the nation because of their exceptional countryside, heritage and wildlife. Over 80 organisations work together to protect this special place.

Funding and finance

The work of the Blackdown Hills AONB team was funded by Natural England, Devon and Somerset county councils, East Devon, Mid Devon and South Somerset district councils and Taunton Deane Borough Council. In 2010 – 2011 we received £286,000 and spent some £80,000 on projects in the area. For full details, please see the full annual report online.

Making it Local

Making it Local is a £2.4m fund for communities and enterprise in this area. During 2010 – 2011, 67 projects were proposed in the AONB. 14 were approved and received grants totalling some £122,000. These included volunteering, training, healthy cooking and living, local history, sport, play and promoting local businesses. For more information about the projects funded, see www.makingitlocal.org



Neroche Scheme

This landscape partnership project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has concentrated on the northern ridge of the Blackdown Hills. Among the scheme's achievements in 2010 – 2011 were a 300-page book about the area, expansion of the fortnightly volunteering group, new geology interpretation, a series of events and training, and continuation of the forest cattle grazing project. See www.nerochescheme.org



Full annual review online

www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Annual-review-2010-11.html