

Blackdown Hills Community Plan

Blackdown Hills Parishes Network 2011



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Summary of Recommendations

Short Term

- **Appoint steering group to oversee activities, regular rotation of members essential to ensure full engagement**
- **Secure funding to maintain momentum**
- **Investigate opportunities for working with AONB and achieving effective community plan development**
- **Raise profile of Plan development**
 - Improved Communications: Undertake a full survey of information dissemination mechanisms, current uptake and reach, investigate opportunities for a 'Blackdowns Online' website to develop an identity, link existing sites.
- **Engage with groups from the community willing to commence work on the following areas:**
 - Planning – with a view to the long term - engage with a group willing to learn through development of the Localism Bill what devolved responsibilities will be available, share best practice and engage with planning authorities. Gather evidence of inconsistency of planning decisions to enable effective engagement for future decisions where appropriate.
 - Public transport opportunities – better dissemination of information about what is already available, survey of uptake of community led schemes, assess opportunities to widen these schemes or emulate in different areas of the Blackdown Hills.
 - Winter roads planning group – establish a group or groups to undertake a survey in the parishes of self help opportunities to enable gritting and salting of important, yet untreated roads in the Blackdowns. This would build on a comprehensive report prepared for Devon County Council's (DCC) Environment, Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee in 2010, which contains a comprehensive assessment of the state of road network throughout the County¹ and makes recommendations for community actions to maintain the network.

Medium Term

- **Develop the Public Transport and Winter Roads planning groups to align with DCC's newly developed arrangements with South West Highways, intended to create flexibility of working practices by enabling information sharing between parishes and the highway authority to ensure effective maintenance visits, and work with the equivalent in Somerset.**
 - Widen remit of Public transport group to include transport and highways input and view to long term achievement of reduced speed limits and less HGV traffic, allowing safer recreational access in key locations
- **Extend the Communications group remit to investigate opportunities to enable access to broadband for all, better mobile signal etc – many examples to draw on. The timing for this is appropriate in the light of recent moves to improve access to high speed broadband throughout Somerset and Devon.**
- **Seek to influence planning decisions from a firm knowledge base**
- **Steering group to maintain overview and direction focus as issues are dealt with or new ones arise.**

¹Task Group CX10601 winter road report to DCC Environment, Economy and Scrutiny Committee.

- Particular attention essential for those areas not currently of concern to Blackdown Hills community although at risk of short to medium term change in delivery, eg Health and Social Care, Education provision, Sustainability (discuss with Transition group) and Environment.

Long Term

- A functional, joined up community that speaks for itself with knowledge and the trust of corresponding local authorities.



Introduction

The idea of developing a Community Plan for the Blackdown Hills parishes evolved following the formation of the Blackdown Hills Parishes Network.

A group of interested parishes met first in May 2009, following earlier discussions related to the possible creation of a Devon Unitary Authority. While this did not materialise, the participating Devon parishes of the Blackdown Hills were keen, with their Somerset counterparts, to continue meeting in order to develop a cohesive voice for this group of rural parishes, and decided that the group would be known as the Blackdown Hills Parishes Network.

The Network agreed that a community-led plan for the Blackdown Hills would be an appropriate step toward achieving this outcome. The purpose of the plan would not be to repeat or distil county or district plans and policies or individual parish plans, but to focus on those things that are particular to the Blackdown Hills and important to local communities, where working collectively would be beneficial. The planning process and the final plan would be collaborative and inclusive and focus on realistic, achievable outcomes that complement the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management plan.

In summary the community-led plan:

- **Provides a social and economic profile of the area**
- **Identifies what people value about the area and why it is distinctive**
- **Sets out the priority issues facing local people**
- **Sets out locally agreed actions and projects to address these issues**

This document addresses the first three of these points, and makes recommendations for the achievement of the fourth point.

The local authorities that provide services to the communities across the Blackdown Hills are all committed to supporting local decision-making and giving people more say and more influence about the future of their area. Devon County Council in particular has supported the development and preparation of the Blackdown Hills Community Plan. During the period that the Blackdown Hills Parishes Network was developing, Devon County Council has been supporting a small number of community forums and initiatives with the Devon Association of Parish Councils (DAPC), and the Community Council of Devon (CCD), characterised by the involvement of local people coming together to decide what they need and how to achieve the desired outcomes.

The Blackdown Hills Community Plan project has enjoyed wider recognition through this network, as one of the projects showcased by DAPC as part of its Empowering Communities initiative. In addition, Devon County Council commissioned the Young Foundation to evaluate three of the area based initiatives, including the Blackdown Hills, with a view to looking for effective ways of working that can be expanded to further develop and enhance community engagement. Their findings are published in a report entitled "Learning Locally" report. This is available at <http://policydevon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Learning-locally-v1.pdf>

Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Blackdown Hills are a distinctive, diverse rural landscape stretching from the M5 in the north to Honiton and Axminster in the south and from Chard in the east to Culmstock in the west. Lying between 150 and 310 metres above sea level, the area is characterised by a sense of relative remoteness and tranquillity, and was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1991. From the dramatic, steep wooded north-facing scarp the area dips gently southwards as a flat-topped plateau, deeply dissected by valleys. On the tops are open, windswept spaces; in the valleys villages and hamlets nestle among ancient patterns of small, enclosed fields and a maze of winding lanes lined with high hedgebanks.

The Blackdown Hills are a special place both for those born here and for those that now live and work here. It is a true living landscape with a strong sense of identity where traditional land management and rural skills flourish. Sparsely populated with widely distributed communities, it is quite unlike the nearby market towns. There are different needs and aspirations from those more urban areas. This plan, for the parishes of the Blackdown Hills, identifies these differences, and articulates how community-led actions and decision-making at a local level can play a part in meeting the wishes and ambitions of the Blackdowns Hills community.

The balance between the environment, the ecology and the economic and social well being of the Blackdown Hills relies on active management and community involvement. Work undertaken following designation as an AONB soon indicated that measures to protect the landscape and natural environment would only be successful if related to economic and social goals. Equally, the natural beauty of the AONB contributes substantially to the economic and social well being of the local communities.

It is intended that the community plan will complement the AONB management plan:

- **The AONB management plan takes account of communities' economic and social needs, the needs of agriculture and other rural industries in relation to the main point of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area.**
- **The value of this plan is that it is based on issues identified directly by parishes, groups, and communities across the area.**

Together they present a compelling picture of the interaction between environmental, economic and social wellbeing, and a framework for targeted action. Recognising this, the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership has supported and facilitated the community plan's development and provided administrative support to the Parishes Network.

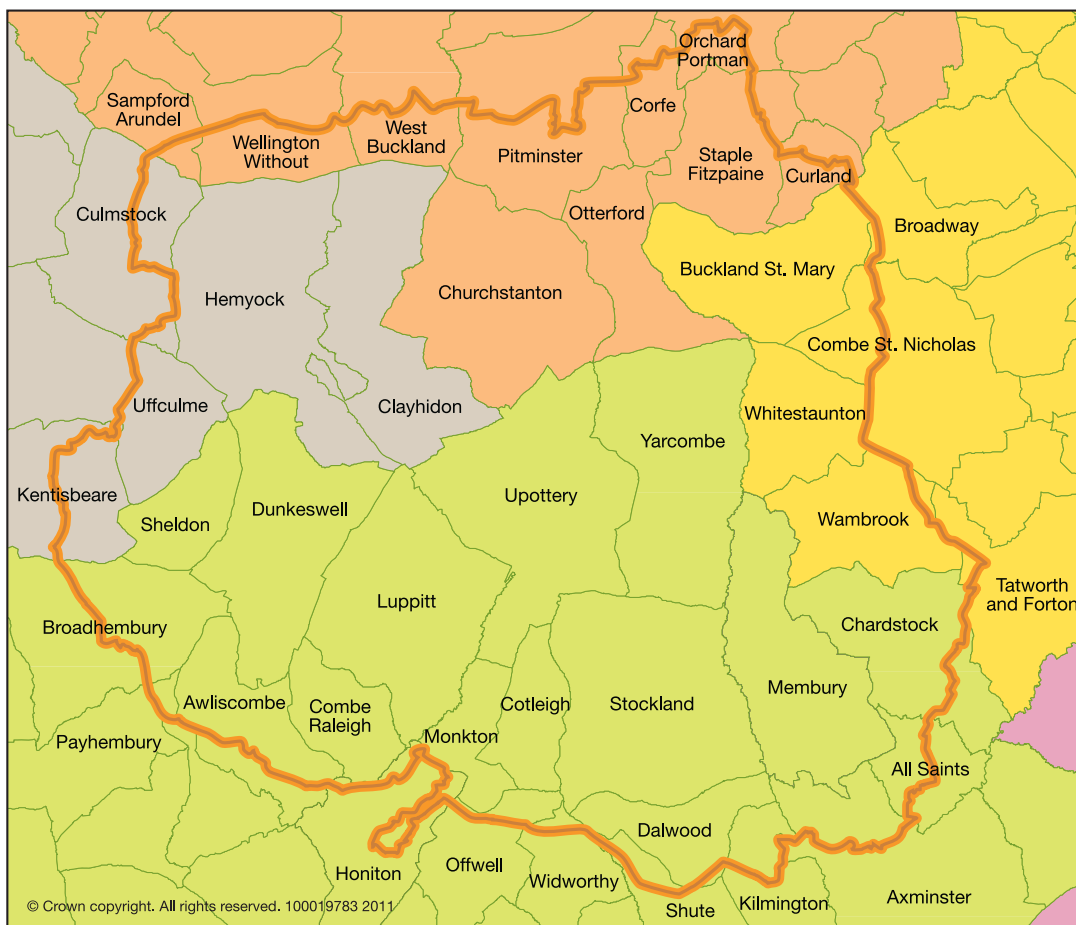


Profile of the Blackdown Hills

Brief profile of the Blackdown Hills community

- Populations range from c. 120 – 2200 per parish.
- Largest settlement is Hemyock.
- Most commercialised is Dunkeswell.
- Six Lower Super Outputs Areas² are in the 5% most deprived in the country with respect to housing and services.
- Two LSOAs are in the 1% LEAST deprived with respect to crime.
- Crime rates much lower than national averages.
- 92% of businesses employ fewer than 10 people.
- Agricultural employment for more than 11% of working population.
- Unemployment at 1.7% in 2009.
- Economically inactive at 2001 census (retired, ill etc) 34.5%.

Map 1 Shows the extent of the Blackdowns Hills AONB with district council boundaries and parish boundaries superimposed.



SCALE

0 6 Km

KEY

— AONB Boundary
— Parish Boundary

Somerset

South Somerset
Taunton Deane

Devon

Mid Devon
East Devon

Dorset

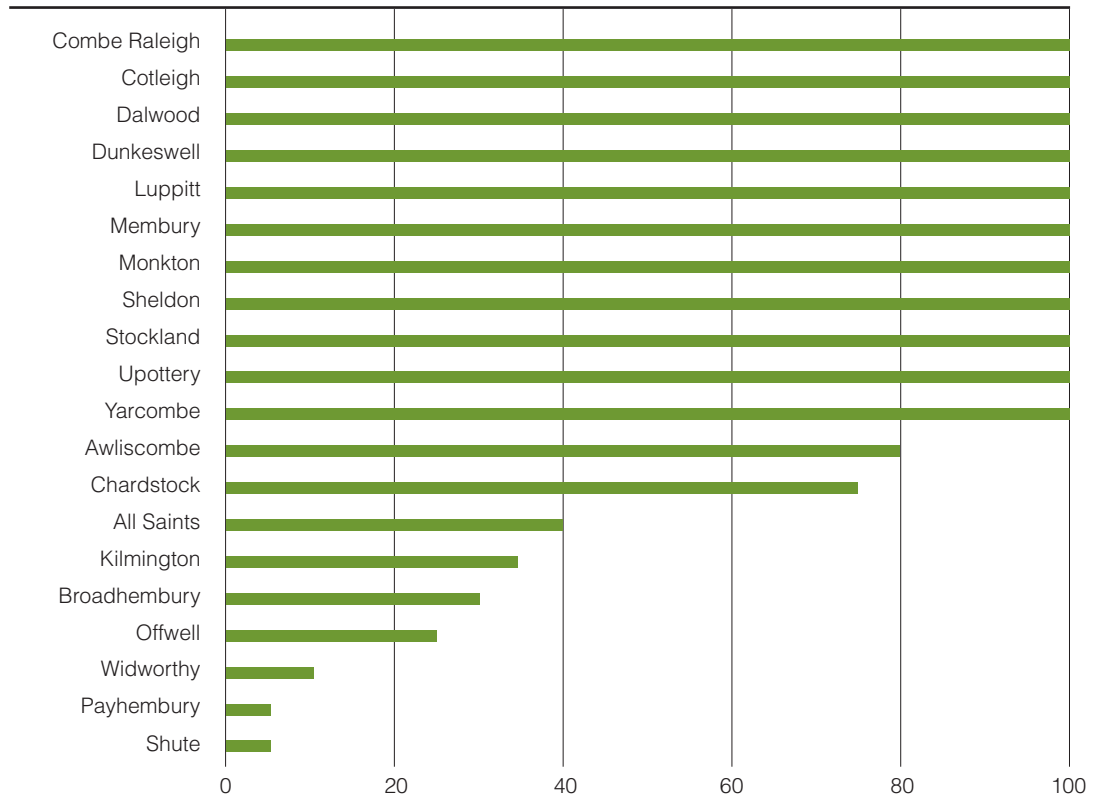
²This term is explained on page 11

Area definition

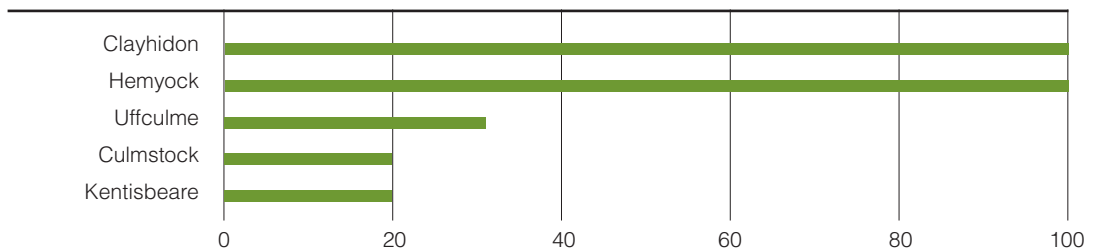
The Plan area has been defined in terms of parishes that are wholly, or have a partial footprint included within the boundary of the Blackdown Hills (AONB). Approximately 2/3 of the AONB area is in Devon, the remaining 1/3 is in Somerset.

There are 25 Devon parishes of which 13 are wholly within the AONB, 12 others have a partial AONB footprint.

East Devon District Council Parishes, approximate % area within AONB boundary:

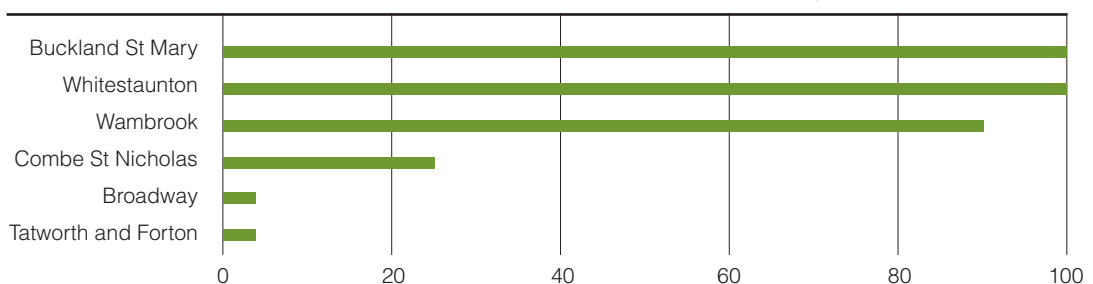


Mid Devon District Council Parishes, approximate % area within AONB boundary:

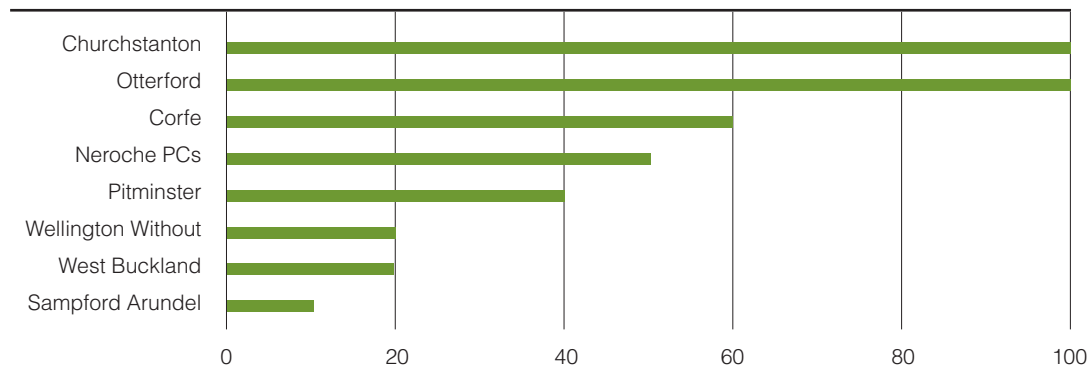


Within Somerset, there are 14 Parishes of which 4 are wholly within the AONB, 10 others have a partial AONB footprint.

South Somerset District Parishes, approximate % area within AONB boundary:



Taunton Deane Borough Council Parishes, approximate % area within AONB boundary:

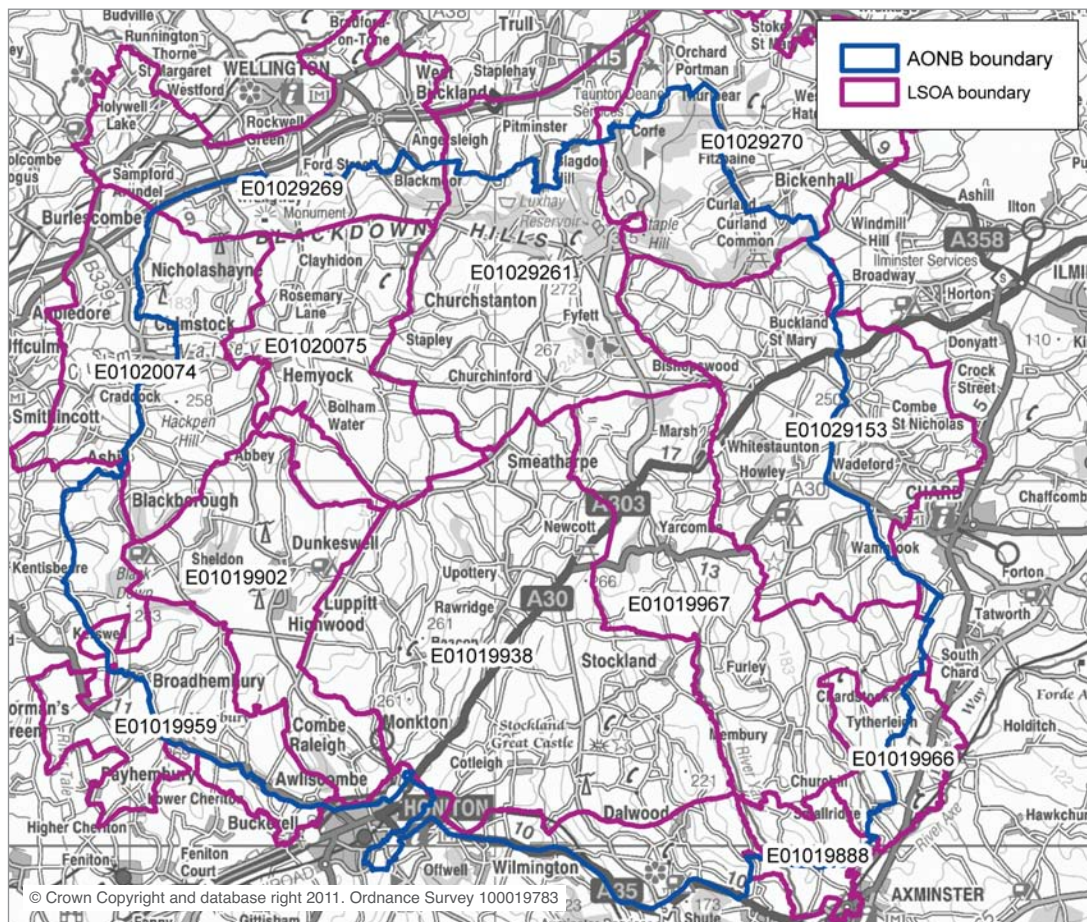
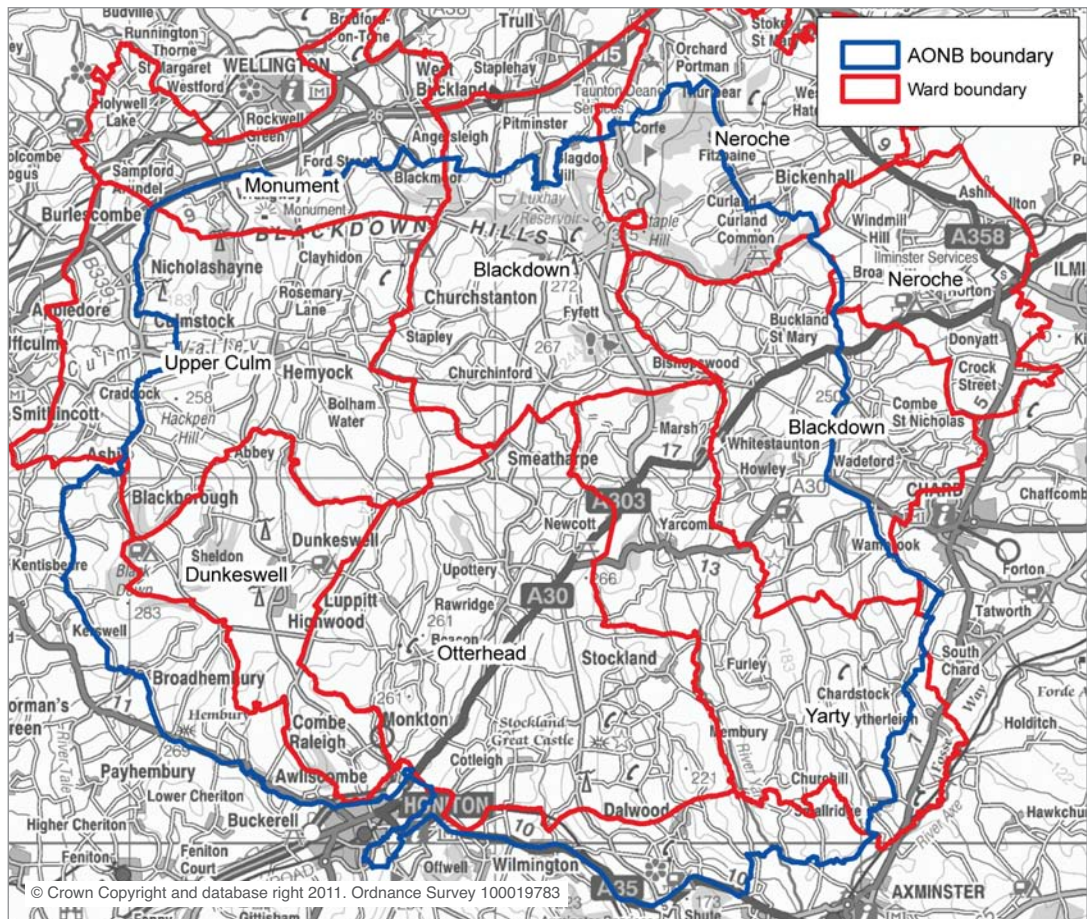


Neroche Parish Council comprises a group of parishes that has worked together for several years. It includes the original parishes of Curland, Orchard Portman, Staple Fitzpaine in AONB [+ Bickenhall, outside AONB]

Unfortunately little data is available for parishes, with official statistics often being reported at ward or lower super output area (LSOA) level. LSOAs are a national statistical geography designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics. They are of consistent size across the country and have an average population of 1,500 (with a minimum of 1,000). They are also not subject to regular boundary change meaning that it will be easier to compare areas over time.

Due to these problems with geography it has been necessary to produce a 'best fit' Blackdown Hills area defined in terms of wards and LSOAs. LSOAs do not, unfortunately, have particularly meaningful names. However, for the sake of completeness, the following maps show which wards and LSOAs have been used.





Map 2 (left)

Shows extent of Blackdowns Hills AONB with Ward area boundaries superimposed.

Wards:

Devon:	Somerset:
Dunkeswell	Blackdown (South Somerset)
Upper Culm	Blackdown (Taunton Deane)
Otterhead	Monument
Yarty	Neroche (South Somerset)
	Neroche (Taunton Deane)

Map 3 (left)

Shows extent of Blackdowns Hills AONB with LSOA boundaries superimposed.

Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA):

Devon:	Somerset:
E01019888 - East Devon 005C	E01029153 – South Somerset 024A
E01019902 - East Devon 001A	E01029261 - Taunton Deane 014A
E01019938 - East Devon 001B	E01029269 – Taunton Deane 014B
E01019959 - East Devon 004D	E01029270 – Taunton Deane 013B
E01019966 - East Devon 005E	
E01019967 - East Devon 001C	
E01020074 - Mid Devon 003B	
E01020075 - Mid Devon 003C	

Clearly, in terms of definitive population statistics, neither of these area definitions is a perfect match for the area included within the AONB, but for ease of interpretation the population statistics in this profile for the Blackdown Hills refers to either the ward or LSOA data.

Population Demographics

The population of the Blackdown Hills is described by the available LSOA statistics for England and Wales [Mid year estimate of the Registrar General for 2009]. These data do not apply to the exact boundary of the parishes included in the plan but do provide information on population subsets within each of the relevant districts. The age distributions show a clear tendency toward an older population than lives in either of the surrounding counties, or in England and Wales overall. Over 30% of the Blackdowns population exceeded the retirement age for men (65) and women (60) in 2009, as compared with 24 and 22% for Devon and Somerset respectively in the same age band. The difference is even more marked when compared with figures for England and Wales, in which the overall proportion of people over retirement age is just 19%.

Table showing age distribution of population in the Blackdowns compared with those of Devon and Somerset in comparison with England and Wales.

	Blackdown Hills Devon		Blackdown Hills Somerset		Blackdowns Population totals***		Devon County*	Somerset County*	England & Wales
0 - 15	2,167	16.3%	1,231	14.1%	3,398	15.4%	15.6%	16.3%	18.9%
16 - 29	1,492	11.2%	942	10.8%	2,434	11.0%	18.9%	21.0%	18.6%
30 - 44	2,206	16.5%	1,383	15.9%	3,589	16.3%	17.7%	19.9%	21.6%
45 - retirement**	3,411	25.6%	2,555	29.3%	5,966	27.1%	23.4%	21.9%	21.9%
retired and older	4,057	30.4%	2,599	29.8%	6,656	30.2%	24.4%	20.9%	19.0%
all ages	13,333		8,710		22,043		1,138,077	1,343,387	c54,800,000

* includes Plymouth, Torbay and Bristol Unitary authorities

** retirement age is 60 for women and 65 for men

*** using LSOA data for areas outlined in map 3

Registrar General mid year estimate 2009 © Crown copyright

Blackdown Hills data derived from the following LSOAs

Devon:

E01019888 - East Devon 005C
E01019902 - East Devon 001A
E01019938 - East Devon 001B
E01019959 - East Devon 004D

E01019966 - East Devon 005E
E01019967 - East Devon 001C
E01020074 - Mid Devon 003B
E01020075 - Mid Devon 003C

Somerset:

E01029153 - South Somerset 024A
E01029261 - Taunton Deane 014A
E01029269 - Taunton Deane 014B
E01029270 - Taunton Deane 013B

Note that it is estimated that the total population living within the AONB boundary is approximately 13,000 (Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-2014).

The table below shows the anticipated increase in population for the four Districts within which the Blackdown Hills are contained from 2009 to 2026. These estimates forecast an overall increase in population of between 13 and 18 %.

(data from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/populationestimates/flash_pyramid)

Population	Year	Where	Year	Est. population
208,700	2009	Total population East Devon DC and Mid Devon DC	2026	245,900 up 18 %
269,100	2009	Total population South Somerset DC and Taunton Deane BC	2026	303,100 up 13 %

Deprivation

The principal source of data for measuring an area's relative disadvantage is currently The Indices of Deprivation³, the latest information being for 2010. This is a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level measure of multiple deprivation and is made up of seven domains:

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation
- Crime

There are two supplementary Indices (Income Deprivation Affecting Children and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People).

The Indices are used widely by public bodies to analyse patterns of deprivation and identify where special programmes may be targeted. None of the 12 Blackdown Hills LSOAs are in the most deprived quarter of LSOAs nationally taking the figures overall.

The table below shows the LSOAs in the area and their rank out of all LSOAs in the country. A rank of one would indicate the most deprived area in the country, a rank of 32,482 would indicate the least deprived.

LSOA	Overall	Income	Employment	Health	Education	Housing	Crime	Living Environment
Devon								
E01019888	19,429	17,178	22,624	19,509	22,453	9,645	21,509	9,025
E01019902	16,114	19,957	23,175	28,420	11,828	79	28,752	25,366
E01019938	15,410	25,413	24,448	27,008	16,721	8	26,725	6,811
E01019959	15,719	20,146	19,590	26,070	22,155	500	31,939	6,483
E01019966	23,762	28,850	27,412	26,954	23,279	2,162	30,238	15,482
E01019967	18,056	25,935	28,040	25,657	25,667	188	31,069	6,768
E01020074	20,716	24,459	24,334	28,440	27,381	1,993	26,957	8,092
E01020075	22,732	19,952	23,413	27,723	22,076	7,715	27,231	13,604
Somerset								
E01029153	19,552	24,209	26,195	22,642	22,863	2,634	21,173	7,740
E01029261	18,354	24,725	26,474	27,946	28,040	509	19,610	8,225
E01029269	19,958	24,217	25,037	20,334	21,739	2,512	25,203	11,434
E01029270	18,671	23,632	23,994	27,224	27,868	746	18,071	12,502

Department for Communities and Local Government, © Crown copyright

It can be seen that although the area is not classed as being particularly deprived in overall terms there are clear issues with barriers to housing and services. This includes access to a GP, food store and primary school, as well as the ability to buy a house and homelessness. One LSOA (covering villages such as Smeatharpe, Upottery, Luppitt, Cotleigh and Stockland) is classed as the 8th most deprived area in the country on this measure with a further five areas classed as being in the most deprived 5% of LSOAs.

Conversely two areas are classed as being in the least deprived 5% of LSOAs nationally in terms of crime.

³ Department for Communities and Local Government www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/indices2010

The Economy

Business

The composition of businesses in the area differs from the Devon and Somerset and national picture in terms of their size (with a higher proportion of very small businesses) but less so in terms of their industry type.

Business size (employees)	Blackdown Hills	Devon	Somerset	England & Wales
1 - 10	91.7%	85.2%	85.9%	84.8%
11 - 49	7.6%	12.1%	11.5%	11.8%
50 - 199	0.4%	2.3%	2.2%	2.8%
200+	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.7%

Annual Business Inquiry 2007, © Crown copyright. Figures do not include farm-based agriculture

Almost all these businesses therefore fall within the most frequently accepted definition of Small and Medium Enterprises: SME is the recognised abbreviation and the majority of the workforce nationwide is employed by SMEs. Statistics for 2008 published by the Government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Small Business Service show that out of 4.8 million businesses in the UK, 99.9% were SMEs⁴. In the UK, sections 382 and 465 of the Companies Act 2006 define an SME for the purpose of accounting requirements. According to this a small company has a turnover of not more than £6.5 million, a balance sheet total of not more than £3.26 million and not more than 50 employees. A medium-sized company has a turnover of not more than £25.9 million, a balance sheet total of not more than £12.9 million and not more than 250 employees.

Industry	Blackdown Hills	Devon	Somerset	England & Wales
Agriculture and fishing	1.5%	1.0%	0.6%	0.4%
Energy and water	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Manufacturing	10.8%	7.0%	7.4%	6.8%
Construction	12.9%	12.1%	11.9%	9.8%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	26.8%	30.7%	29.2%	27.3%
Transport and communications	5.7%	4.1%	4.3%	4.3%
Banking, finance and insurance	25.7%	26.4%	29.3%	33.9%
Public administration, education & health	9.1%	10.3%	9.4%	9.2%
Other services	7.4%	8.0%	7.6%	8.3%

Annual Business Inquiry 2007, © Crown copyright. Figures do not include farm-based agriculture

Current small area statistics for employment in agriculture are not readily available with the last data being from the 2001 census. This shows that employment in agriculture is twice the Devon figure, nearly three times the Somerset figure and seven times that of England.

	Blackdown Hills	Devon	Somerset	England
Employment in agriculture	11.3%	5.3%	4.2%	1.5%

Census 2001, © Crown copyright

⁴ Small and Medium Sized Enterprise Statistics for the UK and Regions 2008, published 14th October 2009

Many businesses are members of The Blackdown Hills Business Association (BHBA), a not-for-profit membership based organisation set up in the early 1980s to bring together small businesses who were finding it difficult to advertise their businesses individually. These businesses saw the value of promoting their wares and services collectively. As at March 2009 membership of the BHBA stood at over 300 business members.

The BHBA aims to promote the interests of all businesses in the Blackdown Hills area and to respond to the needs of commercial ventures contributing to the prosperity of the area. Regular bimonthly meetings are held across the Blackdown Hills area to ensure that contact is enabled on a frequent basis.

Economic Activity

Unemployment in the area is below the county and national averages. However, over 200 people (1.7% of the working age population) were unemployed and claiming benefit in 2009. The number of people unemployed rose three-fold over the previous year with the number rising from 65 to the 2009 level. This is a proportionally bigger increase than for Devon, Somerset or nationally which saw rates roughly double.

Blackdown Hills		Devon	Somerset	England & Wales
212	1.7%	2.6%	2.7%	4.1%

Claimant count April 2009, © Crown copyright

Overall the level of economic inactivity (people not seeking work due to illness, retirement, study etc.) in the Blackdown Hills area is similar to the Devon, Somerset and national figures. In Dunkeswell nearly half (47.2%) the people aged 16 to 74 are economically inactive compared to just 24% in Monkton.

	Blackdown Hills	Devon	Somerset	England
Economically inactive	34.5%	34.8%	32.2%	33.1%

Census 2001, © Crown copyright

Household Income

The level of average household income in the Blackdown parishes compares well to the Devon average, being around £2,000 higher. It is however, around £2,000 below the national average. Dunkeswell has the highest proportion of households with an annual income under £20,000 at 41.4%, followed by Monkton at 37.6%. Conversely, in Sheldon only 8.4% of households have an annual income of less than £20,000.

	Blackdown Hills (Devon part)	Devon	Great Britain
Average household income	£32,591	£30,622	£34,417
Households with an income under £20,000	30.5%	34.5%	

Paycheck, 2009 © CACI

Figures for Somerset are not available.

Education

The level of educational attainment at Key Stage 2 in the area is above the Devon, Somerset and national averages. GCSE results in the Devon part of the AONB are also above average. Data shown below relate to 2008/9.

Key Stage 2 tests are taken before a child moves from a primary school to secondary school with an average ability child expected to achieve level four.

Tests are taken in English, Maths and Science. The percentage of pupils attending schools in the AONB who achieved level four or better is shown below.

	Blackdown Hills schools	Devon	Somerset	England
Key Stage 2 level 4 or better				
English	85%	82%	82%	81%
Math	85%	79%	78%	79%
Science	92%	89%	88%	89%

Department for Children, Schools and Families © Crown copyright

The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above GCSE is also shown, although data are only available for pupils living in Devon.

	Blackdown Hills (Devon part only)	Devon	Somerset	England
5 or more GCSEs at grade C or better	71%	64%	54%	65%

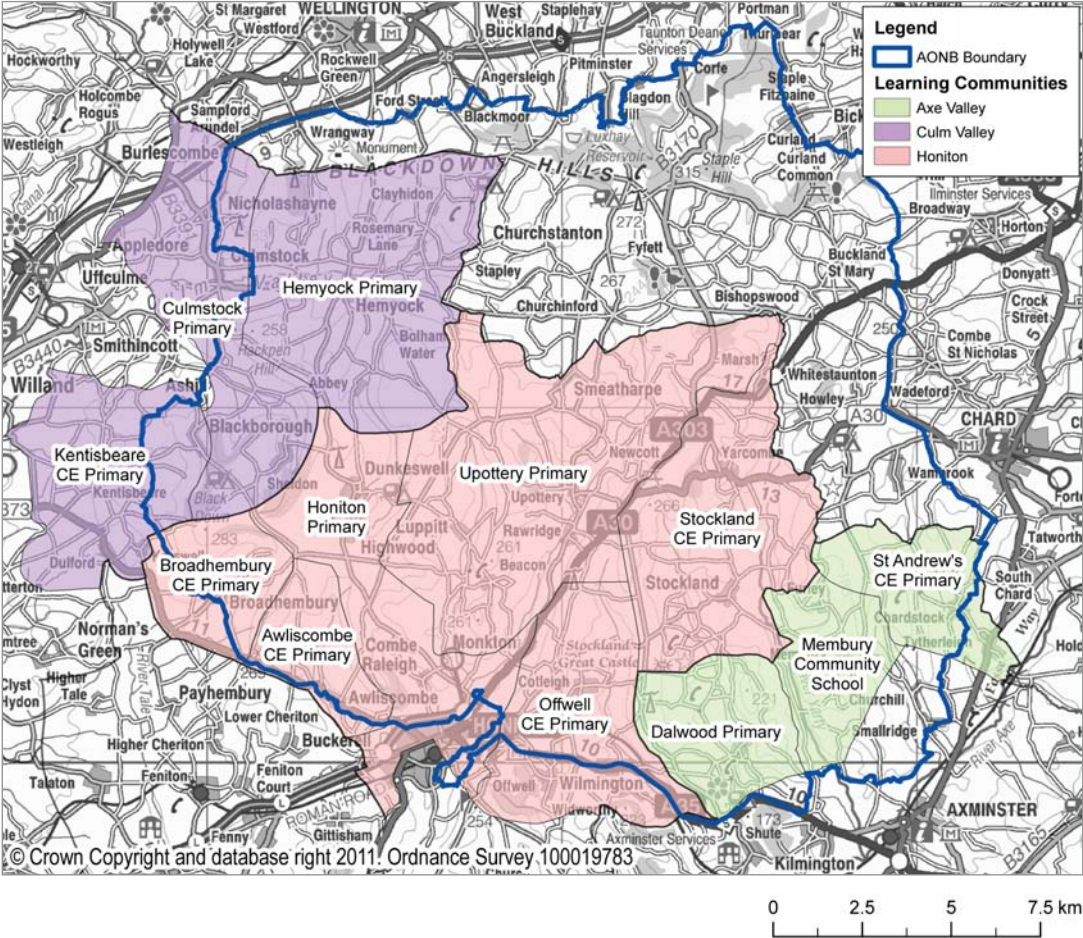
GCSE Blackdown parishes: Devon County Council

There are 20 primary schools in or very close to the Blackdown Hills AONB boundary:

All Saints School	Kentisbeare School
Awliscombe School	Littleton School, Honiton
Broadhembury Primary School	Membury School
Buckland St. Mary Primary School	Offwell School
Churchstanton Community Primary School	St. Andrews School, Chardstock
Culmstock Primary School	Sampford Arundel Primary School
Combe St Nicholas School	Tatworth Primary School
Dalwood School	Stockland Primary School
Hemyock Primary School	Upton Primary School
Honiton Primary School	West Buckland Primary School

As shown on the following map, in Devon the Blackdown Hills primary school catchment areas fall in to three Learning Communities. Broadhembury, Awliscombe, Honiton, Littleton, Upton, Offwell and Stockland primary schools form part of the Honiton Learning Community whilst Kentisbeare, Culmstock and Hemyock primary schools are part of Culm Valley Learning Community. Dalwood, Membury and St Andrew's primary schools fall in the Axe Valley Community.

A Devon Learning Community is made up of a secondary school and its feeder primary schools.



Somerset schools are organised in Patches: primary schools in Buckland St Mary, Combe St Nicholas and Tatworth feed into Holyrood School, Chard, Churchstanton primary feeds into The Castle School, Taunton and primaries at Sampford Arundel and West Buckland feed in to Courtfields School, Wellington (no map available).



House Prices

House prices in the Blackdown Hills parishes are substantially higher than for Devon in general – both are higher than the national average. The gap between the Blackdowns area and Devon has increased markedly since 2001. Combined with relatively low average household income, house price affordability is worse than it is nationally. Local data are currently only available for Devon; however, at a county scale housing in Devon is more expensive than that in Somerset across all housing types.

	Blackdown Hills (Devon part only)	Devon*	Somerset*	England & Wales
Average house price				
2001	£110,891	£112,756	£93,329	£92,169
2007	£271,132	£236,771	£186,399	£180,395
Change	145%	110%	100%	96%
2007 house prices				
Detached	£396,566	£331,912	£305,539	£272,378
Semi-detached	£224,526	£210,742	£173,892	£169,645
Terraced	£171,385	£177,624	£142,531	£141,162
Flat/Maisonette	£125,500	£162,724	£99,786	£170,003

* excludes unitary authority areas

Land Registry © Crown copyright

Health and Social Care

The majority of health care in the Blackdown Hills is provided by the Blackdown Practice, which has three fully staffed surgeries providing all primary care services to the residents of the practice area, with a dispensary at each site. The list size is approximately 7,300 covering an area of 200 square miles. The main surgery is at Hemyock, with a Somerset surgery five miles away at Churchinford and another at Dunkeswell, five miles towards Honiton. The community is also able to choose between other NHS practices situated in the surrounding towns of Wellington, Taunton, Chard, Axminster, Honiton and Cullompton.

Operating in tandem with the Blackdown Practice is a charity, The Blackdown Support Group, set up in 1991 to provide comprehensive health and wellbeing-related support services across the area. These include a chat and shopping services, carer respite, escorted transport to hospital doctors, opticians, dentists or business appointments, transport to local social events, luncheon and tea clubs, short term loan of wheelchairs, tens machines, careline telephones, a library, footcare and access to a hire vehicle capable of carrying a wheelchair-bound passenger plus one escort and driver.

The health of people in all four of the local authorities encompassing the Blackdown Hills AONB area is generally better than in England overall. Summarised NHS data⁵ for the individual districts as compared with England as a whole reveals the following:

⁵ Source: APHO and Department of Health. © Crown Copyright 2009.

East Devon:

Life expectancy in the area is higher than the England average, although some inequalities exist within East Devon by location and gender. For example, men from less deprived areas can expect to live nearly seven years longer than those in more deprived areas. Over the last ten years, rates of death from all causes combined and rates of early death from heart disease and stroke have fallen steadily and are below the England average. Rates of early death from cancer are below the England rate and have been falling since 2001. The health of children in East Devon is generally better than in England as a whole. Rates of teenage pregnancy and smoking during pregnancy are lower than the England average. Estimated levels of smoking in adults are also lower than the whole of England although smoking does kill 250 people a year in East Devon. Rates of death and injury on the roads of East Devon are lower than the rates for England; however, 39 people are killed or injured each year on the roads. East Devon is a prosperous area, with a much older population than the England average.

Mid Devon:

Life expectancies for both men and women are higher than for England. Deprivation levels are lower than the England average, however some areas of Mid Devon are among the most deprived in England (in the lowest 20%). People living in the more deprived areas have lower life expectancy than those in less deprived areas. Over the last ten years early death rates from heart disease, stroke and cancer, and deaths from all causes combined have declined, and are below the England average. The rate of women initiating breast feeding is higher than average for the country, also childhood obesity is much lower than the rate throughout England. An estimated one in four adults in Mid Devon smoke, similar to the average for England, and an estimated one in seven adults binge drink, which is lower than the England average. Rates of death and injury on the roads of Mid Devon are similar to the England average, however 40 people are injured or lose their lives on the road each year.

South Somerset:

Within South Somerset, there are health inequalities, with the difference in male life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas being almost eight years. Over the last ten years, rates of early death from heart disease and stroke, and death rates from all causes combined have declined and are lower than the England average. The estimated proportion of adults that smoke is lower than the England average; however there are around 246 smoking related deaths per year within the area. While the proportion of obese children is lower than that of England, the proportion of physically inactive children within the area is high compared with the England average. The estimated rate of binge drinking among adults is lower in South Somerset compared to the England average, yet there are over 2,500 hospital stays for alcohol related harm per year in the area.

Taunton Deane:

Levels of child poverty, violent crime, and drug misuse are all lower than the average for England. Deprivation levels are lower in Taunton Deane in comparison to the England average. However, the gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas is ten years for men and seven years for women. Early death rates from heart disease, stroke and cancer have all decreased over the last 10 years and are lower than that of

England. The rate of excess winter deaths is higher in Taunton Deane in comparison to England as a whole. The proportion of women smoking during pregnancy is higher than average for England. Although the estimated number of adults who smoke is lower than the England average, there are still 165 smoking related deaths per year. Levels of child obesity within Taunton Deane are lower than England overall.

As noted on page 14, in common with many places in rural Devon, this area has a higher than average proportion of older people. However, the proportion of adults that receive help from the County Council's Adult and Community Service (ACS) is about half that of the county as a whole. Currently data are only available for Devon.

	Blackdown Hills (Devon part)	Devon
ACS clients per 1000 adults	17.2	35.5

Adult and Community Services, Devon County Council

Disability

The proportion of people claiming Disability Living Allowance is also well below the Devon and national figures at 30% less than the Devon and Somerset figures and 40% less than the national figure.

	Blackdown Hills	Devon	Somerset	England & Wales
Disability Living Allowance claim rate	2.7%	4.3%	4.3%	5.0%

Department for Work and Pensions, Nov 2008 © Crown copyright

The proportion of children in need⁶ known to either Devon or Somerset County Council's Children and Young People's Service is below both county averages.

	Blackdown Hills (Devon part)	Blackdown Hills (Somerset part)	Devon	Somerset
Children in need per 1,000 children	16.5	14.4	26.3	31.2

Children and Young People's Directorate, Devon County Council;
Somerset Strategic Partnership Intelligence Unit

⁶Children in need are defined in law as children who are aged under 18 and:-

- need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development
- need local authority services to prevent significant or further harm to health or development
- are disabled.

Crime

The level of crime in the Blackdown Hills area is on a par with levels experienced elsewhere in Devon and Somerset (excluding Unitary Authorities) when comparing the data shown in the table below.

Area	Somerset Blackdowns	% of population affected	Devon Blackdowns	% of population affected	Somerset Total	% of population affected	Devon Total	% of population affected
Burglary	72	0.83%	190	1.43%	3509	0.70%	4794	0.68%
Robbery	1	0.01%	1	0.01%	98	0.02%	195	0.03%
Vehicle crime	50	0.57%	75	0.56%	2259	0.45%	3634	0.52%
Violence	51	0.59%	161	1.21%	6409	1.29%	9317	1.32%
All crime	318	3.65%	704	5.28%	30207	6.06%	37688	5.35%
Anti-social behaviour	202	2.32%	971	7.28%	25666	5.15%	44386	6.30%

October 2009 to September 2010. Data from <http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/information/CrimeStats>

Comparison with national crime levels, as expressed in the Indices of Deprivation data shown on page 15 shows that overall levels of crime are below average, with all LSOAs in the 50% least affected by crime nationally.

LSOA	Rank in total 32482	percentile rank
E01019959	31939	10% least affected by crime nationally
E01019967	31069	
E01019966	30238	
E01019902	28752	10 – 20% least affected by crime nationally
E01020075	27231	
E01020074	26957	
E01019938	26725	
E01029269	25203	20 – 45% least affected by crime nationally
E01019888	21509	
E01029153	21173	
E01029261	19610	
E01029270	18071	

Thanks to Devon County Council's Strategic Intelligence Unit for sourcing much of the data in this profile.

Statistics tell some of the story, but an important part of the community planning process is to establish local issues and priorities. The remainder of this document records that process.

Parish Plan Digest and Prevailing Issues

Parish Plan Audit

A Parish Plan (PP) survey was undertaken to determine the commonality of issues across the Blackdown Hills.

9 PPs have been consulted among the 39 parishes. One other parish is thought to have completed a PP but did not respond to requests to supply a copy, nor are the contents of their plan available through a website. Of the remaining 19 Parishes, 15 did not reply to communications, and 4 confirmed that they do not propose to develop a Parish Plan.

The available PPs were published between 2001 and 2011, the most recent revision of each was consulted where possible.

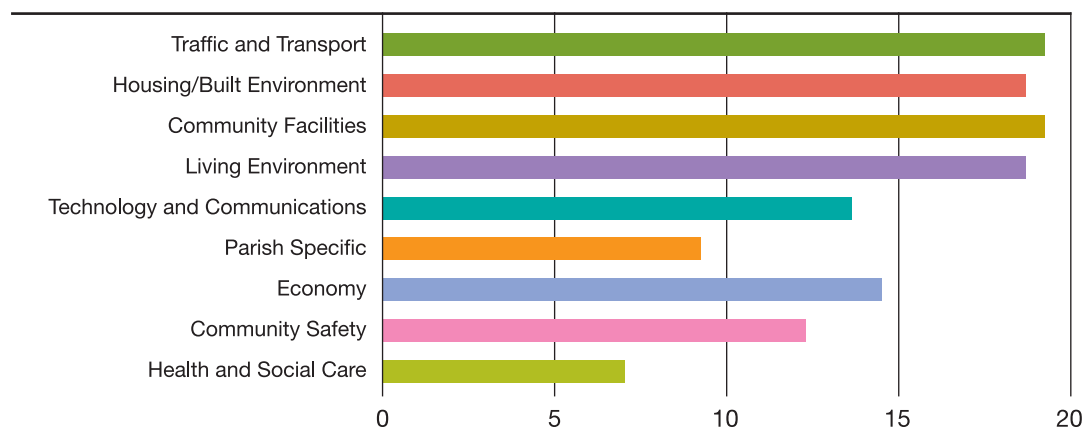
District	Published date	Parish
EDDC	2005	All Saints
EDDC	2006	Awliscombe
EDDC	2010	Broadhembury
EDDC	2011	Chardstock
EDDC	2009	Combe Raleigh
EDDC	2010	Dalwood
EDDC	2007 (revised in 2011)	Dunkeswell
EDDC	2008	Kilmington
EDDC	2008	Luppitt
EDDC	2006	Membury
EDDC	2007	Upottery
EDDC	2004	Widworthy
EDDC	2003	Yarcombe
MDDC	2004	Culmstock
MDDC	From 2010 survey data	Hemyock
MDDC	Info from CCD website	Uffculme
SSDC	2003	Tatworth & Forton
TDBC	2010	Neroche

Most Parish Plans, particularly those completed in the latter part of the last 10 years, have adopted a methodology that categorises issues under the following headings:

- **Traffic and Transport**
- **Housing/built environment**
- **Community Facilities**
- **Economy**
- **Community Safety**
- **Living Environment**
- **Technology and Communications**
- **Parish Specific**
- **Health and Social Care**

The bar chart shows how many of the 19 available Parish Plans addressed the categories listed above.

Issues addressed in parish plans



Notes from Parish Plans

Key points raised in the Parish Plans under each heading are summarised in the tables below.

District	Parish	Traffic and Transport
EDDC	All Saints	Increase awareness of existing transport system, road safety esp for school traffic
EDDC	Awliscombe	Parking problems. Safer roads within the parish. Access to car sharing schemes. Public transport timetables and regular access to public transport timetables.
EDDC	Broadhembury	Reduce on street parking, better awareness of public transport opportunities, integrate public transport with local needs, car sharing, road maintenance
EDDC	Combe Raleigh	Pothole reduction, engender co-operation between highway authorities to endure maintenance of ditches, drains, verges etc, reduce vehicle speed, improve parking facilities and access to village hall CP
EDDC	Dunkeswell	Number of HGVs and excessive speeds through the 20 & 30 mph speed limit, enforcement. Provision of village bypass. Need for a regular 7 d public transport service.
EDDC	Kilmington	To improve safety and introduce 20 mph speed limits.
EDDC	Luppitt	Take control of road maintenance. Prevent further noise pollution and increased road traffic. Improve road safety
EDDC	Membury	Improve the standard of highway maintenance, publicise the availability of the parish lengthsman
EDDC	Upottery	Poorly repaired road surfaces and management of roadside hedgerows, ditches etc. Effectiveness of speed restrictions through the village and roadside parking.
EDDC	Yarcombe	Issues include car sharing, improved bus timetables, road safety, condition of roads and ditches etc., speed of traffic and the proposed dualling of the A303.
EDDC	Chardstock	Improve maintenance of local roads, work with local agencies to improve public transport
MDDC	Culmstock	Access, Traffic and Transport a) Through Traffic b) Roads in the Village c) Roads in the Parish d) Public Transport
MDDC	Hemyock	potential accident black spots identified, support for traffic calming to protect pedestrians

MDDC	Uffculme	Road maintenance considered to be poor. Traffic Calming Measures . Support for 20 mph Speed. Transport to Work, Training or Study. Public Transport. Parking in Uffculme.
SSDC	Tatworth & Forton	Traffic speed, road and verge maintenance; Lack of bus connectivity to trains, evening and w/e service poor, reopen Chard Junction station, Hospital and Doctor car service
TDBC	Neroche	Road safety (speeding, limits, dangerous roads and HGVs), inadequate data on accidents & speeding, No safe cycle route to Taunton, Poor ditch maintenance (flooding), Too few parishioners using bus service. Road signage poor
TDBC	Pitminster	Speed monitoring, weight restrictions on good vehicles, work with neighbouring parishes, car sharing schemes, community bus?
EDDC	Widworthy	Continue work with the Highway Agency to alleviate impact of A35 on village life, ensure day to day maintenance and repairs to A35 , speed checks.

District Parish Housing/built environment

EDDC	All Saints	Resist new housing outside Area Boundary, assess need for affordable housing
EDDC	Awliscombe	Encourage young families to stay in parish and monitor need for new development.
EDDC	Broadhembury	Insufficient and affordable local housing, influence siting of communication masts
EDDC	Combe Raleigh	For community health, need up to 8 affordable houses
EDDC	Dunkeswell	Affordable housing provision to meet local parish needs - up to 16 required
EDDC	Kilmington	Priority to affordable housing and sheltered homes for local people, promote unobtrusive siting of oil tanks and satellite dishes.
EDDC	Luppitt	Limited increase in new housing stock. Lack of affordable housing
EDDC	Membury	Affordable and sheltered housing to meet local needs. family or starter homes and residential care and sheltered housing
EDDC	Uppottery	Develop strategy for helping smaller farms to survive, agree preferred development of the parish
EDDC	Yarcombe	Controlling future housing development.
EDDC	Chardstock	Ensure that new/refurbished sites blend suitably, retain Conservation area, prioritise affordable housing, but limit total new properties overall to 20 in next 10 years
MDDC	Culmstock	Low cost housing for local people, housing for people with specific needs
MDDC	Hemyock	Some housing development needed.
MDDC	Uffculme	Housing Needs. Accommodation Needs. Limits.
TDBC	Neroche	Lack of resident involvement in planning decisions, insufficient housing for first time buyers and young people
TDBC	Pitminster	ensure use of sympathetic building materials
EDDC	Widworthy	site visits to those applying for planning permission to improve, enlarge or modernise their houses, assurances re materials and neighbour awareness.

District Parish Community Facilities

EDDC	All Saints	Maintain and improve Village Hall, develop a village shop/PO, provide playground and equipment, support village school
EDDC	Awliscombe	Parish Hall facilities to meet the needs of the community. Existing school facilities to support community projects and education. Community shop facilities.

EDDC	Broadhembury	Complete plan to rebuild Community Hall, enhance playing fields and BMX track, reinstate community Tennis facility, make best use of existing school facilities. Ensure awareness of mobile library, provide public toilet facilities
EDDC	Combe Raleigh	Develop village green, play area for children, Youth Club, babysitting group, arts and crafts. Improve insulation in Village Hall roof
EDDC	Dunkeswell	New primary school - > 100 pupils bussed out of village every day. Improvement of both Village and Community Halls. Provision of youth work. Preservation of Heritage site of WWII airfield while encouraging commercial activity
EDDC	Kilmington	Play areas, maintain school standards and more activities for the under 16s. Promote sport and encourage young peoples participation. Advertise sport more widely and provide adult education classes. Post office and village stores use
EDDC	Luppitt	improve condition of parish Public Rights of Way. Increase the cultural, sporting and children-related events in the Parish
EDDC	Membury	Maintenance of existing facilities, the school, provide a wide range of activities and promote use of the village hall.
EDDC	Upottery	Explore Arts Council backing for professional/semi-professional shows, a calendar of excursions, Upottery Playing Fields Association to undertake various sporting and leisure activities. Upottery Cricket Club to extend cricket coaching programmes for the young. Various options regarding the Manor Room.
EDDC	Yarcombe	Requiring a more modern village hall. Expansion of sporting and education for adults and leisure activities for children and young people.
EDDC	Chardstock	Support school, funding to improve Community Hall, provide facilities for young people, commission released land for allotments, encourage the Arts for all
MDDC	Culmstock	Activities in nearby villages cannot be easily accessed by public transport.
MDDC	Hemyock	New facilities developed, gaining users, investigate re-opening as much of the Culm Valley Rail track between Hemyock & Willand as possible, for use for cycling, new sports field also in favour, walking etc is widely regarded as important.
MDDC	Uffculme	Shopping, Post Office, Use of Local Premises & Facilities. Mobile Citizens Advice Bureau. Libraries. Allotments. Use of New or Improved Facilities. Inability to join Local Organisations. Specific Outdoor/Indoor Activities. Cycle Paths.
SDDC	Tatworth & Forton	Day Centre provision in the Parish, Local maps for information, Adult Education classes, activities for under young people.
TDBC	Neroche	No playground or field, Improve support for equine facilities, improve access to public footpath and bridleway networks, develop a meeting place or shop , More social activities for children and young people, improve use of mobile library,
TDBC	Pitminster	New village hall, fit for several purposes
EDDC	Widworthy	New notice-board, continue refurbishment of Village Hall

District Parish

Living Environment

EDDC	All Saints	improve recycling arrangements, dog waste awareness, improve signage for footpaths without compromising rural character, noise pollution reduction, low flying aircraft, protection of rural heritage
EDDC	Awliscombe	Litter, dog mess, recycling, road maintenance, disturbances and changes to the landscape.
EDDC	Broadhembury	Reduce litter, dog mess, improve recycling and refuse arrangements
EDDC	Combe Raleigh	Develop walking club, maintain countryside and agricultural land, encourage hedge laying where appropriate

EDDC	Dunkeswell	Improvement of public rights of way network, 2 parts of village are disconnected, no pedestrian connection to Highfield Estate, so walkers have to use public roads to gain access.
EDDC	Kilmington	Maintain the rural character of the parish, enhance the character and encourage green issues.
EDDC	Luppitt	Provision of more recycling capacity in the village
EDDC	Membury	Protection of landscape features. To maintain the present high standard of the footpath network.
EDDC	Upottery	Roadside verges to thrive naturally. Dropping of litter and keeping the parish clean and tidy, regular meetings with local farmers to understand respective viewpoints, improve use of footpaths, mapping and litter collection
EDDC	Yarcombe	Improve footpaths. Minimise flooding, limit mobile phone masts, reduce overhead wires
EDDC	Chardstock	Audit of interesting and valuable rural sites, encourage measures to preserve character for the parish within the AONB landscape. Develop flood management measures, Footpath and bridleway updates, funding for FP projects, record heritage trees
MDDC	Culmstock	Too few footpaths and rights of way are easily accessible, in need of repair, vegetation clearance and general upkeep, need off-road routes available to horse riders. Dog waste fouls the meadows and footpaths. There is no facility for recycling plastic goods. Outlying households are not served by the recycling scheme
MDDC	Hemyock	Footpaths are important, although no signposts and overgrown bushes/nettles
MDDC	Uffculme	Footpath/Bridleway Maps. Ascertain whether there is a litter problem
SSDC	Tatworth & Forton	Requirement for more litter disposal, enhancement of wildlife area.
TDBC	Neroche	Make Neroche a more sustainable community, group purchasing schemes, parish land-sharing schemes, Maintain and enhance rural landscape, deter flytipping and littering
TDBC	Pitminster	Parish litter picking, start a nature conservation group, maintain landscape and ensure use of sympathetic building materials
EDDC	Widworthy	Introduce another footpath, to avoid walking on the A35 to join with the existing footpath to Offwell.

District Parish Technology and Communications

EDDC	Awliscombe	Use of Parish Newsletter/website to publicise local businesses. Availability of local community news, awareness of mobile library
EDDC	Broadhembury	Coordinate Parish publicity and communications
EDDC	Combe Raleigh	Computer classes, establish parish website
EDDC	Luppitt	Improved broadband access
EDDC	Membury	To improve public awareness of the services provided by different Councils.
EDDC	Upottery	improved communication of planning and decision making. enhanced gathering of what parishioners wanted ,Post coding improvement, local telecommunication service providers and create a central point for advertising local events.
EDDC	Yarcombe	encourage improved internet service and to maximise the benefits of services offered by the Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership and support them better.
EDDC	Chardstock	Secure production of Parish Newsletter, improve provision of mobile phone signal and BB speeds, upgrade parish website
MDDC	Hemyock	Parish Mag an important source of information

MDDC	Uffculme	Information availability.
SSDC	Tatworth & Forton	Disparate information sources, not joined up.
TDBC	Neroche	Availability of parish information, Parish Council information, poor mobile service, poor Broadband service, computer skills training for over 50s
TDBC	Pitminster	Develop the parish website, expand parish magazine, improve local communications

District Parish Parish Specific

EDDC	Combe Raleigh	Provide floral displays at entrances to village, aspirations for Church improvements
EDDC	Kilmington	Residents involvement in Parish Council meetings. Requirement for allotment land for local use
EDDC	Luppitt	Establish a heart of the village for social activities
EDDC	Membury	Encourage parishioners to report problems to the Parish Council
EDDC	Uptontery	Generally higher profile for PC amongst members, for membership more reflective of the parish population, Use the Parish Plan and a Design Statement to better influence EDDC in planning matters.
EDDC	Chardstock	Identify and attempt to replace funding shortfalls for parish orgs , collect local historical records, increase level of parish volunteering
MDDC	Hemyock	More powers should be devolved to the Parish Council.
SSDC	Tatworth & Forton	Action groups set up to carry out feasible activities

District Parish Economy

EDDC	All Saints	Resist further commercial development
EDDC	Awliscombe	Point of contact for new business start up.
EDDC	Broadhembury	Encourage opportunities for people to work at home and in the parish
EDDC	Combe Raleigh	Provide more small business units.
EDDC	Dunkeswell	Seek agreement from District Council that no further land will be released for industrial development. Preservation of Heritage site of WWII airfield while encouraging commercial activity
EDDC	Kilmington	provide small business units.
EDDC	Luppitt	Prevent large business development but support small business and rural crafts.
EDDC	Membury	maintain and encourage development of the local economy.
EDDC	Uptontery	Adult education classes and classes for early help for small to medium enterprises.
EDDC	Yarcombe	Promotion of tourism, support existing business
MDDC	Culmstock	Any industrial development would generate further traffic on an already inadequate road network. There are many under-used local services available in the Parish. There is no local support system for traders. No point of contact for information on available funding
MDDC	Hemyock	in favour of small-scale light industrial workshops and redundant farm buildings converted for light industrial workshops
MDDC	Uffculme	Industrial/Agricultural Activity. Industrial Jobs. Development in the Countryside.
TDBC	Neroche	Improve support for farmers and local businesses



District	Parish	Community Safety
EDDC	All Saints	Prevention of crime, security awareness
EDDC	Awliscombe	Improve neighbourhood watch scheme, increase opportunity to talk to local police.
EDDC	Broadhembury	Road safety, empower community to report disturbances, improve Neighbourhood Watch
EDDC	Luppitt	Increase police presence in the Parish, establish Neighbourhood watch
EDDC	Uppottery	Safety of items in outbuildings, lack of visible deterrent police presence, lack of faith in prompt police response to emergency calls, need for access to professional police advice
EDDC	Widworthy	Reintroduce Neighbourhood watch
EDDC	Yarcombe	improved pedestrian lighting.
EDDC	Chardstock	Devise and implement a Parish emergency planning system
MDDC	Culmstock	Speeding traffic and narrow lanes constitute a hazard , emergency service response times, no formal crime reduction schemes in the Parish
MDDC	Uffculme	Concern at Crime. Affected by Disturbances. Response to Disturbances.
SSDC	Tatworth & Forton	High incidence of antisocial behaviour, little police presence, Improve street lighting
TDBC	Pitminster	Establish Neighbourhood watch

District	Parish	Health and social care
EDDC	All Saints	Need local clinic/nurse/pharmacy
EDDC	Kilmington	NHS Dentist and transport to healthcare venues.
EDDC	Luppitt	Easier access to GP surgery- weekly village surgery?
EDDC	Membury	Maintenance of medical facilities.
MDDC	Hemyock	care manager ; health visitor ; mental health ; visiting optician ; patient participation group
MDDC	Uffculme	Health & Social Services.
TDBC	Neroche	Limited social activities for older residents, assistance for elderly/infirm if required

Parish Priorities Survey

In June 2010, each parish, via the parish council, was invited to list its top five priorities and to state what the parish would most like to achieve in the next five years.

Priorities were awarded weighted scores to enable a prioritised list of issues to be developed for all respondents and matched to the 9 Parish Plan categories:

Priority 1 was awarded 5 points

Priority 2 was awarded 4 points

Priority 3 was awarded 3 points

Priority 4 was awarded 2 points

Priority 5 was awarded 1 point

Points awarded within each category were accumulated to arrive at an overall total. The majority of parishes were keen to achieve all priorities within five years. Sixteen parishes responded between July 2010 and January 2011.

All information supplied on the following pages is derived from Parish Priority responses received from the following parishes:

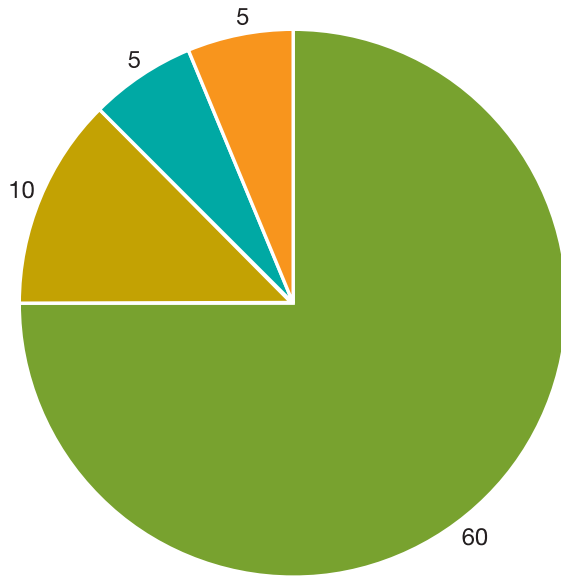
From 16 parishes, with area % in AONB

Dunkeswell	100	Neroche	50
Churchstanton	100	All Saints	40
Clayhidon	100	Pitminster	40
Luppitt	100	Broadhembury	30
Membury	100	Combe St Nicholas	25
Monkton	100	Culmstock	20
Hemyock	100	Wellington Without	20
Upottery	100	Shute	5

The issues receiving the highest scores overall are shown in the final pie chart on page 33: Traffic and transport related problems are clearly a common problem to almost all respondents receiving a score of 93 overall. Housing and the Built Environment and Community Facilities shared almost equal importance in second and third places with 43 and 42 points respectively.

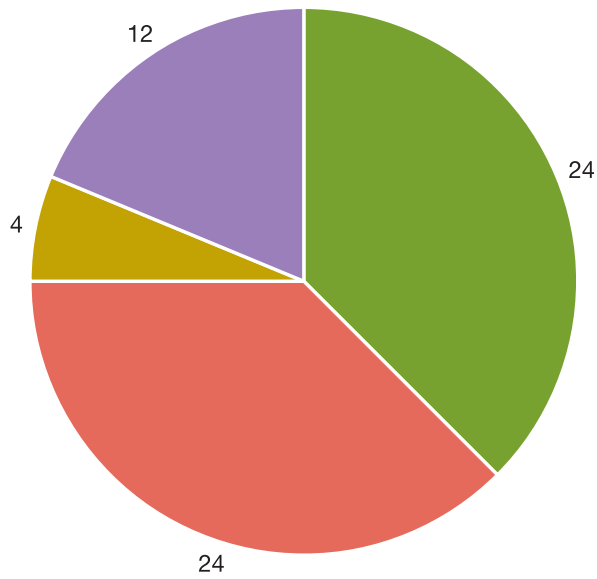
The following series of pie charts shows scores derived from the individual Parish Priorities, the scores are accumulated in the final chart.

Priority 1 Scores



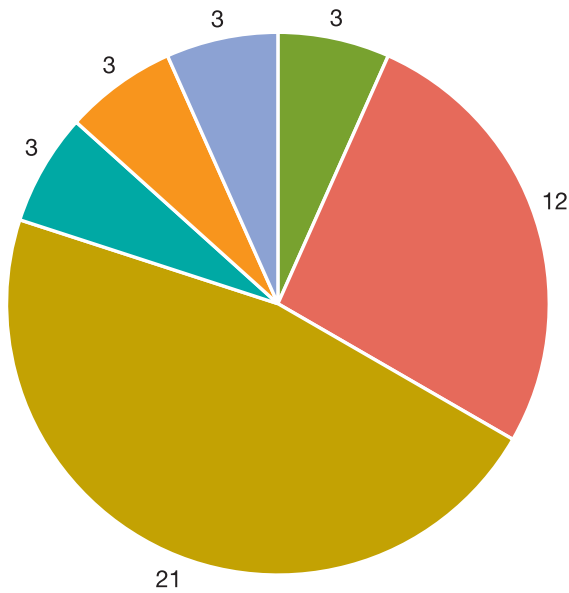
- Traffic and transport
- Community facilities
- Technology & Communications
- Parish Plan

Priority 2 Scores



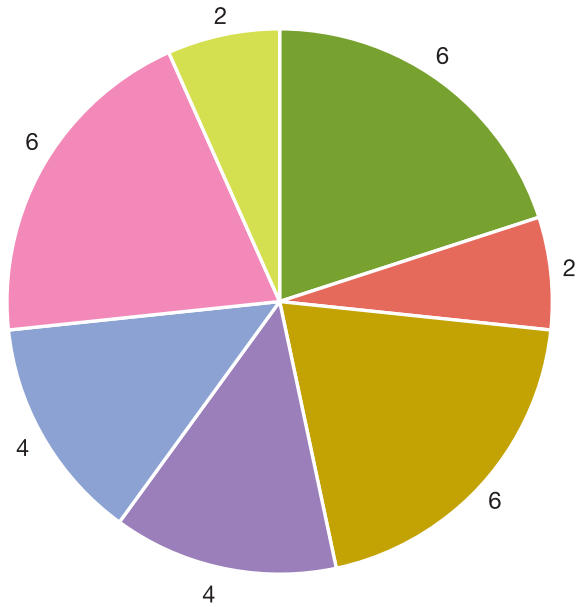
- Traffic and transport
- Housing/built environment
- Community facilities
- Living environment

Priority 3 Scores



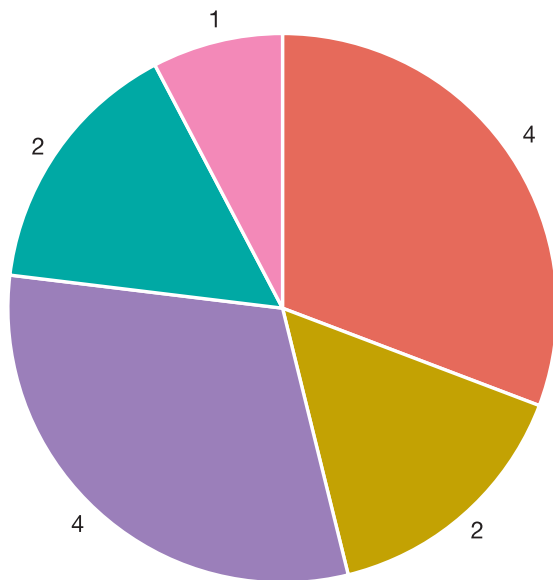
- Traffic and transport
- Housing/built environment
- Community facilities
- Technology & communications
- Parish Plan
- Economy

Priority 4 Scores



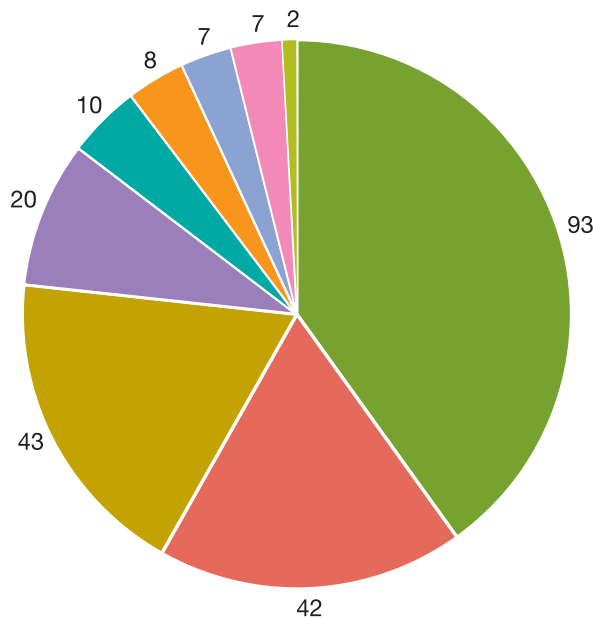
- Traffic and transport
- Housing/built environment
- Community facilities
- Living environment
- Economy
- Community safety
- Health and social care

Priority 5 Scores



- Housing/built environment
- Community facilities
- Living environment
- Technology & communications
- Community safety

Chart showing accumulated totals scored across all parish priorities



- Traffic and transport
- Housing/built environment
- Community Services
- Living environment
- Technology & Communications
- Parish Plan
- Economy
- Community safety
- Health and Social Care

The following tables contain remarks from the responding parishes about their priority issues.

Parish	Issues relating to TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT
All Saints	No public transport services except at A358, only suitable for minority of parishioners. Car share service is available
Broadhembury	Road maintenance and improvements
Churchstanton	Reduce traffic speed, maintain road surfaces to higher standard. Improve road safety for children going from Churchinford to Churchstanton school, especially in village centre and at Cricket Ground crossing of Smeatharpe Rd. Divert HGVs travelling between A303 and Hemyock away from Red Lane and Royston Rd, use Eagle Tavern and Culmhead instead
Clayhidon	V limited public transport provision. Inadequate maintenance of roads, verges, hedgerows, poor winter gritting provision, poor signage directing HGVs to inadequate roads.
Combe St Nicholas	Improve A303 junction at Eagle Cross
Culmstock	Highways/public transport/cyclepaths
Dunkeswell	Reduce speeding in parish; Provide by-pass for HGVs to the industrial estate
Hemyock	Major concerns regarding heavy lorries going backwards and forwards to the Dunkeswell Trading Estate, not local delivery lorries - although some of those are problematic too but we desperately need to keep our local businesses; speeding in village, lack of parking, no of cars, state of roads, overgrown hedges on roadways; bus timetable needs to be more relevant to those who do or could use it;
Luppitt	Road and road conditions
Membury	Improve standards of maintenance and drainage
Monkton	A30 road especially with regard to speeding vehicles, heavy wide lorries passing through the village, accidents, safety concerns of pedestrians crossing, and road repairs
Neroche PC	Volume and speed
Pitminster	Speed in Blagdon Hill and adjoining roads
Shute	Off road car parking and for school; Control speed
Upottery	Make roads safer for all users, esp pedestrians
Wellington without	Routing of heavy transport through parish, Ford St /Monument Road to Dunkeswell ; Satnav incompatibility; quarrying activity; excessive signage on SCC managed routes; little public transport

Parish	Issues relating to Housing/built environment
All Saints	Commercial development: issue over distinction between 'working from home', office based vs light industry to retain Residential status. ?Create small light industry units from redundant farm buildings/disused garages or stables. To be built in Envelope: Small affordable homes to rent/buy in private/affordable housing schemes. Conversion of large/redundant commercial buildings; Tighten up on retrospective planning, also controls re approved execution of planning permissions.
Broadhembury	More affordable housing required
Clayhidon	Lack of affordable housing. Perception that in adequate consideration is given to views of the parish council; Inadequate provision for use of redundant farm buildings
Culmstock	Planning/development outside agreed envelope/ Affordable housing
Dunkeswell	More affordable housing required

Luppitt	More affordable housing required. Planning consultation inadequate?
Monkton	low cost housing for local people
Pitminster	Retain delegated planning agreement with TDBC
Shute	Remove travellers site. More affordable housing required
Upottery	Local houses for local people
Wellington without	Lack of consistency and continuity of decisions, eg sightlines, visibility of installations from other parishes

Parish **Issues relating to Community Facilities**

Broadhembury	Preservation of the countryside. Support continuation of PO
Churchstanton	Improve delivery - post often not delivered until 2.30 pm, and only one collection /day
Combe St Nicholas	Assist Youth Club with proposed sites for equipment
Culmstock	Cyclepaths
Hemyock	Need for youth facilities; re-opening of old railway line as a footpath/cycle way, (many prepared to help clear it);
Membury	To maintain the rural character of the parish, allowing for limited development of affordable/sheltered housing to meet local need
Upottery	Outdoor exercise equipment for adults, improve facilities for youth of the parish
Wellington without	Little provision for youth although few problems

Parish **Issues relating to Living Environment**

Broadhembury	Preservation of the countryside Preserve unique character
Culmstock	Waste management/green energy , Footpaths
Hemyock	increasingly relevant, environmental issues, climate change, sustainability.
Membury	To maintain the rural character of the parish, allowing for limited development of affordable/sheltered housing to meet local need. The protection of the landscape including roadside hedgebanks
Shute	Maintain /improve health of local rivers

Parish **Issues relating to Economy**

Culmstock	Economic development
Membury	Maintain and encourage development
Monkton	Encourage small businesses in the parish

Parish **Issues relating to Community Safety**

All Saints	More efficient service and faster reaction needed when issues are reported.
Clayhidon	Need for more local control over noisy musical events both licensed and under temporary events notices
Luppitt	Rural crime an issue
Wellington without	Very little amenity for managing a public emergency, no meeting place

Parish	Issues relating to Technology and Communications
Luppitt	Broadband provision required
Monkton	Access to Broadband
Neroche	Mobile phone coverage and broadband speeds

Parish	Issues relating to Parish Specific
Dunkeswell	Complete revision of parish plan
Pitminster	Review parish plan

Parish	Issues relating to Health and Social Care
Hemyock	now just surfacing, due to problems with Old School Court no longer being available for the people the original charity was set up to serve, the residential home at Churchinford just closing, and the ever-increasing number of elderly in the area, some serious resolution to future health care needs for the elderly locally.

Consultation Meetings

March 8th Otterford Parish Hall

Attendees were given a short presentation describing activity towards developing a Blackdown Hills Community Plan. They looked at data sets relating to the key issues emerging from Parish Plans and Priority responses and were then invited to comment and offer their views. These are collated below:

Traffic and Public Transport:

Concern expressed which concurred with Parish Plans and Priority responses.

- **Traffic: through routes run across parishes connecting destinations outside the AONB, also to commercial areas in Dunkeswell and Hemyock.**
- **Much HGV traffic is not using advisory routes.**
- **Inappropriate SatNav mapping is blamed for HGV routing, improve signage?**
- **Traffic speed is thought to be too high in many settlements.**
- **Public Transport: some parishes have regular bus routes, others lying off main roads have initiated very local schemes (fare car, or community minibus). Other parishes could benefit if schemes could be shared/extended**
- **Road maintenance: need more communication with DCC/SCC Highways groups**

Suggested outcomes

- Development of a transport group, with sub groups set up to consider specific issues
- Widening access to local transport schemes
- Sub groups clustered in catchment areas (Yarty, Otter, Culm) which provide exits from the AONB to connect with main roads and public transport nodes.
- A group to work with County, District and Police authorities to discuss maintenance issues/ HGVs/speed/parking.

Aim:

- Share best practice in neighbouring parishes
- Extend transport provision where it exists to include inner/smaller parishes
- Improve opportunities for community to travel within the Blackdowns and to surrounding towns and rail transport (particularly for local daily commuters)
- Improve existing knowledge of public transport provision.
- Influence decisions re through-routes, HGV access, signage

Housing and Built Environment

The main point is the planning process – several people expressed concern about the consistency of decision making at District Council level, together with lack of communication/feedback on parish input. Some positive points were raised: Input of AONB Planning officer acknowledged in influencing a design issue in one parish. Another parish cited a planning agreement with its local authority.

Suggested outcomes:

- Determine the extent of inconsistent or inappropriate planning decisions within the Blackdown Hills area.

- Localism Bill - prepare by developing planning clusters around issues in readiness for Neighbourhood Planning. Possible clusters could focus on low cost housing, care home provision.
- Create clusters to receive appropriate training
- Provide community level links/knowledge base spanning boundaries between neighbouring districts to promote consistency of decision making for the community as a whole.

Aims:

- Improve relationship between parishes and Local Authority Planners to ensure that community views are properly considered and fed into the planning process.
- Develop local expertise so that planning decisions are considered with full understanding of powers available to influence outcomes.
- Develop a 'masterplan' for influencing planning decisions affecting Blackdowns community.

Community Facilities

– several parishes expressed a desire to improve/build community halls through their Parish Plans and Priority responses. At the meeting it was highlighted that the Blagdon Hill area is particularly poorly provided for.

Suggested outcomes:

- Set up a group to undertake a Blackdown Hills wide review of existing community buildings and their level of use. Include churches and chapels in this review, engage with appropriate authorities for information.
- Consider opportunities to utilise existing buildings more effectively for community activities/outlets/community shop PO etc. cf recent experience in Churchinford where village shop/PO closed suddenly – community has established a community shop and coffee mornings twice a week in the Village hall.
- Encourage sharing of facilities in neighbouring parishes, could promote community integration and reduce costs/new build.

Aims:

- To bring partially used buildings into more efficient use
- Increase revenue stream to little used buildings to enable improved maintenance by relevant management groups.
- Increase interaction between neighbouring communities.

Technology and Communications:

Concern expressed at the meeting about access to information at all levels, from parish magazines to high speed broadband and interactive web access.

Suggested outcomes:

- Develop a Parish magazine/web-site editors' forum to share and disseminate news of general interest, encourage use of 'View from the Blackdowns' as a pan-Blackdown Hills 'voice' for all.
- Encourage parishes/businesses with poor mobile and broad band access to work together on solving their problems – focus group to lobby providers on behalf of Blackdowns communities?

Aims:

- better informed community
- improved communications
- develop a voice for rural communities

Community Facilities: Improve access to recycling facilities for non-kerbside collected waste - many Blackdown Hills residents experience restricted collections, or have to travel up to 30 miles for a round trip to a municipal recycling facility.

Suggested Action:

- Investigate opportunities for contracting with private waste management companies to site recycling skips at the premises of small and light industrial units in some parishes for local public use.

Aims:

- Encourage recycling
- A more sustainable solution to waste removal
- Opportunity for partnership working

March 16th Luppitt Village Hall

Following a short presentation about the development of the Blackdown Hills Community Plan to date, attendees were invited to look at data sets describing views expressed through the Parish Plans and Priority responses before working in groups to complete a short questionnaire. The consultation concluded with an open discussion session.

Collated responses to questionnaire:

1. Using the list of priorities you have read about, use the following questions to help us understand how you think the Blackdowns community might tackle the issues raised.

• Traffic and transport

- winter gritting – share access to communal equipment eg Luppitt has its own spreader
- Blanket 40 mph limit throughout AONB to improve safety, deter unnecessary traffic, and reduce environmental damage
- Employ a community lengthsman collectively
- Rural transport – fuel prices prohibitive. Need to ensure that public/ community transport is used, five year subsidy might enable development of a sustainable service. Farecar scheme can work but publicity is essential. Examine volunteer driver and or Ring & Ride schemes.
- How to deal with large vehicles in narrow lanes designated 'Unsuitable for lorries'

• Broadband and Communication

- BB speed is a very patchy and a major disadvantage in some areas, need to examine others' solutions eg satellite/cable
- Communication and cascading of information

• Planning:

- Inconsistency in planning decisions
- Examine cross boundary planning issues

- Affordable Housing might be an action for individual parishes, however to combat inconsistency in planning decisions need to be aware of individual cases and variation of decisions between neighbouring districts. Involve AONB where appropriate
- Need for a joint approach in EDDC area
- More say and influence called for

- **Supporting and promoting food production**

- Support for agricultural sector and an opportunity to create a Blackdown Hills brand

- **Purchasing power**

- **Provide economy of scale by group purchasing**

2. What group working mechanism can you suggest so that the whole group or cluster gains from working together? If you think that different issues could benefit from different approaches, please briefly describe these other mechanisms.

- More of a lead from AONB
- Committee of PC Chairs
- Meeting of EDDC parishes re planning issues
- Sharing information
- Get parish magazine editors together
- PR reports/minutes from parishes to View from the Blackdowns
- Deal with local issues within a cluster group.
- Overall policy in planning, traffic etc needs to be determined – would require dedicated core funding.

3. Taking three of the issues you have identified in question 1 above, who else would you invite into the cluster to discuss the issue? How and what would do you think they would contribute to an effective partnership?

- **Traffic: South West Highways and Atkins, Neil Parish and other MPs (some issues may need national lobbying/legislation)**
- **Broadband: BT – what happened to the DCC/SCC broadband project?**
- **Planning: Planners from each district to share details of requirements and ascertain variations between districts**
- **For each issue would invite the Ward Councillor and CC personnel with relevant remits.**

4. If you or your Parish Council was invited to join such a group to work on any of the issues, what would be your (or the PC's) reaction?

- **Yes, if it were fruitful. Would we be listened to?**
- **Yes, if of local relevance and concern and there is an outcome**
- **Suggest designating a person within each PC to act as co-ordinator/clerk for each cluster**
- **Yes, suggest a Councillor or parish rep to work within the cluster**
- **OK to attend meetings, but clusters will need a professional/paid chair or activist/co-ordinator**

5. Which of the issues identified would you feel most interested/qualified to take forward within a group or cluster?

- **Housing**
- **Work with an existing employment site in parish to provide more community benefit**
- **Economy of scale**
- **Would depend on relevance for immediately local issues**
- **Planning**
- **HGV traffic**

After the group sessions, these participants all joined in a general discussion.

The following points were made:

1. Core funding would be needed to support work for action on the bigger issues, particularly where governmental lobbies may be required.
2. Planning – everyone present had issues over planning, all felt that the more collective experience that can be gathered together, the greater the influence that can be brought to bear on the relevant District. On occasion, District planning decisions have appeared to be at odds with County strategy. Distinct lack of consistency, not only between Districts, but also between individual planning officers within a District. Lack of communication between, for example, planning and highways when siting new developments (eg inadequate drainage provision (highways) at the new school in Chardstock led to expensive remedial costs being borne by education authorities with no recourse to highways).
3. Strong view emerged that while all Devon parishes contribute to Devon Association of Local Councils (DAPC), they have received very little support or guidance in return. Perception that the activity of DAPC is not evenly distributed across the county. A more structured link to DAPC would be valued.
4. Role of the AONB cannot be divorced from the community – the landscape, environment and the community are inextricably linked.

Collective working sought for

- **Traffic/Roads/Public transport/HGV intrusion**
- **Planning - Influence outcomes and tackle inconsistency in District Council/s decision making**
- **Work together on economy of scale in purchasing and services**
- **Communications – better information sharing, address broadband access and inefficiencies**
- **Support needed to assist the community to implement recommendations of the Plan – dedicated core funding needed.**

Conclusions

A Community Plan for the Blackdown Hills will not happen without effective management. Throughout the development of the plan, there has been active and supportive engagement from the Blackdown Hills Parish Network, the AONB office and Devon County Council working through a steering group comprising members of these organisations. A similar group should be appointed to oversee future activities which will require a Chair and members elected or appointed from the community to liaise with the appropriate local authorities to ensure that advice, guidance and training are sought when appropriate. It is recommended that the management group that has overseen the development of this plan is offered the opportunity to undertake the short term recommendations set out below, and then to establish an effective means of appointing additional personnel to oversee medium and longer term goals:

1. To ensure momentum, a certain degree of funding will be necessary and it is essential that the Steering Group sets itself an early task to determine the level of support required and potential sources.
2. It has been evident throughout the process that the aims of the AONB management plan are entirely complementary to the development of community aspirations. This has been successful for a number of other AONBs and National Parks in the country (eg Quantocks AONB, Lake District National Park). It is therefore appropriate to consider any opportunity for the community to work in tandem with the AONB office. Topic based groups might usefully ensure that there is good connectivity between the core interests of the AONB Partnership and local communities.
3. The greatest difficulty during the Plan development has been the ability – or otherwise – to communicate with a significant proportion of the population, either through Parish Councils, consultation meetings, poster campaigns or local publications and websites. Other communication difficulties also exist between and with county organisations and local authorities, which in an area like the Blackdown Hills can create considerable hold-ups and practical obstacles. This is perceived to be particularly noticeable where the issues are related to services contracted out by those local authorities, for example waste collection, highways matters and public transport. A short term recommendation is that the Steering group commissions a survey of current information dissemination mechanisms, their current uptake and reach and to identify the portions of the community least well served. This will inform an investigation into opportunities for improving the links wherever possible. It is suggested that a ‘Blackdowns Online’ website would be a relatively easy first stage to develop an identity for the Community initiative, to link existing Blackdowns sites of all descriptions. Efforts need also to be made to raise awareness through other media. In time the remit of this communications group might be extended to investigate opportunities to enable access to high speed broadband for all, better

mobile signals etc. There are many examples of community led actions to draw on in other parts of the country and it is useful to note the current high speed broadband access project already underway throughout Somerset and Devon.

4. Early engagement with groups and individuals from the community willing to work on the following areas:

Planning : It is clear that there are some problems with planning matters among the various Parish Councils. With the recent publication of more detail surrounding the Localism Bill, it is important that the bodies nearest planning matters in the communities themselves (the Parish Councils) are engaged and willing to learn about the devolved responsibilities that will be available. The opportunity therefore exists to work together, share best practice and engage with planning authorities. It is recommended that the Steering Group makes it possible for interested Parish Councils to work within a Planning Group to gather evidence of planning decision issues to enable effective engagement for future decisions where appropriate.

In the longer term, the community would be well served by the Planning group ensuring that all Parish Councillors with planning responsibilities have access to relevant information by setting up specific training sessions, held in local venues.

Public transport opportunities group: it became clear during the course of developing this plan that a number of community led public transport schemes are in operation in a number of small areas. In addition, it is clear that members of the community are not necessarily aware of these schemes, nor of the opportunities that exist to extend and improve what already exists. This requires an initiative to better disseminate information about what is already available, to survey the uptake of community led schemes and assess opportunities to widen these schemes or to emulate in different areas/catchments of the Blackdown Hills.

Winter roads planning group: a small number of parishes has already worked on winter road gritting for their network of roads that is untreated by the local authority. These are frequently the essential lifelines for many residents. The Steering group should ensure that a best practice group is set up in advance of next winter to undertake a survey in the parishes of self help opportunities to enable gritting and salting of important, yet untreated roads in the Blackdowns. This would build on a report prepared for Devon County Council's Environment, Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee in 2010, which contains a comprehensive assessment of the state of road network throughout the County and makes recommendations for community actions to maintain the network.

The two preceding initiatives (public transport and winter roads planning groups) could lead to the development of a wider group to keep abreast of Devon County Council's work with its highways contractor, South West Highways (SWH). A new arrangement is in place intended to create

flexibility of working practices across the SWH remit to enable more effective information sharing for maintenance. It will be important to pursue this approach for Somerset too, and importantly, enable cross county liaison. In the longer term it is foreseen that this will lead to achieving reduced speed limits and less HGV traffic, allowing safer recreational access in key locations.

5. The steering group will be responsible for maintaining an overview and directional focus as the immediately important issues are dealt with. In particular, it will be important for the Steering group to maintain a watching brief on the impact of new initiatives that come forward, locally or Government led, that may affect the community in topic areas that were not perceived to be of high importance during the development of this Plan. Therefore provision for review is essential. While there were few current concerns from the responding Blackdown Hills community about health and social care, education provision, sustainability and environment for example, regular review must open up opportunities to address these in the future.

The long term aim is for a functional, joined up community that speaks for itself with knowledge and the trust of corresponding local authorities

In summing up the process of preparing the plan overall, the following considerations need to be taken into account. It is clear that in the allotted time and with the available resources it was not possible to engage directly with every parish council. Nor was it feasible to ensure that every household within the Blackdown Hills area had an awareness of the initiative and opportunity to contribute.

- **Nineteen of twenty published Parish Plans were consulted in hard copy or from web versions.**
- **All Parish Councils/Parish Meeting Chairpersons were apprised of progress throughout and sixteen of the 39 parishes with a full or partial footprint in the AONB responded to the request for prioritised issues in their individual parishes.**
- **All local parish/church magazines and newsletters were sent three separate items for publication to raise awareness during the eight month consultation.**
- **The two consultation meetings, one in each county, were attended by 21 individuals who were not either AONB employees or representatives of organisations with responsibility for community initiatives (eg Community Council for Devon)**
- **During the course of the project there were numerous conversations with individuals living in the area that may not have responded directly, commented or attended any part of the consultation process. At no point in that informal awareness raising process was there any indication that a Community Plan was inappropriate. It is that tacit agreement together with the principle underlying the initiative of the Blackdown Hills Parish Network, to develop a cohesive voice for this group of rural parishes, which underlies the endorsement of the various recommendations made here.**

Participation at Consultation Meeting

Attendees	March 8th 2011	
Linda Bennett	AONB	
Lisa Turner	AONB	
Caroline Newcombe	AONB	
Catherine Bass	Blackdown Hills Community Plan Co-ordinator (BHCP)	
Aggie Szpinda	Community Council of Devon (CCD)	
Brian Simpson	Churchstanton	TDBC
Bob Chard	Combe St Nicholas	EDDC
Moira Vaughan	Combe St Nicholas PC	EDDC
Roy Hare	Culmstock PC	MDDC
Geoffrey Swarder	Dunkeswell PC Chair	EDDC
Heather Stallard	Hemyock PC Chair	MDDC
David Edmondson	Pitminster PC	TDBC
Ross Henley	SCC, Councillor for Blackdown & Wellington	SCC
Moira Wood	Sheldon PC	EDDC
Nikki Long	Sheldon PC Chair	EDDC
Zoe Harris	SDDC officer	

Attendees	March 16th 2011	
Rita Brickhill	All Saints PC Chair	EDDC
Lisa Turner	AONB	
Linda Bennett	AONB	
William Furnival	Awliscombe PC	EDDC
Catherine Bass	BHCP	
Kate Devlin	CCD	
Aggie Szpinda	CCD	
David Everett	Chardstock PC	EDDC
Mike Hudson	Clayhidon PC Chair	MDDC
CC Padget	Combe Raleigh PC	EDDC
CJ Padget	Combe Raleigh PC	EDDC
Geoffrey Bass	Culmstock PC	MDDC
Geoffrey Swarder	Dunkeswell PC Chair	EDDC
Heather Stallard	Hemyock PC Chair	MDDC
Gavin Brake	Luppitt PC Chair	EDDC
Frank Rosamond	MDDC Councillor	
John Cornish	Upottery PC	EDDC

Post consultation meeting communication with Parish Councillor Everett, Chardstock, who offered his thoughts re planning:

“Based on the comments made at the meeting, the one issue which I think stands out as being suitable for groups action is planning. Could I suggest the following:

- 1) Put the idea to the 39 parish councils within the BHCP asking whether they wish to participate.
- 2) Ask for each council’s wish list of the changes they would like to see introduced.
- 3) Produce an agreed list
- 4) Present it to the District Councillors on the appropriate planning committee, either EDDC or SSDC
- 5) See what happens

Obviously we cannot change planning law, but my impression is that many of the problems, frustrations etc we experience are matters of council policy and not planning laws, and it is the politicians who should decide policy.”

Project Steering Group:

Catherine Bass	Blackdown Hills Community Plan Co-ordinator
Paul Diviani	Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership Chairman
Ann Papworth	Churchstanton Parish Council
Heather Stallard	Hemyock Parish Council
Geoffrey Sworder	Dunkeswell Parish Council
Linda Bennett	Blackdown Hills AONB
Lisa Turner	Blackdown Hills AONB
Roland Pyle	Devon County Council

The contribution of Graham Langford in initially driving forward this project, as chairman of Clayhidon Parish Council at the time, is also acknowledged.

Blackdown Hills Parishes Network

c/o Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

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The Blackdown Hills Community Plan project is funded by Devon County Council and administered through the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership



**Blackdown
Hills** AONB



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