



Blackdown Hills National Landscape: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030

Adoption draft

April 2025

PART C: 5 year Strategic Delivery Plan 2025-2030

INTRODUCTION

There is a hierarchy of strategies and plans within which the National Landscape 5 year Delivery Plan sits:

- The 20-year **vision** in the revised 5 year National Landscape Management Plan sets the direction for the work of the National Landscapes Partnership. Flowing from this, **objectives and policies** are defined that *conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape*, tackling issues that impact the National Landscape as well as seeking opportunities to enhance it.
- Embedded in the National Landscape Management Plan, this **5 year Delivery Plan** sets high level actions and National Landscape Partnership delivery goals, in order to deliver agreed measurable outcomes.
- Guided by the 5 year Delivery Plan, **annual National Landscape Business Plans** sets out key priorities and actions for the National Landscapes Partnership, that follow a thread all the way down from the vision and via monitoring, it can be demonstrated (see below) that each of the action/s (focusing primarily on the actions associated with Key Priorities) help deliver objectives and policies as set out in the National Landscape Management Plan.
- Monitoring via the Protected Landscape Targets and Outcome Framework (PLTOF) and other indicators, will help in demonstrating impact and can be related back to the government's Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) and other plans and strategies e.g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Climate Action Plans/ Strategies.

National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30

The revised Management Plan 2025-2030 is jointly 'owned' by the component Local Authorities.

The National Landscape Management Plan has 4 themes (Place, People, Nature & Climate), each with Objectives, Principles and Policies per Topic. It provides a vision for the future, identifies the challenges and opportunities for the area, and how these will be tackled.

It aims to:

- Inform and influence decisions
- Stimulate and prioritise action
- Promote collaboration
- Help prioritise resources

Its audiences include:

- Local authority partners
- Other National Landscape Partnership organisations
- Relevant public and statutory bodies
- Landowners and managers

- Local communities and businesses

This 5 year Blackdown Hills National Landscape Delivery Plan 2025-30

The Management Plan outlines the strategic priorities necessary to achieve the objectives set out under the 4 themes (Place, People, Nature & Climate) and the main programmes, projects and partnerships that will provide the action.

National Landscape Business Plan 2025-26

The annual plans for the National Landscape team and main partners is informed by the 5 year National Landscape Delivery Plan. The National Landscape team leads on some actions, while with others it works in partnership or plays a supportive role, with other National Landscape partners leading.

The actions follow the same 4 Themes of the National Landscape Management Plan. The Objectives (from the Management Plan) and the Partnership Delivery actions (from the Delivery Plan) are listed at the top of each of the Theme headings.

The National Landscapes Business Plan provides the financial figures for the Defra grant, and the support agreed by the local authority funding partners.

Its audience includes: National Landscapes staff team, National Landscapes partners, Funding partners and Other stakeholders

This Delivery Plan is subject to change; first version April 2025.

Key priorities and actions

- The table below highlights the priority work areas of the National Landscape Partnership for the period 2025-2030 (split into the 4 Management Plan themes), within which there will be a mix of core work and externally funded programmes/ component projects
- The priority work areas are designed to be ambitious yet achievable (through direct delivery, support or advocacy mechanisms), however many are reliant on external funding. Many of the activities covered in the detail of the plan are embraced in a number of the key projects/ initiatives.

THEME 1: PLACE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the farming and land management community through agricultural transition, via farm facilitation support programmes and by responding to ever-changing agricultural policy and the need/incentives to provide ecosystem services for society, including green finance • Step up the action needed to tackle Water Environment Regulations (WER) water quality failures, linked to drinking water/ resource (including drought), surface quality and downstream coastal waters. • Undertake significant new tree planting, including orchards, restore undermanaged woodlands (to promote regeneration), and restore/reestablish 'trees outside woods' habitats, seeking an additional 1108.76 hectares of tree canopy and woodland cover by 2050. • Increase the uptake in agri-environment schemes, across all components of Environmental Land Management (ELM), including supporting the Luppitt Landscape Recovery scheme • Desk based appraisal of the historic environment - use the results to identify where the most significant gaps in understanding are and how they can be addressed. The potential opportunities for community heritage and citizen science projects to help fill those gaps will also be identified. • Continue to inform and influence planning policy, decisions and implementation through development of additional planning guidance and other tools and mechanisms, working with local planning authorities. Develop a shared understanding of the potential opportunities and effects of measures such as carbon offsetting, nutrient credits and biodiversity net gain in relation to conserving and enhancing natural beauty.
THEME 2: PEOPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalise on opportunities to secure physical works to improve accessibility, such as accessible trails, parking and facilities. • Ensure that projects have opportunities for volunteering and engagement with schools built in • The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to take positive action to increase diversity within the management group and the voices reflected in decision making • Promote activities, including organised activities, which support the physical, mental and social health of residents and visitors • Collect data so that we have a clear definition and better understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion issues relevant to the Blackdown Hills. This includes undertaking further work to deepen our knowledge of the population within the Blackdown Hills and the surrounding area and responding accordingly

- Build relationships among local community organisations and agencies to collaborate on inclusion
- Undertake an audit of the current ways in which the qualities of the landscape and historic environment are presented to the local population and the visiting public. Use the results to identify the opportunities for methods and locations for improvement in the presentation of information and explore ways that the local community could be actively involved
- Collaboration among partners to champion and find solutions to practical issues widely affecting communities, such as high speed broadband connectivity and highway maintenance

THEME 3: NATURE

- Restore all priority habitat to a favourable condition, thereby helping to restore the characteristic 'patchwork' landscapes and habitat features for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, particularly springline mires
- Undertake significant work to move SSSI sites from 'unfavourable recovering' to 'favourable'
- Enhance the data baseline, particularly for areas outside designated sites, including refresh / ground-truthing priority habitat maps to improve their accuracy and coverage
- Ensure that activities for nature are consistent with actions arising from the Local Nature Recovery Strategies in Devon and Somerset
- Focus on habitat creation in the highest priority areas, as per the Lawton hierarchy

THEME 4: CLIMATE

Adaptation:

- Mainstream soil health and regenerative farming and forestry techniques, in order to build resilience of soils, that will in turn help with infiltration of water and storage of carbon
- Nature based solutions that build resilience for communities and critical infrastructure, as well as provide a range of co-benefits including for biodiversity, carbon and water quality- e.g. by reducing flooding in the built environment, providing 'natural sponge' type functions to store and slowly release water in times of drought and 'natural filter' to help improve water quality.

Mitigation:

- Produce a comprehensive pathway to net zero by 2026

ACTION PROGRAMME

- The table below shows the actions under each of the four themes (Place, People, Nature and Climate)
- Acronyms are listed in full in the glossary (below the action table)
- 'Targets' listed below are the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcome Framework (PLTOF) targets

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ¹ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
1: PLACE						
	Target 5 ²³	1.1	Increase the uptake of appropriate agri-environment scheme (AES) options, aiming for 75%+ uptake of Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), to underpin Countryside Stewardship and Landscape Recovery (the three components of Environmental Land Management- ELM)	BHNL (RPA, NE, FC)	Ascertain where the SFI agreements are currently located, where are the gaps in take-up and look to fill these, via land advisory effort that supports farmers and land managers in choosing the most beneficial options Aim to increase take-up from agri-environment schemes from 20% to 27% (2017 level)	

¹ Is not necessarily the National Landscape staff unit

² "Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030"

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ¹ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Target 5	1.2	Support and add value to schemes such as the Luppitt Landscape Recovery project (Landscape Recovery round 2) and the potential extension to the Upper Axe Landscape Recovery project (round 1), as well as rolling out successful Landscape Recovery type management to other areas in the Blackdown Hills	BHNL (RPA, NE, FC)	Better understand how to add value and articulate what rolling out Landscape Recovery type management looks like, then implement	
	Target 8 ⁴	1.3	<p>Undertake significant new tree planting, including orchards, restore undermanaged woodlands (to promote regeneration), and restore/re-establish 'trees outside woods' habitats, seeking an additional 1108.76 hectares of tree canopy and woodland cover by 2050</p> <p>Provide woodland advisory support for willing landowners (including relevant authorities), while applying the 'right place right tree' principles. The Somerset and Devon Tree Strategies will help guide and support this</p>	BHNL (FC)	<p>Therefore, 39.6 hectares per year between 2022 and 2050.</p> <p>There are 5,380 ha of woodland covering 14.5% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape</p> <p>Brings the total amount of woodland to 9,302.93 hectares (22,988 acres)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain data to inform progress towards the target e.g. EWCO • Create a shared plan to achieve this target <p>Work with the Somerset and Devon Tree Strategy teams and woodland advisers</p>	

⁴ "Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline)"

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ¹ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Target 10 ⁵	1.4	Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes There are 770 Listed Buildings and 26 Scheduled Monuments. Of these, eight assets are at risk; this is a minor improvement since 2019	BHNL (HE, DCC)	Review the reasons why the eight assets are still at risk and produce an Action Plan for removing as many as possible off the list, as quickly as possible	
	Other priorities	1.5	Step up the action needed to tackle Water Framework Directive (WFD) failures (now referred to as the Water Environment Regulations (WER), linked to drinking water quality and supply (including drought), surface quality and downstream coastal waters. This will involve working with land managers, water industry and other delivery partners	BHNL (EA, CSF, East Devon Catchment Partnership)	Support the Culm, Otter and Axe water quality citizen science groups, under the Making Rivers Better banner Focus significant project effort at improving water quality, via Triple Axe, Connecting the Culm and partnerships projects in the Otter catchment and headwaters of the Tone and Parrett	
	Other priorities	1.6	Continue to promote, deliver and advocate for 'mainstreaming' natural-based solutions as a mechanism to provide resilience to property and infrastructure, both within the Blackdown Hills National Landscape but also, importantly, downstream where major critical infrastructure is at risk from flooding and where improving resilience is only possible through upstream interventions	BHNL (All partners)	Nature-based solution interventions rely on land managers to collaborate at scale. The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership will play a key role here, to help support, incentivise and deliver (Connecting the Culm, Triple Axe)	

⁵ "Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes"

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ¹ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Other priorities	1.7	Continue to support the farming and land management community through agricultural transition, via farm facilitation support programmes and by responding to ever-changing agricultural policy and the need/incentives to provide ecosystem services for society, including green finance opportunities such as nutrient credits and Biodiversity Net Gain	BHNL (NFU, CLBA)	The National Landscape Partnership play a key convening, supporting and delivery role here and lead on the farm facilitation work (Blackdown Hills Sustainable Farming Network)	
		1.8	Desk based appraisal of the historic environment - use the results to identify where the most significant gaps in understanding are and how they can be addressed. The potential opportunities for community heritage and citizen science projects to help fill those gaps will also be identified.	BHNL (DCC, SWHT)	<i>To be determined.</i>	
		1.9	Continue to inform and influence planning policy, decisions and implementation through development of additional planning guidance and other tools and mechanisms, working with local planning authorities. Develop a shared understanding of the potential opportunities and effects of measures such as carbon offsetting, nutrient credits and biodiversity net gain in relation to conserving and enhancing natural beauty.	BHNL (LPAs)	<i>To be determined.</i>	

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ⁶ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
2: PEOPLE						
	Target 9 ⁷	2.1	Capitalise on opportunities to secure physical works to improve accessibility, such as accessible trails, parking and facilities	BHNL (All partners)	Continue and expand (subject to funding) the Linking People and Places (LPAP) programme Utilise FiPL and Defra Access for ALL funding	
	Target 9	2.2	Ensure that projects have opportunities for volunteering and engagement with schools built in	BHNL (All partners)	Build into all current projects including Connecting the Culm and Triple Axe Re-build the volunteering offer Maintain the education programme each year, moving the focus around different themes/ topics and areas	
	Target 9	2.3	The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to take positive action to increase diversity within the management group and the voices reflected in decision making	BHNL (PMG)	Work hard to diversify the Management Group and make sure that a range of voices are heard and have a role in decision making	
	Target 9	2.4	Promote activities, including organised activities, which support the physical, mental and social health of residents and visitors	BHNL (All partners)	<i>To be determined.</i>	

⁶ Is not necessarily the National Landscape staff unit

⁷ "Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using metrics based on those in the Defra Access for All programme".

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ⁶ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Other priorities	2.5	Collect more data so that we have a clear definition and better understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion issues relevant to the Blackdown Hills	BHNL (All partners)	This includes undertaking further work to deepen our knowledge of the population within the Blackdown Hills and the surrounding area and responding accordingly	
	Other priorities	2.6	Build relationships among local community organisations and agencies to collaborate on inclusion	BHNL (All partners)	Create and pump prime a Nature Connection Network, help address barriers to engagement (e.g. transport) and enable/ support group training on key topics	
	Other priorities	2.7	Undertake an audit of the current ways in which the qualities of the landscape and historic environment are presented to the local population and the visiting public. Use the results to identify the opportunities for methods and locations for improvement in the presentation of information and explore ways that the local community could be actively involved.	BHNL	<i>To be determined.</i>	
	Other priorities	2.8	Collaboration among partners to champion and find solutions to practical issues widely affecting communities, such as high speed broadband connectivity and highway maintenance	BHNL (PC, BHPN, LA)	<i>To be determined.</i>	

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ⁸ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
3: NATURE						
	Target 4 ⁹	3.1	Restore all priority habitat to a favourable condition	BHNL (All partners, FC, FE, LNRS responsible authorities)	<p>There are 4,724.43 ha of priority habitats covering 12.8% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape</p> <p>There are 867 ha of ancient woodland covering 2.3% of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.</p> <p>Investigate PAWS¹⁰ woodland and create an Action Plan</p> <p>Prioritise improving the condition of priority habitat (and ensuring no deterioration) via actions 1.1 to 1.4 listed above</p>	

⁸ Is not necessarily the National Landscape staff unit

⁹ "Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042".

¹⁰ Plantation on Ancient Woodland

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ⁸ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Target 4	3.2	Enhance the data baseline, particularly for areas outside designated sites, including refresh / ground-truthing priority habitat maps to improve their accuracy and coverage.	BHNL (All partners)	<p>Note that the priority habitat inventory (PHI) is not considered definitive and underestimates the true extent of priority habitat. Other habitat inventories also underestimate the extent of habitat within mosaics</p> <p>Ascertain (by proxy) what condition all priority habitat is currently in, making assumptions e.g. best case (based on Devon Wildlife Trust data) is 50%</p> <p>45% of woodland is in 'active management'</p>	

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ⁸ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Target 4	3.3	Conserve and restore the characteristic 'patchwork' landscapes and habitat features for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, particularly springline mires.	BHNL (All partners)	Value additional co-benefits including, integrated natural capital benefits from nature recovery include carbon budgets, catchment-scale improvements to fluvial management, well-being benefits from access and recreation, and cultural and heritage enhancements	

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ⁸ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Target 2 ¹¹ and 3 ¹²	3.4	Undertake significant work to move SSSI sites from 'unfavourable recovering' to 'favourable'.	BHNL (NE)	<p>This will require more condition surveying by Natural England and more incentives through Environmental Land Management (ELM) and other schemes, backed up by trusted local advisers</p> <p>The current status of SSSI condition in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape is that only 16.3% is in favourable condition. 94% is in a favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. There is one Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, currently failing to meet its conservation targets (marsh fritillary butterfly)</p>	

¹¹ "Bring 80% of Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042 "

¹² "60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028"

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ⁸ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Target 1 ¹³	3.5	Focus on habitat creation in the highest priority areas, as per the Lawton hierarchy. [See habitat network opportunity/targeting map]	BHNL (NE, LNRS responsible authorities)	<p>If the target was pro rata'd based for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape area without any local factors this would be 2,919.10 ha. This would be equivalent to 145.96 ha per year between 2022 and 2042</p> <p>Use the BHNL Nature Recovery Plan to work with partners to agree how this target can be achieved</p>	

¹³ "Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline)"

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ¹⁴ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
4: CLIMATE						
	Mitigation: Target 6 ¹⁵ and actions for shallow/pocket peat	4.1	Produce a comprehensive pathway to net zero for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape following these steps agreed among the National Landscapes family:	BHNL (DCC, EDDC, MDDC, SC)	Using the greenhouse gas emission data from government (and other data sources) to identify key areas of emissions, Assess which areas the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and key partners can impact directly, and address emissions that are outside the jurisdiction of the National Landscape by engaging with local authorities, businesses, or other relevant stakeholders. Prioritise areas for immediate impact and plan how to engage stakeholders to reduce emissions or promote land use changes for carbon sequestration Coordinate with existing plans and integrate climate action plans with nature recovery strategies to	

¹⁴ Is not necessarily the National Landscape staff unit

¹⁵ "Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels".

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ¹⁴ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
					create a cohesive approach to climate action. Evaluate the feasibility and interdependencies of different actions and identify potential barriers to implementation. Develop planned actions for the short, medium, and long term to meet Net Zero targets	
	Adaptation:	4.2	Produce a climate change adaptation management plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, linked with this management plan by 2028, and all future plans.	BHNL (DCC, EDDC, MDDC, SC)	Work collaboratively to address the risks and actions identified in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape climate change adaptation plan, seeking to highlight where actions from the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Adaptation Plan and Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy to build resilience and allow communities and the natural world to adapt, can be most effective.	

Theme	Sub-theme	Ref	5 year Actions/projects (new or continuing)- <i>Strategic Delivery</i>	Lead partner ¹⁴ (supporting partners)	Targets/ Milestone- <i>BHNL Partnership delivery/ key role</i>	Deadline (FY)
	Adaptation	4.3			Refine the climate adaptation risk assessment matrix already drafted, which identifies the climate risks in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and use the information to develop the required climate adaptation plan for the area:	

GLOSSARY			
National Landscape	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	HoSWLEP	Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership
BHNL	Blackdown Hills National Landscape	LA	Local Authority
EDNL	East Devon National Landscape	LNP	Local Nature Partnership
MHNL	Mendip Hills National Landscape	LPA	Local Planning Authority
NLA	National Landscapes Association	LWS	Local Wildlife Site
QHNL	Quantock Hills National Landscape	MDDC	Mid Devon District Council
BHPN	Blackdown Hills Parish Network	NE	Natural England
BHRGA	Blackdown Hills Rough Grazing Association	NT	National Trust
BC	Butterfly Conservation	OSG	Officer Support Group
DBRC	Devon Biodiversity Records Centre	PMG	Partnership Management Group
DCC	Devon County Council	SC	Somerset Council
DLPG	Devon Landscape Policy Group	SDF	Sustainable Development Fund
DWT	Devon Wildlife Trust	SERC	Somerset Environmental Records Centre
EA	Environment Agency	SM	Scheduled Monument
EDCP	East Devon Catchment Partnership	SWHT	South West Heritage Trust
EDDC	East Devon District Council	SWPLF	South West Protected Landscape Forum
FWAGSW	FWAG South West	SWT	Somerset Wildlife Trust
FC	Forestry Commission	WRT	Westcountry Rivers Trust
FF	Facilitation Fund	WT	Woodland Trust
HE	Historic England		
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund		