



**The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership received funding in 2014 from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund for the ‘Blackdown Hills Natural Futures’ (BHNF) project.**

Over three years (2015-2017), BHNF aims to discover, explore and promote the natural heritage of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and to help local communities to build skills and confidence to set up their own natural heritage projects.

The project will follow a *‘Discover it! – Share it! – Do it!’* approach involving training, research, events and communication, to support community participation and conservation action.

### **Summary of Activities and Projects**

***Discover it!* Training Programme:** The BHNF project will offer traineeships to recent ecology graduates hoping to move into the conservation sector. These unpaid positions will be offered over the spring and summer months each year. Each trainee that completes the programme will receive work-based training in identification of species and habitats, data management and GIS mapping training and introductory instruction in use of digital recording equipment.

Two-thirds of the natural heritage identification training days will also be open to the public, through training day places for local people across the lifespan of the project. This will provide a fantastic opportunity for local people to find out more about wildlife-rich sites close to them and develop their skills to identify the flora and fauna of the Blackdown Hills.

This work will greatly increase our knowledge and understanding of the special sites, species and habitats of the Blackdown Hills, collecting valuable data as well as recording discoveries through photographs and film clips.

<b>Outputs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 9 graduates trained (3 per year), 3 days per week for 26 weeks each year</li> <li>2. 432 training days available to local people, at least 25 participants</li> <li>3. 120 wildlife sites surveyed</li> </ol>
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***Discover it!* Filming and Schools Work:** In order to capture knowledge from those who know the Blackdown Hills countryside best, local people and other experts will be filmed talking about the area. This will generate content for the project’s website and will be locally-focused. Primary school children will take part in the interviewing and filming process in their local area. This will provide children with the opportunity to learn about their local natural heritage and landscape, and to learn from local experts.

<b>Outputs</b>	1. 20 film clips, including working with 2 primary schools, local people and other experts
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**Share it! Interactive Website:** The BHNH website will bring together all the photos, film clips, stories, discoveries, advice, achievements and resources of the project in one place, helping people to understand the natural heritage of the Blackdown Hills as a whole, as well as on a more local level. The website will include a map with links to information and updates about local community projects and photos, stories and films resulting from the project will also be shared.

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| <b>Outputs</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Blackdown Hills Natural Futures website</li><li>2. 150 project updates</li></ol> |
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**Share it! ‘Naturally Blackdown Hills’ Smartphone Resource:** This resource will open up the landscape of the Blackdown Hills to new audiences, encouraging locals and visitors to look closely at the countryside and learn more about what they see. The Naturally Blackdown Hills resource will be accessible at various locations in the Blackdown Hills that are regularly visited and have smartphone reception. The resource will be user-friendly and attractive, linking to short film clips collected through the project’s ‘Discover it!’ activities, which will help bring the landscape to life. This will include films of people talking about the Blackdown Hills countryside, be it about the special archaeology, how the area is farmed or about a rare butterfly that they’ve found nearby.

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| <b>Outputs</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Smartphone resource promoted/accessible at 4 AONB outdoor locations</li></ol> |
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**Share it! Local Events and Activities:** A wide range of community events will be delivered throughout the project. The BHNH Trainees will also work with the project staff to plan and deliver annual family ‘bio-blitz’ events to engage children. In addition, three winter identification events will be delivered each year, such as how to identify trees from their buds and bark or an introduction to fungi.

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| <b>Outputs</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 9 winter identification events (90 participants)</li><li>2. 30 local community talks and site discovery days (450 participants)</li><li>3. 3 Bioblitz events (60 participants)</li></ol> |
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**Share it! Showcase Events:** The project will develop and deliver a ‘nature discovery’ tent that will tour at least three existing large, high-profile events in the final year of the project, showcasing the area’s fantastic natural heritage and the benefits brought about by the project. Local artists will help schoolchildren to produce nature-related materials especially for the tent. The touring tents will also provide community nature projects with the opportunity to come together to share and celebrate their achievements.

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| <b>Outputs</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 3 touring ‘Nature Discovery Tent’ events in year 3 (300 participants)</li></ol> |
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**Do it! Community Nature Projects:** Support will be provided to communities throughout the Blackdown Hills to develop and deliver their own ‘community nature projects’. These projects will focus on habitat creation and management on areas of publicly accessible land, such as village greens, playing fields, school grounds and churchyards, as well as on raising local awareness of the value of natural heritage. The project will help to inspire local communities to take action and provide the support they need to make their project happen. This will include advice on project ideas, sources of funding, how to set up their group and how to raise awareness of their project. Where groups need specialist advice, local experts or volunteers from successful community nature projects will provide ‘natural expertise’ visits, to ensure Blackdown Hills communities have the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver enjoyable and successful projects.

<b>Outputs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 15 community nature projects</li> <li>2. 9 natural expertise visits (90 participants)</li> </ol>
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**Find out more and volunteer: *Contact us!***



**James Maben** (BHNF Manager): **01823 681937 / 07580 463351**

Email: james.maben@devon.gov.uk

**Conrad Barrowclough** (BHNF Officer): **01823 681935 / 07580 459669**

Email: conrad.barrowclough@devon.gov.uk

**Web:** <http://www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Natural-Futures.html>

**Twitter:** @BlackdownsAONB



**Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership**  
St Ivel House, Station Road, Hemyock, Cullompton, Devon, EX15 3SJ

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The Blackdown Hills Trust, The Blackdown Hills Parish Network, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, Devon Wildlife Trust, Plymouth University, Somerset Environmental Records Centre and Somerset Wildlife Trust.

