

Blackdown Hills Parish Network

MEMBERSHIP OPEN TO ALL PARISHES WITH A FULL OR PARTIAL FOOTPRINT IN, OR ADJACENT TO, THE BLACKDOWN HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

NEWSLETTER NO 7 : FEBRUARY 2025



Map shows the four original District Council areas:

MEMBERSHIP – A NEW APPROACH

After 14 years of our existence, we have implemented a fairly radical shake-up: from 1st January 2025.

From that date we will assume all Parish Councils and Parish Meetings with a full or partial footprint in the NL are BHPN members – unless you tell us otherwise

We recognise that many parishes immediately adjoining the NL share many of the same problems and concerns as those within -and will welcome them into membership if they wish to join.

There is no formal membership fee. All we ask is that you give a minimum contribution of £25 annually to assist with basic admin costs – more if you can.

Our website now has open access for all Parish Councils and Parish Meetings

ANNUAL MEETING WITH LOCAL MPs

On 14th February we were delighted to welcome all four MPs whose constituencies include part of the National Landscape. Richard Foord MP (who we have welcomed for the last two years) was joined by Gideon Amos MP, Adam Dance MP and Rachel Gilmour MP who were all elected to Parliament at last July's General Election.



Topics discussed were
+ planning (and the need for Local Planning Authorities to have full regard to the new requirements in the 'Levelling Up Act 2023',
+ fibre broadband (and Connecting Devon & Somerset's continuing extremely poor performance following the removal of 28,000+ properties from the current Airband contracts, and how this will be addressed),
+ water quality: tackling local problems
+ the forthcoming local government reorganisation in Devon (and, frankly, the need to avoid some of the mistakes made when this happened in Somerset recently).

HUNT THE HEAT

Our thermal imaging camera has been out and about in recent months. It's too late to book any more sessions this winter: but we will soon be inviting applications for winter 2025/26

PLANNING – BROADHEMBURY PARISH COUNCIL TAKES DIRECT ACTION!!

National Landscapes (NLs) and Conservation Areas have special protections in law. In the case of NLs even the 'setting' (land immediately adjacent to the NL) has special requirements.

East Devon District Council's Local Plan proposes a housing estate of ten homes right at the entrance to Broadhembury village in rising ground on the very edge of the Blackdown Hills NL.

Broadhembury Parish Council intends to fight this with whatever means at their disposal. Bob Nelson, Chairman of the Parish Council and coincidentally Chairman of the Blackdown Hills NL Partnership Board said "this is a tough thing for a small Parish Council of volunteer Councillors to take on, but at stake is the purpose enshrined in the 1949 Act and subsequent legislation to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Protected Landscapes.

In December 2023, perhaps rather surprisingly, this statutory duty was toughened – and EDDC now have to 'seek to further' the natural beauty, rather than as before simply to 'have regard to'.

Broadhembury Parish Council believes EDDC are wrong in law to propose an estate on the edge of the Blackdown Hills NL and we intend to prove it. If we win it will set a precedent for major developments adjacent to or near to all National Parks and National Landscapes for the foreseeable future".



The BHPN supports Broadhembury PC.

CHURCHINFORD/DUNKESWELL SURGERIES

Members of the BHPN Steering Group have now met the Practice Manager twice – in November it was Mark Dodds who was about to leave, and in February it was Karen Button who we were delighted to see return.

Our request that the Practice continue to offer some afternoon surgeries at Churchinford and Dunkeswell has not, to date, been successful but we are now much clearer about the financial implications which have driven this decision. We will continue to meet the Practice Manager to keep this dialogue, and our request, going. The next meeting will be in July.

Separately, we have offered to work with the Practice to increase take-up of interest and involvement in the Patients Participation Group – we hope to the benefit of both the Practice and patients.

STEERING GROUP

A reminder that we will be inviting all member Parish Councils to nominate someone to join our Steering Group Zoom meeting in May (and every four months thereafter). And, if you believe you have some skills and/or experience to offer, we would welcome new members to the Steering Group. Don't be put off by the title – it's more a working group than a Steering Group!

To talk to us about this, or anything else, please contact our Chairman Mike Canham or Vice Chairman Catherine Bass, Mike can be contacted on 07903 666997 or cllrncanham@otterfordparishcouncil.gov.uk; Catherine on 07771 908643, catherinejbass@gmail.com