

THE BLACKDOWN HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP

It is difficult to report on the many interests and projects undertaken by the AONB in the space of a committee report.

The make-up of the Executive, which contains representatives from four District and two County Councils, CPRE, NFU, Natural England, Blackdown Hills Business Association, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Parish Network, and several Special Appointees, shows the diversity of the expertise and opinion that has been drawn into this organisation.

We, of course, have a seat at the table, as a small part of SSDC and a large part of Blackdown Ward falls within the AONB and we annually give a Grant to the organisation.

I know we all sit on various Committees but personally my time on the AONB Executive is certainly interesting, instructive and productive. I'm not sure that can be said for all organisations!!

Coming, some time ago from a Town background, I never dreamed I would be involved with an organisation fighting to stop an invasion of American Cray fish wiping out our own native species! Or receiving reports on the Otter population or even the re- introduction of Beavers!

But the wild life is only a small part of the picture, I would recommend you to go to the Web Site and view the ambitious programme planned for the coming year. This comes under three main themes –

1. Landscape
2. Sustainable Development
3. Communication and Management

There is something for everybody within the programme whether your thing is walking, wild life surveys, hedge laying competitions, volunteering, heritage projects and much more.

Small business is flourishing in the AONB area and cooperation is maintained to keep the balance between their operations and retaining the beautiful and unique character of the Blackdowns.

I would like to thank all the staff at the AONB for their help, particularly Lisa Turner, the full time Planning Officer who is a great help when Planning Applications arise within the ANOB.

Copies of the latest Newsletter will be available at the meeting.

Martin Wale

Area West Representative Blackdown Hills ANOB Partnership