

NELMS target statement for *Blackdown Hills*

Your application is scored and a decision made on the points awarded. Both top priorities and lower priorities score points but you should select at least one top priority.

Scoring is carried out by...

Comment [m1]: Text to be confirmed: dependent upon development with scoring system – but this section will be standard text, not critical for local authoring process.

Choosing priorities

To apply you should choose at least one of the top priorities, and you can choose lower priorities - this may help with your application.

Top priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Biodiversity	Priority habitats
	Priority species
Water	Water quality
	Flood and coastal risk management
Historic environment	Designated historic and archaeological features
	Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance
Woodland priorities	Woodland management
	Woodland planting
Landscape	
Climate Change	
Multiple environmental benefits	

Lower priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Lower priorities	Water quality

	Archaeological and historic features
	Woodland

Biodiversity - top priorities

Priority habitats

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that maintains, restores and creates priority habitats.

Maintain priority habitat such as:

- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Calcareous and Acid Grassland
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Coastal and Flood Plain Grazing Marsh
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture
- Broadleaved Woodland
- Western Oak Woodland
- Wet Woodland
- Lowland Meadows
- Traditional Orchards

Restore priority habitats (especially proposals which make existing sites bigger or help join up habitat networks) such as:

- Lowland Meadows
- Lowland Heathland
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture

Create priority habitats – to extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation. Defra is looking for proposals to create priority habitat that will also contribute significantly to improvements in:

- water quality
- air quality
- flood and coastal risk management

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Proposals to maintain or restore Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs including SACs) with eligible features are a priority, and both on-site and off-site options (such as to reduce diffuse water and air pollution impacts on SSSIs) are relevant.

Priority species

For the majority of priority species found on the priority habitats listed above, their ecological requirements can be met through good generic habitat management. Managing for those essential elements associated with priority habitats - in particular bare ground, areas of scrub, varying sward structures will allow these species to thrive.

A number of priority species associated with the area require specific and tailored management and advice. You should carry out land management practices and capital works that meet the specific needs of the following priority species:

- Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
- Marsh Fritillary
- Duke of Burgundy
- Wood White
- Large Blue
- Heath Fritillary
- Brown Hairstreak
- Lapwing
- Swamp Lookout Spider
- Grey long-eared Bat
- Greater Horseshoe Bat
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat

Further guidance on the priority species in this area that require more tailored targeted management and advice, as listed, can be found:

- [Links to guidance on those bespoke species' needs found in this [area](#)]
- maintain/enhance conditions for woodland birds

Comment [m2]: Standard links to be provided.

Comment [m3]: Only include this paragraph if the NCA is targeted for woodland birds – NCA reference list provided

Parts of this area are targeted for their woodland bird assemblage, i.e. they contain area(s) assessed as being nationally significant for four or more species (of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Pipit, Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, Marsh Tit, Lesser Redpoll and Hawfinch). Where your land includes such areas, you should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

This area has also been identified as a hotspot for wild pollinators, farmland birds and other wildlife associated with the wider countryside – through the Wild Pollinator and farm Wildlife package implement these options to make sure these species thrive all year around.

- option 1
- option 2

Water - top priorities

Water quality

The area has particular issues with:

- nitrate in the Parrett, Clyst, Culm, Lim, Axe, Sid, Otter, Tone and West Dorset rivers catchments
- phosphate in the Parrett, Clyst, Culm, Lim, Axe, Sid, Otter, Tone and West Dorset rivers catchments
- sediment in the Parrett, Clyst, Culm, Lim, Axe, Sid, Otter, Tone and West Dorset river catchments
- faecal bacteria on land upstream of Budleigh Salterton and Burnham bathing water and/ or River Exe shellfish water
- pesticides in Sid, Otter catchment to benefit drinking water

You should consider options and capital works that address these issues. These are detailed in X guidance document. These options help to improve water quality by controlling the source or the movement of potential pollutants. For this area, this includes:

- nutrients from fertilisers and manures
- sediment problems from soil erosion and run-off
- faecal bacteria from both manures and livestock
- pesticides from their use and disposal

Flood and Coastal Risk Management

Applications that select options to address flood risk issues within the area will also be welcomed, primarily within the flood risk priority areas; on the eastern side of Axminster, on Mill Brook, north of the village of Branscombe, areas to the north and east of Feniton Gardens, north of Membury village, east of Ottery St Mary, catchments north of Sidmouth and land surrounding the village Uplyme.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works to help towards managed realignment or wetland creation, where this will not increase flood risk, within the following areas:

- The tidal floodplain of the River Axe

You should consider options that:

- reduce the amount and rate of surface water run-off
- reduce soil erosion
- slow the movement of floodwaters on floodplains
- manage the coastline

These are detailed in X guidance document.

Historic environment - top priorities

Active management is important for the long term survival of historic environment remains and to protect them against damage and decay brought about through cultivation, scrub growth, burrowing animals or poor maintenance. These features cannot be recreated once they have been lost.

In this area there are a number of designated heritage features and other historic environment features reflecting the long history of occupation and settlement of this landscape. The NCA's ridge and valley topography has influenced settlement since prehistoric times with finds providing evidence of occupation from the Palaeolithic. There are Neolithic causewayed enclosures, Bronze Age barrows and ritual sites, often on high ground, with Iron-Age hillforts both on the coast and inland, including Castle Neroche. The Roman period is represented in several 'Romanised' farms, villas and roads, notably part of the Fosse Way, as well as Roman industrial sites and quarries. The rural settlement pattern reflects its medieval origins and includes important features such as monasteries and castles. The area has some 19th century designed landscape parklands and military sites and airfields from the Second World War. Characteristic farm buildings include threshing barns, including combination buildings with cattle at one end; lincays for cattle; bank barns; and cider houses typically incorporated with stabling and other functions into combination ranges. There is a wide variety of traditional building materials: cob; Triassic Sandstone is locally used; chert is widespread, mainly as squared coursed stone, commonly with brick banding and edging; Brick tiles and slate became widespread in the 19th century.

The 2014 Heritage at Risk 2014 survey has identified 130ha of designated features as being 'at risk', particularly from unmanaged woodland and scrub growth; commercial forestry practices; bracken and invasive plant growth; arable cultivation.

The following historic environment features are a high priority for active management in this area:

- Designated Features - archaeological features of national significance, Scheduled Monuments(SM), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG)
- Designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings and non-domestic historic buildings on holdings

- Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance which are part of the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE), particularly if they are within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- revert archaeological sites under cultivation to permanent grass
- reduce damaging cultivation and harvesting practices through minimum tillage or direct drilling where this offers a suitable level of protection
- remove scrub and bracken from archaeological or historic features
- maintain below-ground archaeology under permanent uncultivated vegetation or actively manage earthworks, standing stones and structures as visible 'above ground' features
- maintain and restore historic water management systems, including those associated with water meadows and designed water bodies
- restore historic buildings that are assessed as a priority in the area.
- address the condition of Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, through the proactive maintenance or restoration of structures or features that make a major contribution to the design intentions or feel of the parkland, provide for their biodiversity and amenity value.
- deal with specific issues that are causing damage or decay to archaeological and historic features, but which are not covered by standard options.

Woodland - top priorities

Woodland management

Management of all woodland to improve structure and species mix is important for biodiversity and to make them more robust in relation to future threats such as climate change, pests and diseases.

Certain types of woodland are a high priority for bringing into management, including:

- protected woodland – those designated for their national biodiversity value
- priority woodland habitat – other unmanaged broadleaved woodland
- priority species – all woodland within current red squirrel range, or within areas important for woodland butterfly and woodland bird species
- Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) restoration – conversion of conifer plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites to broadleaf woodland where they are in close proximity to existing broadleaf woodland
- United Kingdom Forestry Standard – unmanaged conifer woodland within catchments subject to eutrophication and acidification, both to reduce pressures on the water environment and improve biodiversity

Woodlands not included in the categories above are a lower priority for management.

All management should comply with the United Kingdom Forestry Standard and other relevant guidance such as 'Managing Ancient and Native Woodland in England'.

Woodland planting

High priority areas for the planting of new woodlands include:

- biodiversity – planting to buffer and link existing woodlands and other semi natural open habitats within priority woodland habitat networks
- water quality – planting designed to reduce and intercept diffuse pollution from agriculture
- flood risk – planting designed to increase infiltration of heavy rain into the ground, reduce erosion, or slow the flow of floodwaters on floodplains

In order to provide the required biodiversity and/or water benefits, new woodland planting needs to be in the right part of the landscape and to the right design.

Landscape – top priorities

High priorities are the management, restoration or re-creation of landscape features that contribute significantly to the local character by reinforcing the overall pattern and scale of the landscape, together with other important features that give an area its unique and distinctive sense of place.

Top priority in the **Blackdown Hills** is the restoration of these features:

- hedgerows and earth banks
- Parklands
- hedgerow trees
- beech hedgerows along the ridge
- small valley woods

Climate Change

Climate change will pose variable threats and opportunities in different landscapes. Priority should be given to targeted features and issues that are particularly vulnerable to or affected by climate change.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that help to:

- make existing priority habitat sites bigger
- extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation
- reduce the impacts of climate change on local communities, for example by targeted planting of woodland to reduce flood risk
- reduce loss of carbon and emissions of other greenhouse gases

- increase carbon uptake, for example by tree planting
- increase carbon storage, for example by converting arable land to permanent grassland

Multiple environmental benefits

Opportunities for multi-objective agreements

You should look to provide for multiple priorities by selecting options that achieve multiple environmental benefits.

In the **Blackdown Hills** you have the greatest opportunity to achieve multiple objectives with:

- establish new wetland habitat within upper reaches of the river catchments where they're likely to improve water quality, reduce run-off rates into watercourses, add to biodiversity and landscape character and protect historical features
- manage heathland, grassland and valley mire habitats, which will benefit flood risk, carbon storage, water quality, biodiversity, drinking water resources and historic features
- which maintain woodland and expand where appropriate and in keeping with the landscape character, to support woodland plants, birds, bats and butterflies etc. increasing connectivity of the woodland itself for species movement but also connectivity with the wider landscape through linking with hedgerows, parkland, orchards and grassland providing benefits for biodiversity, reducing water flow, improving water quality and regulating climate change
- establish new wet woodland within upper Axe and Otter to benefit biodiversity, landscape character, water quality, flood risk and historic features
- change arable cropping systems to low-intensity grassland where the new management system will protect historical features and benefit farmland birds, water quality, landscape character, groundwater resources, flood risk and biodiversity
- restore historic hedgerows to manage water flow, decrease soil erosion, create wildlife habitats and corridors, and strengthen the local landscape

Lower priorities

You should select one of the top priorities. However, you can also select lower priorities as well as this will attract points used to score your application.

You should consider the following other priorities that are of specific interest in this area.

Historic environment - lower priorities

The Historic environment features set out below are a lower priority.

- Maintain designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings.
- Undesignated SHINE features of medium and low Significance
- Priority Undesignated Historic Parklands

Woodland – lower priorities

Woodland Management

Woodlands not included in the top priority categories listed above are a lower priority for management but may still be supported.

Woodland Planting

Areas are prioritised for new planting based on their potential to create biodiversity and water benefits. Woodland planting schemes are scored depending on where the proposed scheme is in relation to the opportunity maps for woodland planting in England and how well the planting design will benefit biodiversity and water.

Lower priorities for appropriately designed biodiversity schemes exist across the whole of England. Opportunities for new woodland planting for water only exist in certain parts of England.