

PRESS RELEASE 3<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2019



Historic England



## **Blackdown Hills' hidden gem Dunkeswell Abbey will come into the limelight after winning National Lottery Heritage Fund support.**

Devon-based project partners The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, and Heritage, Arts and People (HAP) are delighted to receive £9,700 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards an exciting new project *Discovering Dunkeswell Abbey*. Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, the project will focus on increasing understanding and awareness of the nationally significant abbey complex.

Dunkeswell Abbey, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, is on Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register, and is an important part of the Blackdown Hills historic landscape. However, few people are aware of the significance of this substantial monastic complex since there is currently no signage or interpretation information at the site and only fragments of the 13th century Cistercian abbey survives above ground. There are also many questions left unanswered about the extent and significance of Dunkeswell Abbey, which the community archaeology programme will help to solve.

Catherine Farnell of Heritage, Arts and People, and Project Coordinator for the Discovering Dunkeswell Abbey project said: *"I'm thrilled that the project has received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and am looking forward to working with the local community to record and better interpret the Abbey within its surroundings."*

Tim Youngs, manager of the Blackdown Hills AONB added, *"We are delighted to be working with Heritage, Arts and People to deliver this important project, that will*

*engage communities to help uncover, share and celebrate the rich historic and cultural interest of Dunkeswell Abbey.'*

Heritage, Arts and People is an Exeter-based Community Interest Company which focuses on enabling people of all ages to explore and enjoy their local heritage, bringing new, fulfilling and enriching experiences to participants and volunteers.

The project will provide opportunities for volunteers to get involved in surveying the remains of the abbey, river walking to look for pottery and learning about the fascinating heritage of the site. The results will be shared via 'Dunkeswell Abbey on Tour', a series of interactive workshops and events taking the project into schools and the community. A newly-commissioned interpretation drawing of the abbey which will be installed at the site, alongside information informed by the community archaeology programme.

The project also has the support of Devon County Council and Historic England, who are assisting with expertise and specialist support. Charlotte Russell, Heritage at Risks Projects Officer at Historic England said "*Historic England are delighted to support this work with local people to explore the history of this Nationally Important medieval monastery. Other work to repair and consolidate the site is also underway funded by Historic England grants.*"

If anyone would like to volunteer, please contact Catherine Farnell on Catherine@heritageartspeople.uk to register your interest.

ENDS

## Notes to editors

### About **Heritage Arts and People**

HAP is an Exeter-based Community Interest Company which brings together people who are passionate about heritage and want to share it with the wider community. Working with diverse communities in the southwest, HAP focuses on connecting the rich heritage of the area with people, bringing new, fulfilling and enriching experiences.

With expertise in running educational workshops in schools and organising community events and projects, HAP works across the South West to enable people of all ages to explore and enjoy their local heritage. For more information visit <https://heritageartspeople.uk/>

### **The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

The Blackdown Hills is one of 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For many it epitomises our iconic picture of the English countryside, characterised by hedgerows and copses, small farms with intricate field patterns, steep valleys and narrow, winding lanes.

The Blackdown Hills was designated an AONB in 1991. It covers 370 square kilometres of unspoilt countryside, rich in wildlife and heritage.

The Blackdown Hills AONB partnership is a coalition of local authorities, government agencies, conservation organisations and community groups which work to protect this special landscape.

More information: [www.blackdownhillsAONB.org.uk](http://www.blackdownhillsAONB.org.uk)

### **The National Lottery Heritage Fund**

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk).

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