



Mendip Hills
National
Landscape

Mendip Views

**Views In, Views Out
and how we work to
preserve them**

As you would expect for a landscape called the Mendip Hills, incredible views are almost wherever you go on Mendip. But have you ever taken the time to appreciate the view towards the Mendip Hills? I often forget that the special quality of "Views" also includes the "view in". I particularly love to see the view of the northern slopes, with the ancient woodlands scattered across them. It is of course, tinged with sadness, that this woodland is undergoing significant change due to ash dieback, and may not be there in its current form for much longer. I like to see the few houses clinging to the steep slopes, determined to maintain their position and enjoy the view that comes with it.



The view in from the south is equally impressive. From some places it is possible to get almost a full view of the east and west Mendip ridge, and the scale of it. This approach to Mendip always makes me think of the enormity of the geological forces that created this magnificent landscape. There are clues to the geological history of Mendip scattered across the land, (exposed geology is another one of the special qualities), and there are even some rare features to be found on Mendip such as the geological unconformity at Vallis Vale. If geology is something you want to learn more about then look out for the programme for Mendip Rocks! festival, which will be announced very soon.

As a resident of the National Landscape, my appreciation of this view towards Mendip is also associated with a feeling of coming home. I feel very lucky to have found a place for my family among one of the wonderful communities of the Mendip Hills.



Of course, I also have a favourite view out from Mendip: up on the slopes of Nempnett Thrubwell you can see across Blagdon Lake and all the way to the sea, framed beautifully by the hills on either side. Standing on the edge of the Mendip Hills and sharing the view with visiting friends and family is something they always enjoy. The effort it takes to get to these special places makes it something to appreciate even more. One of the things I love about being surrounded by incredible views, is observing how they change with the seasons. My favourite time of year to experience the view out is winter, when occasionally a covering of snow makes everything seem more delicate and fragile, or when there is a mist in the air which amplifies the layers in the landscape and the distances between them. It was interesting when the team here chose their favourite views out of Mendip, they were all different. There were also some I hadn't been to despite living here for five years. There is so much to discover on Mendip that even through working here I haven't seen all of it.



It is unsurprising that the artists behind Nature Calling chose to call their piece “View in, View out” or VIVO for short. They were drawn to the variety of landscapes and habitat types that can be found here, and the many ways of viewing them. They explored them with fresh eyes and found their own ways to connect with the landscape and its people. They collected the stories and experiences from farmers, wardens, young people and more. They have created an immersive sonic exhibition, and transported Mendip right into the town centre of Weston-super-Mare. The free exhibition will be open to the public from 15/7/2025. More information here: <https://mendiphills-nl.org.uk/news/nature-calling/>



Of course, in an ever-changing world, it is uppermost in our minds to ensure that the scenic beauty of the Mendip Hills is preserved for ever. There will always be a need for new farm buildings, homes and residential extensions, tourist and commercial development and infrastructure such as transport, energy and water supply networks.

Often, change and development can be planned in ways which mitigate any impacts on the protected landscape. As a specialist consultee, we work closely with local councils who are responsible for making decisions on most types of planning and development. We make suggestions on how they should write their local plan policies to ensure they are guided by a robust understanding of local landscape character, and that the area's outstanding beauty is put front and centre in deciding future individual planning proposals.



We also make comments and suggestions on individual planning applications. There are all sorts of ways in which the details of a new development can make all the difference in avoiding harm to our precious landscape, or providing enhancements. This could mean considering the bulk, height and/or siting of new buildings and requiring appropriate soft landscaping to provide visual screening. Or it could mean carefully selecting suitable colour palettes to make sure the development blends into its setting in the countryside. This is particularly important for, say, agricultural barns or stables where large roof areas could be highly conspicuous in the landscape from distant viewpoints. As dark skies are an important quality of the area, it could also mean carefully considering the amount and positioning of glazing and outdoor lighting so as to avoid cumulative increase in harmful skyglow. We produce our own design guidelines to help the local planning authorities decide what makes an acceptable scheme.



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For larger developments, we also encourage applicants to prepare Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) which describe how the scheme would be viewed from a wide range of viewpoints both near and far. LVIAs provide a comprehensive evaluation of whether a new development is capable of being integrated into the surroundings and, if so, how the design of a project can mitigate any adverse effects and maximise enhancements.

