

Community Governance Group  
Somerset County Council  
County Hall  
Taunton, TA1 4DY



## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Friday 19 November 2010**

at

**2.15pm**

in the

**Council Chamber, West Somerset Council, Killick Way, Williton**

To:           The Members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

Julian Gale  
Group Manager, Community Governance  
12 November, 2010

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Committee Administrator for the meeting – Norman Tottle (Community Governance) on tel (01823) 355571, fax (01823) 355529 or email. [natottle@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:natottle@somerset.gov.uk)

Guidance about procedures at the meeting is given on the last page.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

## AGENDA

### Agenda Item No.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest** – an opportunity for members of the JAC to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter being considered at this meeting.
3. **Accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2010**  
(copy appended ) **and to consider any matters arising.**
4. **Public Question Time** – The Chairman will allow members of the public to ask questions or make statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting, or present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit.
5. **Report of the Acting AONB Manager on Service Activity ( Paper A )**
6. **Quantock Hills AONB Future Priorities ( Paper B)**
7. **Landscape Planning Officer Report ( Paper C)**
8. **Proposed Introduction of Car Park Charges at Ramscombe ( Paper D)**
9. **Any Other Business of Urgency**

**Note** : Further information about any of the reports for this meeting may be obtained from the report authors based at the Quantock Hills AONB Service, The Quantock Office, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Bridgwater, TA5 2EQ. Tel No 01823 451884 or e-mail : [quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk)

## THE MEETING – GUIDANCE NOTES

### 1. Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect Minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Norman Tottle – tel: (01823) 355571, fax (01823) 355529 or email. [natottle@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:natottle@somerset.gov.uk)

### 2. Notes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed and decisions taken at the meeting will be set out in the Minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. In the meantime, details of the decisions taken can be obtained from Norman Tottle – tel: (01823) 355571, fax (01823) 355529 or email [natottle@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:natottle@somerset.gov.uk)

### 3. Public Question Time

At the Chairman's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about **any matter on the Committee's agenda**. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. **The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total.**

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been signed. If you wish to speak, please tell Norman Tottle, the Committee Administrator, **before the meeting**.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chairman. You may not take direct part in the debate.

The Chairman will decide when public participation is to finish.

If there are many people present at the meeting for one particular item, the Chairman may adjourn the meeting to allow views to be expressed more freely.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting.

**Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.**

### 4. Substitutions

Committee members are able to appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.

(23 July, 2010)

## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held in the Village Hall, Kilve, on Friday 23 July 2010 at 2.15pm.

### **Present**

Somerset County Council Chairman )	Mr A H Trollope-Bellew (  Mr J Wilkins
Sedgemoor District Council	Mr J Swayne Mr A Bradford Mr D W Joslin
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Dr C Guerrier Mr N Stuart-Thorn Ms L James
Parish Representatives	Mr T Ayre Mr J Edwards
Natural England	Mr S Marston
Friends of Quantock	Mrs L Kelly
Forestry Commission	Mr N Salter
SLAF	Mr R Conway
Quantock Commoners Association	Mrs D Salvidge
CLBA	Mr H Warmington

### **Also Present**

Mr B James (SCC- Officer), Mr A Hughes (F of Q), Mr J Clarke ( Kingston St Mary PC), Mrs J Sansom ( West Quantoxhead PC), and Mr K Rogers ( Kilve PC).

Apologies were received from Mr J Edney (SCC), Mr S Dowding ( WSC), Mr H Davies (WSC), Mr C Morgan (WSC) and Mrs J Burton (SDC- Officer).

### **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

41. Mr A H Trollope-Bellew was reappointed as Chairman of the JAC for the ensuing year.

## **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

42. Mr N Stuart-Thorn was reappointed as Vice- Chairman of the JAC for the ensuing year.

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

43. Mr Wilkins, Mr Warmington and Mr Salter declared personal interests in the Review of County Council land item discussed under Any other Business of Urgency.

## **MINUTES – 7 MAY 2010**

44. (1) The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2010 were taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to an amendment to Minute 34 (2) by the deletion of the words “ the next three years” and the substitution of the figures “ 2008/11”.

### **Matters arising**

#### **Minute 32 (2) - Pathwatch**

(2) Mr J Edwards referred to the point made at the last meeting concerning the legal interpretation on the police web-site. No alterations appeared to have been made. Andy Whysall and Roger Joliffe would be contacted again and reminded.

#### **Minute 32 (3) – Notes on Phytopthera**

(3) Mr T Ayre said that he had still not received the Phytopthera notes that the JAC had agreed would be circulated. Iain Porter explained that these had been delayed because of the changing situation but arrangements would now be made to send these out. Mr Salter said that Larch was the main host of the disease but Rhododendron was still a significant host.

#### **Minute 34 (2) – Annual Event**

(4) The date for the Annual Event had been changed from 16 June to 5 October.

#### **Minute 40 (1) – Rhododendrons at Vinnicombe and Works at Deadwomans Ditch**

(5) Mrs Salvidge asked when the work at Vinnicombe on the Rhododendrons would be started. It was understood that this would commence during September. Mrs Salvidge and Mr Ayre asked questions concerning works at Deadwomans Ditch. Soil removal and filling in of holes would be undertaken

during late August. No further parking places were being provided as part of the works.

### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

45. There were no questions asked by members of the public.

### **REPORT OF THE ACTING AONB MANAGER ON SERVICE ACTIVITY**

46. (1) The report from the Acting AONB Manager was considered on the following subjects :- Staffing, Revised 2010/11 Business Plan, Officer Working Group meeting, Delivery Plan Update, Planning, Local Nature Reserves, SDF , Future Funding of AONB's and the Service Budget 2010/11.

(2) The revised Business Plan had been produced following the reduction in staff resources. The revised Plan set out the actions the AONB Service would deliver for the coming year and indicated the priority placed on that action. The Vice- Chairman reported on the key messages coming from the National AONB Conference he had attended with the Acting AONB Manager which had included a field trip to the High Weald The JAC discussed in the light of the impending reductions in the AONB budget, the implications of that on the AONB Service including the reassessment of priorities, new ways of working. Barry James reported that a meeting had been arranged in September between all AONB's in Somerset, Natural England etc, to look at the future direction of AONB's in the County. Papers outlining options for the future would be presented to the next JAC meeting.

(3) Iain Porter said that a large response had been received to the Schools project and an exhibition was being held at Fyne Court for 2 weeks from 17 August. The remaining items in the report were noted including the Local Nature Reserves item and members were asked to submit any comments on the plan for a Cothelstone Hill LNR to Iain Porter by 27 August.

### **RANGERS REPORT**

47. (1) The JAC considered the report of the Rangers for the period January to June 2010 on the following subjects :- Practical Management, Heritage and Local Distinctiveness, Visitor Management, Tick Conference and Events. The report also contained as an Appendix the results of the latest Deer Count which had taken place on 7 March 2010. Tim Russell gave a presentation using photographs of some of the issues that had arisen during the period.

(2) Tim Russell was asked to produce a short synopsis of the Tick Conference for the benefit of JAC members. Mr Conway said that he would supply his notes from the Conference to assist in this. For future JAC meetings it was requested that the Rangers as well as reporting on past issues include forward issues/items.

### **JAC MEETING DATES 2010/11**

48. It was agreed, to reflect the increasingly serious resource situation, to reduce the number of JAC meetings to be held during the year from 4 to 3 and that the May meeting be dropped from the programme. Meetings for 2010/11 were agreed to be held on the following dates to commence at 2.15pm :-

Friday 19 November 2010

Friday 25 February 2011

Friday 22 July 2011

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

49. (1) Mr Wilkins said that he had received a consultation letter as local member from Phil Stone, Countryside Group, Somerset County Council, indicating that the public car parks at Lydeard Hill and Triscombe Stone had been included in the County Council Review of Council owned land and that the possibility existed that these car parks could be disposed of or transferred to another body. The consultation period ended on 17 September and he felt that it was appropriate for the JAC to submit their comments on this possibility. The view was expressed that the car parks were valuable amenities for visitors to the Hills and should be retained in County Council ownership or if that was not possible transferred to the Parish Councils. Concern was expressed that the car parks could be disposed of or that charges could be introduced by new owners. The Clerk agreed to submit these views to Phil Stone on behalf of the JAC as part of the consultation process.

(2) Mrs Kelly asked whether the proposed sell –off of County Farms in the AONB area would have implications in the future for the visual landscape of the AONB. Any future purchasers would be subject to the normal planning process as anybody else was in terms of changes of use. Mr Ayre raised the issue of overnight camping in Holford Bowling Green Car Park. It was agreed that Tim Russell would look into this and come back to the JAC with a report.

( The meeting closed at 4.15pm )

### **CHAIRMAN**

Qhjac mins 23.7.10

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee  
**Author:** Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager **Date:** 19 November 2010  
**Subject:** Quantock Hills AONB Service Activity Report.

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1. AONB Service Staffing
  - a. Georgie Grant, Communications Officer, has returned from Maternity Leave. We have said goodbye to Anna Newman, who did a great job as maternity cover for this post, and wish her the best for the future.
  - b. Chris Edwards secondment continues in County Hall and he is still due to return to the Quantock Hills AONB Service in May 2011.
  
2. 2010 – 11 Business Plan
  - a. With the changes in staffing this year the Business Plan was revised in June and the priorities set for 2010-11.
  - b. Appendix A shows current delivery against the business plan. A number of actions are shown as behind progress. In most instances this is due to issues beyond the control of the AONB Service, such as a partner no longer taking forward a piece of work. Overall delivery is going well
  - c. The Business Plan will be the main reporting mechanism updating JAC members and the partnership on delivery against the actions.
  
3. Office Working Group Reporting
  - a. Meeting held 3 November. In attendance were: Steve Marston (NE, OWG Chair), Richard Andrews (NE), Barry James (SCC), Angela Lamplough (WSC), Julie Cooper (SDC), Iain Clark (TDBC), Nick Salter (FC), Iain Porter and Katy Coate (AONB). Apologies were received from Anthony Trollope-Bellew (JAC). Key points from the meeting were:
    - b. Future Chairmanship. Due to increased commitment on the Soils for Profit project, Steve Marston will no longer be the Account Manager for Quantock Hills AONB. Richard Andrews, Natural England, will be the new Account Manager. Barry James will take over the chair of the OWG. Steve has been the account manager for the Quantock Hills for the past 2 years. We thank him for his work with the OWG and JAC and wish him the best for the future.
    - c. Quantock Hills AONB Service 2010/11 Update. Discussion on AONB Service delivery.
    - d. Future AONB Funding. There was a frank discussion on the need to work quickly to try and increase the external income of the AONB Service while also managing the changing situation in terms of funding from national and local government. At this stage funding partners did not have clarity on their own budgets but felt that by January 2011 there will be enough information to allow planning of future AONB budgets. See item 4 below.

4. Future of the Quantock Hills AONB.
  - a. There is significant pressure on national and local government funding. The AONB Service has seen this with a number of 'in-year' cuts and is very aware of the pressures on its funding partners. The cuts are going to continue into the future with potentially large cuts expected within the next 3 years and possibly front loaded for next financial year. These levels of cuts will affect how the AONB Service delivers the Statutory Management Plan.
  - b. At the time of writing the AONB Service is unsure of the level of cuts expected from many of the partners and as such can not make an informed decision on the future delivery by the Service. We are undertaking a number of exercises looking at priorities of partners and others which will help inform the 2011/12 Business Plan and longer term Delivery Plan 2011-14.
  - c. One important element is the Partnership priority setting exercise (Paper B) and we hope the partnership members will fully engage to ensure a comprehensive view for the future direction of the AONB Service and Partnership.
  
5. Project Development
  - a. At the May 2010 JAC meeting the JAC supported the recommendation to further investigate and develop a Landscape Partnership (LP) bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Initial work has identified a number of projects and potential partners. The AONB Service had planned to buy in bid writing expertise, either through secondment or short term contract, to develop the first phase LP bid.
  - b. Through liaison with the HLF it is apparent that a number of LP bids have failed due to match funding issues. As a result the HLF are requiring a more robust sign up by funding partners at the initial stages. In the current financial climate with local authority and other partners unlikely to be able to commit to this work has not been progressed to date. We are hoping to progress the work based on external match funding opportunities and are exploring the use of existing staff within partnership organisations to support this work over the next 4 months.
  
6. Sustainable Development Fund.
  - a. The Quantock Hills SDF has received 15 applications, 11 have been approved, 3 rejected and 1 is still being processed. The SDF has allocated £53,489 with a further £1,237 for the project being processed. This means an allocation of £54,726. The SDF pot for 2010/11 was £55,000 (it was reduced by £5,000 due to Natural England's in-year cut).
  - b. All projects are on track and Owen will be working with project leaders in January and February to ensure the claiming of SDF is completed by the end of the financial year.
  - c. *SDF Contact: Owen Jones*
  
7. AONB Service Budget 2010 – 11

- a. The AONB Service has revised it's 'in-year' budget to take account of changes in staffing and reduction in funding from a number of partners (£1,000 SDC, £5,500 WSC, £10,397 [10% of their grant]).
- b. The budgets have been revised to take account of the reduction in core funding (Tables 1 and 2). The core budget has been reduced through the frozen Development Officer post salary.
- c. Core expenditure (mths 1 – 6) is on track (Table 2) with full expenditure expected.
- d. Project expenditure is low, which is expected as invoicing is retrospective. 2 projects have been put on hold which means their budgets are not currently allocated. Other projects are on target for full expenditure.

Table 1: Revised AONB Income 2010 – 11

Source	Contribution 2010 11	Revised Contribution 2010 11
NE	£207,941	£197,544
SCC	£26,500	£26,500
SDC	£17,500	£16,500
TDBC	£16,500	£16,500
WSC	£21,500	£16,000
Forestry Commission	£17,300	£17,300
<i>Core Funders TOTAL</i>	<i>£307,241</i>	<i>£290,344</i>
Misc project income (RIA)	-	35,243
Event income (estimated)	-	900
Access Management Grant	-	5,500
Blackdown –Quantock Link Ptn Cont	-	8,000
NE – Volunteer Project	-	2,000
Equipment Sales (carry over)	-	1,250
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>343,237</b>

Table 2. AONB Core Expenditure Mths 1-6

	Budget	Revised budget	Expenditure	Balance	%
Salaries & training	189,928	172,614	91,566	81,048	53
Travel	16,446	16,446	11,028	5,418	67
Accommodation	9,500	11,293	5,018	6,275	44
Partnership Budget	8,400	10,690	3,140	7,550	29
Partnership Running Costs	5,400	5,400	2,827	2,573	52
Other Costs	5,620	5,620	4,751	869	85
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235,294</b>	<b>222,063</b>	<b>118,329</b>	<b>103,734</b>	<b>53</b>

Table 3: SDF and Project

Project Expenditure	Budget	Exp	Comments
SDF	55,000	54,726	Effectively fully allocated. Small projects encouraged to fully allocate.

Volunteer Development	2,000	115.64	Many items of expenditure not yet captured in system. Full expenditure expected
Long Eared Owl Survey	1,500	0	Waiting for invoice from HoT
Quantock - Blackdown Link	8,000	4,500	Project continuing with end date of Dec 2010. Expenditure miscoded
Bat Survey	1,000	484.38	Awaiting feedback from HLF before going ahead with further expenditure
Woodland Bird Survey	1,000	0	Survey completed, currently working with RSPB in drawing together results
Quantock Arts Project	1,500	158	Awaiting final invoices. Project completed successfully.
Climate Change Adaptation	15,000	0	Awaiting funding outcomes before committing expenditure
Landscape Partnership Development	15,000	0	Awaiting funding outcomes before committing expenditure
Development Mgt Consultation	9,000	4,000	Contract set up and working. Full expenditure not showing due to retrospective payment
Circular Walk Enhancement	1,000	280	Further audits to be carried out in autumn.
Quantock Tick Research	500	500	Tick research completed. Awaiting the results from Prof Roy Brown
Local Information Points Project	2,515	1,230	Project well underway with local service providers contacted. Project due to be completed Dec 2010.
Commons Access Mgt	1,250	0	Funding agreement from AMG given beginning of October. Project looking to start ASAP
Ramscombe All Ability Access	6,000	0	Funding agreement from AMG given beginning of October. Project looking to start ASAP
Quantock Access Guide	2,000	0	Slight delay with project. Looking to take forward during autumn / winter ready for launch spring 2011.
<b>TOTAL (inc SDF)</b>	<b>122,265</b>	<b>65,994</b>	
<b>TOTAL (exc SDF)</b>	<b>67,265</b>	<b>11,286</b>	

<b>SUMMARY</b>	
TOTAL INCOME	£343,237
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£344,328
<b>Balance</b>	<b>-£1,091</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The JAC notes the report.

## Appendix 1: QHAONB Revised Business Plan – Delivery Progress

### HIGH PRIORITY

ACTION POINT	Action	Progress	Comments
FAP2	Promote HLS scheme through web-promotion and targeting of under represented areas.	☺	NE delivery of HLS & UELS on Aisholt Common and Wills Neck nearing completion.
FWAP2	From FWAP1 action undertake study of woodfuel resource, concentrating on Cothelstone Hill to provide a exemplar site	☹	AONB Service comment on FWAG 'working the woods' project which is currently going forward for WSLAG funding
FWAP4	Work with NE to develop and implement Management Plans for the Upland Oak SAC woodland	☹	NE looking to develop plan. AONB to comment once draft is ready but should take less resource.
WAP4	Undertake or support other to undertake the following surveys 1) Woodland Bird Survey (Support) 2) LEO Survey (Support) 3) Adder Survey (support) 4) Deer Count (Support) 5) Bechstein Bat Survey (Support)	☺	Surveys undertaken include: 1) LEO survey (completed) 2) Woodland Bird Survey (completed) 3) Adder survey (completed) 4) Wood Warbler Survey (completed) 5) Bechsteins Bats (in progress) 6) Nightjar (in progress) Currently putting together report which will present results from surveys
DAP1	Identify and comment on relevant planning applications including consultation on Hinkley Point C	☺	Hinkley C consultation response currently being finalised. Other DM comments being fed into LA and database kept up to date
DAP2	Identify and comment on Local Development Framework documents for relevant local planning authorities	☺	Comments submitted to WSC and TDBC (Green Infrastructure).
DAP3	Host 1 Quantock Planning Officers Working Group and implement the Planning Protocol (consultation and endorsement) and monitoring through planning database (included NE protocol)	☺	Slight delay due to Hinkley C consultation (SCC specific element) but still on target for happening this year. AONB planning officers have met to discuss collaborative working.
DAP6	Continued development of Landscape Character Assessment. Look to include potential 'Views to' work and work with DO & AM	☹	Slight delay due to Hinkley C consultation. Aim to start in November with target completion date end of March.
DAP7	Undertake assessments of planning development outside the AONB boundary which will have an adverse impact on the AONB	☺	DM comments being fed into LA and database being kept up to date
VAP1	Encourage all event and group users to notify the AONB Service of planned events and keep a database of known events	☺	Event notification occurring with increased communication expected with school groups. Events database being disseminated to interested organisations on monthly basis.
VAP2	Undertake necessary patrols at sensitive times (e.g. bank holidays)	☺	Patrols occurring. New patrolling policy and procedure in place to increase effectiveness of patrolling. High number of patrols planned for holiday period.
VAP6	Undertake 2 audits of each promoted route & 1 audit of the Quantock Greenway and undertake works to ensure high standard	☹	Audits being undertaken or planned. Works currently behind schedule but aimed to completed by end of financial year.

ACTION POINT	Action	Progress	Comments
ARAP6	Increase easy access provision at Ramscombe through project with Forestry Commsiion	☹	Additional funding through AMG granted and project underway. Delay due to late notification of AMG but still on track for completion by end of March 2011.
ARAP7	Collate and produce information on access provision for easy access within the Quantock Hills AONB	☹	In work programme for autumn
ARAP8	Organise patrolling rota of volunteers in support of ranger patrols	☹	Volunteer involvement in patrolling being undertaken on 'ad-hoc' basis. Plan to formulise for 2011.
CAP1	Engagement with parish councils and other organisations / groups and promotion of funding opportunities such as SDF	☺	Community applications for SDF coming forward. Engagement in a number of local community initiatives
EAP3	Update website on weekly basis.	☺	Website updated on weekly basis with blogs and new content being added. Facebook and Twitter accounts also updated
EAP4	Update website and develop further linkages to educational establishments	☺	SiX account created for disseminating information to schools
EAP7	Organise and host 'Tick' conference in May 2010	☺	Tick Conference has occurred.
<b>CORE DUTIES</b>			
Strat Dev	Further development of the Delivery Plan and ensure sign up by core partners by presentations to local authority committees, promotion of the AONB Service work and commenting on regional consultations (e.g. NE Soils Strategy). Work with SWPLF & NAAONB	☺	Delivery plan consultation nearly complete with one more organisation to comment. Meeting set for September to finalise. Final document to come to next JAC.
Par Mgt	Preparation for and running 4x OWG meetings and 4x JAC meetings. Oversee annual event in autumn 2010	☺	On track
Amenity Land	Pony checks daily, enhanced water provision & safety audits	☺	On track with development of greater involvement from volunteers.
Line Mgt	Line Management of all AONB core and project staff.	☺	Monthly 1-1s dates set for all staff
Finance	Collate and present finance information	☺	On track
Monitoring	Collate and present State of AONB data	☺	On track
Vol Mgt	Develop policies, procedures and priorities for engagement with volunteers through existing QCV group and other new groups	☺	Engagement with QCV at appropriate level. Development of new volunteering opportunities, policies and procedures occurring with completion date set at March 2011.

<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Events	Deliver 14 events throughout 2010 to estimated audience of 150 people	☺	Events programme on track with most events fully booked.
H&S	Review all AONB risk assessments and complete office fire & emergency plans	☺	Risk assessments currently being review. Office fire & emergency plans finalised.
Promotion	Undertake 12 press releases, Update blog and news sections on website. Promote events through posters, media and contact lists	☺	On track
Support	Provide support to team, includes planning database support for LPO, OWG/JAC admin support for AONB Manager, Events admin for Partnership Ranger, Finance support for Development Officer	☺	On track

### **MEDIUM PRIORITY**

<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comment</b>
FWAP1	Develop Woodland Grant Scheme in line with Woodland Management Plan for Cothelstone Hill and start management on 8-acres LNR	☺	Cothelstone Hill LNR Management Plan currently being written. Woodland Grant Scheme will be considered under this Management Plan
FWAP3	Comment on Great Wood and Wind Down Forest Design Plans	☹	Forest Design Plans currently on hold due to Phyto situation
FWAP5	Work with FC to develop management plan for heathland reversion site in Great Wood.	☹	As above
WAP1	Carry out swaling programme for Quantock Common CSS. Host QCMG meetings and engage with ES planning	☺	To occur October 2010 – March 2011.
GCAP3	Lead on the development of seascape and coastal project for Quantock coast	☹	SCC coastal strategy on hold at present so AONB unable to engage and progress project
HAP1	Look to develop historic feature monitoring project in the LP bid	☹	LP bid not progressed due to issues over match funding under current financial climate
DAP4	Through keeping the planning database up to date assess agricultural build in the AONB	☺	Planning database up to date, assessment planned for March 2011.
DAP5	Lobby of service provider for undergrounding infrastructure. Comment on applications for telecommunication masts and other structures	☺	Comments made on all applications received and pre-application consultation
VAP5	Finalise Fly Tipping monitoring and reporting for the AONB Service and respond to any reported incidents	☺	Fly tipping database up to date.
VAP8	Collect visitor counter data 4 times / yr. Collate and process data and distribute to relevant partners	☺	Visitor counter data collected. Will be looking to process and send out to interested parties by end of December
ARAP1	Host 1 LAMG meeting for Quantocks	☺	Group membership agreed and meeting planned for autumn.

<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
ARAP4	Pilot Hilltop Track Erosion Project with 3 sites on Quantock Common.	☹️	In work programme to start in autumn.
ARAP8	4 press releases. Update AONB information posts	😊	Information provision happening with new info posts planned for February 2011
TAP4	Develop highway survey to assess unnecessary highway signage and plan works for 2012	☹️	No progress to date, still priority and look to undertake during winter.
CAP1	Engage in community project - dependant upon community projects coming forward	😊	AONB Service able to respond to a number of requests from community groups.
CAP3	Engagement with Taunton Deane LSP. Expected at 4 1/2 meetings plus pre work	☹️	Engaged with Taunton Deane LSP continuing. May drop off depending upon outcome of LSP review.
CAP4	Liaise with SCC, SDC, TDBC and WSC to feed in AONB requirements to SCS process	☹️	Unsure current status of SCS process.
CAP5	Start to develop material to go out to local service providers	😊	Local providers contacted and significant number interest in going forward with project. Currently at design stage with project expected to roll out over November
EAP2	Work with NT to develop appropriate interpretation at Fyne Court. Work with EH in provision of interp panel at Hurley Beacon	😊	Currently engaged with NT over interpretation at Fyne Court and EH. Further development of AONB Interpretation through AMG potential.
EAP5	Development of arts related project for schools, subject to reflect International Year of Biodiversity	😊	4 schools involved with over 200 pupils entries. Huge success culminating in 2 weeks exhibition at Fyne Court.
<b>CORE DUTIES</b>			
IT/GIS mgt	Monthly back of IT. GIS work	😊	On-going

### LOW PRIORTIY

<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
FAP4	Dependant upon applications for energy crops	☹️	
WAP2	Attendance at Somerset Biodiversity Partnership meetings. Look to receive LBAP from SERC by end of year	😊	Engagement with SBP through email communication. Looking to attend future meetings when required. Draft LBAPs currently with AONB Service for comment and due to be signed off in January
CEAP1	Undertake climate change assessment of Management Plan for next review	☹️	No action at present. May need to postpone due to in-year funding cuts
GCAP1	Dependant upon applications for mineral extraction	☹️	
VAP3	Attend 4x 1/2 day meetings of the SSTSG.	☹️	Do not attend SSTSG for current year. Look to re-engage next year.
VAP7	Work with AONB Manager to look at further developing relationship with Hestercombes Gardens Trust for joint interpretation	☹️	POSTPONE
ARAP2	Continually feedback on PRoWIP	☹️	POSTPONE

ACTION POINT	Action	Progress	Comments
EAP1	Lead on discussions with Hestercombe Gardens on joint interpretation	☹️	POSTPONE
EAP6	Run schools based arts project celebrating IYoB year	☹️	Currently carried out under EAP 5
EAP7	Assist in the undertaking of wildlife research projects. Work with SERC and others to collate AONB relevant information	😊	AONB involved with a number of active wildlife surveys under other Action Points. Research into data held by others postponed.

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager **Date:** 19 November 2010

**Subject:** Quantock Hills AONB Future Priorities

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## 1. Introduction

- a. The national and local governments are currently looking at cutting their budgets in light of the deficit. The Quantock Hills AONB Service is primarily exchequer funded through its partners, National England, Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council. The AONB Service attracts other funding for core (sometimes referred to as revenue funding) from Forestry Commission, which is specifically ring-fenced for the partnership ranger post. External funding from various sources is also used in project delivery.
- b. There is a requirement to begin to think about the likely cuts and how they will affect the delivery of the statutory Management Plan by the AONB Service. The process has already started with an initial meeting hosted by Somerset County Council, 10<sup>th</sup> September, to raise the issues and look at potential solutions.
- c. At the time of writing the funding situation is not clear with partners unsure of their future contributions and this limits the ability to plan. However the AONB Service is undertaking a number elements of work to allow it to better manage and cuts imposed upon it.

## 2. Setting the scene

- a. While we are aware that there will be cuts which affect the Quantock Hills AONB Service we are unsure of the level and the timescale in which they will be imposed. This uncertainty makes it very hard to plan but we have been undertaking certain aspects of work which will allow us to react faster.
  - b. Somerset County Council is undertaking a piece of work which is looking at the 3 AONBs in Somerset (Quantock Hills, Mendip Hills and Blackdown Hills) to consider:
    - i. Existing staff structures, skills available and areas of work and options for the future
    - ii. Identify ways to increase income for the AONB units
    - iii. Examine potential development of AONB functions beyond existing areas of work
    - iv. Consider potential savings
    - v. Take into account the regional and national position for the future of AONBs
    - vi. Consider the potential joint working with Exmoor National Park as another protected landscape in the area.
3. This work will be completed by December and will be used to help inform the future mechanism and structure of the AONB Services.

- a. The AONB Service has undertaken an assessment of the current Management Plan to see what actions, which are project based, can be grouped together. A further assessment has then identified the external funding opportunities for these areas of work.
- b. The NAAONBs has run a workshop looking at non-exchequer funding. This looked at opportunities in the private sector, through setting up Trusts and also opportunities through Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). There is potential for income generation through any of these means however they will take significant time and will not be able to realised in the short term.

4. What do we do?

- a. With income likely to be cut it is important that the AONB Service delivers the priority aspects of the statutory Management Plan. The first stage in any priority setting exercise is to look at what we do and ask ‘does it meet our primary purpose?’ **Under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 the primary purpose of AONBs is:**
  - i. ***To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape. In this context natural beauty includes the protection of flora, fauna and geological as well as landscape features.***
- b. While achieving this primary purpose AONBs must be aware of the need for quiet enjoyment of the countryside and to have regard for the interests of those who live and work there.
- c. Currently the Quantock Hills AONB Service undertakes a wide range of work which is summarised in Table 1. The majority of this work is actioned by the current staff unit.

5. Table 1: Quantock Hills AONB Service – current areas of work

Area of work	Comments
Consultations	The AONB Service will comment on national and local policies, statues or position statements. This is either done on an individual basis or through the SWPLF or NAAONB.
Sustainable Development Fund	The AONB Service administers the Sustainable Development Fund on behalf of Natural England. This fund can be used to support projects which will deliver actions from the Management Plan. The SDF is currently £55,000 though 2010/11 fund is fully allocated. The Fund can support, environmental, landscape, community or economic projects
Volunteering - Development	The AONB Service is currently undertaking a significant amount of work in terms of volunteer development. We are looking at establishment of policies and procedures which will strengthen the existing volunteer groups as well as the emerging opportunities for volunteering with the AONB Service.
Volunteering – Tasks	The AONB Service undertakes a significant number of volunteer tasks which will be delivering actions from the Management Plan. This is also a great mechanism for community engagement and ownership.
Planning – Development management	The AONB Service will submit comments to local planning authorities on behalf of the JAC where is believes a development will have a detrimental effect on the landscape or character of the AONB
Planning – Strategic development	The AONB Services will undertake strategic development in relation to the landscape of the AONB. This could include such work as a Landscape Character Assessment. The value of this work will be to describe and inform the local planning authorities of the different landscape elements and their

	value of the AONB
Planning – Local / Regional / National consultations	The AONB Service will comment on a wide range of local plans, such as the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), to ensure that the special landscape of the Quantocks is conserved and enhanced through the local planning process
Amenity Land	The AONB Service acts as de-facto land agent for Somerset County Council for all its amenity land estate within the Quantock Hills AONB. This is currently approximately 250 Ha over 4 sites with a few much smaller sites dotted throughout the AONB. The areas of work include habitat management, access improvements and also administration for SPS and agri-environment schemes. There is significant resource implication and the AONB Service has recently entered into discussions with SCC to discuss income generation in relation to this work.
Other land management (swaling)	Done on behalf of Commoners Association and at present no direct payment received. This is an important land management activity for the heathland of the Quantock Hills. The AONB Service is currently investigating income potential for this area of work.
Facilitating – Agri/Environ	The AONB Service will comment on HLS targeting as well as promote the agri-environment schemes. It has also supported through the SDF the enhancement and reinstatement of key beech hedge banks.
Facilitating – Forestry and Woodlands	The AONB Service has undertaken significant work on the value of small woodlands in the AONB and looked to support rural businesses through wood-fuel initiatives. The AONB Service is currently engaged with consultations on the future management of the upland oak woodlands being led by Natural England
Wildlife - Monitoring	The AONB Service directly undertakes a number of wildlife surveys as well as facilitating and supporting a larger number. This work informs management plans for particular sites as well as local, regional and national plans, such as Biodiversity Action Plans.
Wildlife - Enhancement	The AONB Service will look to enhance habitats for wildlife through such mechanisms as bird boxes, dormouse box etc. It will also comment on Management Plans for HLS or other agri-environment schemes as well as leading on the development of Local Nature Reserves within the AONB.
Heritage & local distinctiveness	The AONB Service undertakes heritage and local distinctive work, usually on a project basis. This can be items such as historic post reinstatement or monument protection.
Coast & Geology	Currently little work is being undertaken in these roles, though there will be opportunities to engage with SCC through outcomes from the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
Climate Change & Ecosystem Services	The AONB Service will be commissioning a climate change adaptation paper which will assess the objectives and actions of the current management plan in light of climate change. The AONB Service also supports groups such as Quantock Eco in provision of Energy Efficiency workshops to local village.
Visitor Mgt	Visitor Management is undertaken through 3 main mechanisms, the first is patrolling by the Rangers, the second is by information provision through interpretation, leaflets and information boards and the 3 <sup>rd</sup> is through provision of promoted routes. Patrolling raises the profile of the AONB and Service as well as allowing opportunity to provide information to the visiting public.
Events – AONB led events	The AONB Services runs 18-20 events / year which range from walks to children's events. All events aim to raise the profile of the AONB and use local experts as well as the wealth of experience and knowledge of the team. There is a small charge for attending the events which means that the whole programme runs at a zero balance.
Events – Other event monitoring	The AONB Service provides a event monitoring / advice service where events organiser provide details of their events to the AONB Service. This allows the AONB Service to ensure that large events do not clash and also to give advice over route, timings etc. The AONB Service then sends this information out to landowners, relevant organisations etc.

Rights of Way	The AONB Service works with SCC RoW team in the enhancement of rights of way within the AONB. The AONB Service is careful to ensure that work done provides added value and does not duplicate the work of SCC.
Open Access	Somerset County Council is the authority responsible for Open Access (as designated under the CRoW Act 2000) however the AONB Service will undertake enhancement work where this benefits the local community or visitors to the open access areas of the Quantock Hills. Current projects include access enhancement at Ramscombe and information provision on Quantock Common
Traffic & Country lanes	Current AONB Service work is centred on removal of unnecessary signage associated with the highway. This work will be undertaken in partnership with Somerset Highways
Facilitating – Local Community	The AONB Service undertakes a number of projects which are community initiated or led. This is usually through project support or pump priming / match funding. These project can be social or economic but will always relate to the core purpose of AONBs. There is also wider community engagement which is a very important aspect of AONB Service delivery and ensure a wider ownership of the management plan.
Education	The AONB Service works with a wide range of educational establishments, from primary schools, through to universities and wider educational establishments. The type of work can include a ranger visit, raising awareness of specific issues (e.g. IYoB 2010), research projects or training opportunities.
Information Provision	Information provision and communication is an integral element of all other areas of work. It includes informal communication such as working group meetings, as well as formal communications (newsletters, website etc).

## 6. Priority setting exercise

- a. With funding cuts predicted between 10 – 50% over the next 3 years it will not be possible for the AONB Service to delivery the statutory Management Plan as envisaged at it's launch in April 2009. To allow the AONB Service to develop the future business and delivery plans in light of these cuts we need to know the priorities of the partnership
- b. At the Joint Advisory Committee meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> November members of the partnership will be asked to undertake a priority setting exercise. This will be a group exercise in which members will be able to discuss and prioritise a number of areas of work into high, medium or low priority keeping in mind the primary purpose of AONBs.
- c. There will also be room for additional comments and suggestions so we capture all thoughts from the partnership. This work will be drawn together and used by the AONB Service along with the other elements of work to develop the 2011/12 Business Plan and the longer term 2011-14 Delivery Plan.

## 7. Next steps

- a. The AONB Service will take the partnerships priorities and along with the other work will develop a response to the funding cuts. This will look at the resource (funding) and the priorities to develop a business plan for 2011/12 which will incorporate a delivery plan for 2011-14, the remaining period on the current Management Plan.

- b. The business plan will be presented to a special Joint Advisory Committee meeting to be held in January – date to be confirmed – before going to Natural England as the single pot grant application. The timescales are very tight as it is unlikely that local authority and Natural England partners will be in a position to give clear indication of their budgets to the AONBs for 2011/12 until January.
  - c. In the medium to longer term the AONB Service will be looking at alternative income generation opportunities such as sponsorship, different delivery structures and new areas of work. This will require time to set up and implement so it is unlikely to be in place for April 2011. Any new opportunity will be brought back to the partnership for discussion.
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To: Quantock Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

From: Emma-Jane Preece – Landscape Planning Officer (part time – 2 days/wk)

## Landscape Planning Officer Report – November 2010

### 1. Update on Hinkley Point C

- 1.1 Emma-Jane has spent a considerable amount of her two days a week focussing on the Hinkley Point Stage 2 consultation – acting as a technical specialist (Landscape and Visual Impact) for Somerset County Council as well as providing the independent response from the AONB Service. She has also had one-to-one consultation with the Landscape and Visual consultants (Michal Novak of Gillespies) in respect of views (and more recently with Thomas Evans – Consents Officer for EDF energy).
- 1.2 Detailed comments (from the AONB Service) based on the Stage 2 consultation were sent on 4<sup>th</sup> October. The key issues covered were:
  - **Methodology** (range of inadequacies and inconsistencies)
  - **Baseline information** (range of errors and inconsistencies)
  - **Viewpoints and photomontages** (problems regarding quality of photographs, scale of photographs, lack of views from coast etc)
  - **Judgements of Magnitude of Change** (problems with judgements and other issues such as no consideration of change to night views)
  - **Judgements of Impact Magnitude and residual impact** (judgements simplistic and inadequate level of detail).
  - **Mitigation**
  - **Cumulative Impacts**
  - **Associated Development sites**
- 1.3 Following these detailed comments (related to the main site and additional development site) Emma-Jane was asked to undertake another exercise for SCC – breaking down and highlighting each of the 'Issues' raised from Stage 2 and identifying a series of 'Actions' for EDF to fulfil in response to those issues.
- 1.4 The AONB Service will be recharging Somerset County Council for work conducted on its behalf as part of the move toward greater income generation. Since submitting detailed comments from the AONB Service in October, Emma-Jane has been invited to attend an EDF Verified Views Workshop on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

### 2. National Grid

- 2.1 In her last report to the JAC, Emma-Jane confirmed that she would be meeting with a representative from National Grid regarding the two

proposed route corridors for larger towers (pylons) to carry power lines from Hinkley Point C to Bridgwater and on to Avonmouth. Emma-Jane and Chris Mayes (Natural England) met with Aileen Smith from National Grid who gave an overview of the two different proposals and the issues that were raised with Consultation Phase 1 (predominantly why undergrounding cables along parts or the whole of the length of both routes was not presented as an option to the public).

- 2.2 Emma-Jane has been invited to attend a Hinkley C National Grid Connection workshop on 10<sup>th</sup> December.

### **3. Consultation on Local Development Frameworks**

- 3.1 Emma-Jane is currently involved in consultation on Sedgemoor's Local Development Framework – Proposed Submission Core Strategy. She is liaising with Jonathan Richards from Mendip Hills AONB (as this is a shared local authority across both AONBs) with the intention of sending a joint response. It is felt that a 'strength in numbers' approach may give greater weight to comments received and it is also an example of a decision to try to illustrate collaborative working with the other Somerset AONBs, where this is both feasible and appropriate.

### **4. Collaborative working**

- 4.1 On 1st November Emma-Jane met with Lisa Turner (Planning Officer for the Blackdown Hills AONB) and Jonathan Richards (Planning Liaison Officer for the Mendip Hills AONB) to discuss a range of landscape and planning issues affecting the AONBs. These included:
- National Grid – overhead lines and undergrounding;
  - Solar/pv arrays, turbines and renewable in general;
  - LDFs; and
  - Collaborative working with NE (monitoring)
- 4.2 With regard to collaborative working, the possibility of working collectively on shared generic issues was discussed e.g. production of future guidance documents, projects put out to consultation, and joint responses to Local Planning Authorities where more than one AONB falls inside the LPA boundary e.g. Joint Quantock Hills and Mendip Hills response to Sedgemoor District Council's Core Strategy consultation.
- 4.3 Emma-Jane, Lisa Turner and Jonathan Richards have now established a complementary working arrangement with Natural England (with respect to planning policy and development management). This system of working has now been agreed and is in place. We are currently discussing how its effectiveness can be monitored.

## **5. Planning application consultation**

- 5.1 Colin Blundel from The Planning Company continues to work with the AONB Service in respect of planning application responses. Colin has made a number of site visits. He feeds a draft response to Emma-Jane which is then reviewed. Any changes or additions are made if required, and then it is forwarded to the Local Planning Authority. Colin's input has allowed Emma-Jane to focus on large areas of work such as Hinkley Point C and will allow her to have the time to advance the revision of the Quantock Hills Landscape Character Assessment.

## **6. Website**

- 6.1 Anna Newman (maternity cover for Georgie Grant) discussed uploading AONB planning application responses onto the AONB website. Emma-Jane intends working with Georgie to start this system in the New Year.

## **7. Monitoring planning applications**

- 7.1 The AONB Service is continuing with its process of collecting data for the purposes of monitoring planning applications within/around the AONB. A short presentation on how the monitoring process works, its purpose and benefits, will be provided at the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The JAC notes the report.

**To: Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee**  
**From: Stephen Lees**  
**Recreation and Public Affairs Manager, Forestry Commission**  
**Subject: Proposed Introduction of Car Park Charges, Ramscombe**  
**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

Ramscombe (in Great Wood) operates as a popular visitor destination, and is one of the Forestry Commissions four main recreation sites in the Peninsula District. The other three are Haldon Forest Park, near Exeter, Cardinham Woods in Cornwall and Bellever Woods in Dartmoor National Park. At all of these sites we provide a minimum service of car parking, trails, picnic area and public toilets.

The provision of these facilities has in the past been provided free of charge, but we have in recent years increasingly sought to recover the costs of providing these facilities from visitors to the site. Charging was introduced at Bellever this spring, and we are currently planning to implement a similar scheme at Ramscombe from next spring.

The Area Forester, Nick Salter, has calculated the cost of providing the current facilities at over £11,000 per annum in direct costs, plus staff/volunteer time. Direct costs include annual business rates of around £800, but also covers maintenance of the car parks, access road, toilet blocks and necessary tree works for safety reasons.

In times of cuts in public funding, we have increasingly had to look at either cutting costs, cutting services, or raising additional revenue. The preference in Peninsula District has been to continue to provide the services, but seek to recover costs. With that in mind, we are planning to introduce a pay and display system at Ramscombe, with a basic charge of £1 for up to two hours or £2 for longer periods. We are also seeking to set up a discount season ticket for local residents, who are regular visitors to Ramscombe. Such a system has operated at Cardinham for over five years now. All income raised from this process will be reinvested in the conservation and maintenance of Ramscombe and in the continued provision of facilities for public enjoyment.

I would add that there are no plans to extend charging to other Commission sites, and the basic principle of free access by foot, under CRoW legislation, remains. We also remain committed to making our facilities available to as many people as possible, an important aspect of our public sector remit. Charging for parking will enable us to continue to provide the existing service.

The decision to introduce charging has been taken at a District level, but will be managed and implemented on the ground by our West Somerset beat team, led by Nick Salter. We would like to attend a couple of local Parish Council meetings early in the new year to promote the changes and appreciate that the introduction of charging will not be, to say the least, universally popular, but I trust that the members of the JAC will understand the thinking behind the charges, and the constraints within which we are all

seeking to work. Nick Salter and myself will be attending the 19 November Quantock Hills JAC meeting in order to be available to discuss any issues arising.

Stephen Lees

**Recreation and Public Affairs Manager, Peninsula District.**

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