

# **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Friday 23 July 2010**

at

**2.15pm**

in the

**Kilve Village Hall, Kilve**

To: The Members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

Julian Gale  
Group Manager, Community Governance  
16 July, 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. **Appointment of Chairman** – to be appointed from the County Council representatives
2. **Appointment of Vice- Chairman** – to be appointed from the Taunton Deane Borough Council representatives.
3. **Apologies for Absence**
4. **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.
5. **Accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2010**  
(copy appended ) **and to consider any matters arising.**
6. **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.
7. **Report of the Acting AONB Manager on Service Activity ( Paper A )**
8. **Report of the Rangers ( Paper B)**
9. **JAC Meeting Dates** - To agree dates for meetings of the JAC for the next 12 months. ( Suggested dates will be tabled at the meeting)
10. **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

### 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

### 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.

(7 May 2010)

## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held in the Crowcombe Hall, Crowcombe, on Friday 7 May 2010 at 2.15pm.

### **Present**

Somerset County Council	Mr A H Trollope-Bellew ( Chairman ) Mr J Wilkins
Sedgemoor District Council	Mr J Swayne Mr A Bradford
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Dr C Guerrier Mr N Stuart-Thorn
West Somerset Council	Mr S Dowding ( Subst) Mr C Morgan
Parish Representatives	Mr T Ayre Mr J Edwards Mr S Parkman
Natural England	Mr S Marston
Friends of Quantock	Mrs L Kelly
Forestry Commission	Mr N Salter
SLAF	Mr R Conway

### **Also Present**

Ms N Penn ( Field Studies Council ), Mrs M White ( Sedgemoor Bridleways Association ), Mrs J Sansom ( West Quantoxhead PC), Mr B James ( SCC - Officer), Mr D Edwards ( North Petherton TC), Dr P Radford ( Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society) and Mr John Clarke ( Kingston St Mary PC).

Apologies were received from Mr J Edney (SCC), Mr D Joslin (SDC), Mr T Taylor (WSC), Mr H Davies (WSC), Mr N Cavill (TDBC), Mrs D Salvidge (QCA), Mrs C Parsons ( Parish Rep), Mrs J Burton (SDC- Officer ) and Mrs A Lamplough (WSC – Officer).

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

31. The Chairman declared personal and prejudicial interests in agenda items 8 and 9 (SDF and Planning reports). If there was discussion on those items he would leave the room.

### **MINUTES**

32. (1) The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2010 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

### **Matters arising**

#### **Minute 25 – Pathwatch**

(2) Mr J Edwards said that the legal interpretation was not particularly clear on the police web-site. Mr Swayne said that he would take this up with the Police.

#### **Minute 26 (2) – AONB Manager’s Report – Phytopthera Notes**

(3) Mr Ayre said that he had not seen Andy Harris’s Notes following the Phytopthera event held last November. These would be circulated to all JAC members.

### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

33. There were no questions from members of the public.

### **REPORT OF THE AONB MANAGER**

34. (1) The JAC considered the report of the AONB Manager containing items on the AONB Service, Management Plan Delivery, Officers Working Group , Partnership Agreement and Core Funding.

(2) The JAC were informed that the AONB Manager had successfully applied for secondment to the post of Environmental Resources Group Manager at County Hall for the period to 31 March 2011 and therefore this would be his last JAC meeting until the end of that period. Iain Porter, Development Officer, would be acting AONB Manager during the period of the secondment. The AONB Manager also drew attention to the Annual Event now set for Wednesday 16 June and the proposal to create an AONB Parish Network. The JAC considered the discussions held at the OWG meeting on 22 April concerning the Partnership Agreement and some current difficulties with its completion resulting in the deadline for signing by all funding partners being extended to the end of June. Mr Marston confirmed that Natural England would want the Agreement which ties together all funders for the next 3 years to be signed off by the end of June. Mr Morgan outlined the problems that West Somerset Council had concerning the wording of the Agreement in particular the clauses relating to potential redundancy costs and that legal advice was awaited concerning this. The Chairman indicated that there was not much more that the JAC could do about this now but to await further developments.

(3) The JAC agreed to the following recommendations contained in the report and an amendment concerning the Vice- Chairman being added to the membership of the OWG :-

- Support the Manager secondment arrangements described in sections 1.1 to 1.4 of the report;
- Support the Parish Network development proposed in section 1.7 of the report; and

- Agree that the JAC Vice- Chairman be added to the membership of the Officer Working Group.

## **DEVELOPMENT OFFICER REPORT**

35. (1) The JAC considered the report of the Development Officer for the period November 2009 to March 2010. As part of the consideration of this report Owen Jones, Volunteer Co-ordinator, made a short presentation to the JAC concerning his role which was detailed in section 2 of the report.

(2) The report also outlined in some detail a proposed Landscape Partnership bid to the Lottery Heritage Fund and the implications if the AONB Service took forward an application to this funding programme. The OWG having considered an assessment of all the risks associated in taking forward a bid recommended that the benefits of pursuing a bid outweigh the potential disadvantages and also recommended that a specialist bid development officer is employed on a fixed term contract.

(3) The JAC agreed the following recommendations:-

- To endorse the OWG recommendation to take forward the Landscape Partnership Bid;
- To endorse the OWG recommendation to employ, on a fixed term contract, a specialist bid development officer; and
- To note the remainder of the report.

## **FINANCE REPORT**

36. The JAC received and noted a report setting out an indicative statement of the financial position for the 2009/10 year together with a tabled report outlining the draft forward budget for 2010/11 based on changes to staffing and delivery.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND REPORT**

37. (1) The JAC received and considered a report outlining the position regarding the Sustainable Development Fund for the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11 together with details of the applications that had received funding.

(2) The JAC noted the report and agreed to promote the Sustainable Development Fund at suitable opportunities.

## **LANDSCAPE PLANNING OFFICER REPORT**

38. (1) The JAC received and considered the report of the Landscape Planning Officer for the period 22 February to 27 April 2010 on the following subjects :-

- Update on Hinkley Point C
- National Grid – power lines
- Consultation on Local Development Frameworks
- Planning Application Consultation
- Update on SW Protected Landscape's Guidance for Horse keeping
- Protocol between AONB's and Natural England

(2) There was discussion on the local National Grid consultation process and the meetings that had been arranged on this. Mr J Edwards asked about the status and position of local Village Design Statements in Local Development Frameworks and hoped that these had not been forgotten. Mr Swayne commented that they still had the same status but that he would follow this point up. Mrs Kelly commented on a planning application at The Studio, Lower Aisholt Farmhouse and it was confirmed that the new application did not appear to be overly intrusive and the right type of materials were to be used. It was agreed to add JAC Parish Reps to any consultations on applications.

(3) The JAC noted the report.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

39. Confirmed as Friday 23 July 2010. Kilve Village Hall was suggested as the venue.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

40. (1) Mr Ayre asked questions about :- alterations at Dead Woman's Ditch, the treatment of bracken on the Hills and the lack of fire breaks, and the treatment of Rhododendrons at Vinnicombe. Chris Edwards responded that the National Trust were responsible for the after care at Vinnicombe and that issues about an aftercare plan had been raised with them. There had been a meeting at Nether Stowey to discuss the bracken fire risk problem. The project at Dead Woman's Ditch had been designed to alleviate damage by cars.

(2) Mrs Kelly asked a question about the provision of salt containers on the Hills which were the responsibility of the Highway Authority. Dr Guerrier congratulated staff on the success of the recent Tick Conference held at Halsway Manor.

( The meeting closed at 4.10pm)

**CHAIRMAN**

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee  
**Author:** Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager **Date:** 23 July 2010  
**Subject:** Quantock Hills AONB Service Activity Report.

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1. AONB Service Staffing

- a. Chris Edwards started his secondment as Group Manager Environmental Resources, Somerset County Council on 17<sup>th</sup> May. Since that time I have been acting up as AONB Manager and the Development Officer post has been frozen. To take account of the reduced staff resource I have increased Owen Jones hours by 15 and increased Katy Coate's hours by 5.5 per week.
- b. Grant Turner is undertaking a partnership project looking at promoted routes between Quantocks – Taunton and the Blackdown Hills. He is being hosted by the Quantock Hills AONB Service as part of our contribution to the project. The post is for 6 months at 22hrs/wk. *Please do not hesitate to contact Grant at the Quantock Office (01823 451884), Wed – Fri if you want more information on this project.*

2. Revised 2010 – 11 Business Plan

- a. With the reduction in staff resource the AONB Team, including Barry James – Group Manager SCC, went through a priority setting meeting to re-assess the 2010-11 Business Plan. The revised plan is attached, Appendix 1.
- b. The plan sets out the actions the AONB Service will deliver for the coming year and indicates the priority placed upon that action. Low priority actions will have less resources allocated to them and may even be dropped if we lose further resources, such as partnership funding.
- c. As part of the revised business plan we have increased staff resource for the Volunteer Coordinator and Support Assistant posts until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.
- d. 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 8 July. In attendance were: Steve Marston (NE, OWG Chair), Barry James (SCC), Angela Lamplough (WSC), Janette Burton (SDC), Nick Salter (FC), Iain Porter and Katy Coate (AONB). Apologies were received from Anthony Trollope-Bellew (JAC) and Ian Clark (TDBC). Key points from the meeting were:
- b. Partnership Agreement. NE reported that after a recent meeting with West Somerset Council they were not able to agree to sign the partnership agreement. WSC confirmed it was not the principle of the agreement with but more the fact that it could not afford to put itself at risk of incurring this possible expenditure due to budget cuts it is going through. As a result there is **no agreement** in place for this financial year. The OWG agreed to wait for the lead from NE regarding its wishes for any future partnership agreement and to wait for the results of the Government spending review in October.
- c. Staffing & Delivery. The OWG received an update on staffing and the revised business plan (para 1 & 2). The OWG assessed the revised 2010 / 11 AONB Service budget and agreed that predicted overspend is manageable through reduction in project delivery or increase in external funding.

- d. Future AONB Funding. (para 8) OWG members are keen to manage expected cuts pro-actively. The AONB Service sees this time as a chance to really assess the work of the Service, reassess roles and responsibilities and move forward. Barry James had attended a meeting where the future delivery of Devon's AONBs had been discussed. Options included difficult issues such as joint management of AONBs, shared posts etc. A number of potential options were discussed by the OWG which will be taken forward to a Somerset meeting in September. Regionally the SWPLF has produced a report after discussions with AONB Services which provides a good starting position in regard to the future funding of AONBs the full report and summary are available from : <http://www.southwestlandscapes.org.uk/commissionedworks.asp>

#### 4. Delivery Plan Update

- a. The Delivery Plan is near completion and we are awaiting comments from one further organisation. The Delivery Plan sets some ambitious targets in light of the economic climate and we may need to revisit them in the near future.
- b. The completed Delivery Plan will be presented to the JAC at the next meeting.

#### 5. Planning

- a. Hinkley Point Consultation. EDF Energy will be undertaking it's Stage 2 consultation from 9<sup>th</sup> July – 4<sup>th</sup> October. Emma-Jane Preece will be heavily involved in the consultations to ensure that any landscape impacts for the AONB are effectively mitigated against.
- b. Development Management Consultation. To allow Emma-Jane to develop the strategic areas of her work e.g. Landscape Character Assessment the Development Management consultation has been contracted out. Many AONB Services follow this model and we have researched their level of satisfaction in terms of value for money and quality of service. The contract is for a pilot period until the end of March 2011.
- c. Full reports on planning topics will be presented at the next JAC meeting.
- d. *AONB Contact for Landscape Planning: Emma-Jane Preece, Landscape Planning Officer.*

#### 6. Local Nature Reserves

- a. The Quantock Hills AONB Service is supporting the creation of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) over the Quantock Hills. We have written the application for 8 Acres LNR which is being processed by Sedgemoor District Council and in the process of writing the application for Cothelstone Hill LNR. The plan of 8-Acres (appendix 2) shows the habitats and areas of work which will be undertaken over the next 10 years.
- b. LNRs are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. They should offer people the opportunity to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. A number of sites on the Quantocks lend themselves to LNR status and offer an opportunity for volunteering on the Quantocks.
- c. The full plan is available from the Quantock Hills AONB Office and JAC members are invited to make comments on the plans (closing date 27<sup>th</sup> August 2010). *Please contact Iain Porter for copies of the plans or more details.*

#### 7. Sustainable Development Fund.

- a. The Quantock Hills SDF has been on hold for May – June due to undertaking the dual roles of the AONB Manager and Development Officer. It would have been inappropriate to be making recommendations as well as sitting on the panel. Owen Jones has now taken over the running of the SDF (as part of his role in the additional hours) and is currently processing a number of SDF applications.
- b. The SDF has currently approved 5 projects, allocating £16,100 funding. There are a further 6 applications being processed which if approved could account for a further £22,000.
- c. *SDF Contact: Owen Jones*

8. Future Funding of AONBs

- 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 pressure it’s local authority funding partners are under.
- b. It is likely that the level of funding cuts affecting AONBs will mean that the way we work will need to change and so a meeting has been arranged in early September by Somerset County Council (as host of 2 Somerset AONBs) in which officers and members from funding bodies have been invited. This meeting will look openly at the situation for the years ahead, the priorities of AONBs, opportunities for external funding or new ways of working.
- c. A discussion paper will be presented at the next JAC to allow all partners to input into the future of the AONB Service and delivery by the Partnership.

9. 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 with NE cut to be confirmed).
- b. The revised budget shows £3,034 overspend which will be accounted for by reducing project spend. The AONB Service is currently assessing which projects can be postponed or identifying appropriate funding streams to increase project income.
- c. Current expenditure (mths 1 – 2) is on track.

Table 1: Revised AONB Core Partners Income 2010 – 11

Source	Contribution 2010 11	Revised Contribution 2010 11
NE	£207,941	£207,941
SCC	£26,500	£26,500
SDC	£17,500	£16,500
TDBC	£16,500	£16,500
WSC	£21,500	£16,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£289,941</b>	<b>£283,441</b>

Table 2. Revised core budget 2010 - 11

Expenditure	Set Budget	Revision	Comments
Salaries	187,528	162,064	Based on reduced staff model, includes Vol Co
Training et al	2,400	3,500	@ £400 / FTE
Electricity	200	1,000	Include oil
Rates	900	948	est 12 x £79
Rent of Room	8,000	8,945	Depot (£2845) / Office (£6,100)

Water Charges	400	400	
Car allowance	1,200	1,200	
Travel costs	200	200	
Vehicle costs - Fuel	3,800	3,800	Estimate based on previous years
Vehicle costs - Insurance + tax	1,080	1,080	Actual
Vehicle costs - Maintenance + Misc	2,380	2,380	Estimate based on previous years
Vehicle costs - Lease	7,786	7,786	Actual
Equipment et al	2,320	2,320	Estimate based on previous years
Literature & Pubs	4,100	4,100	2 x updates, 1 x annual report, 1 x events guide
shows & Exhib	600	3,890	Tick Con (£2000) / Annual Event (£870) / Events (£1020)
Clothing & Uniform	300	300	@ £150 / ranger
R & D	3,700	2,700	Contributions to NAAONB & SWPLF
Advertising Staff Vac	0	0	
Photocopying	700	700	
Stationary	1,100	1,100	
Postage	300	300	
Telephones	1,300	1,300	
Subs allowance	100	100	
Interview expenses	0	0	
Hospitality	700	700	
Subscriptions	600	600	
Insurance	600	600	
Cross Service recharge	3,000	3,000	SCC Management Fee
<b>TOTAL CORE</b>	<b>£235,294</b>	<b>£215,013</b>	
Other Core Income	£0	£900	Events Income ( est£900)
FC Contribution	£17,300	£17,300	
<i>Other Core Income</i>	<i>17,300</i>	<i>18,200</i>	

Table 3: SDF and Project Budgets

Project Expenditure	£	Comments
SDF	60,000	
Volunteer Development	2,000	10 months employment of Vol Coordinator now in core
Adder Survey	0	Project funded through 'in-kind' contribution
Long Eared Owl Survey	1,500	
Quantock - Blackdown Link	8,000	
Bat Survey	1,000	
Woodland Bird Survey	1,000	
Quantock Arts Project	1,500	
Climate Change Adaptation	20,000	
Landscape Partnership		
Development	20,000	
Development Mgt		
Consultation	9,000	
Views to the Quantocks	0	Cut due to Development Mgt Consult work
Circular Walk Enhancement	1,000	
Quantock Tick Research	500	
Local Information Points		
Project	2,515	
Ramscombe All Ability		
Access	2,000	
Quantock Access Guide	2,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132,015</b>	[SDF = 60,000 / Projects = 72,015]

<b>Project Income</b>	<b>£</b>
Various	42,353

**SUMMARY**

TOTAL INCOME	£343,994
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£347,028
<b>Balance</b>	<b>-£3,034</b>

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. JAC Partnership are invited to make comment on the LNR Management Plan.
2. 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.	☹️	No progress to date. Action planned for autumn.
FWAP2	From FWAP1 action undertake study of woodfuel resource, concentrating on Cothelstone Hill to provide a exemplar site	☹️	FWAG looking to put in application to SDF and WSLAG for a 'working the woods' project which will delivery against this action. AONB / FWAG meetings held to ensure outputs
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)
DAP1	Identify and comment on relevant planning applications including consultation on Hinkley Point C	☺️	Engaged and commented on phase 1 consultation. Phase 2 consultation started and resource allocated to assess plans.
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)	☹️	QPOWG planned for autumn and planning protocols being finalised.
DAP6	Continued development of Landscape Character Assessment. Look to include potential 'Views to' work and work with DO & AM	☹️	LCA work planned for autumn.
DAP7	Undertake assessments of planning development outside the AONB boundary which will have an adverse impact on the AONB	☺️	Commenting on applications.
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	☺️	On track with audits and maintenance work planned into work programme

<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
ARAP6	Increase easy access provision at Ramscombe through project with Forestry Commssiion	☺	Project brief developed with application for external funding.
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	☺	Some involvement but looking to increase and widen remit in future years.
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
Monitorin g	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	☹	Woodland Management Plan currently on hold as currently writing LNR application for Cothelstone Hill
FWAP3	Comment on Great Wood and Wind Down Forest Design Plans	☺	Currently engaged in Forest Design Plan consultation for Great Wood & Wind Down
FWAP5	Work with FC to develop management plan for heathland reversion site in Great Wood.	☹	Not progressed but currently engaged in Forest Design Plan consultation
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 development to occur over next few months.
DAP4	Through keeping the planning database up to date assess agricultural build in the AONB	☺	Planning database up to date.
DAP5	Lobby of service provider for undergrounding infrastructure. Comment on applications for telecommunication masts and other structures	☺	Initial conversations held with providers through SWPLF.
VAP5	Finalise Fly Tipping monitoring and reporting for the AONB Service and respond to any reported incidents	☹	Fly tipping being monitored but reporting mechanism still to be agreed.
VAP8	Collect visitor counter data 4 times / yr. Collate and process data and distribute to relevant partners	☺	2 collections have taken place with others planned for autumn and winter
ARAP1	Host 1 LAMG meeting for Quantocks	☹	Group membership agreed and meeting planned for autumn.

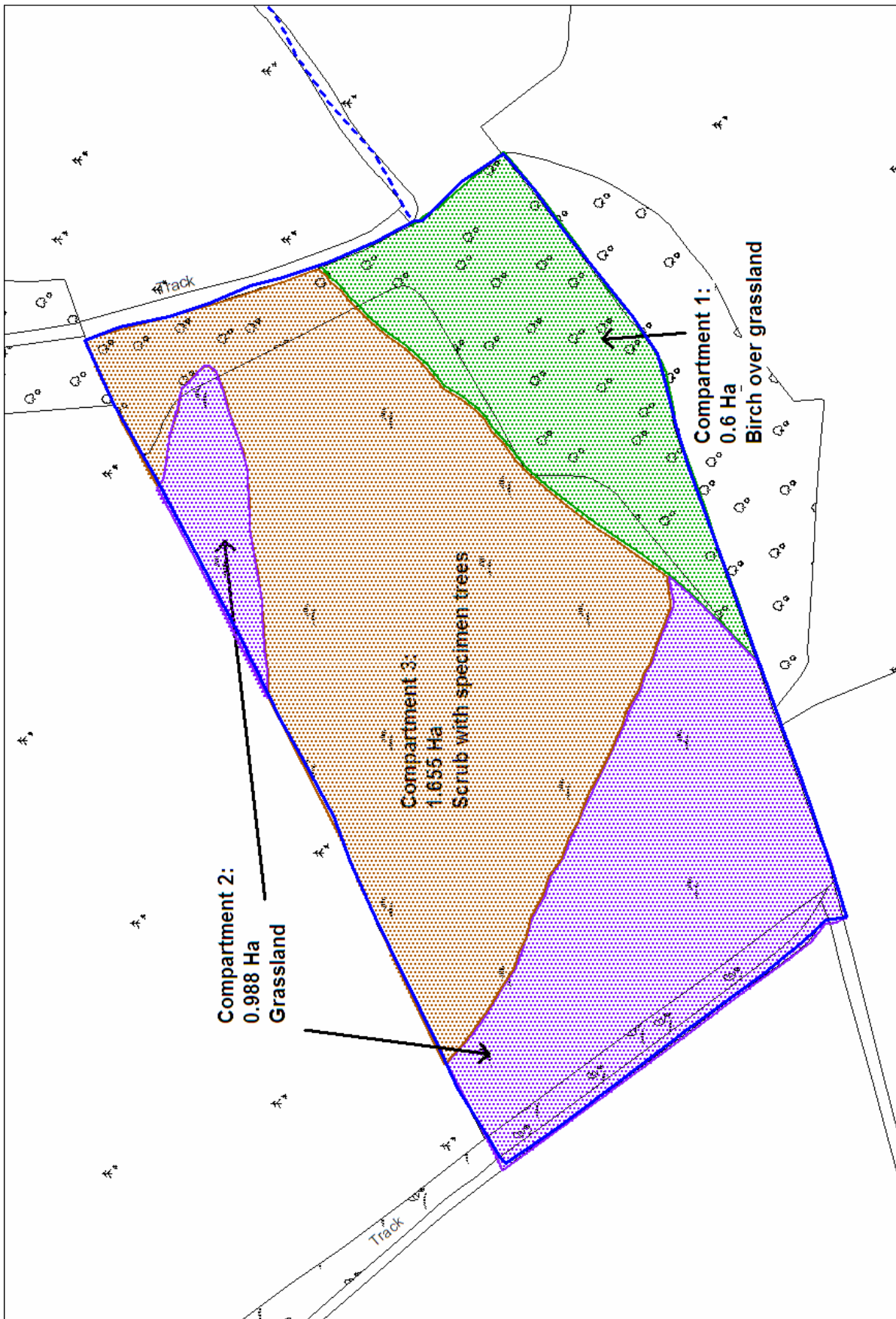
<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
ARAP4	Pilot Hilltop Track Erosion Project with 3 sites on Quantock Common.	☹️	In work programme to start in autumn.
ARAP8	4 press releases. Update AONB information posts	😊	Press release have gone out and information posts have been updated.
TAP4	Develop highway survey to assess unnecessary highway signage and plan works for 2012	☹️	No progress to date
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	☹️	Chris Edwards attending LSP and representing AONB.
CAP4	Liaise with SCC, SDC, TDBC and WSC to feed in AONB requirements to SCS process	😊	Initial comments passed to WSC on first stage consultation.
CAP5	Start to develop material to go out to local service providers	😊	Project brief agreed and project planned for September – October.
EAP2	Work with NT to develop appropriate interpretation at Fyne Court. Work with EH in provision of interp panel at Hurley Beacon	😊	Awaiting contact from NT in relation to Fyne Court interpretation. Engaged with EH interpretation.
EAP5	Development of arts related project for schools, subject to reflect International Year of Biodiversity	😊	This project is on track with exhibition planned for 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> August
<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	☹️	Chris Edwards to attend on behalf of QHAONB and report back
CEAP1	Undertake climate change assessment of Management Plan for next review	☹️	Move to project basis with project funding used for consultant / temp staff
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

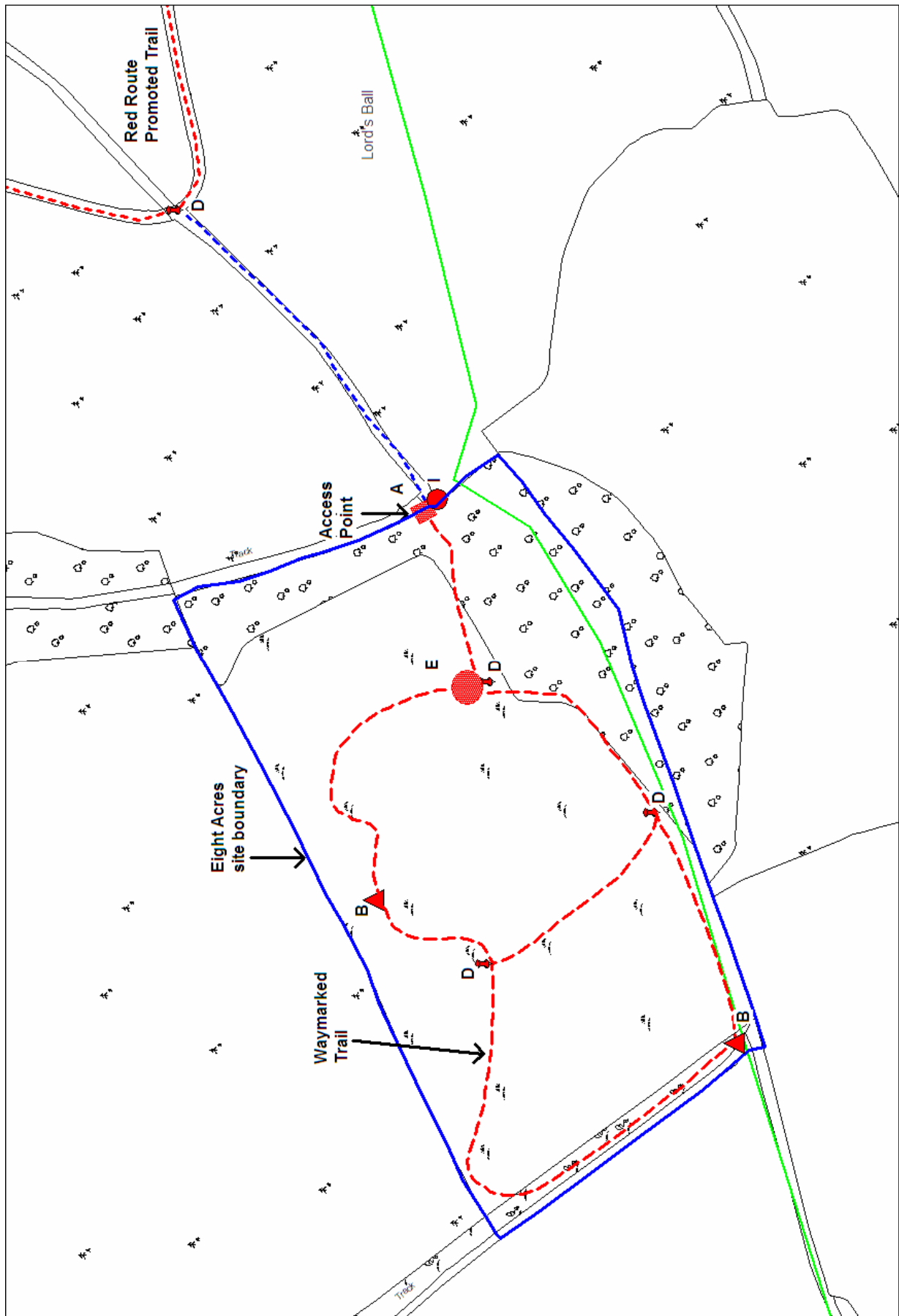
ACTION POINT	Action	Progress	Comments
EAP1	Lead on discussions with Hestercombe Gardens on joint interpretation	☹️	POSTPONE
EAP6	Run schools based arts project celebrating IYoB year	☹️	Currently carried out under EAP 5
EAP7	Assist in the undertaking of wildlife research projects. Work with SERC and others 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.

**Appendix 2: 8-Acres LNR Plans.**



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# 8-Acres LNR: Access Plan



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**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Tim Russell, Senior Ranger

**Date:** 23 July 2010

**Subject:** Rangers Report

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This report period covers the six months from January to the end of June. It is almost hard to imagine now, but this report began with snow on the ground during the coldest winter for over 30 years. This sixth month period has been one of the driest for a hundred years.

## **2.0 Practical Management**

The bracken spraying that took place last summer as part of the Quantock Commons CSS has proved to be a major success, with most of the hilltops showing very little signs of bracken re-growth this year. A recent visit hosted by the AONB Service for Friends of Quantock looked at the success of the spraying in the Thorncombe Hill/Bicknoller Hill areas.

### **Cothelstone Hill:**

Sadly we have to inform the committee that during this report period one of the Exmoor Ponies on Cothelstone Hill had to be put down. As part of the regular monitoring of the herd Rangers became concerned about the condition of one of the mares and after consultation with a vet the difficult decision to have her put down was made. The herd have been on Cothelstone Hill for almost twenty years and “old age” will start to become more of an issue over the forthcoming years.

Following the example of the Exmoor Pony herd, the Cothelstone Estate has introduced 6 Exmoor Ponies to Lydeard Hill (SSSI), on loan from the Moorland Mousey Trust. It is good to see native hill ponies being used elsewhere on the hills contributing to conservation grazing schemes on upland grassland and heathland sites.

Involvement by Rangers and volunteers ensures that practical management to this important amenity and wildlife site is maintained. Cothelstone Hill is one of the most visited and appreciated recreation sites. It is also extremely important for wildlife, particularly bird species, such as Yellowhammers, reptiles, dormice and even glow-worms. This spring was memorable for the fantastic (and lengthy) show of bluebells on the hill, possibly due to the spraying of bracken last summer and cold conditions which ‘held the flowers back’. Trained volunteers assist with the path cutting using the quad-mounted flail and brush cutters.

Improvements have been made to the Circular Trail in the woodland section, with resurfacing and drainage works. .

### **Ecological burns (swaling):**

Favourable conditions in late February and early March allowed a range of heathland sites to be burnt. Approximately 30ha of heathland was swaled with the help of trained volunteers. Towards the end of the season and just into April three fires occurred on

the hills (not part of the swaling programme) and Rangers work alongside the Fire Brigade to bring the fires back under control. The training and equipment that the Rangers have developed over the years enable them to provide valuable assistance in preventing the fires spreading to far.

### **Wildlife Monitoring:**

In March the AONB Service and Dr Jochen Langbein co-ordinated the deer count on behalf of the Quantock Deer Management and Conservation group. The findings are tabled in appendix one.

Several monitoring programmes have been undertaken this spring. Volunteers have helped with the third year of Long Eared Owl Surveying on some very cold and wintery nights. Only one definite male owl was heard calling in Great Wood. Volunteers also helped with a survey of Wood Warblers. These birds migrate to our woods from Africa and have undergone a massive population crash and are now Red Data List Species. Encouragingly the numbers found seem to be reasonably good but a full study of the results has not yet been undertaken.

A more detailed survey of the woodland birds in the sessile oak woods Special Area of Conservation has been completed by the AONB Ranger, National Trust Ranger and a volunteer. The results will be analysed by the RSPB this summer.

Following the previous two harsh winters it appears that the heathland population of Dartford Warblers has suffered greatly. In fact it may be the case there are no breeding Dartford Warblers on the hills as none have been officially recorded this year.

Another species that may have been affected by difficult seasonal weather is the Nightjar. The past three wet summers may have resulted in a reduce breeding success rate as early findings from the snap shot survey volunteers undertake may be down on previous years.

Finally, good news it appears that the number of young Pied Flycatchers rung on the nest is up on last year.

At the next Rangers Report it is intended to present findings of wildlife monitoring that has taken place during the International Year of Biodiversity.

### **3.0 Heritage & Local Distinctiveness**

Volunteers have helped to restore St Agnes Well at Cothelstone as part of an SDF Project. Restoration of this well known historic well was shown on regional television with Iain and Owen.

Lisa Turner, Community Planner from the Blackdown Hills AONB paid a visit to look at our distinctive village gateway signs as the AONB are keen to adopt a similar project in the Blackdowns through their own Sustainable Development Fund.

### **4.0 Visitor Management**

Rangers have maintained a visual presence at busy periods such as weekends, Public and school holidays. Sunny weather over much of this period has meant that visitor numbers have remained consistently high. Digital visitor counters have been in place

for some months now to accurately record volumes and patterns of use, figures will be assessed once they have been in place for a full year.

Issues demanding special attention have included dealing deliberate, illegal heath fires, camp fires and vandalism. Certain locations (such as Sandy Beds) have become regular campfire sites with associated litter. Rangers (along with PCSOs) have focussed their attention at these sites to clear them of rubbish and to talk to the public about the dangers of hill fires. Litter with personal details has been followed up by the Police.

Vandalism has occurred on a number of occasions at Ramscombe, including the destruction of the barrier gate.

## **5.0 Rangers**

Rangers have been involved in a range of events this report period, these include:

### **Tick Conference:**

A major input this period was organising the Ticks & Tick Borne Diseases Conference in May. Fifty delegates, representing health practitioners and countryside managers from across the region attended the conference at Halsway Manor. The day was introduced by Anthony Trollope – Bellew and chaired by Hugh Warmington. Professor Roy Brown, who has carried out 20 years of surveying on the Quantocks, provided useful information regarding the increase in ticks and tick borne diseases in the area. Some members of the JAC attended the day, which proved most valuable. A small action group is to take forward recommendations from the workshops to help increase the public's awareness of the potential health problems associated with the increasing number of tick borne diseases.

### **Events:**

Andy has carried out bird surveys/monitoring with volunteers focusing on long-eared owls and summer migrants such as pied flycatchers, wood warblers and nightjars. Andy has also led evening walks for the public to view the nightjars, one of our most fascinating visitors.

Tim led a site visit and walk along the Quantock Coast for the annual meeting of the Somerset Local Access Forum. One of the main themes discussed was the implications of the Government's Marine Bill. An important element of the Bill allows for increased access along England's coastline with the Somerset coast being one of four national pilot areas for the scheme.

The AONB also hosted a visit for staff from Natural England's Bristol and Cheltenham offices. The Open Access team deal with the Access Management Grant Scheme (which the Quantocks have greatly benefitted from over the last few years) and came to look at examples of access management carried out in the AONB.

Public events hosted or led by the AONB Service so far this year have included: Dawn Chorus Walk, Dusk Chorus Walk, International Day of Biodiversity Walk, From Hilltop to Coastline walk and Nightjar Watching.

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For more information on subjects or issues covered in this report please contact:

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**AONB Lead on:**  
Access, Rights of Way, Heritage,  
Patrolling

Andy Harris, Partnership Ranger  
[Andy.quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Andy.quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk)

Amenity Land, Biodiversity (including  
wildlife monitoring), Events,

## APPENDIX 1: Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group

31<sup>st</sup> March 2010

### **To all deer count helpers and members of QDM&CG,**

Please find below results of our latest annual deer count held on **Sunday 7th March 2010**. Visibility for counting was good with clear bright skies from dawn, but with temperatures well below freezing well into the morning and very cold winds across on the hills.

Overall **498 Red deer** were seen within the count area on the day – making this the lowest count recorded for that species this decade. The unusually cold conditions for this time of year may have contributed to that result, possibly leading to a higher proportion of deer than normal remaining in cover and out of view of counters. The low result does however remain consistent with the overall trend towards lower red deer numbers ever since Spring 2005 when 958 red deer were seen during the count. As in the last two years, only very few red deer were seen in the southern third of the count region. However, numbers seen in the northern and central counting blocks were also down by more than a quarter compared to 2009. Male deer older than 12 months (prickets and stags) seen on the day only totalled 92 – but as a proportion remains similar to most previous years; several further mature stags are known to be residing in areas off the hill not covered fully by the count.

Numbers of roe deer recorded during the count totalled 47, an increase again compared to the last two years. At very least a further 20+ roe not actually seen on the day were reported to be resident and regularly seen by the deer managers for one of the counting blocks in the north, In addition two muntjac were seen during the count in woods to the south of Lydeard Hill.

The deer count is likely to repeated once more in March next year. Please let us know your availability nearer the time. Once again thank you to everyone who turned out at the crack of dawn to help and to all landholders for their continued co-operation with these counts. Regards , **Jochen Langbein & Andy Harris** (Quantock Deer Count co-ordinators).

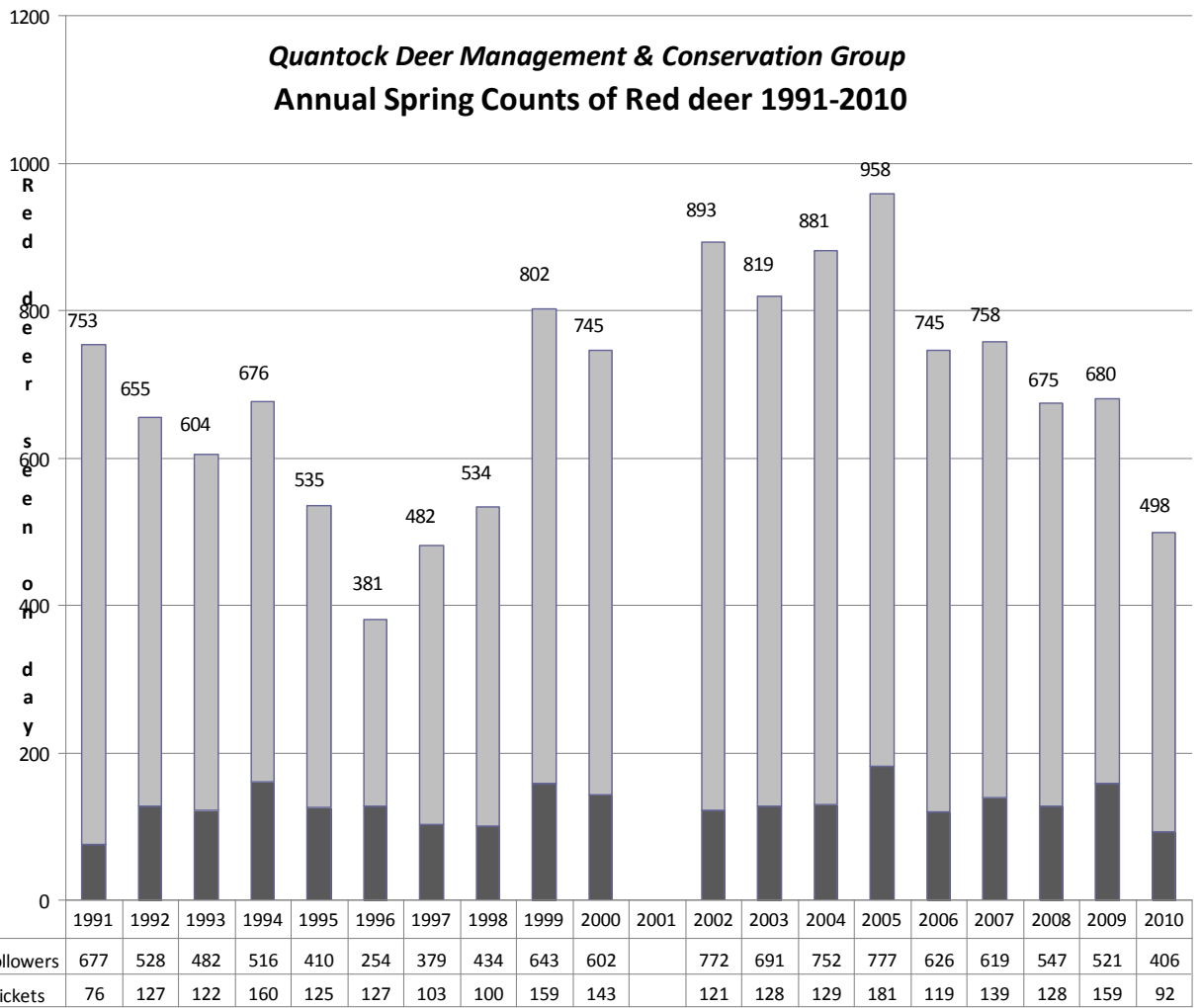
### **Quantock Deer Count Results 7 March 2010**

<b>Red Deer Total</b>	Hinds & Calves (of both sexes)	Prickets	Young Stags	Older Stags (> 4 yr old)	-- -	<b>Roe Deer Total</b>	<b>Muntjac Total</b>
<b>498:</b>	406	29	54	9	--	47 (inc > 9 bucks)	2

### **Comparison of Red deer count March 2010 and 2009 by region:**

<b>Total</b>	<b><u>2010</u></b>		<b>Total</b>	<b><u>2009</u></b>	
	Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags		Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags
<u>A: North (all count blocks lying north of the Crowcombe to Overstowey road)</u>					
<b>304</b>	246	58	<b>396</b>	277	119
<u>B: Central: (South of Overstowey Road to Great Wood / West Bagborough &amp; including Aisholt Common , and Crowcombe Heathfield)</u>					
<b>181</b>	155	26	<b>270</b>	232	38
<u>C: South-East (all areas south-east of Lydeard Hill - includes Cothelstone Hill, Broomfield Hill, Wind Down &amp; King's Cliff)</u>					

**Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group  
Annual Spring Counts of Red deer 1991-2010**



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