

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



# **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Friday 4 February 2011**

at

**2.15pm**

in the

**Crowcombe Village Hall, Crowcombe**

To: The Members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

Julian Gale  
Group Manager, Community Governance  
28 January , 2011

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 19 November 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 Business Plan 2011/12 ( Paper B)**
7. **Volunteering on the Quantock Hills AONB ( Paper C)**
8. **Rangers Report ( 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

### 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.

(19 November, 2010)

## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held in the Council Chamber, West Somerset Council, Killick Way, Williton, on Friday 19 November 2010 at 2.15pm.

### **Present**

Somerset County Council Chairman )	Mr A H Trollope-Bellew (  Mr J Wilkins
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Dr C Guerrier Mr N Stuart-Thorn Ms L James
West Somerset Council	Mr H Davies Mr S Dowding Mr C Morgan
Parish Representatives	Mr T Ayre Mr J Edwards
Natural England	Mr R Andrews
Friends of Quantock	Mrs L Kelly
Forestry Commission	Mr N Salter
SLAF	Mr R Conway
Quantock Commoners Association	Mrs D Salvidge

### **Also Present**

Mr S Lees ( Forestry Commission), Mr B James ( SCC- Officer), Mrs A Lamplough (WSC-Officer), Dr P Radford ( Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society) , Mr J Clarke ( Kingston St Mary PC), Mrs J Sansom ( West Quantoxhead PC), Mrs M White ( Sedgemoor Bridleways ), Ms H Booker (RSPB), Mr K Rogers ( Kilve PC) and Mr S Bone ( GOSW).

Apologies were received from Mr J Edney (SCC), Mr D Joslin (SDC), Mr J Swayne (SDC) and Mr S Parkman ( Parish Rep)

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

50. There were no Declarations of Interest made.

## **MINUTES**

51. (1) The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2010 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

### **Matters arising**

#### **Minute 49(1) – Lydeard Hill and Triscombe Stone Car Parks**

(2) It was reported that the County Council only had a leasehold interest and did not own the freehold of these car parks and therefore they could not be disposed of. Another area of land within the AONB – Thorncombe Hill – was reported also to be included in the Review of County Council land and could possibly be disposed of or transferred. Bicknoller PC and the District Council were also being consulted on this possibility. JAC members were asked if they had any views that they would wish to submit as part of this consultation – but no strong feelings were expressed on the matter.

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

52. (1) The report of the Acting AONB Manager on the following items :- AONB Service Staffing, 2010/11 Business Plan, OWG Meeting on 3 November, Future of the AONB, Project Development, SDF and the AONB Service Budget 2010/11 was received and considered.
- (2) The JAC had no issues to raise on the report and the report was duly noted.

### **QUANTOCK HILLS AONB FUTURE PRIORITIES**

53. (1) The Acting AONB Manager, outlined the contents of this report which set out the current position on how projected and anticipated budget reductions being considered by the AONB funding partners would affect in future the budget of the AONB Service and the delivery of the statutory Management Plan. With funding cuts predicted of between 10% - 50% over the next 3 years it was essential that the priorities of the AONB Partnership are discussed and those priorities made known. The JAC was asked to undertake a priority setting exercise in a group setting which would discuss and prioritise a number of areas of work into high, medium or low priority bearing in mind the primary purposes of the AONB.
- (2) The JAC members were split into 4 groups and undertook the priority setting exercise. The results would be evaluated and incorporated into a Business Plan to be considered at a meeting of the JAC to be arranged during the latter half of January/early February. It was agreed to bring forward the JAC meeting planned on 25 February 2011 to 4 February 2011 to facilitate this.

## **LANDSCAPE PLANNING OFFICER REPORT**

54. (1) The report from Emma- Jane Preece, Landscape Planning Officer was presented and considered by the JAC. The report contained items on Hinkley Point C, National Grid, Local Development Frameworks, Collaborative Working, Planning application consultation, the AONB planning web-site and the Monitoring of planning applications.

Questions were asked about the colour of the proposed new Hinkley C buildings, the design and style of National Grid Pylons and their affects on the landscape, and the inclusion of Village Design statements in Local planning frameworks. The report was noted.

## **PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF CAR PARK CHARGES AT RAMSCOMBE**

55. (1) A report by Stephen Lees, Recreation and Public Affairs Manager, Forestry Commission concerning the intention to introduce from next spring car parking charges at Ramscombe in Great Wood for public visitors was presented and considered by the JAC. Mr Lees explained in some detail the reasons for the decision as set out in the report.

(2) JAC members asked a number of questions concerning the availability of parking permits and where the public could obtain these. There would be various methods including by post to the Exeter office, over the internet or by applying to the local office. Other issues discussed included the type of pay and display equipment, changes in coinage and the provision of bins for used tickets.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

56. The Clerk reported that Mr Swayne had e-mailed him with two items of information that he wished the JAC to be aware. Firstly he had been in e-mail communication with Roger Joliffe concerning the amendment of the information on the Police web-site on the Pathwatch scheme. Secondly an issue that had arisen at the Crime and Disorder Group for the Quantocks concerning the issue of a licence to shoot deer at night by Natural England and the need for information to be provided to the Group. In future the Deer Initiative Deer Liaison Officer who sits on the group will act as a point of contact and will notify the Group of any future cases.

( The meeting closed at 4.25 pm )

## **CHAIRMAN**

Qhjac.mins 19 November 2011

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager **Date:** 4 February 2011

**Subject:** Quantock Hills AONB Service Activity Report.

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1. 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 1 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.

2. Office Working Group Reporting

- a. Meeting held 19 January. In attendance: Barry James (SCC, OWG Chair), Richard Andrews (NE), Angela Lamplough (WSC), Julie Cooper (SDC), Nick Salter (FC), Anthony Trollope-Bellew (SCC, JAC Chair), Nigel Stuart-Thorn (TDBC, JAC Vice-chair) Iain Porter and Katy Coate (AONB). Apologies were received from Ian Clark (TDBC). Key points from the meeting were:
- b. Financial Update: DEFRA / NE had confirmed the available grant to the Quantock Hills AONB Service. Local authority partners have provided an indicative contribution for 2011/12 though these will not be confirmed until they have gone through the relevant committees.
- c. DEFRA Conditions of Grant: SCC as host authority has concerns over a condition of the DEFRA grant (a 4 year MoU). They are seeking clarification from DEFRA on this. NE is hoping to receive a template MoU soon at which point it will begin negotiations with the partnership.
- d. Forestry update: FC gave an update on current disposal of land holdings and future of the Public Forest Estate. There will be a wide ranging consultation at which point the AONB Partnership can make comment.
- e. SCC Report – The report by Steve Bone, ‘A Review of current funding and service delivery’ had been emailed to all members of the OWG. It was felt that with the current uncertainty it would be hard to use this report fully. The report would be returned to at a later date.
- f. 2011/12 Business Plan. A detailed discussion occurred on the various ways forward in light of reduced funding. A revised Business Plan was produced in light of these discussions [Paper B].
- g. Quantock Hills AONB Service 2010/11 Update. Discussion on AONB Service delivery – See Appendix 1 for updated delivery progress

3. Future of the Quantock Hills AONB Service.
  - a. The AONB Service has received very severe cuts over the last 2 years and it is likely that this will continue into the future. In light of the financial climate we have already started looking at the priorities of the Partnership and AONB Service [Paper B, Table 1.1] and will use these to direct the work of the Service into the short-term. For the medium term and longer there is a requirement to look at how we operate and whether there are better delivery mechanisms and models we can adopt.
  - b. 2011/12 is a key year in which the partnership and AONB Service development is a priority. In the Business Plan we have allocated resource to undertake this work however I am keen that there is involvement from both the OWG and JAC to ensure direction and communication occurs between the service and the partnership.
  - c. I propose the setting up of a temporary working group to develop options on future funding and delivery models. The group will meet every 6-8 weeks for the next 12 months and work with the Development Officer to develop options to be considered by both the OWG and JAC. The ideal membership of the group will be: 2 x Local Authority JAC members, 2 x Non-local authority JAC members and 2 x OWG members. If agreed I would welcome expressions of interest from JAC members who wish to sit on the group.
  
4. Project Development
  - a. Due to the resource constraints placed upon the AONB Service no progress has been made with the Landscape Partnership development. There is concern that in the current financial climate it would be hard to meet the match funding requirements. At this present time this work has been put on hold until the match funding and resources issues can be resolved.
  - b. Initial work has started on a joint Bats project with Blackdown Hills AONB. Both AONB units have undertaken some initial work usually through the Somerset Bat Group or SERC and are keen to progress this into a full project with external funding. An expression of interest has been entered into the HLF and this will be followed up with the HLF on 9<sup>th</sup> February.
  - c. Working the Woods (Western Somerset). The AONB Service is engaged in this project which is being led by FWAG. The project aims to develop networks between those who own woods and those who work in woodlands for the benefit. The project will also look at increasing woodland management to enhance woodland habitats for education, environmental and recreational use.
  
5. Sustainable Development Fund.
  - a. The SDF budget for 2010/11 is £55,000. The current allocation is £54,939 awarded to 12 projects. 3 applications have been rejected. The projects range from historic building enhancement, woodland management, promotion of bee keeping, outdoor play days, and access enhancements.

- b. Most projects are on track and Owen is working with the other applicants to ensure their projects deliver or the funding is re-allocated to other projects. Owen is working with all applicants to ensure the claiming of SDF is completed by the end of the financial year.
  - c. *SDF Contact: Owen Jones*
6. Quantock Hills AONB Led Events
- a. The 2010 Event year has been a huge success with 14 of the 16 planned events going ahead. A total of 259 people attended the events (212 adults and 47 young people) which included a number of wildlife orientated events to celebrate 2010 International Year of Biodiversity (IYoB) as well as some new events, such as star gazing in the autumn.
  - b. The events programme is supported by a number of local experts and the AONB Service would like to thank them for their time in helping deliver a varied programme. The AONB 2010 events programme was cost neutral (excluding AONB Staff time) and is a wonderful way of promoting the vision and special nature of the AONB as well as providing a useful mechanism for education.
  - c. The 2011 Events programme is being finalised and promotion of these will begin soon. The theme for 2011 is 'Discover' and a number of events are aimed at young people or family groups.
  - d. *AONB Events Contact: Andy Harris*
7. Quantock Hills Communication
- a. The Quantock Hills has updated its newsletter which is now available in an electronic format as well as a hardcopy. This will mean that updates can be sent out more regularly with less printing. This is expected to save £900 in printing costs annually.
  - b. The Local Information Points (LiPs) have been distributed to 16 local service providers. This includes pubs, tourist attractions and shops and is intended to provide visitor information and visitor guides in the local community. It will also provide a mechanism to get information out quickly.
  - c. *AONB Communication Contact: Georgie Grant*
8. 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 NE [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 – 9) is on track (Table 2) with full expenditure expected.
  - d. Project expenditure is low, which is expected as invoicing is retrospective. 2 large projects were postponed (Climate Change and Landscape Partnership) to ensure the AONB Service could afford potential redundancies in light of funding cuts. We will now look to

proceed with project work using this funding. Other project expenditure is expected to be fully spent by the end of the financial year.

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	-	1,190
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 1-9

	Budget	Revised budget	Expenditure	Balance	%
Salaries & training	189,928	172,614	132,090	38,534	77.7
Travel	16,446	16,446	11,479	4,968	70.0
Accommodation	9,500	11,293	7,914	3,379	70.1
Partnership Budget	8,400	10,690	5,550	5,140	52.0
Partnership Running Costs	5,400	5,400	3,620	1,780	67.0
Other Costs	5,620	5,620	2,110	3,510	37.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235,294</b>	<b>222,063</b>	<b>164,754</b>	<b>103,734</b>	<b>74.2</b>

Table 3: SDF and Project

Project Expenditure	Budget	Exp	Comments
SDF	55,000	54,939	Effectively fully allocated.
Volunteer Development	2,000	1,000	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	4,743	Project continuing with end date of Jan 2011. Expenditure miscoded
Bat Survey	1,000	484.38	Proposed new joint project going into 2011/12. No further expenditure
Woodland Bird Survey	1,000	0	Survey completed, currently working with RSPB in drawing together results
Quantock Arts Project	1,500	1,363	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	3,749	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 February and works currently programmed in for completion by end of Feb.
Quantock Tick Research	500	703	Tick research completed. Awaiting the results from Prof Roy Brown
Local Information Points Project	2,515	2,175	Project nearly complete with a few panels left to go out.
Commons Access Mgt	1,500	0	Funding agreement from AMG given beginning of October. Project started and due for completion by end of March
Ramscombe All Ability Access	6,000	0	Funding agreement from AMG given beginning of October. Project started with delivery expected by end March
Quantock Access Guide	2,000	0	Project well underway and due for completion by April 2011.. Expected underspend due to cheaper alternatives.
<b>TOTAL (inc SDF)</b>	<b>122,515</b>	<b>69,436</b>	
<b>TOTAL (exc SDF)</b>	<b>67,515</b>	<b>14,497</b>	

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The JAC agrees the setting up of a temporary 'Future funding & Delivery' working group.
2. The JAC notes the report.

## Appendix 1: QHAONB Revised 2010/ 11 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	☹	FWAG Working the Woods project successful in application to WSLAG. Project due to start April 2011.
FWAP4	Work with NE to develop and implement Management Plans for the Upland Oak SAC woodland	☺	NE SAC woodland management plan produced in draft.
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)	☺	All identified survey completed. 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 entered. 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. Planning for work started 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 users contact the AONB Service
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	☺	Work started with information collection near completion. Next phase will be information dissemination via website.
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	☺	SDF allocated at £54,939 To 12 projects. 3 projects rejected. 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 delivered with 14 events and 259 attendees (212 adults & 47 young people)
H&S	Review all AONB risk assessments and complete office fire & emergency plans	☺	Risk assessments reviewed. Other H&S updated as required.
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 on hold due to SCC amenity land review. 8 acres management not taken forward due to amenity land review.
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	☹	Swaling occurs during winter / spring so no progress yet. QCMG meeting held 19 <sup>th</sup> Jan.
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.
ARAP1	Host 1 LAMG meeting for Quantocks	☹	Group membership agreed and meeting planned for spring.

<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.	☹️	Delayed and now postponed until Spring 2011.
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.
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	😊	Completed LIP project with panels out to 16 service providers
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.
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	😊	No applications. Consultation on Somerset Building Stone for the Future document.
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:** 4 February 2011

**Subject:** Quantock Hills AONB Business Plan 2011/12

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## 9. Introduction

- a. The 2011/12 Business Plan has been produced later than is usual due to the uncertainties of future funding. While Local Authority funding partners have not been able to confirm funding for 2011/12 they have been able to supply indicative figures which have allowed us to develop the business plan.
- b. The AONB Service realises that there will be reduced resources into the future and undertook a number of priority setting exercises which would direct the work for future years. This included an independent assessment of the priorities of the Quantock Hills Management Plan, a partnership exercise looking at the priority areas of work for the AONB Service and looking at the current priorities for AONBs from the Government. By combining the results of these exercises we can see the priority areas of work for the AONB Service over the short to medium term (Table 1.1.)
- c. Using the indicative figures provided by the local authority funding partners and the provisional grant offer from DEFRA we have been able to estimate the 2011/12 budgets. If the AONB Service were to operate as in previous years (core budget to remain the same) there would be a **£9,199** shortfall in funding.

Table 1.1: Priority work for the AONB Service into the future.

Action	Overall Priority
SDF	High
Volunteer Development	High
Volunteer Tasks	High
Amenity Land – <i>if income received</i>	High (with income)
Visitor Mgt	Medium
Facilitating – Local communities	High
Planning – Strategic development	High
Event – Others	Medium
Planning – Development Management	Medium
Planning – Local / Regional Consultation	Medium
Other Land Mgt – <i>if income received</i>	Medium (with income)
Wildlife - Monitoring	High
Wildlife – Enhancement	High
Event – AONB	Medium
Education	Medium
Information Provision	Medium
Consultation	Medium
Facilitating – Agriculture	Medium

Facilitating – Forestry	Medium
Climate Change	Low
Rights of Way	Low
Open Access	Low
Coast & Geology	Low
Heritage & Local Distinctiveness	Low
Traffic & Country Lanes	Low

#### 10. AONB Service

- a. The AONB Service is the main delivery element of the Partnership. For 2011/12 no major changes are proposed in staff structure, though individual roles will adapt to priorities.
- b. The Development Officer role will concentrate on ‘business development’ and will look at external income generation, alternative delivery mechanism to ensure that the AONB Service is sustainable and robust to deliver the Management Plan into the future.
- c. Somerset County Council is looking to extend the secondment of Chris Edwards as Group Manager, Environmental Resources until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. There is in principle agreement from the OWG though detailed discussions are still continuing.
- d. The Development Officer will undertake the essential AONB Manager duties for 2011/12 and will use savings from the non filled post to buy in specialist assistance for partnership development or income generation.

#### 11. 2011/12 Budget

- a. Table 3.1 shows an indicative budget based on predications of funding cuts supplied by the AONB partners. The funding will not be confirmed until February 2011 by local authority funding partners. DEFRA, through Natural England has just confirmed their contribution, which is cut by 5.4% for 2011/12 with an expected overall cut of 21.5% over 4 years. A full budget can be found in Appendix 2.
- b. The budget concentrates on delivery through staffing and the development of volunteering. Project development will look to attract external funding for projects identified in the action plan (section 4). Further work will be undertaken to develop an alternative delivery model for the AONB Partnership and Team to reduce reliance on exchequer funding.
- c. The budget shows a slight overspend of £61 (0.02% of expenditure) which will be accounted for in viaments form core nominal lines.
- d. The budget will deliver the Action Plan (Sc 4) which will work to the priorities identified in Sc 1. To this extent a SDF is included of £45,000 as well as continued funding for a Volunteer Coordinator post and funding for volunteer activities. Project funds are to deliver a joint bats project with Blackdown Hills AONB and contribution to the Working the Woods Project, being led by FWAG. These projects are further explained in the Action Plan (sc 4).

- e. The budget currently shows no income from Somerset County Council for management of their Amenity Land sites. The AONB Service has put a request in for a realistic contribution to allow us to continue the management of SCC amenity land. A very strong message came from the partnership priority setting exercise that this is only a high priority if it attracts funding. Negotiations are continuing.
- f. The budget shows no income against other land management. This is primarily the swaling which the AONB Service undertakes on Quantock Common SSSI. Swaling is a conservation management tool that is required to take place as part of the Quantock Commons Countryside Stewardship Scheme. A payment is made to the Quantock Commoners Association for this activity to occur (as part of their annual revenue payment). Historically the Quantock Commoners Association has not passed this payment onto the AONB Service, however they have contributed 100% of specialist equipment costs. We are currently in discussions with the Quantock Commoners Association about the continued swaling management.
- g. The Mendip Hills AONB recharge is for the Volunteer Coordinator post. This is a joint post with Quantock and Mendip Hills AONB. Quantock Hills will retain budget and line management with day to day supervision undertaken by the local AONB officer.

Table 3.1: Quantock Hills AONB Service Summary Budget 2011/12

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Core	£	Core	£
Natural England / DEFRA	186,800	AONB Manager	0
Somerset County Council	21,500	Deve'T Officer	37,510
Forestry Commission	17,300	Landscape Planning Off	14,910
Taunton Deane Borough Council	12,000	Senior Ranger	36,730
Sedgemoor District Council	11,700	Partnership Ranger	30,985
West Somerset Council	11,025	Volunteer Coordinator	20,644
Mendip Hills AONB (recharge)	11,000	Comms Officer	9,589
Events income	1,000	Support Assistant	10,251
<b>Total</b>	<b>272,325</b>	Accommodation	13,945
		Travel & Training	20,896
<b>Project</b>	<b>£</b>	Equip, Clothing,	6,680
Blackdown Hills AONB	1,000	Literature, Shows, R&D	11,400
Virrador Landfill Community Credit	7,000	Other costs	3,130
HFL	14,000	Management fee	3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,000</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>219,671</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>294,325</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>£</b>
		SDF	45,000
<i>Balance</i>	<i>-61</i>	Joint Bats Project	24,200
		Working the Woods	5,515
		<b>Total</b>	<b>74,715</b>
		<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>294,386</b>

## 12. Headline Areas of Work & Action Plan

- a. The Action Plan (Appendix 3) below identifies delivery against NE core duties of an AONB, Management Plan Action Point Delivery and Core Duties delivery, such as line management. Against the delivery is an assessment of AONB resources required by post and number of days. With some delivery there will be more than one post associated with delivery, but the first post listed will be the lead on that item of work. Table 4.1 Identifies 3 headline areas of work the AONB Service will be undertaking during 2011/12. Appendix 3 contains the full action plan.
- b. Please contact the Acting AONB Manager for full copies of the 2011/12 Business Plan.

Table 4.1: Quantock Hills AONB Service – Headline Areas of Work 2011/12

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resource</b>
Bats Project. A joint project with Blackdown Hills AONB looking to deliver at the landscape scale a monitoring programme which will lead to habitat improvement over a wide range of landscapes. The project aims to increase current knowledge of bat species on the Quantocks and Blackdown Hills including the interconnectivity of Taunton Vale, to maintain known existing maternity, swarming, hibernation and other roost sites as well expand the current geographical range of bat populations and to raise awareness with local communities of bats and their relationship with the landscapes. An outcome will be the better targeting of habitat improvements of farmland and woodland through existing and new funding streams e.g. Higher Level Stewardship or England Woodland Grant Scheme	AONB Service, Blackdown Hills AONB, Somerset Bat Group (possible), SERC (possible)
Production of an Integrated LCA and Environmental Report. Using new NCA development as a template the Quantock Hills will look to produce a integrated LCA and environmental report which will set the framework to the next Management Plan. This approach will explore individual themes (biodiversity, Historic Interest, farming) under the overriding landscape types and produce a more targeted set of objectives, policies and actions to conserve and enhance the Quantock Hills into the future	AONB Service, Natural England
Volunteering with Young People, Full Time Volunteer and Young Rangers. Delivered through the partnership post (Volunteer Coordinator) and taking best practice from Mendips the AONB Service will look to develop a 'Young Rangers' scheme with local secondary schools. Also expanding on the partnership with the National Trust the AONB Service will host a full time volunteer and look to enhance the relationship with other potential partners, such as Mendip Hills AONB or the Forestry Commission.	AONB Service, National Trust, Mendip Hills AONB, Forestry Commission (possible)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

3. The JAC approve the 2011/12 Business Plan.

## Appendix 2: Quantock Hills AONB Service – Full budget 2011/12

Source	Contribution 2011 12	Comments
NE	£186,800	DEFRA confirmed 5.4% cut
SCC	£21,500	Exp £5k reduction
SDC	£11,700	Exp £16,500 reduction
TDBC	£12,000	Exp £4.5k reduction
WSC	£11,025	Exp £4,975k reduction
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£243,025</b>	

Expenditure	2011 12	Comments
Salaries	160,619	NE – Staff costs
Training et al	2,000	NE – Staff costs
Electricity	200	NE – Accommodation
Rates	900	NE – Accommodation
Rent of Room	8,645	NE – Accommodation
Water Charges	400	NE – Accommodation
Car allowance	4,300	NE – Staff costs
Hired Transport	0	NE – Staff costs
Travel costs	500	NE – Staff costs
Vehicle costs - Fuel	3,340	NE – Staff costs
Vehicle costs - Insurance	1,150	NE – Staff costs
Vehicle costs - Maintenance	1,820	NE – Other costs
Vehicle costs - Lease	7,786	NE – Staff costs
Equipment et al	6,530	NE - Other costs
Literature & Pubs	1,200	NE – Partnership Budget
shows & Exhib	3,200	NE – Partnership Budget
Clothing & Uniform	150	NE – Other costs
R & D	7,000	NE – Partnership Budget
Advertising Staff Vac	0	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Photocopying	700	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Stationary	1,500	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Postage	300	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Telephones	1,300	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Subs allowance	100	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Interview expenses	0	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Hospitality	700	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Subscriptions	2,250	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Insurance	80	NE – Partnership Running Costs
Cross Service recharge	3,000	NE – Partnership Running Costs
<b>TOTAL CORE</b>	<b>£219,671</b>	
<b>Other income</b>		
SCC - Amenity Land	£0	Recharge for mgt of amenity land
Mendip Hills AONB	£11,000	Recharge for volunteer coord post
FC Contribution	£17,300	Recharge for Ptn Ranger post
Events	£1,000	
	£0	
	£0	
Other Core Income	29,300	

<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>£52,654</b>	
<b>SDF Expenditure</b>		
Projects	45,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,000</b>	
<b>Project Expenditure</b>		
Various	29,715	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,715</b>	
<b>Ext Project Income</b>		
Various	22,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,000</b>	
<b>SUMMARY</b>		
TOTAL INCOME	£294,325	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£294,386	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>£61</b>	

### Appendix 3: Quantock Hills AONB Service 2011/12 Action Plan

Key:

AM	AONB Manager	DO	Development Officer	LP	Landscape Planner
SR	Senior Ranger	PR	Partnership Ranger	VC	Volunteer Coordinator
CO	Communications Officer	SA	Support Assistant		

Other Resource includes other organisations that will be assisting with action. Highlighted resources are yet to confirm or contacted regarding involvement.

NE duty	ACTION POINT	Action	Milestone / Target	AONB resource Post (days)	Partners
C H	FAP 2	Collate monitoring information of uptake of CSS / ES / EWGS etc. Promote ES schemes through web-promotion & targeting of areas under represented if ES has funding.	ES data provided to AONB unit from NE. 75% of eligible AONB land area in ES. Evidence of appropriate targeting in Quantock ES schemes.	DO (1)	Natural England (Lead)
C	FWAP 4	Comment on draft SAC Woodland Management Plan to ensure plan with bring greatest benefit to subsequent management	Comments received and actioned	DO (1) PR (1)	Natural England (lead)
C O	WAP 4	Support continued monitoring of LBAP species (adder) to inform future management plans for Quantock Common and surrounding agricultural land	Adder population and hibernacula survey carried out on 3 sites in Quantock AONB	DO (1) PR (5)	SRAG (lead), Reaseheath College
C O	WAP 4	Support monitoring of Pied Flycatchers on Quantock Hills and feed into regional project on effects of climate change on indicator species	5 volunteers trained in bird monitoring. Monitoring of 30 boxes in key locations throughout AONB	PR (12) VC (10)	Exeter University (lead), BTO, NE
C	WAP2	Implement or manage implementation by others of the Quantock Hills BAP. <b>Specific actions</b>	?? % of LBAP Targets achieved – <b>need to check delivery by others</b>	PR (25), DO (1)	RAGS, SWT, SERC, SBG
O	WAP2	Provide concise monitoring and reporting on LBAP actions	Produce a LBAP actions report	PR (5)	<b>SERC</b>
D C E O G	WAP 4 FAP 2	Apply to external funders for project funding of joint Bats project. Run a joint Bats Project which will increase awareness of special landscapes importance for bats as well as increase knowledge of bat populations and allow targeting of land management to improve habitat of farmland and woodland.	Successful application to external funders. Project started with project officer in place and first season bat monitoring underway.	DO (15) PR (4)	<b>Somerset Bat Group</b> , Blackdown Hills AONB, <b>SERC</b>
A O	DAP 6	Produce an integrated Landscape Character Assessment and environment report that will set the framework to the next Management Plan based on the latest guidance on NCA	Draft report produced ready for consideration by partnership	LP (32) SR (2) PR (1) DO (3)	

		assessment from NE			
J	DAP 1 DAP 4 DAP 5	Monitor planning applications in and around the AONB and identify any potential damaging developments. Comment on potentially damaging applications on behalf of the JAC	Planning Database up to date and reporting back against database possible through GIS. Comments sent to relevant planning authorities	LP (18) SA (10)	
J	DAP 2	Engage with Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation	Relevant LDF consultation responses sent	LP (10)	
J	DAP 7	Engage with and offer specialist advice on impacts of major infrastructure developments such as Hinkley Point C	Engagement with consultation process and comments received and acted upon	LP (12)	
E J		Make AONB planning comments available on the website (or synopsis with link) to ensure partners and communities can see AONB response to planning application	All planning comments (1 <sup>st</sup> April 2011 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2012) to be available on the website.	LP (5) SA (10)	
E		VOLUNTEERS – Continued engagement with Quantock Countryside Volunteers ensuring tasks occurring through AONB area.	3,000 volunteer hours completed.	VC (35) SR (20)	
E	ARAP 8 VAP 2	VOLUNTEERS - Volunteer involvement in local events and other visitor management to raise AONB profile and provide information.	30 volunteer work days spent at local events or engaged in visitor management activity	VC (10) SR (5)	
E	ARAP 8 VAP 2	VOLUNTEERS - Development of Full-time volunteer post expanding the existing partnership with National Trust to include a 9 month placement for a second FTV which will be hosted by AONB.	FTV in 'post' and 9 months placement successfully completed.	VC (15)	National Trust
E	EAP 6	VOLUNTEERS - Development of a 'Young Ranger' scheme based on successful Mendip AONB model	12 'Young Rangers' enrolled on the Quantock Young Ranger Scheme	VC (50) SR (20)	National Trust
C D E	CAP 1	Deliver Sustainable Development Fund to fund local projects which will deliver Management Plan objectives	Fully expenditure against SDF with project targets being fully met	DO (10)	SDF Panel
E F	CAP 6	Host a Parish conference to engage with Parish Council and inform them of AONB work as well as discussing Parish Council involvement with the AONB and Partnership	75% of parish representatives invited attending 1 parish conference	DO (3), CO (1), SA (2), LP (2)	
D	CAP 3	Engagement with Western Somerset Local Action Group to ensure funding opportunities through this scheme are available for Quantock projects.	Quantock Hills AONB Service retains place on executive meeting and attends	DO (12)	

E	CAP 6	Encourage and practically support parish initiatives such as parish plans in and around the AONB to help local communities protect the character of their villages and ensure local distinctiveness is integral to the local community	Development of Parish Plans or other relevant initiatives supported by AONB Service	SR (8) LP (4)	
C D F	FWAP 2 CAP 2	Support of the Working the Woods Project which aims to work with woodland owners and workers to strengthen local supply chains and maximise biodiversity and business opportunities	Project running with project officer in post. Targets as project plan but include woodland Management Plans, creation of woodland associations etc.	DO (10)	FWAG (lead), Silvanus Trust
E H	WAP 1	Provide secretariat and support for Quantock Commons Management Group (QCMG) and Quantock Police & Conservation Agencies Working Group (QPCAWG)	2 meetings of each group. Meeting notes and progress on actions recorded	SA (4) PR (2) SR (2)	
C F O	WAP 4	Provide on the ground support to the Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group (QDMCG) deer count	Deer Count undertaken and results fed back to QDMCG and JAC	PR (4) SR (1)	
B	VAP 2	Provide 14 events open to the public, including specialist walks and events aimed at families. The theme for 2011 will be 'Discovery'	300 people attending AONB events	PR (15), CO (12), VC (4) SR (12)	Other leaders (6)
B	EAP 2	Distribute AONB Visitor Guide through the LIPs distribution points	Restocking of LIPs distribution points x 4	CO (7)	
B	EAP 2	Publish and distribute e-newsletter. Hardcopy can be printed off for distribution through schools	At least 4 newsletters produced with distribution to 1,100 individuals	CO (16)	
B	EAP 3	Regularly update the website to include blogs, news items, planning comments etc	New content to be added on at least a fortnightly basis	CO (22)	
B		Produce media content (press release direct media contact) to include standard messages (lambing, ticks etc) as well as specific project successes	12 press releases sent out with 50% picked up by local media	CO (15)	
N		Produce and distribute a annual report to show progress against AONB Management Plan Targets	Annual Report produced and distributed by end of June 2011	DO (3), CO (8)	
N		OWG and JAC reports produced. These reports will provide monitoring against the action plan targets	3 OWG reports and 3 JAC reports produced.	DO (6)	
D		Develop new 'business delivery model' that can co-exist with the AONB Service but which will reduce reliance on exchequer funding while allowing continued or enhanced delivery of the Statutory	Options paper produced and favoured option agreed by partnership	DO (120)	

		Management Plan. This will be overseen by a Funding & Delivery Working Group made up of 2 JAC members, officers and 2 others.			
D		Write NE/DEFRA AONB bid with input from OWG and JAC partnership	NE / DEFRA bid accepted	DO (5)	
F		Host 3 OWG and JAC meetings – July, November and February 2012 to allow informed and engaged ownership of partnership by JAC.	3 meetings held.	DO (4) PR (2) SR (2) VC (1) LP (1)	
F		Regular meetings of AONB Service team to review AONB Management activities and issues	45 meetings held.	All team 2 days each	
I K L		Membership and involvement in the NAAONB and SWPLF to ensure national and regional liaison and to ensure that the NAAONB represents the views of the Quantock Hills partnership in its new business model. – Includes Countryside Management Association	Attendance at Lead Officers meetings and other meetings where applicable	DO (15) PR (4)	
F		Host 2 Partnership workshops on relevant issues which could include 'the role of volunteers' and Landscape scale biodiversity enhancement	2 workshops held with 12 partnership members in attendance on each	DO (3) PR (2) VC (3)	
O		Undertake fixed point photography monitoring on 12 sites to provide a visual record of landscape and change over time including views into and from the AONB	Take photographs from 12 sites twice during 2011/12.	SR (6)	
C	VAP 8	Collect bi-annual data from 15 visitor counters installed through the Quantock Hills and disseminate information to partners	Information collected, processed and disseminated. Information in format to be used as evidence in funding bids	SR (5)	
C		Provide support to the 1SW off-road cycling project with officer time for the collection of local data and input into route description as a visitor management tool	Officer time allocated and routes data vetted and agreed by AONB	DO (5)	
C E	EAP 7	Owls Schools Project delivery. A project which will raise the importance of the various Quantock habitats to owls and other raptors based on the recent monitoring of the Long Eared Owl.	10 local school visits. 8 volunteers trained to assist delivery of education of project	PR (10) VC (2)	Hawk & Owl Trust (Lead)
G	VAP 1	Engage with event organisers to ensure notification of events occurring on the hills. Offer advice to ensure minimal	Creation of events database. Event monitoring information available through	PR (8) CO (6)	

		adverse impact from events to the landscape, tranquillity and natural environment of the Quantock Hills	website		
C	VAP 2	Ensure on the ground presence during busy periods to engage visitors and provide information.	24 days patrol throughout year, with volunteer involvement	SR (25) PR (5)	
H	VAP 5	Completion of flytipping database with hotspots provided to local authorities and negotiate a enhanced level of service to ensure waste is cleaned quickly	Database finalised and sent to local authorities. Agreement from local authorities to clear flytipping	SR (15)	
F	ARAP 4	Limit vehicle damage to hilltop tracks through engagement with user groups.	Continued erosion monitoring project. Access agreement in place with main user groups	SR (25)	
<b>CORE DUTIES</b>					
	H&S	Annual risk assessment reviews, instigate new H&S procedures in line with best practice. Audits of promoted routes and carry out safety works (VAP 6)		DO (1) PR (5) VC (5) SR (30)	
	Finance	Undertake finance monitoring and provide reports in various formats to partners, hosts and grant giving organisations		DO (5)	
	Support Activities	Undertake a range of support activities such as answering enquiries, filing, procurement etc		SA (110)	
	Line Mgt	1-1 management meetings, annual PRaD meetings staff management		DO (15)	

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Owen Jones, Volunteer Coordinator **Date:** 4 February 2011

**Subject:** Volunteering on the Quantock Hills AONB

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### 13. Volunteer Involvement

- a. The AONB Service is now regularly involved with three volunteer groups. These are:
  1. Quantock Countryside Volunteer (QCV) – 30 Individuals
  2. Estates Team Volunteers (ETV) – 2 Individuals
  3. Full Time Volunteer (FTV) – 1 Individual
- b. In total the volunteers have contributed; 131 hrs for ETV, 672 for FTV, 1,001hrs for AONB lead QCV tasks and 1,183 hrs for National Trust QCV tasks. In conclusion a total of 2,987 hrs, to the beginning of Feb, have been carried out on the Quantocks, which is the equivalent to just over 400 work days.
- c. Each individual group of volunteers carries out a slightly different, but vital role on the hills.
- d. **QCV** – Due to the group size these tasks are often large scale work and this year have consisted of; a Beach clean at Kilve Pill where over 10 volunteers helped to remove litter as part of a National beach cleaning scheme, scrub clearance at various locations throughout the Quantocks to help remove hundreds of saplings and invasive species and carrying out surveying for nightjars and other wildlife to help landowners manage sites accordingly.
- e. **ETV** – These are volunteers with specialist skills that have been trained to use AONB machinery and help with general maintenance duties. These have included undertaking regular weekly tasks in the summer months (flailing paths & rides), helping with fence repairs, corral maintenance and helping with general woodland management.
- f. **FTV** – This role has been involved in the day-to-day work carried out by the rangers and has included working on individual projects like using GIS/GPS to map Rhododendron, record and monitor dormice populations and provide additional support for QCV tasks.

### 14. Volunteer Policy

- a. Part of the role of Volunteer Coordinator was to examine the way the AONB Service worked with volunteers. This involved inspecting the ways individuals from the AONB Service communicated, participated and treated volunteers to identify any discrepancies. Although this did not vary greatly within the team it highlighted that a common standard, or 'ways of working', was needed.
- b. A large majority of my role has, therefore, been generating a volunteer policy (Appendix 4) that the AONB Service could adopt to ensure contact, interaction and communication with volunteers is undertaken to an agreed, unified standard. The volunteer policy has been

- developed to provide the 'ways of working' that the AONB Service need to implement to ensure that not only volunteers benefit but also helps to define the position of the AONB Service.
- c. The Policy is split into two main sections; Volunteer management in the AONB Service and Supporting Volunteers within the AONB Service. These two headings, in principle, cover how we interact with volunteers along with legal requirements, and secondly, how we can help to develop and encourage volunteering within the AONB Service.
  - d. Volunteer management in the AONB Service examines what categories of volunteering the AONB Service offers, with volunteer's falling into four areas. These cover all aspects of volunteers from the individual to groups and recognise that key principles can be applied to every category. The section then provides information and advice on ensuring each volunteer is treated equally, giving standard guidance on recruiting, health and safety, inductions, administration including paperwork, insurance and disciplinary procedures.
  - e. Supporting Volunteers within the AONB Service provides guidelines and suggestions on what can be offered in return for individual's commitment and dedication. This section of the policy gives further guidance on volunteer's expenses, inductions, clothing (including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)), duty when embarking on tasks/events, incentives and the policies and procedures relevant to their position.
  - f. The policy has been developed mainly around the 'on-the-ground' interaction with volunteers, such as conservation management tasks, but share similar principles that could be applied to 'non-physical' volunteering e.g. administration support, archive storage etc.
  - g. Appendix 4 contains a full copy of the Volunteer Policy.

#### 15. Future volunteering opportunities

- a. At present there is a requirement to monitoring the spending of the AONB Service. The future expansion of volunteering will need to be considered in this environment of austerity. The structure currently in place provides a good but limited range of possibilities for individuals interested in supporting the work of the AONB Service. With the current coalition Government keen on 'localism' and the 'Big society', it is key that whilst in this transition period the AONB Service remains adaptable to future policy changes. To ensure this can occur at short notice listed below is a selection of options that could be undertaken by the AONB Service. Option 1 will be the minimal level of commitment to volunteers for 2011/12 and depending upon financial resource the AONB Service may be able to expand and deliver option 2 or 3.
- b. **Option 1:** In order to maintain the service that is offered to volunteers there are several areas that need to be preserved, mainly through staff time and resource commitments. The responsibility of running volunteer's and the QCV partnership should, ideally, be given to a member of staff who has experience of volunteering and who can commit the necessary resources. This individual will be required not only to organise and run volunteers in any relevant work the AONB

undertakes but also contribute (on behalf on the AONB Service) to the QCV partnership. For both areas the input needs to be regular in order for the current level of volunteering to be sustained. This commitment ensure the partnership is of benefit to all involved be that volunteer, the AONB Service or the National Trust.

- c. **Option 2.** The second option looks at developing the roles the volunteers can take in the services the AONB provides. This would involve a fresh appraisal to look at the skills, training and opportunities that are offered by Quantock Hills. The idea of how to integrate volunteering into AONB Services would also need to be reviewed with a focus on all of the AONB Service. I feel that the organisation could accommodate several more volunteering roles for new recruits quite easily, subject to staff time and resources. For example, one of these roles could be offering the opportunity of becoming a Full-Time Volunteer with the AONB Service. This should be in addition to the role already established with the National Trust but could be offered in a similar vein.
- d. The AONB Service could also benefit from using volunteers as ambassadors (on the ground/attending fetes/becoming involved in local communities) and may generate small amounts of income through walks, talks and events volunteers provide.
- e. The opportunities to work with other organisations environmentally focused (National Trust, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trust) and those concerned with other issues (Turning Point, Bridgwater Educational Trust, Community Payback) should be explored as the Quantocks is ideally situated between two large conurbations. Transport, as well as other issues, would need to be addressed before this could occur.
- f. **Option 3.** The final option incorporates all the volunteer roles found in the 'Volunteer Funding Scenario' document, those mentioned in previous options and should look to expand on the role the AONB Service currently occupies. The AONB Service could, if funding permits, act as a central hub for all volunteering within the Quantock Hills and surrounding area. The opportunity to act as an 'agent' for all volunteer activity undertaken on the Quantocks would allow a unified and easily administered approach to volunteering within the boundaries (and beyond!). The AONB Service could liaise with all landowners; private, local authority and charity to "identify" work and operate a group(s) of volunteers across all categories.
- g. In addition to 'partnership working' the AONB should also look to expand the role the volunteers offered to external sources through providing walks, talks and events but also investigate if volunteers could help to facilitate school and youth groups whom wish to use the AONB. This would provide a small income stream, provide alternative roles for people interested in volunteering and would allow staff to focus their time on more technical aspects of management. These volunteer roles would also help to enhance the profile of the AONB through local interaction and increasing contact with the Service.
- h. In addition to traditional volunteering, the Quantock Hills AONB should investigate whether it can work in partnership with other locally based

organisations (National Parks, Natural England, Parish Councils etc) to explore if any volunteer roles could accommodate their requirements.

- i. The option of running a Volunteer Rangers Scheme (VRS) similar to that found in the Mendips could be considered with other organisations also contributing (either through monetary or in-kind donations).

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. The JAC agrees the adoption of the Quantock Hills AONB Volunteer Policy.
2. The JAC notes the volunteer development options.

## Appendix 4: Volunteer Management in the AONB Service [Volunteer Policy]

### Introduction

1. This document will provide the Quantock Hills AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Service with guidance on managing and working with volunteers. It should be used to supplement formal training and in combination with staff with specific volunteer management skills.
2. This document recognises the importance of good management of volunteers to ensure they operate in a safe and productive environment. The AONB Service needs to ensure it is acting responsibly, guarantee volunteers Health and Safety and protect vulnerable children and adults.
3. The responsibilities associated with this policy will remain the duty of an individual member of AONB staff. This should be a dedicated member of staff, such as a Volunteer Co-ordinator or a duly appointed member of staff.
4. Volunteering with the AONB Service occurs in a number of forms. These include;
  - **Direct Volunteering** where volunteers are working directly with the AONB Service. These posts are sometimes supervised but largely they are treated as a member of staff. The Full Time Volunteer (FTV) post and Estates Team fall within this category.
  - **Specialist Groups** of volunteers including stock handling volunteers. These groups are supervised by the AONB Service but are personally responsible for their own safety. Volunteer groups that form for special projects e.g. long-eared owl, deer counts etc also fall into this category.
  - **Partnership working** with the National Trust with a shared group of volunteers. This group has been formed to provide both organisations with volunteers that can be centrally trained and administered. The FTVs' position also has elements of this category in their role.
  - **Third party volunteers** are used infrequently by the AONB Service. These services are only used for specific projects or when contact is made by the voluntary organisation. The AONB Service works with these third parties to ensure the safety of the volunteers and all risk factors are assessed before the task commences.
5. Although the above categories help to present the types of volunteering available through the AONB Service in reality they are never as clear-cut. Often volunteers are keen and enthusiastic to be involved in a range or tasks or events and therefore should never be discouraged from spanning categories.

6. The guidance contained within this document is for the AONB Service relating to volunteer management. The liability of all volunteers, whether directly or indirectly linked to the AONB Service, is the responsibility of the designated member of staff.

## **Recruiting volunteers**

7. Any enquiry by a potential volunteer should be dealt with swiftly and promptly, no matter what the volunteering situation is. Any initial enquiry should be dealt with by finding out the type, commitment, and length of volunteering that is looking to be undertaken. To help aid this information gathering stage a collection of roles should be available to help match volunteers with opportunities.
8. When offering a volunteer a role it should be clearly stated that this does not constitute a contract, agreement or any offer of employment. If an “agreement” is to be offered (see appendix A), wording should be chosen carefully to avoid implying that the volunteer will receive a reward for their services. The AONB Service should be aware that a volunteer can withdraw from this “agreement” at any time without any prior notice. Neither party can be force to take part in services or tasks.
9. When dealing with recruiting volunteers these example roles will prove invaluable. They should include;
  - A clear description of the task/event/project that the individual might be asked to be undertaken
  - List the experiences they are likely to receive if they become a volunteer in the chosen role. If appropriate then also highlight the type of commitment needed, whether they’ll be eligible for any training (in-house or external) and other administrative issues.
  - If volunteers are to be left in a supervisory role or have regular contact with unaccompanied children or vulnerable adults then a Disclosure/CRB is required. If this is to be undertaken then it must be made apparent when discussing the role. Further information can be found at [www.crb.org.uk](http://www.crb.org.uk)
10. Apply SCC (Somerset County Council) equal opportunities and discrimination policy. Regularly check these documents to ensure the AONB Service is working to the most up to date policy.
11. When recruiting volunteers never limit your target audience. The use of local knowledge and organisations to aid your recruitment would be worth engaging with in the first instance. Local Volunteering centres can be a good source and will often have a ready list of suitable candidates. Ensure you know how many people you are looking for and whether the task requires any certain skills or knowledge. Promotion, in-house and through your own network and resources often produces good results.
12. If you are recruiting further a field or abroad then remember Non E.U. applicants may need a “volunteers or work permit/visa”. It is an

applicant's job to attain the relevant document with support from the AONB Service. Applicants from other countries should be able to volunteer with out the need for a permit but researching on a case-by-case scenario is advised.

13. For children under the age of 18 years of age a specific risk assessment has to be undertaken. This concentrates on the volunteering experiences they are likely to encounter and should allow for them to gain valuable understanding. SCC insurance documents should be consulted to ensure young children are adequately covered. For any activity involving young children (under 18 year old's) or vulnerable individuals clarification on whether tasks are covered should be sort from the insurance section of the host authority.

### **Health & Safety**

14. All volunteers are covered whilst undertaking volunteering with the AONB Service by the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. This Act ensures a volunteer's health and safety, as is reasonably practical, is not affected by actions that they undertake whilst in a work environment. Other legislation will also cover volunteers, such as the Manual Handling Regulations and advice can be sought from Somerset County Council if unsure of health & safety in respect of volunteers.
15. The AONB Service, as the responsible authority, has a duty of care for any other activities or tasks volunteers may be asked to undertake including those by third parties.
16. All tasks undertaken by volunteers should have an accompanying risk assessment and all risks highlighted in an on site talk before the task commences.
17. It is important to offer volunteers regular breaks, especially if the work is physically demanding. They should be encouraged to bring plenty of water and food onto site and be made aware that toilet facilities will be limited. Advice should be given, in advance if possible, of any other personal matters e.g. sun screen, warm clothing, wet weather gear etc

### **Risk assessments**

18. All risk assessments should be undertaken before the task takes place. These are the sole responsibility of the AONB Service staff member leading the task (see appendix B). These help to highlight any risks that may occur whilst completing the task and implement any control measures that have been highlighted. These should be taken onto site and help form part of the on site risk assessment and site talk.
19. For each site where the task is to take place a site risk assessment should undertaken. These are the responsibility of the AONB Service staff member leading the task. Any PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) that

is deemed necessary to undertake the task should be in good working condition and made available to the volunteers.

20. Third party tasks should also be covered by a risk assessment. These should be made available to members of staff from the AONB Service but completed by the third party. AONB staff should help provide site specific information. A task should not go ahead with out a copy being made available to the AONB Service.

### **Briefing volunteers**

21. Volunteers should be made aware before a task or project is undertaken of any health and safety requirements. This will be in writing or signed off with the introduction paper work. It should cover:
- Work place health and safety including fire exist,
  - Hazards they may come into contact with, how they are stored and used.
  - Emergency and communication procedures
  - Lone working procedures
22. The lone working system should be explained and supporting paperwork distributed.
23. Personal Health & Safety should be explained to each volunteer. This should either take place on an individual basis or as part of the site briefing. They should include;
- Personal responsibility of health and safety and of those you are working with.
  - Reporting any injury, near misses or potential health and safety issues.
  - Highlighting any personal information that maybe needed to ensure their own safety.
  - If volunteers are unsure of the health and safety issues for a task or project, they should be told to stop and ask for more information.
24. It is not adequate enough to assume all volunteers have understood the health and safety instructions. AONB staff need to ensure instructions are understood and complied with by all volunteers regardless of whether the task has been undertaken previously.
25. When using third party groups the same policies should be implemented to ensure volunteers are adequately prepared and site-specific issues taken into account. The responsibility remains that of the AONB Service to provide continuity.

### **Training**

26. Volunteers are to be given the appropriate training for the task/project they are to undertake. All hand tools or equipment to be used by volunteers should be assessed by the postholder responsible for volunteering. It is their responsibility (with help from other members of staff) to ensure equipment is in good working order.

27. Ensure safe working practices are followed and best practice guidelines followed. Use external resources to supplement SCC policies e.g. AFAG guidelines.
28. The AONB Service will provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when deemed necessary. Ideally, the use of hand tools should be accompanied by the individual wearing steel toe-capped boots. For one off events or when no/low risk is identified, stout footwear should be worn and the risk of injury highlighted. The responsibility to check the PPE should be shared between the individual (monthly) and the AONB Service (annually). The PPE ultimately remains the property of the AONB Service.
29. If individuals provide their own PPE then AONB staff should inspect the equipment before use to ensure it adequately covers the risk and is in good working condition.
30. Within the AONB Service volunteers are not permitted to use any power tools unless specifically told to do so and appropriate training (in-house or external) has been given and if appropriate, certification approved by a member of staff.
31. Training is sometimes offered to volunteers but this should be used as a supplementary tool. Training should never be used as a reward or a motivator. Be clear about what is on offer when discussing volunteer roles and the likelihood and type of qualification that may be offered.
32. The Full-time volunteer (FTV) is offered certain training as part of their commitment. This is a reciprocal relationship with the AONB Service and will depend on numerous factors/requirements. This should be discussed with partnership organisations before the FTV is advertised or starts their post.

## **Protection**

33. The AONB Service is responsible for all action undertaken by its volunteers or any third party volunteers it uses. Volunteers are expected to act professionally and avoid confrontational situations when volunteering. Volunteers are advised to walk away and/or seek out a member of the AONB Service if situations do occur. Personal safety is paramount.
34. When PPE is provided it is the responsibility of the volunteer to ensure they use it correctly. Regular checks by AONB staff will be made throughout the task. The volunteer should be made aware that if they are unsure of correct usage of PPE they should speak to a member of the AONB Service.
35. When volunteering with children (individuals under the age of 18 years old) or vulnerable adults it is advised that sensible protection measures are in place. A specific working with children or vulnerable adults risk

assessment should also be undertaken. These should also be carried out when dealing with third party volunteers.

### **Reporting accidents, near misses or injuries**

36. Any near misses, accidents and/or injuries should be reported immediately to the AONB staff member leading the task. It is the responsibility of that member of staff to gain the appropriate details on the incident and report this to the AONB Manager as soon as possible. The incident should then be processed in accordance to SCC regulations and policies (currently through EEC – see appendix C). The AONB Manager will then conduct an investigation following HS018 procedures. Third parties should report any incidents or accidents to AONB staff. All details must remain highly confidential.

### **Insurance**

37. The AONB Service and its volunteers are insured through SCC. Volunteers are only covered by this insurance if they are acting on the request of an AONB staff member. Additional cover may be required if volunteers are working around a contractor. Suitable insurance must be in place when using third party volunteers and a copy of the insurance certificate made available to the AONB Service.
38. If volunteers are acting on their own initiative then SCC insurance does not cover them. They must have their own policy in place. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) arranges insurance cover to groups that join their community network. This may not be appropriate for low risk activities such as walks and surveys. The responsibility lies with third party organisation to consult with the AONB Service to determine whether insurance is necessary.
39. If third party volunteers are being used to carry out work they should be assessed before or during the task/project to ensure it is to be of satisfactory quality. The AONB Service should also reiterate that once a structure has been installed or land altered, the liability is the responsibility of the third party organisation.
40. It may be necessary to clarify liability and ongoing maintenance responsibility before third party volunteers are used for a project.

## **Supporting Volunteers within the AONB Service**

### **Administration**

41. All applicants should fill out and return an application form (see appendix D) if working directly with the AONB Service. A medical questionnaire should also be included to highlight any medical or special needs

volunteers may feel should be highlighted. Volunteers should be informed that in signing an application form they give their consent to photographs being taken and used by the AONB Service. Information collected in application forms should be relevant to the tasks to be covered, treated as confidential and stored (in a secure locked cabinet or draw) in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Information should be checked regularly (annually) and updated accordingly.

42. If the AONB Service is using third party volunteers it is assumed that the organisation in charge will have these details available and advise as required.
43. All volunteers need to sign a “sign in” sheet to show they understand the health and safety issues on site and will work to AONB Service policies and procedures.
44. AONB staff will record hours and tasks undertaken by volunteers and inform the member of staff responsible for volunteers. A database will be updated regularly to highlight tasks completed, who attends and if any problems occur. To help aid this process a volunteer hours sheet has been produced (see appendix E). This information will also help to provide valuable data and help recognise the work volunteers have done.
45. Records of training and any certification relevant to the AONB Service and the duties being undertaken should be kept on file. These should be kept up to date and information regarding competence/training made available to relevant members of the AONB Service.
46. The volunteers should receive regular updates from the AONB Service. This could be directly through the newsletter (produced by the full time volunteer), updates of the management plan, or through inviting them to the Annual Event/Joint Advisory Committee (when applicable).

## **Induction**

47. Volunteers who are enquiring about undertaking work with the AONB Service in any capacity should already have completed an application form. When this initial contact is made a brief discussion into type and suitability for volunteering should be talked about. This contact will help to determine whether the AONB Service is a suitable organisation for the potential volunteer. The relationship must be a reciprocal allowing both the volunteer and the AONB Service to benefit.
48. The formality of the introduction is largely dependant on the position to be held by a volunteer. For example, the Full time volunteer who will be representing the AONB Service should have a more in-depth induction than a day volunteer.
49. When volunteers first work with the AONB Service it is important to ensure an induction is completed. This should include the day-to-day operations,

policies and documentation that affect volunteers and task/project specific details. An induction checklist (see appendix F) should be completed and signed off for the full time volunteer and any volunteer working on a self-lead project.

## **Cancellation of task**

50. If a task is to be cancelled then the decision lies with the supervising member of staff. The decision should take into account; why the tasks has to be cancelled, is there an alternative available, has everyone been informed. Only when all factors have been accounted for can a task be signed off as being cancelled. It is essential to have all contact details up to date to ensure volunteers do not make unnecessary journeys etc. Cancellation should always been used as a last measure.

## **Expenses**

51. All AONB Service volunteers are entitled to claim expenses (see appendix G). The appropriate paperwork MUST be completed before a claim can be submitted. Volunteers should complete a Drivers Risk assessment (currently version F14a) and have the appropriate paperwork in place ensuring they are adequately covered if claiming for mileage. There are three options available for mileage but in all circumstance paperwork must be signed to acknowledge receipt. The options are;
- Paperwork is completed. Business insurance, MOT and endorsement sections are completed and meet requirements. If volunteer has more than 5 points then additional training maybe required. This is at the AONB manager's discretion. In this example a volunteer would be entitled to claim mileage expenses and use their vehicle for AONB tasks.
  - Paper work is completed but volunteers do not possess business insurance. For this example a volunteer can use their car for AONB tasks but are unable to claim expenses.
  - Paper work is named and signed. The volunteer has verified that they have received the paperwork but do not wish to use their car for AONB tasks and therefore cannot claim expenses.
52. Additional expenses (other than mileage) can be claimed; e.g. overnight stays, food, parking but must be agreed first and have the AONB manager's permission.
53. An honorarium can be paid to volunteers to cover costs incurred whilst undertaking a compulsory requirement. These expenses do not and should never be implied as a payment for services. These expenses are given on a case-by-case basis.
54. When working with third parties the organisation should cover the costs incurred. This should be discussed before a task is undertaken and a formal agreement put into place if necessary. When the shared volunteers (Quantock Countryside Volunteers) are used then the cost of expense lies with the organisation in charge of that particular task or project.

55. If volunteers on benefits, allowances or credits were to claim expenses then it would be advisable to inform them to consult with their benefit provider to ensure they are not jeopardising their situation.

## **Clothing**

56. New volunteers should be given instructions to wear old garments on tasks and stout footwear. The responsibility of clothing for third parties remains with their organisation unless agreed in writing with the AONB Service beforehand.

57. Volunteers who are in a role of responsibility and who interact with members of the public may be given uniform to wear to help identify them. These garments remain the property of the AONB Service and should be returned at the end of the volunteering period.

58. The shared group, run in partnership with the National Trust, also distributes uniform. These uniforms are only for use whilst undertaking Quantock Countryside Volunteers (QCV) Tasks. They remain the property of the AONB Service and should be returned at the end of the volunteering period.

59. Any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) given out to volunteers whilst with the AONB Service should be retained by the volunteer and is their responsibility while they continue to volunteer for the AONB Service. A post holder for volunteers should be notified of broken/defected goods and the PPE should be returned if it becomes damaged or no longer fit for purpose. When the volunteer leaves the AONB Service PPE should be returned.

60. PPE for individual and group AONB Service volunteers should be assigned to an individual and supporting documentation should be in place. A delegated representative of the AONB Service should undertake regular checks of volunteer PPE and other safety equipment.

## **Incentives**

61. The AONB Service does not offer incentives or rewards and volunteers should not expect these for taking part in AONB Service or QCV tasks. Volunteers should be offered appreciation, through social events, letters or press releases or expenses to reimburse costs covered whilst volunteering.

62. If members of staff receive gifts from volunteers then they are advised to inform the AONB manager to ensure they are complying with SCC policy.

## **Training**

63. All volunteers should be offered some form of training whenever possible, whether that is to a recognised standard or in-house training. Volunteer supervisors should acknowledge the current ability of the volunteer and provide training to complement or further this.
64. Any training should be relevant to the work and duties that volunteers are likely to undertake. Training should not be used as a reward or made dependant on future service commitments.
65. As part of the FTV role training is given if a suitable candidate can be found. The training is offered to each placement though specifics details will differ.

### **Feedback**

66. Whenever possible feedback should be gained from volunteers whether this is on an informal basis or as part of an exit interview. Where appropriate a feedback form should be used to ensure volunteers are treated equally and given the chance to improve the service the AONB offers.
67. Casual feedback when on site or undertaking tasks should also be taken in to consideration.
68. A response in writing should be given if appropriate.

### **Complaints Procedures**

69. Any volunteer wishing to air a grievance or make a complaint must follow SCC policy. In the first instance the volunteer should inform the AONB Manager and further action will be taken as required. A work diary relating to the individual case should be kept.

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

70. If a supervising member of staff considers there may have been misconduct on the volunteer's part then they must follow SCC policy used for employees. Keeping a work diary to record important information is also advised as well as informing the AONB Manager. Dependant upon the severity of the misconduct the process will usually be initiated with a verbal warning, followed by a written warning and/or suspension of the volunteer. This is followed by the volunteer being asked to leave if the warnings are not adhered to. In cases of gross misconduct volunteers will be required not to attend any task while an investigation is carried out.
71. If the misconduct is concerned with assault or theft, then the police and/or appropriate authorities should be informed.

### **Volunteer Manager Training**

72. Appropriate training and resources should be made available to the managers or supervisors of volunteers. On going training and updating policies should involve staff members.
73. Where applicable volunteers can be trained to provide additional support but must be treated with caution to ensure volunteers and the AONB Service are still gaining the best experience possible.

### **Presentation to Volunteers and third parties**

74. When working with volunteers it is vital to present a good image of the AONB Service. When organising a task/event it is essential to ensure the supervising AONB staff are;
- Prepared – Paperwork to be completed before-hand, including risk assessments & site specific risk assessment
  - Relevant paperwork should be taken out onto site including but not exclusively risk assessments and CoSHH forms
  - Begin the task on time allowing a period beforehand to prepare & set up
  - Undertake a tool talk and site safety briefing highlighting any issues on site. Any paperwork must be signed and kept for records
  - Provide a summary at the end of the day and give feedback to the group volunteers

**Appendix A: Quantock Hills AONB Service Volunteer Agreement**

Volunteers are an important and valued part of the Quantock Hills AONB Service. We hope that you enjoy volunteering with us and feel a full part of our team. This agreement tells you what you can expect from us, and what we hope from you. We aim to be flexible, so please let us know if you would like to make any changes and we will do our best to accommodate them.

**The Organisation**

**We, Quantock Hills AONB Service, will do our best:**

- to introduce you to how the organisation works, your role in it and provide any training deemed necessary whilst with us.
- to provide volunteers with a main point of contact so that you can tell us if you are happy with how your tasks are organised and get feedback from us.

Your manager's/supervisor's name is .....

- to respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them.
- to reimburse your travel at a rate of.....p/mile.
- to consult with you and keep you informed of possible changes.
- to insure you whilst undertaking work you have been asked to do.
- to provide a safe workplace and provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- to undertake an equal opportunities approach.
- to apply our complaints procedure if there are any problems.

**The individual**

**I ,....., agree to do my best:**

- to work reliably to the best of my ability, and to give as much warning as possible whenever I cannot work when expected
- to follow Quantock Hill AONB Service's rules and procedures, including health and safety, equal opportunities and confidentiality.

Individual signature .....

AONB Staff Member.....

AONB signature.....

## Appendix D: Volunteer Information Form

### CONFIDENTIAL

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Tel No. Day:</b>	
<b>Evening:</b>	
<b>Mobile:</b>	
<b>E-mail:</b>	
<b>Areas of interest:</b> Could you indicate your preferences below (1 being primary interest; 6 being least interest). If you are not interested in a particular task area please leave the box blank.	
<b>Admin</b>	
<b>Practical Conservation</b>	
<b>Research and Monitoring</b>	
<b>Recreation &amp; Events</b>	
<b>Rangers/Visitor Management</b>	
<b>Formal Education</b>	

**Relevant Skills, Qualifications, Experience and interests:**

**Do you have a current driving licence**

**Availability:**

**Emergency contact**

**Name/Address:**

**Tel. No:**

**Relationship:**

**Comments/Questions:**

**Signature**

**(or parent/guardian if under 18 years old):**

.....

Appendix E:  
**Quantock Hills AONB Service**  
**Volunteer Hours Recording Sheet**



TASK / LOCATION		DATE
START TIME	END TIME	
NAMES OF VOLUNTEERS		
COMMENTS (how has the task gone, was task completed, follow up work required, other issues?)		
Tools Damaged / Need Repair / Need Replacing		
Signed	Dated	

# Induction checklist



Name .....

Date of starting .....

Induction completed.....Yes/No

(Signature).....

	Date	Initials	Comments
<p><b>Introduction to the AONB Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who's who (Show diagram)</li> <li>• Partner organisations &amp; relationships</li> <li>• History of AONB &amp; Volunteering</li> <li>• Services</li> <li>• Funding structure</li> </ul>			
<p><b>The role</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Projects/Opportunities</li> <li>• Working Hours inc Breaks</li> <li>• Co-workers</li> <li>• Supervision in the role</li> <li>• Holidays &amp; Sickness</li> <li>• Disciplinary procedure</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Catch up sessions                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Procurement &amp; stationary</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
<p><b>Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoking policy</li> <li>• General behaviour/dress code</li> <li>• Telephone calls</li> <li>• Storage/toilets</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Health and safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of hazards – any particular to type of work</li> <li>• Protective clothing – supply, duty of care &amp; replacement</li> <li>• Safety rules</li> <li>• Emergency procedures</li> <li>• Layout - Location of exits etc</li> <li>• Dangerous substances or processes</li> <li>• Reporting of accidents</li> <li>• First aid/First aid contacts</li> <li>• Introduction to health &amp; safety representative</li> </ul>			

## Appendix G: Expenses

1. Following a review, the AONB Service has decided to up date its volunteer's expenses policy. All AONB Service volunteers are entitled to claim any necessary expenses or mileage incurred whilst in the duty of their role.
2. Expenses are only paid directly to the volunteer's bank account and any claim must be supported by relevant documentation (e.g. parking vouchers, receipts etc). Appropriate paperwork and details must be completed before the claim is submitted. All volunteer expenses should be checked and authorised by a member of the AONB Service before being processed.
3. Volunteers can submit an expense claim for 12 months from the date the expense occurs or by the end of the financial year, whichever is soonest. Any claims after 12 months/into the next financial year is subject to a review and likely to be rejected.
4. Volunteers have a responsibility for their own tax records and National Insurance contributions with regards to money paid for mileage. In order to help, the rate of mileage paid to volunteers is lower than the National Expenses Allowance. Currently (October 2010) this is £0.30p per mile irrespective of motor vehicle capacity.
5. If volunteers are claiming for use of a motorcycle or a bicycle then rates are correspondingly lower. The claimant must still ensure adequate insurance and road worthy documents (where applicable) are in place before a claim is submitted.
6. All volunteers claiming mileage expenses (Casual or Honorarium) will be required to fill in a Drivers Risk Assessment (currently an F14a form). It is a self-declaration form and by completing and returning the form volunteers are verifying their details.
7. The volunteers mileage expenses are categorised into two groups;
  - Honorarium – Is given to volunteers who make a needed regular journey as a token amount to cover costs.
  - Casual – Mileage claimed on a task by task basis
8. Honorarium expenses will be paid to volunteers to cover costs incurred whilst undertaking a compulsory/needed requirement. These expenses do not and should never be implied as a payment for services. These expenses are given on a case-by-case basis.
9. There are three options available for casual mileage claims but in all circumstance paperwork must be signed to acknowledge receipt. The options are;

- Paperwork is completed. Business insurance, MOT and endorsement sections are completed and meet requirements. If volunteer has more than 5 points then additional training maybe required. This is at the AONB manager's discretion. In this example a volunteer would be entitled to claim mileage expenses and use their vehicle for AONB tasks.
  - Paper work is completed but volunteers do not possess business insurance. For this example a volunteer can use their car for AONB tasks but are unable to claim expenses.
  - Paper work is named and signed. The volunteer has verified that they have received the paperwork but do not wish to use their car for AONB tasks and therefore cannot claim expenses.
10. A casual mileage claim can commence from the meeting place of the AONB task and include the mileage accumulated during the task. The claim can also include the mileage to return to meeting point unless distance home is lower.
  11. Where two or more volunteers are travelling to the same destination by car, transport must be shared wherever possible. In order to encourage volunteers to share transport, a passenger supplement will be payable to the driver of the vehicle. Currently this is an additional 5p per mile (October 2010). Volunteers must ensure their insurance policy covers this issue.
  12. If volunteers are asked to use their own vehicle, those with business insurance and who have claimed before should be asked first. Then individuals who have given details but do not wish to claim then the remaining individuals. In the first instance an AONB Service vehicle should be used. Appropriate training and authority must be gained beforehand.
  13. All certification and forms will be reviewed on an annual basis. If volunteers update or change details relating to their personal circumstance or vehicles they must inform the AONB Service before submitting the next claim.
  14. All volunteer expenses are subject to review and updates in documentation.

To: Quantock Hills JAC

From: Tim Russell, Senior Ranger

Subject: Rangers Report

4 February 2011

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## 1.0 Introduction

This report covers the six month period July to Dec 2010. The main body of the report will be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. Rangers have been involved in a wide range of duties and activities in Management Plan delivery throughout this period. Their involvement broadly covers habitat, access, visitor and events management. The report period covers three distinct seasons: summer, autumn and winter.

## 2.0 Practical Management, Commons Management:

- **Bracken.** Around 100 hectares of bracken were sprayed in the summer to 'tidy up' small areas that were missed in 2009 and some extra areas were treated. The aerial spraying company came back and finished off the work for free.
- **Rhododendron.** Significant rhododendron clearance has taken place at Vinny Combe. This is work that has been contracted out by the National Trust and funded through Natural England to limit the potential spread of Phytopthera. Rhododendron is a major host for the disease and the dense stands in Vinny Combe posed a major threat to harbouring and then spreading the disease into the nationally important Quantock Site of Special Scientific Interest (potentially threatening woodland and heathland communities).
- Further areas of rhododendron control have also been taking place on Aisholt Common, again with funding from Natural England. The future management and conservation of Aisholt Common is hopefully being addressed now with a HLS arrangement with Natural England, the landowner and Quantock Commoners Association.

## 3.0 Somerset County Council Amenity Land:

- **Cothelstone Hill.** Further access improvements were made to the Circular Trail around Cothelstone Hill and drainage works on the main footpath to the top. Volunteers have also assisted with bramble topping, corral repairs and scrub removal.
- **Over Stowey Customs Common.** Volunteers completed some extremely valuable woodland management work in the sessile oak woods on this important SCC owned SAC. Young beech trees were taken out as these pose a long term threat to the native oak woodland and open heathland areas. Beech trees can spread quickly and cast a dense shade, excluding most of our native species, if not weeded out when they are manageable the area could become dominated by beech trees over time, changing the ecological make up and character of the area.

### **3.0 Access & Visitor Management**

- 3.1** Promoted routes work has included route assessment of the Greenway around Enmore, with the intention of slightly re-routing the section near Enmore Castle. New finger posts have been put in on the Greenway at Plainsfield, Friarn and Bincombe.
- 3.2** Following the JAC request at the July meeting the AONB Service is currently drafting a policy on camping within the AONB. This is currently being discussed with landowners and will be brought to the July 2011 JAC for discussion and approval.

### **4.0 Events & Events Management**

- 4.1** AONB Service events for the public this period included: Nightjar watching, Archaeology walk, Wild Stories for Wild Children, Bat walk, Star Gazing, Ridge walk, Fabulous Fungi and Deer Rut walks. Forestry Commission and National Trust events included Wild Play days, charcoal making, Halloween walk, and Autumn Glory forest walk. Andy Harris continues to co-ordinate organised events on the hill in his Partnership Ranger role with the AONB and Forestry Commission.

### **5.0 Rangers**

- 5.1** It has been a busy period for rangers trying to balance visitor use and habitat protection, as well as providing events for the public. Snow fall on the hills always adds extra attention to visitor use and general logistics of hill management and Management Plan delivery are obviously affected.
- 5.2** In September, Andy Harris ran a very informative training day for the Countryside Management Association called 'Paths and Pathogens' on the threats and management of phytophthora and also issues relating to mountain bike use of Forestry Commission land. The day was attended by countryside managers and rangers from across the region.
- 5.3** The AONB Service was recently asked to contribute to a BBC Countryfile programme focussing on Somerset. The piece broadcast highlighted the grazing on Cothelstone Hill by Exmoor Ponies (Somerset County Council Amenity Land) as a successful example of conservation management grazing.
- 5.4** Rangers along with other staff members continue to contribute to a regular blog on the Quantock Hills AONB website, and according Google Analytical, these are particularly popular in terms of 'visit hits'.
- 5.5** Rangers have attended or run a number of meetings/visits over the report period, including: Police & Conservation Bodies, Quantock Commons Management Group, Friends of Quantock, Countryside Management Association.
- 5.6** Somerset County Council's Chief Executive, Sheila Wheeler visited the AONB Team in August and managed a brief look around the hills.

**Tim Russell – Senior Ranger**

**Andy Harris – Partnership Ranger**