

Fyne Court  
Broomfield  
Bridgwater  
TA5 2EQ

**Q**uantock Hills  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

at

**2.15pm**

in the

**Crowcombe Village Hall**

To: The Members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Quantock Hills AONB Support Assistant, Katy Coate: tel 01823 451884, email [klcoate@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:klcoate@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 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011** (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 Acting AONB Manager (Paper A)**
6. **Local Nature Partnerships – An update by Chris Mayes, Natural England**
7. **Future Directions (Paper B)**
8. **Report on Camping Policy (Paper C)**
9. **Report of the Rangers (Paper D)**
8. **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 Quantock Hills AONB Support Assistant, Katy Coate: tel 01823 451884, email [klcoate@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:klcoate@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 Quantock Hills AONB Support Assistant, Katy Coate: tel 01823 451884, email [klcoate@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:klcoate@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 Katy Coate, 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.

(18 November 2011)

## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held in Nether Stowey Church Centre, Nether Stowey on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at 2.15pm.

### **Present**

Somerset County Council	Mr A H Trollope-Bellew
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Mrs J Warmington Mr B Nottrodt
West Somerset Council	Mr H Davies
Sedgemoor District Council	Mrs J Pay Mr J Swayne
Parish Representatives	Mr P Greig Mr T Ayres Mrs J Sansom
Natural England	Mr C Mayes
Friends of Quantock	Mrs L Kelly
Forestry Commission	Mr N Salter
SLAF	Mr R Conway
CLA	Mr H Warmington

### **Also Present**

Mr C Edwards (SCC Officer), Mr A Hughes (Friends of Quantock), Mr J Edwards (Spaxton PC), CSGT G Beilby (40 Commando RM), Andy Harris (FC/AONB Partnership Ranger)

Apologies were received from Mrs E Waymouth (TDBC), Mr M Caswell (SDC), Mrs D Salvidge (Quantock Commoners Association), Mr S Dowding (WSC), Mr J Edney (SCC), Dr P Radford (Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society), Mrs A Lamplough (WSC officer), Melanie Squire (NFU), Jo Pearson (Cheddon Fitzpaine PC)

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

77. The Chairman declared that he is also a West Somerset Councillor.

### **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

78. (1) The Minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2011 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

## **Matters arising**

### **Minute 73 (2) – Fly Tipping**

(2) John Swayne reported that although there has been a decrease in 3 of the districts, 2 of the districts are still experiencing a 100% increase. Strangely the overall tonnage going to landfill is the same. SDC are managing to collect within 24hrs. Although attention is drawn to the fact that this is purely for tipping on public land not private. Hugh Warmington confirmed that although he hasn't seen a great increase it is still an ongoing significant problem, especially on hard to access part of land.

### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

79. John Edwards (Spaxton PC) re the Pathwatch Scheme, drew attention to the fact that at no point on the Pathwatch Scheme website does it say that off road vehicle use is illegal (unless you have landowner permission). He felt this was a key message in the potential success of the scheme and also important in light of the Trail Riders Associations interest in applying for various Restricted Byways to be reclassified as Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT). *John Swayne agreed to discuss this issue and potential alteration of wording on website with Andy Whysall on 8<sup>th</sup> December.*

### **REPORT OF ACTING AONB MANGER**

80. The JAC considered the activity report (Paper A) by the Acting AONB Manager. Attention was drawn to SCC request for a 9 month extension to the secondment of Chris Edwards with SCC; the continuation of the secondment was agreed by the JAC committee.

81. A progress report of the successful SDF applications will be brought to the next JAC.

82. With regard to Local Nature Partnerships, Chris Edwards added that the nature of the partnership is being looked at and it is something that is intended to work in a strategic way, at a fairly senior level; a cabinet member will be likely to represent SCC.

83. Hugh Davies apologised for WSC slow response regarding the Statement of Intent.

### **BUSINESS PLAN 2012/13 WORKSHOP SESSION**

84. The JAC considered the Business Plan Development report (Paper B) by the Acting AONB Manager. Following on from this the JAC were allocated into one of 3 groups and asked to prioritise the 15 research or projects delivery areas of work, which aim to cover the outstanding action points from the 2009-14 Management Plan.

85. Iain Porter clarified to the JAC that the use of the word 'spare' capacity in his report was misleading and clarified that 'delivery' capacity would be more suitable; meaning the capacity each member of staff has to deliver each project or research area in 2012/13.

86. The recommendation outlined at the end of Iain's report was agreed by the JAC.

At workshop end Andy Harris, CSGT G Beilby and Hugh Warmington had to leave.

## LANDSCAPE PLANNING OFFICER REPORT

### Hinkley Point C

87. The AONB Service has consulted on everything received to date in relation to the Environmental Statement. The final statement will be made public at the end of November. Emma-Jane thanked Chris Mayes for his time and involvement with the AONB during the consultation process.

88. Emma-Jane confirmed to John Swayne that she would have the opportunity to feed into the local impact report (produced by 3 councils) which will go to the IPC in relation to the final application (and environmental statement).

89. The Chair reported that the Major Infrastructure Unit will be visiting in due course for anyone to voice their concerns / opinions about Hinkley C, this will be publicised nearer the time.

90. Emma-Jane confirmed to Terry Ayres that she has submitted comments at all key stages of the consultation in relation to methodology and the landscape/visual impact but as yet there is no final application to comment on. Emma-Jane and Chris Mayes they have been critical of the product the consultants are delivering and their approach to the visual impact assessment. Emma-Jane's concern has been that the consultants give as representative as possible, an impression of the predicted impact on the Quantock Hills, via the representative viewpoints and the judgments they are making in terms of visual impact. In Emma-Jane's opinion the consultant have been making judgements which are too beneficial or neutral towards the development and suggesting the impact to be less than the AONB and NE believe it will be.

91. Terry Ayres asked about impacts of the development other than visual and whether the AONB has commented. Emma-Jane confirmed that she has commented on the jetty application in relation to lighting and an audible alarm, and also all other associated development such as campus accommodation sites, park and ride schemes and developments at J24. Emma-Jane has also submitted comments highlighting the impacts of increased use of rural roads through the AONB. John Swayne added that a transport forum, based in Taunton, has been formed looking at some of these issues including the consequences of the closure of the A39 for any reason. The Chairman felt that all groups and parish councils had voiced their concerns and commented as best they could and if any of the contentious proposals are still within the final application it will have to be dealt with once publically available.

92. Chris Mayes thanked Emma-Jane for her help with the interpretation of these issues, her contribution and hard work has made Natural England's job far easier. He commented that their united front has succeeded in making some changes to the consultation which really was quite unsatisfactory to begin with.

93. John Swayne added that the difficulties with the landowner regarding the signing of Section 106 for the earth works have been overcome and the agreement should be signed today. However the presence of bats in some of the barns may hold up commencement of any works.

## **National Grid**

94. The Chairman added that from an AONB perspective the option of under sea cabling would have led to a very large converter building on this side of the coast so visually more of an impact than the proposed over land option. Emma-Jane added that the size of the pylons coming from Hinkley will not change, however there will be 3 new pylons allowing an extension into Hinkley C (exact locations not yet decided). Emma-Jane has sent various questions to clarify points, including the size of these new pylons, to the first of the thematic meeting taking place on the 21<sup>st</sup> November.

## **Collaborative AONB Working**

95. This idea was responded to positively by all of the JAC

## **Planning Applications (consultation and monitoring)**

96. Emma-Jane will aim to report at the next JAC she attends as to how many of those applications granted within the AONB had strong comments or objections submitted.

97. Hugh Davies asked if the AONB is ever consulted on licensing activity, Emma-Jane responded that licensing applications would be outside the AONB's remit unless consultation is requested from the local authority. The AONB generally will act on notifications of concern from rangers and the public if relevant.

98. The JAC noted the report by Emma-Jane.

## **Feedback from Workshop**

99. Brief feedback by Iain, consistency regarding the continuing project development of farmland fringes and orchards projects. Areas the JAC still wanted to see done but maybe in the final year of the management plan, highways and access. Areas or works to drop included circular walks and quarries. Iain will build these thoughts into the business plan and post out when it goes to Defra. A more robust version of the Business Plan will be bought formally to the next JAC on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY**

NONE

(The meeting closed at 4.30pm)

The Chairman

Qhjac.mins 18 November 2011

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager

**Date:** 10 February 2012

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

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1. 2011 – 12 Business Plan – Progress.

- a. The 2011/12 Quantock Hills AONB Service business plan was signed off in April 2011. *Please contact Iain Porter for full copies.* Appendix A1 highlights progress against actions from the Business Plan, **KEY:** Smile – Complete or on target. Straight face – Progress made. Unhappy face – no progress or not on target.

2. Statement of Intent

- a. Requirement of DEFRA grant is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between all core funding partners (Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council). Due to partner reluctance in signing a MoU Quantock Hills AONB has pursued a Statement of Intent.
- b. All partners have now agreed wording of Statement of Intent (appendix A2). Currently the statement is going through the internal processes within the local authorities to ensure signing by the end of March.
- c. The statement of intent requires that a ring fenced budget is kept to cover the redundancy costs of the AONB Service team. This has been found from this year's budget by not progressing 2 projects. Somerset County Council (host authority) has agreed that this fund can be carried forward over financial years as an 'Earmarked Reserve'.

3. Office Working Group Reporting

- a. Meeting held 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012. Discussion included Future Directions progress, Local authority funding for 2012/13 and beyond, 2012/13 Business Plan including headline areas of work and Defra grant application.

4. Quantock Hills AONB Staffing

- a. In line with the JAC recommendation (November 2011) Chris Edwards will continue in his secondment as Group Manager at Somerset County Council until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. The 2012/13 Business Plan has been developed to take account of this continued secondment.
- b. Landscape Planning Officer. The landscape planning officer is a part-time post (2 days per week) which is insufficient to deliver all areas of work currently identified. To manage this the AONB Service will prioritise strategic areas of work such as the Landscape Character Assessment (required for the review of the Management Plan due to start December 2012) and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) inline with the priorities set by the JAC at the November 2010 committee meeting. For a period, likely to be 9-12 months, the Landscape Planning Officer will not submitting detailed comments on planning applications, unless there is thought to be a significant impact. The local planning authorities have been made aware of this and asked to inform the AONB Service of planning applications they feel might have a significant impact upon the AONB.

- c. Partnership Ranger. The Forestry Commission are currently restructuring their area and staffing structures as part of the savings to be made under the CSR. The West Somerset Beat has joined with the East Devon Beat and Nick Salter is the Area Forester for this much larger beat. It is not anticipated that this will have an effect on the Partnership Ranger's AONB role, however the FC role may need to change to reflect the larger beat. Iain and Nick will continue to monitor to ensure the partnership post delivers as effectively as it has for the past 10 years.
5. Adaptation Plan.
- a. The adaptation plan is an output from the Future Directions Working Group. It includes 7 areas of work, the main one being the change to a more sustainable operating model. Other areas of work currently being undertaken include:
    - i. ICT provision – seeking approval from SCC that the AONB Service can investigate external ICT provision. The aim is to procure the most cost effective ICT for the AONB Service.
    - ii. Increased local liaison through existing mechanisms or where none exist investigation and development of
  - b. *For further information please contact Iain Porter.*
6. Sustainable Development Fund.
- a. The SDF for 2011/12 is £45,000. Due to a project coming back in there is significant under spend in the SDF. We have vied this across to the project budget and are looking to take forward projects that were on hold due to the creation of the Earmarked Reserve required by the Statement of Intent.
  - b. The SDF panel currently consists of Mark Anderson, Jane Birch and the John Swayne vice-chair of the JAC.
  - c. *SDF Contact: Owen Jones*
7. Local Nature Partnership (LNP)
- a. In late December the partnership putting forward a bid to develop a Somerset LNP was awarded £25,000 to develop a sustainable Somerset wide LNP by June 2012. Appendix A3 contains a briefing on the latest progress from the partnership.
8. AONB Service Budget 2011 – 12
- a. Core budget (Table 1) is on track with current expenditure at 70%. Expected full expenditure at end of year.
  - b. Viaments required from other costs into vehicle maintenance to cover repair to ranger vehicle and partnership budget into salaries. Salaries expenditure higher than budgeted due to increases in superannuation and National Insurance which were not known when budgets set in November 2010.
  - c. Expenditure associated with partnership running costs and partnership budget is weighted towards of end of year and has been amended to take into account viaments to other budget lines.
  - d. Income from events lower than anticipated. Event expenditure reduced to take account of reduced income.
  - e. Current SDF expenditure, Table 2, low due to nature of SDF and the fact that many projects are still happening and have not entered claims. Note reduction in SDF budget to take account of applications which are not going ahead.

- f. Project budget increased to take account of reduction in SDF budget – AONB can match Defra funding at 50% for projects. Requirement to have earmarked reserve to cover redundancies, currently estimated to be £34,000 for 2011/12 year, though this will need to increase to £37,000 for 2012/13. New project budget £23,250 with £6,726 expenditure. The project expenditure is low as budget was only released at beginning of January following assessment of SDF applications.

Table 1: Quantock Hills AONB: Core Budget & Expenditure

	Budget	Exp	%
AONB Manager	0	0	-
Deve'T Officer	37,510	29,472	78%
Landscape Planner	14,910	11,344	76%
Ranger	36,730	28,017	76%
Partnership Ranger	30,985	23,382	75%
Volunteer Coordinator	20,644	16,796	81%
Comms Officer	9,589	7,419	77%
Support Assistant	10,251	7,731	75%
Accommodation	10,145	6,677	66%
Travel & Training	19,076	12,724	67%
Partnership Running Costs	9,930	4,737	48%
Partnership Budget	11,400	1,854	16%
Other costs	8,500	2,843	33%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>219,671</b>	<b>154,585</b>	<b>70%</b>

Table 2: Quantock Hills AONB: Project Budget & Expenditure

	Budget	Exp	%
SDF	33,375	4,363	%
Projects	23,250	6,726	%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50,125</b>	<b>11,089</b>	<b>%</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The JAC notes the report.

## **APPENDIX A1: 2011/12 Business Plan – Progress.**

<b>ACTION POINT</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestone / Target</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
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.	☺	Though nationally ES has been reduced key schemes are still being pursued for Quantock Hills. These are mainly targeting the SSSI areas.
FWAP 4	Comment on draft SAC Woodland Management Plan to ensure plan with bring greatest benefit to subsequent management	Comments received and actioned	☺	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft received. Comments have been fed back.
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	☺	Reports received from Kevin Palmer & RAGS for 2011 surveys.
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	☺	Monitoring completed with 3 volunteers trained. Collating data to present report
WAP2	Implement or manage implementation by others of the Quantock Hills BAP.	10% of LBAP Targets achieved.	☺	Adder SAP signed off. Survey work identified being carried out. Need to assess value of LBAPs in light of NE changes
WAP2	Provide concise monitoring and reporting on LBAP actions	Produce a LBAP actions report	☺	Adder survey report published by RAGS.
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.	☺	Joint project on hold due to larger joint working being investigated. QHAONB involved with bat monitoring at a number of sites and looking at project development for Southern Quantock Project to start April 2012.
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 assessment from NE	Draft report produced ready for consideration by partnership	☺	Fieldwork currently occurring. Working to extended deadline of December 2012 to sync with Management Plan review.
DAP 1 DAP 4 DAP 5	Monitor planning applications in and around the AONB and identify any potential damaging developments.	Planning Database up to date and reporting back against database possible through GIS.	☺	55 applications within AONB boundary. AONB sent comments on 47, though this includes

	Comment on potentially damaging applications on behalf of the JAC	Comments sent to relevant planning authorities		significant applications outside the boundary.
DAP 2	Engage with Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation	Relevant LDF consultation responses sent	☺	Comments sent.
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	☺	Full engagement with HPC and written representation submitted.
	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.	☺	AONB planning comments on website.
	VOLUNTEERS – Continued engagement with Quantock Countryside Volunteers ensuring tasks occurring through AONB area.	3,000 volunteer hours completed.	☺	April - Dec = 3,068 volunteer hours
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	☺	6 visitor management volunteers engaged and being trained. 13 volunteer work days (91 hours) completed to date.
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.	☺	FTV Vicky Criddle started 31 <sup>st</sup> Oct. Undertaken considerable work mainly in access audits to date.
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	☹	No progress to date, project development scheduled for Spring 2012
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	☺	Due to 'clawback' some SDF has been re-allocated to projects.
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	☺	In discussion with parishes at present to look at existing mechanisms such as cluster groups.
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	☺	WSLAG now operating after DEFRA review. Current yr expenditure near completion with small projects being put forward.

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	☺	No parish initiatives coming forward, though support for a number of small parish projects.
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.	☺	Launch 13 <sup>th</sup> July. Project progress has fallen behind schedule due to issues with FAWG (current lead on project). FWAG confident that progress will be back on track during February and March 2012.
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	☺	QCMG x2 meeting QPCAWG x2
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	☺	Results from 6 <sup>th</sup> March count presented to JAC & QDMCG.
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	☺	14 events run and 5 cancelled. 219 attendees.
EAP 2	Distribute AONB Visitor Guide through the LIPs distribution points	Restocking of LIPs distribution points x 4	☺	Re-stocking x3. On target.
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	☺	3 e-newsletter submitted
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 (26 blogs annually)	☺	31 blogs submitted.
	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	☺	5 press releases issued, SDF, events, lambing and ticks
	Produce and distribute a annual report to show progress against AONB Management Plan Targets	Annual Report produced and distributed by end of June 2011	☺	Annual Report produced. Distributed to JAC and partnership.
	OWG and JAC reports produced. These reports will provide monitoring against the action plan targets	3 OWG reports and 3 JAC reports produced.	☺	July and November reports produced and distributed.

	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 Management Plan. This will be overseen by a Funding & Delivery Working Group made up of 2 JAC members, officers and 2 others.	Options paper produced and favoured option agreed by partnership	☹️	Limited progress due to various reasons (elections, national led work etc). Recommendation for approach to be taken to Feb 2012 JAC.
	Write NE/DEFRA AONB bid with input from OWG and JAC partnership	NE / DEFRA bid accepted	😊	Draft business plan complete. Defra grant application submitted January 2012.
	Host 3 OWG and JAC meetings – July, November and February 2012 to allow informed and engaged ownership of partnership by JAC.	3 meetings held.	😊	On target
	Regular meetings of AONB Service team to review AONB Management activities and issues	45 meetings held.	😊	Meetings fallen off due to annual leave and new work patterns.
	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	😊	Attendance at NAAONB conference (officer & chair), SW Lead Officers meeting (Officer), NAAONB AGM (Officer), SWPLF lead officers (Officer) meeting.
	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	😊	JAC induction Sept, 8 attendees. Parish Reps meeting to be held January 2012. Commons meeting to be held next year to report on progress of HLS application.
	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.	☹️	Behind schedule due to other work commitments.
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	😊	First collection missed. Next happening now. This should not create issues but will mean reporting will be delayed.
	Provide support to the 1SW off-road cycling project with officer time for the collection	Officer time allocated and routes data vetted and agreed by AONB	😊	Surveys undertaken. Feedback given.

	of local data and input into route description as a visitor management tool			
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	☺	8 volunteers trained. Visited 8 schools and 2 more visits to occur Feb 2012.
VAP 1	Engage with event organisers to ensure notification of events occurring on the hills. Offer advice to ensure minimal adverse impact from events to the landscape, tranquillity and natural environment of the Quantock Hills	Creation of events database. Event monitoring information available through website	☺	Events database created. External event notification going out to relevant organisations.
VAP 2	Ensure on the ground presence during busy periods to engage visitors and provide information.	24 days patrol throughout year, with volunteer involvement	☺	23 patrols undertaken in report period. On target
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	☺	Database up to date. On track for GIS and hotspot identification.
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	☺	Progress made with report submitted. Initial meeting with main user group held.
<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)		☺	Promoted route audits near completion. Action plan produced. H&S assessment completed December 2011.
Finance	Undertake finance monitoring and provide reports in various formats to partners, hosts and grant giving organisations		☺	¼ reports to DEFRA & reporting to SCC
Support Activities	Undertake a range of support activities such as answering enquiries, filing, procurement etc		☺	
Line Mgt	1-1 management meetings, annual PRaD meetings staff management		☺	

## Appendix A2: Quantock Hills AONB Partnership – Statement of Intent for the period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 - March 31<sup>st</sup> 2015 (v6.1)

As local authorities covering parts of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty we; Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council and the Forestry Commission are committed to the purpose and functions of the AONB Partnership as set out in Schedule 1 – Quantock Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee Terms of Reference.

To deliver duties and obligations arising from Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 including the operation and management of an AONB Partnership (“the Partnership”), a Staff Unit (as defined in Schedule 2) to act on behalf of the Partnership and the publishing, reviewing and monitoring of the Management Plan we commit together with the other partners to provide to the best of our abilities the following contributions (years 2012/13 – 2014/15 are indicative and cannot be confirmed until the preceding January of the financial year).

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>FY 2011/12</b>	<b>FY 2012/13</b>	<b>FY 2013/14</b>	<b>FY 2014/15</b>
SCC	£21,500	£21,500	£21,500	£21,500
SDC	£11,550	£11,550	£11,550	£11,500
TDBC	£12,000	£10,000	£8,000	£8,000
WSC	£11,575	£9,956	£7,000	£6,000
FC	£17,300	£17,300	£17,300	£17,300
Defra	£186,877	£177,533	£168,656	£160,224

This is intended to give medium term security, matching Defra’s commitment to a AONB funding programme over a 4 year CSR period 2011-2015.

Contributions will be paid to the Host Authority by June 30th in each year. The host authority is Somerset County Council and thereby responsible for administration of the Partnership’s finances and employment of AONB staff.

### **In case of redundancy**

Whilst it is envisaged that Defra and Local Authority partners contributions will be sufficient to maintain the AONB staff unit and core functions, in the event of a redundancy situation the following will apply :

- Any redundancy payments legally due to AONB Core Staff under Part XI of the Employment Rights Act 1996 or other relevant legislation on termination of employment will be met by an existing specific / ring fenced Partnership budget (Earmarked Reserves) that has been allocated in 2011/12 to cover 100% of such costs.
- This budget will be maintained at a level to cover 100% of AONB Unit costs, excluding 50% redundancy cost of the Partnership Ranger (detailed in the Forestry Commission / Quantock Hills AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2008 – 2014), currently £34,738 based on 2011/2012 figures, to cover compulsory redundancy costs of the current team. This figure will be reviewed annually and the budget amended accordingly, using additional funds if required, from partner (excluding Forestry Commission) contributions pro rata to 11/12 contributions.
- Any redundancy payments legally due to the Partnership Ranger postholder under Part XI of the Employment Rights Act 1996 or other relevant legislation on termination of employment will be met as outlined in the Forestry Commission / Quantock Hills AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2008 – 2014.

### **Reduction in contributions**

Any intention to reduce funding, from the contributions indicated on page 1, should be given to the AONB and host authority no less than 6 months before the end of the financial year (31<sup>st</sup> March).

**Signed:**

**Name:**

**For and on behalf of**

## **Appendix A3: Somerset Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Briefing**

This briefing, written on behalf of the developing Somerset Local Nature Partnership (LNP), outlines the potential for a LNP in Somerset and the development work underway during 2012.

### **What is a Local Nature Partnership?**

Local Nature Partnerships are a key aspect of the Government's 2011 Natural Environment White Paper for England, which states that LNPs will *'bring a diverse range of individuals, businesses and organisations together at a local level to create a vision and plan of action of how the natural environment can be taken into account in decision making.'*

Defra intends LNPs to work alongside Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Operating at the strategic, decision-maker level, the work of LNPs can help to complement the good technical work carried out by Biodiversity Partnerships, to champion the value of nature throughout different sectors, to develop innovative ways of engaging new sectors in work to benefit nature and ecological networks, and to tackle some of the knotty challenges facing nature in local areas.

Defra launched a small fund for assisting the development and set-up of LNPs in 2011. However, there will be a separate Defra process for formal applications for LNP status – this is expected to begin in spring 2012.

### **A Local Nature Partnership for Somerset**

A number of organisations, listed at the end of this document, have so far expressed an interest in being involved in a county-wide Somerset LNP. During meetings held in 2011, it was agreed that the Somerset Local Nature Partnership needs to provide a strong voice for the natural environment in Somerset at a strategic, decision-maker level.

Three overarching outcomes for the Partnership were identified:

- A shared vision and priorities for Somerset's natural environment
- Strong environmental leadership for Somerset at the strategic level
- Strong and active connections with other sectors, leading to new environmental gain

This will help to drive forward the environmental agenda in Somerset in a way which encourages the sharing of expertise and experience, based on a common understanding and a common vision for the future of our natural environment.

The Somerset LNP will complement and require the technical support of the existing Somerset Biodiversity Partnership, Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC), and all organisations working to protect and enhance Somerset's natural environment.

### **Who should be involved?**

We want all sections of the community represented in a Somerset LNP. Defra have indicated a range of likely participants and this includes: local authorities; National Parks and AONBs; environmental charities; landowners; local businesses and business enterprise organisations; health and wellbeing organisations; educational organisations; community organisations and forums; existing biodiversity partnerships.

In particular, we are keen to broaden the sphere of influence of the Partnership to social and economic interests in Somerset that have not, until now, been aware of the many benefits of working with, and supporting, a thriving natural environment.

Organisations currently involved in development of the Somerset Local Nature Partnership include:

Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership

Sedgemoor District Council

Environment Agency  
Exmoor National Park Authority  
Forestry Commission  
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group  
Hawk and Owl Trust

Somerset Biodiversity Partnership  
Somerset County Council  
Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium  
Somerset Environmental Records Centre  
Somerset Wildlife Trust

Mendip Hills AONB Partnership  
National Health Service Somerset  
National Farmers' Union  
National Trust  
Quantock Hills AONB Partnership  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

South Somerset District Council  
Taunton Deane Borough Council  
Wessex Water  
Woodland Trust

### **Next steps in development of the Somerset LNP**

Working on behalf of all interested partner organisations, Somerset Wildlife Trust has successfully secured a small amount of funding from Defra to set-up and establish a Somerset LNP during the first half of 2012. Three main streams of work are underway:

1. Development of the LNP with the help of a consultant, involving 1:1 meetings with all stakeholders, resulting in an Issues Report. This will be followed by two facilitated workshops to debate and agree the vision, priorities, work plan, funding, governance and set-up of the LNP.
2. High level liaison to achieve buy-in from senior decision makers during the LNP development phase, including the Local Enterprise Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board.
3. Preparation of a State of Somerset's Environment Report to give a baseline on existing data and requirements. This will be undertaken by the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership, SERC and consultants on socio-economic aspects.

This development work is intended to give the embryonic Somerset Local Nature Partnership an excellent beginning when it is formed in July 2012.

*To find out more about the Somerset Local Nature Partnership, please contact:  
Lisa Schneidau, Director of Conservation at Somerset Wildlife Trust:  
[lisa.schneidau@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:lisa.schneidau@somersetwildlife.org) or 01823 652443.*

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Future Directions Working Group      **Date:** 10 February 2012

**Subject:** Quantock Hills Future Direction

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1. **Introduction.** The Future Directions Working Group was set up to investigate potential approaches to dealing with reduced exchequer funding (both local and national government) for AONBs. Exchequer funding makes up 85% of the Quantock Hills AONB core funding (revenue or operating costs) – See JAC paper A, **Sc 3**, 4 February 2011.
  - a. The group's remit is to identify options for a possible new business model to ensure that the AONB designation is conserved and enhanced and the statutory Management Plan delivered into the future.
  
2. **Work to date**
  - a. **Mapping AONB Service and Partnership activity.** Assessment of delivery of current Management Plan by AONB Service and partnership. Highlighted priority areas of work for AONB Service as well as areas of work more appropriately undertaken by other organisations / groups.
  - b. **Mapping work undertaken by others in delivery of the AONB Management Plan.** Assessment of work undertaken by other organisations or where it is necessary for the AONB to undertake an influencing role. An example is the targeting of Higher Level Stewardship, where the AONB can influence but Natural England delivery the scheme.
  - c. **Development of Adaptation Plan.** The group has create a 7 point adaptation plan which includes actions such as evaluation of IT provision, hosting, sharing staff, increasing political support. The plan is a live document which is updated as actions are achieved and new opportunities present themselves.
  - d. **Assessment of approaches by other AONBs**
    - i. **Local.** Close liaison with Mendip & Blackdown Hills AONB over their approach and assessment of joint options, such as joint volunteer coordinator post with Mendip Hills. Continued discussion to realise opportunities.
    - ii. **Regional.** Devon AONBs created adaptation plan which include joint working as well as investigation into belt-tightening measures. Evaluation of Tamar Trust as a relatively new Trust and understanding of lessons learnt.
    - iii. **National.** Engagement with NAAONB commissioned work on fund holding body establishments & assessments of raising new funds for AONB activities. Investigation and assessment of other measures taken by AONBs nationally which included 'belt-tightening' where 2 AONBs have combined their staff unit, setting up Trusts or 'Friends of' groups and the setting up of endowment funds.
  
3. **Recommended Option.** After consideration of the options (Appendix A1) the Future Directions Working Group recommends that the partnership investigate the setting up of a separate arms length body. The arms length body would have similar aims and objectives to the Quantock Hills JAC, such as conservation and enhancement of Natural Beauty.
  - a. The main reasons for this recommendation are:
    - i. Increased freedom at organisational level,

- ii. Increased ability to respond to opportunities
  - iii. Increased ability to be able to drawdown funds beyond a local authority.
  - iv. Increased ability to diversify income streams and reduce reliance upon exchequer funding.
- b. Considerations
- i. Structure / type of Arms length body: What form of arms-length body will work best? Relationships with existing structures (JAC and AONB Service). The structure, whether social enterprise, development trust or trust (charitable/non-charitable) needs to deliver the right solution based on JAC strategic ambitions. Influence / control?
  - ii. Financial: How to create income, what asset base is there, risk with project-driven grant funding, set up costs, what commercial income opportunities are there?
  - iii. Governance: Make up of board, roles and responsibilities, impact of leaving local authority systems.
  - iv. Relationship with local authorities: Common philosophy, values and outcomes for arms length body.
  - v. Staff / Cultural Change: Leadership and support, dependant upon existing cultures in local authorities. Different skill sets required? Practical considerations such as pensions, and staff transfer.
4. Consideration of options. The group has considered a number of options (see appendix B1 for full option appraisals). While these are no longer the preferred options the Future Directions Working Group may revisit them as they are not mutually exclusive.
5. Next Steps:
- a. Employment of specialist in arms length bodies to inform discussion and work with FDWG and JAC. February - July 2012.
  - b. Communication with stakeholders to gather information – workshops, face-face etc. April / May 2012.
  - c. Workshop session with JAC to discuss and decide strategic direction of any arms length body. May 2012.
  - d. Full report / briefing of JAC. July 2012
  - e. JAC decision. July 2012.
  - f. Implementation of decision July 2012 – March 2013.
6. Other information
- a. For copies of FDWG papers and appropriate reports please contact Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager. Reports available:
  - b. Evaluating delivery models for AONBs – Non Public Sector & Hybrid Options. SWPLF. October 2011.
  - c. The potential to establish a national or sub-national body to hold and channel funds for use by and within AONBs. 2MD. January 2012.
  - d. Developing a Mutual for Local Authority Service Delivery. TPP Law. November 2010.

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## Recommendation

- That the JAC approve recommendation (Sc 3) and next steps (Sc 5) for Future Directions Working Group to action.

**Appendix B1: Quantock Hills Future Directions Options:**

Objective: To address the declining public sector funding of the Quantock Hills AONB Partnership (JAC and Service) to enable the development of a organisation which is sustainable and able to achieve the vision and objectives of the AONB Management Plan.

Context:

- We know Defra funding will decrease over the CSR period by 5.4% per year.
- We are assuming that local authority funding will decrease though we are unsure of rate and timescale of this decrease.

**Option 1 – Do Nothing**

<b>Description:</b> The do nothing option, or do least possible, is a valid option. The option explores the consequences of reacting to change rather than pro-actively managing it.	
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AONB has already been ‘belt tightening’ for a number of years so discretionary funds are very limited.</li> <li>• Reactionary approach to future reduction in funding could lead to ‘knee jerk’ reaction with long term consequences.</li> <li>• Retains operating model which is primarily reliant on exchequer funding.</li> <li>• Current AONB Service model bias towards delivery, leaving limited resources for development.</li> <li>• Further reduction in funding will require changes in staffing levels.</li> </ul>	
<b>Risks:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Reacting, rather than planning for, further reduction in funding will limit options available</li> <li>2) Do nothing approach will lead to reduction in delivery – e.g. transfer of resource to undertake management plan review (a high priority) will impact on other service delivery</li> <li>3) AONB Service / Partnership loss of support as not being seen to manage issue proactively.</li> </ol>	
<b>Impact - Positive:</b>  No additional resources required.	<b>Impact - Negative:</b>  No forward planning – unable to commit further than 1 year ahead. Reduced flexibility to realise opportunities.
<b>Conclusion:</b>  Will not deliver objective. High risk with limited risk management available, low positive and high negative impacts.  <b>Do Nothing – not a viable option.</b>	

## Option 2 – Belt Tightening

### Description:

Belt tightening requires the organisations to look at all expenditure and decide if it is necessary. It is deciding what is essential and what is desirable. Belt tightening assumes that the operating model of the organisation is fit for purpose and that by reducing costs within accepted limits services can still effectively be delivered.

### Considerations:

- Quantock Hills AONB Service has been suffering cuts since 2007 which has meant the loss of one FTE post (Ranger). Budget for project work has reduced to virtually zero with much of the project work undertaken in the last 2 years through externally funding or underspend in the SDF pot. Currently majority of funding received goes to staffing costs, transport, accommodation and office costs.
- Belt tightening for Quantock Hills AONB Service will need to look at reducing staffing costs to have any real impact – change to service rather than cut. We are currently in discussions with other AONBs about shared staff but options are limited and early identified options would not reduce funding significantly if at all.
- Potential for joint AONB staff unit is limited by geographical location.
- AONB JAC / Service model seen as fit for purpose if exchequer funding is not an issue.
- Essentially AONB has been 'belt-tightening' for 4 years and on-going

### Risks:

- 1) Belt tightening can lead to inefficiency as remaining resources stretched
- 2) Limited scope for belt tightening within existing model due to reduction in funding already experienced. This will mean change to different operating model which may not be able to deliver Management Plan or achieve statutory duty on behalf of local authority partners.
- 3) Reduction in flexibility to realise other opportunities such as external funding opportunities.

### Impact - Positive

Belt-tightening will allow for future growth if exchequer funding increases  
No financial costs to implement

### Impact - Negative

No forward planning – unable to commit further than 1 year ahead.  
Reduced flexibility to realise opportunities.  
Forced operational model change

### Conclusion:

Will not deliver objective. High risk, with limited scope for management, low positive & high negative impact.

**Not a viable option due to previous belt-tightening over last 4 years**

**Option 3: Work through Trust / Friends group for project delivery and / or Community Foundation for fund holding / distribution.**

**Description:**

Develop close working relationships with existing Trust / Charity to develop and deliver projects. Potential for external group to employ staff, contract AONB Service or undertake contractors directly.

Working with existing Community Foundation AONB channel's donations into the CF where they would be held as named funds for the benefit of the AONB. The CF would administer the fund and charge a management fee

**Considerations:**

- Existing group – Friends of Quantock – have long history as a separate group.
- Existing group may not want to expand current role to encompass project development and delivery role currently undertaken by AONB Service.
- Potential for confusion over roles & responsibilities
- Loss of ownership of project delivery by AONB Service and Partnership. Would require a mindshift in AONB Service & partnership role.
- External group (trust / charity) can access more funding streams that AONB Service (due to AONB Service being seen as 'local government')
- External group can role funding over financial years which is an issue for AONB Service.
- Funds put into CF remain with the CF forever so it is high commitment.
- Majority of Somerset Community Foundation named funds deal with socio-economic aims. Opportunity for environmental aim?
- Will need to build fund raising into AONB Service role to ensure named fund is maintained / continues to grow.

**Risks:**

- 1) Loss of ownership of projects may see competition for funds as external groups priorities may be different to AONB partnerships
- 2) External group withdrawal. Will need robust mechanisms to ensure
- 3) Project development experience of existing group
- 4) Will not fund AONB Service core functions directly but will deliver projects. May lead to reduction in core delivery
- 5) Some loss of control – AONB Service / Partnership having to apply for grants but decision would be made at local level.

**Impact - Positive**

Improved relationship with external groups  
 Limited / no financial cost  
 More funding sources available for projects (though actual funding may decrease)

**Impact - Negative**

Loss of control / ownership of projects  
 Does not provide income for core AONB Service

**Conclusion:**

Will not deliver objective. High risk though risk management can mitigate though this will require longer timescale than envisaged, high positive and negative impact.

**Not a viable option in it's own right due to risks but explore further in conjunction with option 4.**

**Option 4: Set up own charitable / trust arm of AONB**

**Description:**

The AONB Service / Partnership can set up and develop a separate body as a Trust or charity which will have similar aims such as conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

This body would be directed by a board of trustees and though AONB Service / Partnership could influence they would not have control. Trusts can be set up in a number of ways so could be primarily a project delivery mechanism or a bigger body which employed its own staff unit.

**Considerations:**

- Can be expensive to set up – look at scale. Unfortunately Blackdowns has a trust already and Mendips looking to set up separate charity by end of March so this limits options for Somerset scale arms length body.
- Need mixed income streams and also assets (car parks) to generate income.
- Skills required to set up and run trust different to core AONB work
- Potential for loss of control by existing structure (AONB Service and Partnership)
- Individual trustees are critical to driving forward the arms length body – there will be no / very limited staff resource from AONB Service
- Scope of trust – will it be purely project delivery or delivery of core functions and employment of staff etc. If looking at all encompassing model will need significant capital or assets to start up.
- Have ability to set up trading arm which can look to generate income (rather than cover costs).

**Risks:**

- 1) Reduced influence / control over delivery by Quantock Hills JAC
- 2) Unable to find appropriate trustees.
- 3) Resource requirement is high and will impact on other high priority activities e.g. Management Plan review.
- 4) Competition with existing charities / trusts could harm relationships with these groups.

**Benefits**

Could meet main objective of sustainable operation model  
 Can allow greater flexibility to realise opportunities in medium and long term

**Impacts**

Need to divert funds to set up  
 Time resource to set up

**Conclusion:**

Will deliver objective. High risk but management strategy can mitigate within scope and timescale, high positive & low negative impact.

**Preferred option – due to scope to meet objective of delivering sustainable operating model for AONB Partnership and AONB Service**

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Tim Russell, Ranger

**Date:** 10 February 2012

**Subject:** Quantock Hill Policy on Wild Camping

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1. Background.

- e. In July 2010 the JAC was approached by Holford Parish Council to see to clarify the position on 'wild camping'. A policy relating to 'wild camping' in tents on the open hill has never been adopted.
- f. While 'wild camping' seems to have increased in recent years it is still uncommon with rangers encountering a handful of campers during the season. When rangers do encounter overnight campers they will approach them and depending upon the attitude and situation will either suggest moving on or request that they stay one night, take all litter home and stipulate no camp fires.
- g. When approached by people wishing to camp the AONB Service has always suggested the use of one of the many official campsites around the fringes of the Quantock Hills.

2. Approaches by other protected landscapes

- h. It has been useful to look at the policies adopted by other areas or organisations in respect of wild camping. The National Trust is a major national landowner and has a general policy in the Lake District:
  - i. *"The National Trust does not generally allow camping on non-recognised sites without permission; however it is 'tolerated' outside of 'in-bye' land. 'Wild camping', where permitted (for example in the Lake District, in upland areas above 450m), should be out of sight of the public highway, entail only one-night stopovers with a maximum of two campers and leave no trace of their presence"*  
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays/camping/view-page/item369164/>
  - j. The Dartmoor National Park website confirms that "wild camping" is permitted on Dartmoor subject to certain conditions which are: *Camping for one or two nights on the open land on Dartmoor is perfectly acceptable provided that you choose your spot sensibly and don't pitch your tent on farmland, on moorland enclosed by walls, within 100 metres of a road, on flood plains or on archaeological sites.*
  - k. Exmoor National Park policy states: *'Wild camping or bivying as part of a long distance walk for example can be desirable for visitors and the Authority will be more tolerant of this type of camping than multiday stays supported by a vehicle. Also, organised groups such as scout groups will be treated more sympathetically. Camping will only normally be allowed by agreement but there may be some locations where 'wild camping' spots could be agreed without a need to confirm permission with us'.*

3. Suggested Quantock Hills policy.

- l. Over the last 12 months the Quantock Hills AONB Service has consulted a number of landowners with land on the un-enclosed commons to ascertain their views with regard to 'wild camping'.
- m. The AONB Service is keen to adopt a similar approach to that taken by other protected landscapes. This would be non-promotional and would set out the

approach to be followed by rangers when encountering wild camping on land where the landowner has agreed to the policy.

- n. It is apparent that a further piece of work, which would be beneficial, is to investigate potential sites that could be offered as 'wild camping' locations with agreeable landowners. The benefit of having dedicated sites are:
  - i. It allows the management of wild camping if the AONB Service is approach pro-actively by individuals / groups
  - ii. It provides a service for organised groups such as Duke of Edinburgh, Venture Scouts etc
  - iii. It allows for monitoring of 'wild camping' and appropriate visitor management activity.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The JAC agrees the adoption of the wild camping policy for a trial period of 1 year
  - 2. The JAC agrees the investigation of 'wild camping' sites for organised groups.
- 

### **Quantock Hills AONB – Policy for 'Wild Camping and other associated activities.**

- 1. If approached regarding camping on the Quantock Hills the AONB Service response will be to signpost to existing official campsites around or near the AONB.
- 2. There will be no promotion of the Quantock Hills AONB as a location for 'wild camping'. However the AONB Service will be tolerant of this type of activity when it is limited in numbers (one or two small tents) and duration (one or two nights).
- 3. Procedure when approaching 'wild campers' in-situ – on land where the landowner has agreed to this policy:
  - a. Inform campers that camping is acceptable for one or two nights on un-enclosed land [ensure their understanding of un-enclosed land] provided the site is sensitively located and that they follow the 'Wild Camping Principles':
    - i. Do not camp near or in sight of houses or anywhere near livestock
    - ii. Keep a low profile – pitch your tent late in the day and leave early
    - iii. Wherever you can, ask permission. If it is refused, do not argue or ignore the refusal
    - iv. Avoid lighting a fire and never do so without permission
    - v. Do not pollute water sources by using the nearby ground as a toilet
    - vi. Dig a hole to bury your faeces.
    - vii. Take away all other rubbish including tampons and sanitary towels
    - viii. Do not use soap, shampoo or detergent in streams
    - ix. Leave no trace of your visit / stay.
  - b. Ask for details to include name, address and contact details.
  - c. Check site regularly to ensure no damage / litter is left. If there is damage / litter follow this up with the proper authorities.
- 4. Procedure when approaching 'wild campers' in-situ – on land where the landowner has not agreed to this policy and on Enclosed land:

- a. Ascertain whether the camper has landowner permission. If they have inform of the 'Wild Camping' principals (above).
  - b. If the campers do not have landowner permission ask them to move to an official campsite if appropriate – situations when this may not be appropriate – campers unable to move due to intoxication, campers become aggressive etc.
  - c. If the campers stay check the site regularly and follow up with the landowner and proper authorities as appropriate.
5. Motor homes / caravans: Another type of camping is overnight stays by people in motor homes. Generally these people are in transit through the Quantock Hills to or from somewhere else. In line with the other types of camping the procedure will be to approach and inform the campers of the policy as well as the wild camping principals where they apply (no fires, no litter etc). Details of the vehicle should be recorded and passed to the relevant authorities if follow up action is required.
  6. Travellers: In the past some people have set up camp and intended staying for more than just a couple of days/nights. One of the reasons of having a 'one-night only' approach to all is that the AONB Service can be seen to be fair to all campers. Where campers are wishing to stay more than one night inform them of this policy and if appropriate inform the proper authorities and land owner. Ensure details of discussions and information given to the campers are recorded in the incident log and can be presented as evidence if required by police or local authorities.
  7. Landowners support: A separate list of landowners in support of this policy is held by the Quantock Hills AONB Service. Landowners will be contacted annually to inform them of success of this policy and to ascertain their continued support for this policy.

Doc Ref: v2.0 January 2012

**To:** Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

**Author:** Tim Russell, Ranger & Andy Harris Partnership Ranger

**Subject:** Ranger's Report

**Date:** 10 February 2012

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This report period runs from July 2011 to end of January 2012, including summer, autumn and winter issues, with one of the mildest Novembers on record. Rangers have been actively involved in a wide variety of work ranging from running educational bush craft days with local youngsters to dealing with illegal activities such as fly tipping and motor bike use of restricted byways.

Rangers are assisted in many aspects of their work by volunteers, who provide valuable support in both visitor management and practical work.

### **1. AONB led practical work**

- a. Some very useful works have been carried out on Cothelstone Hill including: footpath maintenance, scrub removal, roadside tree management and vegetation topping. New timber work repair has been carried out on the pony corral and creation of a raised timber storage area at the old corral site.
- b. A significant amount of sycamore scrub has been cleared on Cothelstone Hill by Quantock volunteers. This helps to restore and improve the native hawthorn scrub habitat that is vital for some of our bird species such as Yellowhammer and Whitethroat.

### **2. Quantock Common – Quantock Commoners Association**

- a. Following the past two years of very successful aerial bracken spraying the Commoners let a contract to follow-up on areas where the control had not been 100% or to increase the control in other areas. This was achieved by more conventional means using tractor and sprayer, ATV and weed-wipe and in a few places knapsack.
- b. Working with the Commoners agent (Ben Thorn) maps and on the ground support was given to contractors, often starting early to avoid busy times on the hill. As the Countryside Stewardship Scheme enters its final year the achievement in bracken management must be seen as a great success and a crucial element to enhancing the condition of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) heathlands.
- c. A trial area for using Round-up application via a weed-wipe was given consent by Natural England to the commoners to see whether or not this could be an alternative method of controlling bracken within this sensitive habitat. If successful this may prove advantageous as the active chemical traditionally used to control bracken Asulam is being taken off the market raising concerns over how bracken will continue to be managed in areas where it is invading the heathland. More info on this subject can be seen via the following links: <http://www.nfuonline.com/Our-work/Animal-and-Plant-Health/News/Industry-works-together-following-Asulam-ban/> and <http://www.brackencontrol.co.uk/>
- d. Rangers met with some members of the Pony Commoners to consider a plan to install a corral just off the Drove Road near Crowcombe Combe Gate. The

commoners have been given permission from the landowner and because the site is within the Site of Special Scientific Interest consent is also required from Natural England (currently being considered). The corral will hopefully make the annual pony round up easier to manage and the location chosen would have minimal impact on the SSSI and landscape. Rangers were keen to mention the need to carefully consider public access in the vicinity of the corral during periods of use to ensure conflict with other hill users is minimal.

### 3. **Wildlife.** AONB Lead: Andy Harris.

- a. Pied Flycatchers. The numbers of Pied Flycatcher chicks ringed in 2011 were up on previous years (2008 = 91, 2009 = 84, 2010 = 141). In total 148 Pied Flycatchers were ringed throughout AONB and Forestry Commission sites contributing to the South West Pied Flycatcher Monitoring Group research. In addition 400 individual birds were ringed including blue tits, great tits, nuthatch, spotted flycatcher and tawny owls. The Quantock Hills AONB Service and Forestry Commission have been involved in monitoring Pied Flycatchers for many years. On one such ringing visit Andy Harris was interviewed for the Radio 4 Saving Species programme on the monitoring and conservation of this iconic woodland migrant.
- b. Dormice. Volunteer Shelley Saltman has put in a tremendous effort in monitoring Dormice on Cothelstone Hill. In total 48 boxes were monitored with 68 records of dormouse being made. Cothelstone Hill has some prime dormouse habitat and following an exercise organised by Shelley with other volunteers it's been decided to increase the number of boxes and monitoring area on the hill.
- c. Heather Beetle. Partnership Ranger Andy Harris attended a seminar in Exmoor National Park on the issue of Heather Beetle. Heather Beetle populations go through cycles when their population explodes and this can cause damage to stands of heather (particularly *Calluna vulgaris* Ling Heather). In places the Quantock heathland has suffered with Heather Beetle damage, most recently on Longstone Hill. The damage occurs during the summer so any thoughts of swaling infected areas immediately are not practical. Often sites make a full recovery but a few of the areas where the affects were greatest are being put forward on this seasons swaling programme to assist with the recovery.
- d. Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group. In the past couple of months Dr Jochen Langbein has created a website for the Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group (QDMCG). This website publishes the results of the past 21yrs of deer counts as well as AONB leaflet that outlines the group's policies and approach to managing the red deer herd. The website can be found at: <http://www.quantockdeergroup.co.uk>

### 4. **Access.** AONB lead: Tim Russell

- a. As part of our annual auditing responsibilities, the 5 circular walking routes need to be assessed for safety and usability. Our current Full Time Volunteer, Vicky Criddle is helping us with this task. The priority has been to assess the Quantock Greenway first of all. Much of the route is in reasonable condition. The northern loop is available to horse use as well as pedestrian and is relatively straightforward. The southern loop (promoted for walkers only) is being looked at to slightly amend some of the sections around Broomfield and Enmore for ease of use. The audit comes up with works that need to be carried out on an annual

basis. These are currently being scheduled into the works programme through the coming year.

- b. The Government's Coastal Access strategy under the Marine Act is now being implemented in Somerset. The Somerset Stretch is the longest, at 90km, of any going forward (others are all about 30km). and will enhance the access opportunities along the Quantock coast where there are currently gaps. Funding to implement coastal access has been given to Somerset County Council who are currently 'Walking the course', which is expected to take approximately 12 months. It is currently anticipated that the access will be open by March 2014.

## 5. Visitor Management

- a. Since April there have been 9 public holidays and the hills can attract heavy use over these times. Ranger and Voluntary Ranger cover ensures that an 'on the ground' presence is maintained wherever possible. Rangers have undertaken 23 weekend / bank holiday patrols since April, providing an on the ground presence. This has been supported by the Volunteer rangers who also will also undertake site visits during the week as well.
- b. At the last JAC we reported the increase in fly tipping, this still seems to be the case and the AONB office is keeping records of known incidents. In the 2010/11 financial year there were 8 incidents of flytipping reported by the AONB Service. Since April 2011 there has been 27 incidents, a 237% increase.
- c. Great Wood. New interpretation signage has been installed in Ramscombe by the Forestry Commission along with the introduction of Pay & Display machines. The timber framework for the new signs came from a Douglas fir that was felled for safety reasons within Ramscombe car park following the observation of a root fungus growing at its base. The timber was in good condition and three local businesses were used to produce the frames from forest floor back to forest floor.
- d. Following a public consultation period three Pay & Display machines have been installed within Ramscombe and were commissioned in late August, overall reaction has been positive and understanding as the income contributes to the running of this very popular recreational site.
- e. Unfortunately during the summer the toilet block suffered fire damage. The incident wasn't malicious and the crew from Nether Stowey Fire Station were on site quickly and did a superb job in putting the fire out.
- f. A planning application to SDC was made by the Forestry Commission to rebuild and modernise the toilet block and building works should soon be underway. The new building will be very similar in design and materials to the previous one on site which it is hoped will be opened around Easter.

## 6. Events

- a. Great Wood remains the most popular venue to base organised events on the hills from charity walks to horse rides to orienteering. Many events make use of Ramscombe facilities using it as a base to venture further afield. Over the past two decades the AONB Service and Forestry Commission have liaised with event organisers with great success to ensure their plans do not impact on the Quantock environment or clash with other hill users. At a future JAC Andy Harris would like to involve members in revisiting/reviewing the policies in place to manage events to ensure they are up to date with current event applications.

- b. AONB Led Events. 'Discover' was a theme running through the AONB's 2011 event programme along with our traditionally popular walks such as Jurassic Coast walk, Heart of the Hills walk, Fungus Foray, Deer Rut and forest walks.
  - c. Nightjar watching and deer rut walks were as popular as ever. At the end of the Deer Rut Walk led by Andy and Boyd Hay (FC Ranger) a Great Grey Shrike was spotted near Withyman's Pool, there have been only 106 records of this rare species in Somerset since 1862.
  - d. Some of the events were aimed at the young people and in August Andy was assisted by Chris Sperring (Hawk and Owl Trust) and volunteer Dave Pusill to put on an event looking at forest wildlife in Ramscombe.
  - e. The following month in September National Trust Ranger Steve Sudworth and Andy held a family Bushcraft Day on Cothelstone Hill. Volunteers helped build a shelter within the woods which formed the base for events such as small mammal identification, fire lighting, animal tracking and eating marshmallows.
  - f. These events provide an excellent opportunity for us to get important messages across to the public in an enjoyable way. The AONB Service held 14 events last year with 219 people attending (176 adults and 43 children).
  - g. As well as events in the field, Rangers have given a number of educational evening talks to groups including Somerset Wildlife Trust (Shapwick Group), Spaxton Society and the Watchet Conservation Society.
7. **Volunteers.** Some of our volunteers were given a Swaling Refresher Training session prior to this coming season's swaling programme. Our new cohort of 6 Voluntary Rangers (appointed in 2011) have already undertaken patrols out on the hills, already contributing 116 hours of their time to site patrols and assisting at events such as village fetes.
8. **Police & Conservation Bodies Working Group.** Of particular note this period has been the issue of illegal use of Restricted Byways by motor bikes. This has led to joint working with the Police and targeted patrols. Increased use may be due to challenges being brought under the NERC Act 2006. However latest guidance from Defra is that while the legislation is in place no use by motor vehicles of Restricted Byways is allowed and is therefore still an offence. A number of cases are currently being followed up. The group also discussed greater use of seasonal warning or information notices which would be used for relatively short periods to raise visitor awareness and themed patrols with the police with a patrol calendar produced.
9. **Remembrance Sunday.** The AONB were proud to host 40 Commando Royal Marines Remembrance Day Service on Cothelstone Hill. This was extremely successful and a cannon was fired to punctuate the two minute silence, accompanied with a helicopter fly by.