

Fyne Court
Broomfield
Bridgwater
TA5 2EQ

Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Friday 18th November 2011

at

2.15pm

in the

Nether Stowey Church Centre

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.

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 22nd July 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 the Acting AONB Manager**
6. **Business Plan 2012/13 Workshop Session**
7. **Landscape Planning Officer Report (Paper G)**
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

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.

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.

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.

(22 July 2011)

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held in Spaxton Village Hall, Spaxton on Friday 22nd July 2011 at 2.15pm.

Present

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

Also Present

Mr C Edwards (SCC- Officer), Dr P Radford (Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society) , Mrs M White (Sedgemoor Bridleways), Mr T Rich (Nether Stowey PC), Mrs T Kirk (QH Full Time Volunteer), Mr A Nelson (Field Study Council), Mr A Hughes (Friends of Quantock), Mr D Cole (Enmore PC), Mr T Whittingham (Over Stowey PC), Mr J Edwards (Spaxton PC), Mr N Stuart-Thorn (Bishops Hull PC), Mr D Edwards (North Petherton Town Council)

Apologies were received from Mr J Edney (SCC), Mr H Warmington (CLA), Mr S Dowding (WSC), Mrs J Sansom (Parish rep – WQPC), Mr R Harris (Forestry Commission), Mrs A Kent (Taunton Bridleways), N Penn (Field Study Council)

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIR

65. For the role of **Chairman** – Roger Conway proposed **Mr A Trollope-Bellew** and Mr J Swayne seconded this.

66. For the role of **Vice Chair** – Mr A Trollope-Bellew proposed **Mr J Swayne** and Mr M Caswell seconded this.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

67. (1)The Chairman declared an interest in item 10 – Rangers Report - paragraph 3 - the interpretation board at Hurley Beacon is on his land.

(2) The Chairman declared that he is also a West Somerset Councillor.

(3) Elaine Waymouth declared that she is also a Somerset County Councillor.

(4) Bruce Nottrodt declared that he is a Director with South West One.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

68. (1) The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2011 were taken as read signed as a correct record.

Matters arising

Minute 58 (2) – Pathwatch

(2) Mr Nottrodt added that any alteration to the Pathwatch website was Avon and Somerset Police's responsibility and not SW One.

Minute 59 – Mrs J Sansom's enquiry re Staple Plain and Phytophthora

(3) Iain Porter obtained information from the landowner – National Trust – and a letter was sent 7th February 2011.

Minute 60 (2) – Draft response re selling of Forestry Commission land

(4) The week after the February JAC DEFRA withdrew its consultation and replaced with an independent panel, to which the National Association of AONB's (NAAONB) has sent in a response.

Minute 64 (2) – AOB – next JAC to contain items on wind and solar policy

(5) The number of applications for large scale projects has declined therefore there is less urgency to create these policies and they will be presented at the next JAC.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – None

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHITE PAPER

69. The JAC considered a report by Iain Porter which outlined the key areas and background of the NEWP paper, what the response has been, Local Nature Partnerships (LNP), Nature Improvement Areas (NIA) and the Quantock Hills response to the above. A meeting of likely LNP partners on the 19th July resulted in those organisations present agreeing to pursue a Somerset wide LNP with SWT doing the paperwork. The recommendations outlined at the end of Iain's report were agreed by the JAC.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY AND BIOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

70. The JAC considered the report by Andy Harris which feedback about the range of monitoring and surveys being contributed to or led by the AONB service and its team of specialist volunteers. Also how these relate to biodiversity internationally and have fed into management on the ground via stewardship agreements and also encouraged public involvement and understanding.

QUANTOCK HILLS AONB SERVICE ACTIVITY REPORT

71. (1) The JAC considered the activity report by the Acting AONB Manager. Attention was drawn to 3 proposed changes to the JAC constitution, all of which were agreed by the committee.

(2) The OWG group has decided to draw up a Statement of Intention to be brought to the next JAC to replace the previous document (Memorandum of Agreement) which some authorities were unsure about signing.

(3) Future Directions Working Group progress has been delayed by elections but a full report with recommendation will be brought to the next JAC for consideration.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AONB'S BRIEFING PAPER

72. (1) Iain Porter's report introduced the role and work of the NAAONB.

(2) As the NAAONB's workload increases, so will the need for AONB support both financially and via staff resource. Use of the specialist skills of each AONB and sharing of expertise will be fed into NAAONB business plan. Any implications for the Quantock Hills AONB from the NAAONB business plan to be discussed at the AGM in October, will be fed back to the JAC.

(3) The Chairman reported that Mendip AONB have potentially volunteered to host the 2013 NAAONB conference perhaps in partnership with the other AONB's (Quantock Hills and Blackdowns)

RANGERS REPORT

73. (1) The JAC considered the Rangers report for the six month period between February and July 2011. As is customary Tim Russell illustrated many aspects of the Rangers work in a slide show presentation. The report covered the following topics: Practical Management (habitat and access), Visitor Management, Volunteers, Events and Events Management and the Rangers

(2) The huge increase in fly tipping within the AONB was discussed and John Swayne confirmed that within SDC alone a 100% increase has been monitored. He also feedback to the committee that once reported the fly tipping should be collected within 24hrs and SCC will be reimbursing districts for this collecting. Somerset Waste Partnership met 22nd July to discuss this topic.

(3) John Swayne also commented on the excellent and constructive results that come from the Quantock Hills Police and Conservation partnership meetings, he had recently fed this into the Safer Community Meeting for Somerset.

VOLUNTEER REPORT

74. The new full time Quantock Conservation Volunteer Tori Kirk was introduced to the JAC. Owen Jones report was noted and Iain Porter reported that along with Owen Jones he will be looking into other ways forward for volunteering and welcomed any input from members.

LANDSCAPE PLANNING OFFICER REPORT

75. The JAC considered the report and Iain Porter stated that the EDF Hinkley Point consultation has taken up a lot of Emma-Jane time. Also comments from the Quantock Hills AONB are now available to view on the website.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF URGENCY

76. (1) Induction days for new member and longer standing members are planned for September. Further information to follow soon.

(2) Next years JAC meeting dates were confirmed as Friday 18th November, Friday 10th February, Friday 20th April and Friday 27th July. Times and locations to be arranged.

(3) Hugh Davies suggested the submission of one of the rangers photos to the country file 'Children in Need' calendar photo competition.

(The meeting closed at 4.10pm)

CHAIRMAN

Qhjac.mins 22 July 2011

To: Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

Author: Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager

Date: 18 November 2011

Subject: Quantock Hills AONB Service Activity Report

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: Green – Complete or on target. Amber – Progress made. Red – 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 pursuing Statement of Intent.
- b. DEFRA, Somerset County Council, Forestry Commission, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Sedgemoor District Council intend signing the Statement of Intent which places a requirement on the AONB Service to ring-fence an ear marked reserve to cover redundancy costs for the staff unit and for partners to notify the partnership of intention to reduce funding contributions 6 months before the end of the financial year.
- c. Currently discussions on-going between AONB Service and West Somerset Council.

3. Office Working Group Reporting

- a. Meeting held 2nd November 2011. Discussion included potential of income from other funding sources such as Sc106, Community Infrastructure Levy, etc to replace decreasing local authority funding. Other agenda items included Statement of Intent, Local Nature Partnerships, AONB staff & budget update, 2012/13 funding and Future Directions update.

4. Quantock Hills AONB Staffing

- a. SCC has provisionally requested an extension to secondment of Chris Edwards for a further 9 months. If agreed by the JAC Chris will return in January 2013. The AONB Service can develop the business plan around this timescale but is seeking confirmation of end of the secondment to ensure it can resource the Management Plan review and Future Directions work which are planned for 2012/13.
- b. We have agreed a 2 month extension to the Volunteer Coordinator post that is shared with Mendip Hills AONB. The post was originally due to end 31st January 2012 due to the recruitment freeze SCC was operating when the post was put forward in January 2011. We are keen to continue this post for a further year as is Mendip Hills AONB and have built it into the draft business plan.

5. Future Directions Working Group (FDWG)

- a. The working group have agreed
 - i. The terms of reference

- ii. The Vision
 - iii. Communications Management Strategy
 - iv. The Adaptation Plan
- b. A risk assessment for the partnership is currently in draft form awaiting approval by the working group.
 - c. The adaptation plan includes short term and longer term actions. Some of the short term actions include partnership sign up (e.g. Statement of Intent), procurement of services (e.g. ICT) and sharing services. Longer term actions include investigation and set up of arms length body, evaluation of hosting arrangements etc.
 - d. An important element of the adaptation plan is the setting up of an arms length body. Investigation of the various models and structures has been started. The NAAONB is also undertaking a piece of work looking at the opportunities of an arms length body based on a national or sub-national scale and will report back on this work on 1st December.
 - e. Based on the work happening at national and sub-national level the FDWG feel it would not be prudent to bring recommendations to this JAC meeting as originally intended. It is anticipated that the FDWG will report back to the February JAC on potential options and actions for full discussion by the partnership.
 - f. *For further information please contact Iain Porter.*
6. Sustainable Development Fund.
- a. The SDF for 2011/12 is £45,000. There have been 17 applications to the SDF this year. 8 applications have been accepted, 2 rejected and 5 are pending after the final application round in October. The 2011/12 SDF has been oversubscribed and we are expecting full allocation and spend.
 - 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
- a. A partnership of relevant and interested organisations have submitted an application to Natural England (31st October) for the development of a Somerset wide Local Nature Partnership. This is being led by Somerset Wildlife Trust and has been undertaken under very tight timescales.
 - b. The Quantock Hills AONB Service has supported the application as it feels there is potential for this partnership to add value to existing organisations in working at a strategic level. The application is for funding to develop a Local Nature Partnership. If the bid is successful the JAC will be consulted on the LNP development and will need to decide if it supports and wishes to be a partner on the LNP. This consultation is likely to occur between January and March 2012 with agreement sought between April and June 2012.
 - c. Many of the partners of the Quantock Hills AONB JAC are also represented on the LNP group in their own right.
8. AONB Service Budget 2011 – 12
- a. Core budget (Table 1) is on track with current expenditure at 51.2%. Expected full expenditure at end of year.
 - b. Viaments required from other costs into vehicle maintenance to cover repair to ranger vehicle.

- c. Income from events lower than anticipated. Event expenditure reduced to take account of reduced income.
- d. 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.
- e. Project budget lowered to take account of new requirement to have earmarked reserve to cover redundancies, currently estimated to be £34,000. New project budget £5,125 with £1,483 expenditure. The project budget may increase slightly as reserve figure still to be confirmed with core funding partners.

Table 1: Quantock Hills AONB: Core Budget & Expenditure

	Budget	Exp	%
AONB Manager	0	0	-
Deve'T Officer	37,510	18,557	49.5%
Landscape Planner	14,910	7,085	47.5%
Ranger	36,730	17,640	48.0%
Partnership Ranger	30,985	14,718	47.5%
Volunteer Coordinator	20,644	11,259	54.5%
Comms Officer	9,589	4,946	51.6%
Support Assistant	10,251	5,162	50.4%
Accommodation	10,145	5,411	53.3%
Travel & Training	19,076	11,969	62.7%
Partnership Running Costs	9,930	6,344	63.9%
Partnership Budget	11,400	6,757	59.3%
Other costs	8,500	2,704	31.8%
TOTAL	219,671	112,552	51.2%

Table 2: Quantock Hills AONB: Project Budget & Expenditure

	Budget	Exp	%
SDF	45,000	3,507	7.8%
Projects	5,125	1,483	28.9%
TOTAL	50,125	4,990	9.9%

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The JAC notes the report.
2. Agrees SCC request for a 9 month extension to Chris Edwards secondment with SCC.

APPENDIX A1: 2011/12 Business Plan – Progress.

ACTION POINT	Action	Milestone / Target	Progress	Comments
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 nd 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	●	Results currently being collated.
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.
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.	●	

	Comment on potentially damaging applications on behalf of the JAC	Comments sent to relevant planning authorities		
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.
	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 st April 2011 – 31 st 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 - Sept = 2,204 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. 10 volunteer work days 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.	●	Tori Kirk in post and task programme developed. New FTV Vicky Criddle started 31 st October with 1 st quarter programme being developed.
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	●	Project development looking at larger scale project than 'Young Rangers' Likely to take longer to develop.
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	●	On track for full allocation and expenditure.
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.
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 th July. Project progressing well with next SG 30 th Nov.
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 x1 (next in Dec)
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 th 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	●	15 events run with 219 people attending.
EAP 2	Distribute AONB Visitor Guide through the LIPs distribution points	Restocking of LIPs distribution points x 4	●	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	●	2 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)	●	19 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	Options paper produced and favoured option agreed by	●	Limited progress due to various reasons (elections, national led

	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.	partnership		work etc).
	Write NE/DEFRA AONB bid with input from OWG and JAC partnership	NE / DEFRA bid accepted	●	Programmed in to work plan – Draft to OWG / JAC Nov, Application to DEFRA Jan 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	●	
	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. Commons planned spring 2012.
	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.	●	On target.
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. 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 of local data and input into route description as a visitor management tool	Officer time allocated and routes data vetted and agreed by AONB	●	Surveys undertaken. Feedback given.

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. School visits due January 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	●	12 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.
CORE DUTIES				
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 auditing review complete (audits to take place Nov 2011). H&S assessment due December 2011.
Finance	Undertake finance monitoring and provide reports in various formats to partners, hosts and grant giving organisations		●	1/4 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 PRA D meetings staff management		●	

PAPER B

To: Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

Author: Iain Porter, Acting AONB Manager **Date:** 18 November 2011

Subject: Quantock Hills AONB 2012 / 13 Business Plan Development

1. Introduction

- a. The AONB Service is currently developing the 2012 / 13 business plan for submission to DEFRA in January 2012. Due to the budget planning process of both DEFRA and our local authority partners a number of assumptions have to be made when developing the draft business plan.
- b. DEFRA will confirm AONB grants available in January 2012, subject to a successful application, though they currently expect these to be inline with previous estimates with a 5.4% reduction on 2011/12 grant levels.
- c. Local authorities will be able to provide an indication of funding commitment in December but will not be able to confirm funding levels until February / March 2012.

2. AONB Service Activity

- a. Business as Usual. Based on the priority setting exercise undertaken in November 2010 the AONB Service will be looking to undertake a number of core activities (sometimes referred to as Business as Usual). Appendix B1 highlights the core activities and AONB Service team members involved with those areas of work. This includes activities such as commenting on core strategies or LDF, working with volunteers, patrolling, communications and working group secretariat duties etc. We are able to predict the amount of time this will require based on previous years experience.
- b. Spare capacity: A number of AONB Service team members will have limited 'spare' capacity in which to develop and deliver other Management Plan action points. This could be direct delivery or development of projects. Table 1 shows the estimated spare capacity of the AONB team (rounded to blocks of 5 days).

Table 1: Estimated spare capacity:

Team Member	Spare capacity
AONB Manager	10
Landscape Planning Officer	5
Ranger	30
Partnership Ranger	10
Volunteer Coordinator	15
Communications Officer	5
Support Assistant	0

3. Draft Budget

- a. The draft budget below is based on information from DEFRA, local authority partners and other partners. It takes account of the 2 partnership posts (Partnership Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator) and the requested extension to Chris Edwards secondment to Somerset County Council.
- b. The core costs have increased slightly to take account of the return of Chris Edwards for 3 months from January – March 2013.
- c. The AONB Service will operate a reduced SDF pot to allow for community led projects to occur through the Wild Places competition.
- d. Draft budget indicates project budget of £10,784.

Table 2: Quantock Hills 2012/13 Draft Budget

Item	£		Income		Comment
AONB Manager	40,200		DEFRA	176,786	Expected 5.4% cut
Development Officer	9,600		SCC	21,500	Still to be confirmed
Landscape Planner (p/t)	15,000		SDC	10,000	Expect £1,550 cut
Ranger	36,700		TDBC	10,000	Expect £2,000 cut
Partnership Ranger (p/t)	30,900		WSC	10,000	Unknown
Volunteer Coordinator (p/t)	22,500		Mendip AONB	11,000	Cont to Vol Coordinator
Comms Officer (p/t)	9,900		FC	17,300	Cont to Ptn Ranger
Support Assistant (p/t)	10,300		Misc Income	1,000	Events, sales etc
Accommodation	10,145		TOTAL INCOME	257,586	
Travel & Training	19,676				
Partnership Running Costs	10,180				
Partnership Budget	3,200				
Other costs	8,500				
CORE COSTS	226,801				
SDF	20,000				
Project Budget	10,784				
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	257,586				

4. Management Plan Projects.

- a. A mid point assessment of progress against the 2009-14 Quantock Hills Management Plan has highlighted action points where action is still required. These are shown in Table 3. Some of these could be developed directly by the spare capacity of the AONB Service, however it would be prudent to seek external resources (external project funding) to achieve others. This will require some spare capacity to develop projects for submission to external funding sources.

Table 3: Management Plan Actions still requiring action.

Action Point	Proposed Action
FWAP5: Support the restoration and enlargement of heathland and oakwoods through working with forest owners in the AONB.	Develop Woodlands for Wildlife project as successor to Western Somerset Woodlands Project.
WAP3: Seek designation as Local Nature Reserves for sites which are suitable in respect of access, ownership and wildlife interest.	Scope potential sites and work with landowners to development management plans.
HAP1: Protect known archaeological and historically significant sites and record newly discovered features through partnership projects with archaeology and historic landscape specialists.	Develop project to provide funding for feature and site restoration.
HAP2: Continue to develop a detailed fact base on the historic environment of the Quantocks.	Develop partnership with educational establishments to set up regular research opportunities. Develop project to support research and provide opportunities for dissemination of information
HAP4: Develop a project to assess Quantock parkland and associated heritage trees and seek their effective conservation and management.	Develop landscape scale project to research, fund restoration and enhancement and encourage understanding of role of parklands in Quantock landscape

HAP5: Identify traditional orchards in the Quantock area and offer owners support and information for their management and protection.	Develop project to support research and provide opportunities for dissemination of information
HAP6: Develop an oral history project involving Quantock communities in recording stories, customs and traditions from the Quantock area.	Develop phase 2 project to allow opportunity to access completed oral history work.
GCAP1: Protect existing geological exposures where they are not a major scar in the landscape and support provision of local stone where consistent with resisting further quarrying that would have a negative impact on the landscape, biodiversity, tranquillity or local communities of the Quantocks.	Identify all quarries and prioritise sites for proactive management in line with best practice.
GCAP2: Develop a quarries assessment project, possibly with the support of external funding.	Undertake project to assess quarries in terms of future use (LNR, access, recreation)
CEAP2: Minimise the carbon footprint of AONB Service operations and work with partners to develop the sustainability of Fyne Court.	Measure carbon footprint of AONB Service and look at measure to reduce this along with working with partners to reduce carbon footprint of Fyne Court.
CEAP3: Explore opportunities to monitor and support AONB ecosystem services, including clean water and air, productive soil and healthy food, carbon management, flood risk mitigation through water catchment, along with current AONB initiatives for biodiversity, recreation opportunities and inspirational landscape.	Undertake research project to collate existing monitoring and commission research where gaps exist.
DAP8: Develop AONB Design Guidance in conjunction with district councils and others and seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Documents or recognition as Material Consideration as appropriate.	Potential to develop through working with education establishment or as output of project.
ARAP3: Develop waymarking and timber signposting of rights of way comprehensively on enclosed land and promoted routes and to a landscape-sensitive level on open-access land through partnership with the County Council Rights of Way Team.	Liaise with Rights of way and where required install key waymarker posts.
ARAP4: Limit vehicle damage to tracks through agreement with users, implementation of recent legislation and Traffic Regulation Order restrictions on sensitive routes.	Develop baseline erosion monitoring of hilltop tracks. Monitor tracks to assess erosion trends
TAP1: Investigate the possibilities for visitors to reach the Quantock Hills more sustainably.	Develop project to promote circular walks from locations based on public transport infrastructure.
TAP2: Pursue restrictions on damaging or dangerous use of Quantock lanes and roads where these are appropriate and supported by parish councils.	Develop highways protocol between Somerset County Council and the Quantock Hills JAC (see Peak District for example of good practice)
TAP3: Pursue JAC liaison and consultation on changes to road layouts, signing and road maintenance affecting the AONB.	As above
TAP4: Promote the removal of unnecessary or obsolete modern signs and the sensitive design and locating of necessary signage.	Develop project to survey signs and working with Somerset County Council develop programme of work to remove where possible.
TAP5: Encourage Somerset Highways to continue to reinstate, replace and maintain traditional cast iron style road signs throughout the AONB.	Consolidate survey and research undertaken to date. Develop Highway protocol as above.

5. JAC Exercise

- a. To assist the AONB Service with the business plan development the JAC members will be asked to undertake an exercise during the meeting to prioritise the remaining Management Plan action points for delivery during 2012/13.
- b. The JAC members, working in small groups, will be presented with blocks of works that will have staff resource and costs attached to them. Using these and the expected spare capacity and project budget members will be asked to prioritise the actions for 2012/13 and which will be delivered in 2013/14.
- c. Initial results will be fed back at the JAC meeting, time permitting, before being developed further into the 2012/13 Business Plan for submission to DEFRA.

6. Timetable

- a. With the uncertainties over funding and other issues the AONB Service is looking at a slightly delayed timetable with regard to the Business Plan than in previous years. The key dates are:
 - b. 30th November - DEFRA release application guidance and forms.
 - c. December – AONB Service develop draft 2012/13 Business plan and confirmation from DEFRA of AONB grant available.
 - d. 20th January – AONB grant application submitted to DEFRA based on draft business plan.
 - e. 10th February – Draft 2012/13 Business Plan agreed by JAC [subject to local authority confirmation of funding contributions].
 - f. February / March – Confirmation of local authority funding.
 - g. April – Business Plan signed off once partner contributions confirmed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. JAC approves 2012/13 draft budget and AONB core activities subject to confirmation of funding commitment by partners.

APPENDIX B1: Core Activities of Quantock Hills AONB Service 2012 / 13

ACTION POINT	Action	Who
FAP 2	Engagement and support for HLS schemes in development	Partnership Ranger, AONB Manager
WAP 4	Support continued monitoring of LBAP species (adder) to inform future management plans for Quantock Common and surrounding agricultural land	Partnership Ranger, AONB Manager
WAP2	Implement or manage implementation by others of the Quantock Hills BAP.	Partnership Ranger
WAP2	Provide concise monitoring and reporting on LBAP actions	Partnership Ranger
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	Landscape Planning Officer
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	Landscape Planning Officer, Support Assistant
DAP 2	Engage with Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation	Landscape Planning Officer
DAP 7	Engage with and offer specialist advice on impacts of major infrastructure developments such as Hinkley Point C	Landscape Planning Officer
	VOLUNTEERS – Continued engagement with Quantock Countryside Volunteers ensuring tasks occurring through AONB area.	Volunteer Coordinator, Ranger, Partnership Ranger
ARAP 8 VAP 2	VOLUNTEERS - Volunteer involvement in local events and other visitor management to raise AONB profile and provide information.	Volunteer Coordinator, Ranger
CAP 1	Deliver Sustainable Development Fund to fund local projects which will deliver Management Plan objectives	Volunteer Coordinator, AONB Manager
CAP 3	Engagement with Western Somerset Local Action Group to ensure funding opportunities through this scheme are available for Quantock projects.	AONB Manager
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	Ranger
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	AONB Manager
WAP 1	Provide secretariat and support for Quantock Commons Management Group (QCMG) and Quantock Police & Conservation Agencies Working Group (QPCAWG)	Ranger, Partnership Ranger, Support Assistant
WAP 4	Provide on the ground support to the Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group (QDMCG) deer count	Partnership Ranger
VAP 2	Provide events programme open to the public, including specialist walks and events aimed at families.	Communications Officer, Partnership Ranger, Support Assistant, others as required.
EAP 2	Distribute AONB Visitor Guide through the LIPs distribution points	Communication Officer

EAP 2	Publish and distribute e-newsletter. Hardcopy can be printed off for distribution through schools	Communication Officer
EAP 3	Regularly update the website to include blogs, news items, planning comments etc	Communication Officer
	Produce media content (press release direct media contact) to include standard messages (lambing, ticks etc) as well as specific project successes	Communication Officer
	Produce and distribute a annual report to show progress against AONB Management Plan Targets	Communication Officer
	OWG and JAC reports produced. These reports will provide monitoring against the action plan targets	AONB Manager
	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.	AONB Manager
	Write NE/DEFRA AONB bid with input from OWG and JAC partnership	AONB Manager
	Host 3 OWG and JAC meetings – July, November and February 2012 to allow informed and engaged ownership of partnership by JAC.	AONB Manager
	Regular meetings of AONB Service team to review AONB Management activities and issues	All staff
	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	AONB Manager, others as necessary
VAP 8	Collect bi-annual data from 15 visitor counters installed through the Quantock Hills and disseminate information to partners	AONB Manager
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	Support Assistant, Partnership Ranger
VAP 2	Ensure on the ground presence during busy periods to engage visitors and provide information.	Ranger, Partnership Ranger
VAP 5	Maintenance of flytipping database with hotspots provided to local authorities and negotiate a enhanced level of service to ensure waste is cleaned quickly	Ranger, Support Assistant
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	AONB Manager, Partnership Ranger, Ranger
Finance	Undertake finance monitoring and provide reports in various formats to partners, hosts and grant giving organisations	AONB Manager
Support Activities	Undertake a range of support activities such as answering enquiries, filing, procurement etc	Support Assistant + others
Line Mgt	1-1 management meetings, annual PRaD meetings staff management	AONB Manager

To: Quantock Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

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

Landscape Planning Officer Report – November 2011

This report provides an outline update of key areas of work for the Landscape Planning Officer since the last report to the Joint Advisory Committee in July 2011.

1. Update on Hinkley Point C

- 1.1** Final consultation meetings have been attended by Emma-Jane and final comments on the Landscape and Visual Impact (LVIA) Assessment have been submitted. The Development Consent Order (DCO) application from EDF was submitted to the infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) on 31st October. There will be no further opportunities to consult on the contents of the Environmental Statement.
- 1.2** The AONB Service and Natural England have had a good collaborative working arrangement during the consultation process.

2. National Grid

- 2.1** Consultation has commenced regarding the new grid connection between Hinkley Point C and Seabank. Emma-Jane has attended an initial meeting with National Grid and the Mendip Hills AONB. A series of thematic meetings will start during the week commencing 21st November – kick starting discussions on the three key themes of biodiversity, landscape, and cultural heritage.

3. Landscape Character Assessment

Fieldwork has commenced but development of the project has been slower than anticipated due to workload.

4. Collaborative AONB working

- 4.1** On 4th October Emma-Jane met with Lisa Turner (Planning Officer for the Blackdown Hills AONB) and Jonathan Richards (Planning Liaison Officer for the Mendip Hills AONB) to discuss a range of landscape and planning issues affecting the AONBs.
- 4.2** A key point for discussion was the possibility of organising a collective Landscape and Planning Seminar and it was agreed to hold an inaugural Seminar in Spring 2012. This will be held at Fyne Court and hosted by the Quantock Hills AONB Service. The responsibility for hosting the annual event will switch between the three AONBs.

5. **Planning applications (consultation and monitoring)**

5.1 The contract for Colin Blundel from The Planning Company ceased in September. Although she has liaised with Colin and reviewed responses throughout the contract, Emma-Jane has now taken back on the full development management consultation workload.

5.2 Katy Coate continues to provide invaluable administrative support for this area of work – accurately recording data so that useful monitoring statistics can be collected. The following outlines consultation activity over the last 12 months:

- Number of consultation letters received – 48 (SDC- 23, TDBC – 14, WSC 10 and SCC – 1).
- Consultation letters generating detailed investigation and comments - 18.
- Total number of detailed comments submitted (taking into account applications picked up from weekly lists) - 39.
- Number of less-detailed (more generic) comments submitted - 47.
- Inside the AONB boundary there have been 64 planning applications and of those 42 (66%) have been granted permission or conditional approval.
- AONB Service has considered 189 planning applications in the past year.

6. **Solar PV Position Statement**

6.1 Comments have been gratefully received and considered. Amendments have been made and the final statement produced.

7. **Policy consultation**

7.1 Sedgemoor's Core Strategy was formally adopted on 12th October 2011. Emma-Jane has compared the adopted strategy with comments submitted by the Quantock Hills AONB Service and Mendip Hills AONB Unit. A number of comments have resulted in changes to the final document text.

7.2 Detailed comments were submitted (August 2011) in respect of Taunton Deane Borough Council's Core Strategy.

8. **SWPLF**

8.1 The AONB Service hosted the South West Protected Landscape Forum (SWPLF) Planning meeting on 17th October 2011 at Fyne Court. Key points for discussion were:

- Collaborative working between AONBs and Natural England;
- Natural England's internal operations for dealing with planning consultations;
- Position Statements (national and AONB-specific);
- AONB engagement in the planning process; and

- Draft National Planning Policy Framework.

8.2 Further information in respect of the above agenda items will be given to the committee on 18th November.

Recommendations:

1. The JAC notes the report.