

Quantock Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 19th October 2021

2.15pm

in the

Holford Village Hall

To: The members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Quantock Hills AONB Communication and Support Officer, Amanda Sampson: telephone 07976 695913 or email asampson@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 Item No.	
1.	Annual election of the JAC Chair and Vice Chair
2.	Apologies for absence
3.	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.
4.	Accuracy of the previous minutes (copy appended) and to consider any matters arising.
5.	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.
6.	Paper A - Team and Partnership Report (Chris Edwards)
7.	Paper B - Crowcombe Park Gate Application (Chris Edwards)
8.	Paper C - Ranger Report (Andy Stevenson & Owen Jones)
9.	Paper D - Volunteering Report (Verity Jones)
10.	Paper E - Project Report (Iain Porter)
11.	Paper F - Quantock Hills AONB Finance highlight Report (Iain Porter)
12.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Future JAC meeting dates: (all start at 2.15pm location TBC)</p> <p>Tuesday 25th January 2022 (virtual meeting) Tuesday 26th April 2022 (face to face meeting) Tuesday 19th July 2022 (virtual meeting)</p>
	<p>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: 01823 451884 or Email: quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</p>

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 Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson: telephone 07976 695913 or email asampson@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 Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson: telephone 07976 695913 or email asampson@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 Amanda Sampson, 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 can appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

Minutes of a meeting for the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held at Halsway Manor, Crowcombe on **Tuesday 20th July 2021 at 2.15pm**

Present:

Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew, JAC Chair (ATB)	- Somerset West & Taunton Council
Cllr Mike Caswell, JAC Vice Chair (MC)	- Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Dixie Darch (DD)	- Somerset West & Taunton Council
Cllr Alan Bradford (AB)	- Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Mandy Chilcott (MAC)	- Somerset County Council
Cllr Hugh Davies (HW)	- Somerset County Council
Chris Edwards (CE)	- Quantock Hills AONB Service
Iain Porter (IP)	- Quantock Hills AONB Service
Cllr Julian Taylor (JT)	- North Petherton Town Council
Philip Comer (PC)	- Friends of Quantock
Hugh Warmington (HW)	- Countryside Landowners Association

Also present:

Amanda Sampson (AS) (virtually via Teams)	- Quantock Hills Comms & Support Officer
Bill Jenman (BJ)	- Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme
Alex Meletiou (AM)	- Quantock Hills Planning Officer
Joshua Schweiso	- Spaxton Parish Council??
Peter Payne	- Williton Parish Council
Laetitia Kelly	- Friends of Quantock

(There were 2 other persons present but no names given)

Apologies:

John Ebsary (Forestry England), Alicia Aras (Somerset Local Access Forum), Alan Hughes (Friends of Quantock), Jo Chesworth (Natural England) and Kristina Luxton (National Trust).

1. Declarations of Interest

ATB declared himself to be a member of Quantock Eco, Friends of Quantock, Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group, Quantock Stag Hounds, and a Quantock Hills Landowner.

2. Accuracy and matters arising from the previous minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2021 were taken as read and signed as an accurate record.

3. Public Question Time

There were no public questions recorded.

4. Paper A – Team and Partnership Report (Chris Edwards)

4.1 Team

CE gave an update on the team working from home and that the process of opening up the AONB Office at Fyne Court. Since the start of the lockdown there has been an increase of an extra 5 members of staff – the position of Landscape Project Officer has just been successfully recruited. The team now numbers 13 members of staff with the office at Fyne Court having desk space for 8 people.

Guidance from SCC is that if able to staff are to work from home however the office is open for use as required, operating at 50% capacity, allowing a maximum of 4 desks. The QLPS team are hoping to be in their new office which is based in Nether Stowey library – the old AONB Service Office – allowing greater flexibility for staff who do wish to work from an office base.

4.2 Partnership

There have been discussions about the format of JAC meetings moving forward after having been held virtually for the past 18 months - this meeting being the first face to face meeting since January 2020. Feelings were that virtual meetings had worked very well and had encouraged people to attend the meetings that would not usually have been able to attend and some valuable connections have been made as a result of this.

After checking requirements for Joint Advisory Committee meetings from the host authority (Somerset County Council) the meetings fall under the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972. As such meetings where decisions are required need to be face to face. Virtual meetings can be held but these would be informal and decisions would not be able to be made and reported on at these. Through discussion it is proposed to change the format of JAC meetings to 2 face-to-face and 2 virtual meetings in a year.

AB – face-to-face meetings are very important and virtual meetings can be very frustrating for some people.

MAC - a questionnaire went out to all councils across the country about 3 months ago about meetings face-to-face. Having listened to the Ministerial Conference which acknowledged that there was a need to look at legislation allowing remote voting. There was a very strong lobby about trying to cut down carbon emissions and the costs incurred with meetings and travel costs ect.

MAC - likes the option of doing both face-to-face and virtual meetings or a hybrid type meeting with people attending both virtually and if this helps with inclusion then that can only be a positive thing.

CE - the hybrid type meetings where people attend both virtually and in person can sometimes be disruptive.

ATB - has attended meetings with people attending both virtually and in person and it can work perfectly well with a small number attending virtually.

JT - virtual meetings can sometimes mean people cannot pick up on emotions from the room and is cautious about virtual meetings.

CE - feels the virtual meetings are a great benefit for people not able to attend face to face meetings.

ATB - recommended trialling 2 face-to-face and 2 virtual meetings alternating for the next year to see how well it works.

MAC - on the proviso that if anything that needed attention/ voting that the virtual and face-to-face meetings could be altered accordingly.

ATB another discussion can be had again in the JAC meeting in July 2022 to see how it has worked – all agreed.

The next JAC meetings in order will be:

Tuesday 19th October 2021 – Face to face (election of JAC Chair & Vice Chair)

Tuesday 25th January 2022 – Virtual

Tuesday 26th April 2022 – Face to face

Tuesday 19th July 2022 – Virtual

Landscape Review 2018 - CE a positive response overall from government on certain aspects of the review.

ATB - has concerns over more strategic oversight and increased public access.

HW - should be more about better public access not more public access.

CE - focus by Julian Glover was about diversity of access, it is a matter of equity.

DD - whether they take the current visitor level as a baseline and say we have to increase it or whether we may be considered as a high performing AONB because of all the work we already do.

CE - the monitoring we do and what we are being checked on will tell us a lot about how we are going to have to deliver.

BJ - better more inclusive access is what the QLPS are trying to achieve, is more about educating people.

IP - Government due to deliver full response to the review in autumn 2020.

CE - Somerset Nature Connections project that we are jointly running with the 2 other Somerset AONB's and the Somerset Wildlife Trust are starting the first free Nature & Wellbeing course on the 20th July 2021 for 6 weeks in the Quantocks.

There were no further questions or comments.

Recommendations:

- 1) The JAC supported the amendment to the Constitution and ToR to mandate 2 formal JAC meetings a year (rather than 4) with interim informal meetings as required (to be reviewed in 1 year).
- 2) The JAC noted the report.

5. Paper B – Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (Bill Jenman)

BJ gave a brief overview of the QLPS report. The team have settled in well together and even working mostly online have been collaborating on events and activities planning. The team are looking forward to opening the new office in the Library in Nether Stowey in the near future.

ATB – what date were the features identified by the LiDAR survey? BJ believes features dating back to 1300

CE - can all future QLPS events information to go out to the JAC members in advance. MAC could a link go out with the QH newsletter. CE newsletter goes out every 4-8 weeks and any future events will be included.

DD - congratulated BJ on the mural in Priorswood and working so well with young people which is very impressive.

HW - how deep are the ploughed lines on Quantock Common that have been identified by LiDAR? Some are significant and can be easily identifiable on the ground.

There were no further questions or comments.

Recommendations:

1) The JAC noted the report.

6. Paper C – Planning Report (Alex Meletiou)

AM gave a quick overview of the contents of the planning report and asked if there were any questions about the report.

A discussion was had about a planning application in Broomfield for agricultural barns. AM – this is an increasing trend for barns under Permitted Development and we are seeing some planning applications for conversion of agricultural barns to residential.

There were no further questions about the report.

Recommendations:

1) The JAC noted the report.

7. Paper D – Project Report (Iain Porter)

IP gave an update on the project report.

MAC - Levels Up project why are trees being felled? IP – they are ash and have significant levels of Ash Dieback. Project aims to increase woodland structure through underplanting replacement trees of different species.

ATB – Ash dieback is of serious concern with many contractors not happy to work on seriously infected trees. Better to deal with trees early before they become too infected.

CE – FiPL is still being developed and guidance being updated. AB – how does this funding work with QLPS grants? CE – While a lot of similarities between the grants being offered AONB / LPS will look to signpost potential applicants to most appropriate fund.

Recommendations:

1) The JAC noted the report.

8. Paper E – Finance Highlight Report (Iain Porter)

IP gave an update on the finance report.

There were no questions.

Recommendations:

1) The JAC noted the report.

9. AOB

No AOB

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 19th October 2021 (Venue TBC).

Meeting closed at 16:42pm

Joint Advisory Committee

19th October 2021

AONB Team and Partnership Report.

1. Team

- We are amending advice and protocols for working both at the Fyne Court Office and out on the hills as the County Council rules are revised. We have introduced a booking system for the office allowing 50% occupancy and Iain is revising the outdoor and group working Risk Assessments and guidance. We have revised our Team Meeting schedule to a virtual meeting every fortnight and a face to face meeting every 2 months, the first of these was held mid-September.
- Recruitment has been successful to the new AONB post of Landscape Project Officer to deliver the Farming in Protected Landscapes fund and our pre-existing Greater Quantocks Landscape Development Fund. The successful candidate and new team member, Katie Read, is supported 12 hours a week by Vickie Sellick, who's substantive post is as Project Support Assistant to the Landscape Partnership Scheme. Katie has held the first introductory meeting of the new Landscape Projects Panel with the support of Iain and Vickie and is engaged with a number of farmers and land managers in developing applications to these funds.
- The AONB Team is now at full strength and includes 13 members of staff, as AONB Manager I line manage most of the core team while Iain line manages our Volunteer Officer and FiPL staff, and Bill line manages our four QLPS staff

2. Partnership

- The Officer Working Group meetings continue to be held virtually on Teams for convenience and sustainability. This arrangement is by agreement of members and is open to discussion at any stage.
- To enable a hybrid arrangement of face to face and virtual JAC meetings as agreed at the last JAC meeting the JAC Constitution has been amended to mandate **2 formal JAC meetings a year** (rather than 4) **with interim informal meetings as required**. The draft Constitution with this amendment (1.3.3 highlighted) is attached as appendix A.

The proposal supported by the JAC that required this amendment was to hold two face-to-face JAC meetings in the spring and autumn and two virtual meetings each year in summer and winter. Under the 1972 Local Government legislation formal meetings have to be held face to face so the virtual meetings will be informal (i.e. non decision making) but follow the usual format.

Recommendations

- 1) The JAC supports the draft amendment to section 1.1.3 of the JAC Constitution**
- 2) The JAC notes the report**

Chris Edwards

October 2021



Appendix A

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

Constitution & Terms of Reference (January 2020)

1.0 Constitution

- 1.0.1 The Committee is set up as a Joint Advisory Committee under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to advise the constituent local authorities. The JAC does not have executive powers over the funding partners rather it acts in an advisory and consultative capacity to the funding partners.
- 1.0.2 The term the 'constituent local authorities' applies to the three principal local authorities whose areas wholly or partly comprise the Quantock Hills AONB (i.e. Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, and Somerset West and Taunton Council). These local authorities, plus Defra, are also the 'funding partners'.

1.1 Committee

- 1.1.1 The Committee shall be constituted as follows:-

Principal Local Authorities:

Somerset County Council:	2 representatives
Sedgemoor District Council:	2 representatives
Somerset West and Taunton Council:	2 representatives

Other voting members:

Parish Reps (see appendix 1)	4 representatives
Natural England	1 representatives
Forestry England	1 representative
Quantock Commoners	1 representative
Friends of Quantock	1 representative
Country Land and Business Association	1 representative
Somerset Local Access Forum	1 representative
The National Trust	1 representative
Defra	1 representative

- 1.1.2 The Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship shall rest with the County and District Councils elected annually
- 1.1.3 The Committee shall meet formally 2 times a year with additional informal Partnership Update Meetings 2 times a year. Special meetings may be called as and when required.

1.2 Meetings

- 1.2.1 Meetings shall be subject to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and shall be open to the press and public, where the public will be able to present questions to the Committee.

- 1.2.2 A quorum for a JAC meeting will comprise a minimum of six voting members, of which a minimum of two will be representatives of funding partners.
- 1.2.3 Decisions of the Committee shall be reached by consensus where possible. Where a formal vote is necessary, voting shall be restricted to the voting members. When it is considered by any funding partner (the Principal Local Authorities and Defra) that the decision would have financial implications for that or all the funding partners, voting would be restricted to the representatives of the Principal Local Authorities and the representative of Defra.

1.3 Funding

- 1.3.1 The funding arrangements for the AONB Partnership will be set out in a 'Statement of Intent' (SoI) between the four funding partners which sets out a shared vision for the AONB, provides a framework for the delivery of the duties and obligations of the different parties and, so far as possible, will give the Partnership a secure financial future.
- 1.3.2 The annual budget will be agreed by the funding partners in accordance with their SoI. Decisions regarding the annual strategic priorities for this budget will be the responsibility of the Quantock Hills JAC. Day to day management of the budget will be the responsibility of the AONB Manager who will follow the financial standing orders of the host authority. The OWG will monitor the budget quarterly and provide guidance/advice to the AONB Manager as required.

1.4 Officers Working Group (OWG) (see Appendix 2: OWG Terms of Reference)

- 1.4.1 The principal roles and responsibilities of the OWG will be:
- (a) to provide support to the AONB Manager and the JAC;
 - (b) to agree with the AONB Manager the form and content of the agenda for JAC meetings and the process through which the decisions will be implemented.
- 1.4.2 The membership of the OWG will comprise: one officer from each of the three constituent principal local authorities; one officer from Defra, the Chair of Friends of Quantock, a representative of Forestry England, the Chair of the JAC, the Vice Chair of the JAC and the AONB Manager.
- 1.4.3 The OWG will elect a Chair from amongst its members (neither the Chair or Vice-Chair of the JAC nor the AONB Manager are eligible for this post). The Chair will be elected on an annual basis.
- 1.4.4 The OWG will meet at least 4 times a year.
- 1.4.5 Should a vote be required, each member present will have one vote, with the Chair having a second or casting vote if required.

2.0 JAC Terms of Reference

- 2.1 These Terms of Reference will operate alongside the time periods of the Statement of Intent (SoI), signed by the funding partners, and will be subject to review by the JAC at the same time the SoI is reviewed. Subject to the agreement of all funding partners and a majority of the JAC, these Terms of Reference may be reviewed at any time.
- 2.2 The JAC shall:-
- 2.2.1 act as a forum for the discussion and investigation of issues affecting the Quantock Hills AONB and adjacent areas; and to promote action by the constituent Local Authorities and relevant bodies to further the interests and purposes of the AONB and to recommend action to its constituent organisations;
 - 2.2.2 enable the relevant local authorities, 'acting jointly', to fulfil their duties under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Quantock Hills AONB through the production of a Management Plan. In addition, the JAC will encompass a wider membership in order to engage an appropriate range of relevant national, regional and local interests in the management of the area;
 - 2.2.3 oversee the implementation of the AONB Management Plan and associated Service and Action Plans;
 - 2.2.4 guide the operation of the Quantock Hills AONB Service (line-management of the AONB Manager to be undertaken by Somerset County Council);
 - 2.2.5 make and delegate observations on development control matters referred to the Committee for its views by the relevant Local Planning Authorities.
 - 2.2.6 establish working groups on an ad hoc basis; to provide specialist advice and guidance on issues relating to any matter where the Committee decides that it would be expedient. Working Groups will normally be established on a 'Task and Finish' basis with specific and time-limited role. Terms of Reference will be prepared for each Working Groups, to include details of: its purpose and goals; its membership; the frequency of meetings; Each Working Group will elect a Chair from amongst its current membership.
- 2.3 Whilst each member of the Partnership Committee represents an organisation or stakeholder group, such interests should be considered in context with the Committee's collective goal of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. The principal role of individual Partnership Committee members is to bring their knowledge, skills, experience and expertise to this process and to assist the Partnership in the delivery of the Management Plan.

3.0 Accountability

Nothing in this Agreement or the performance or observation of any of its objectives conflicts with or may result in any breach of any constitution, standing

orders, law or enactment or any deed, agreement or other instrument, obligation or duty to which that Partner is bound.

Appendix 1: Parish Council Election Process

With regard to the representation of Parish Councils, it is agreed that the Quantock Hills JAC has four Parish Councils members. Parishes that lie within or abut the Quantock Hills AONB Boundary (see table 1) will be eligible to put forward a member for election.

- (a) Sedgemoor District Council (7 parishes)
- (b) Somerset West and Taunton (14 parishes)

The eligible parishes within each of these three local authority areas are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Parish and Town Councils whose boundaries that lie wholly or partially within the boundaries of the Quantock Hills AONB		
Sedgemoor District Council	Somerset West and Taunton Council	
Broomfield	Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone	Bicknoller
Enmore	Combe Florey	Crowcombe
Goathurst	Kingston St Mary	East Quantoxhead
Nether Stowey	Lydeard St Lawrence	Holford
North Petherton	West Bagborough	Kilve
Over Stowey	West Monkton	Sampford Brett
Spaxton	West Quantoxhead	Strington

The elections will be administered by Somerset Associations of Local Councils.

Each candidate will be required to currently hold a position as a parish councillor on one of the parish councils within their local authority area and should not be intending to stand down at the next parish council elections.

Candidates should preferably not be an elected member of a principal local authority: it is hoped that this will ensure that those elected to the Quantock Hills JAC will be better able to focus on issues at the parish council level and give the necessary time and commitment to the work of the JAC Committee.

Each of the four parish councillors elected to the Quantock Hills JAC would hold the post for a four year term from the date of the Parish Council elections.

Role of Parish Council Members on the JAC Committee.

The role of parish council members of the Committee will be as follows: 'A parish member will be regarded as broadly representative of parish interests but is not a delegate, so cannot be mandated by the parish councils concerned. The involvement of parish members is to ensure that the Quantock Hills JAC takes full account of the needs of their local communities and to improve the links between the JAC and local residents. Parish members should not just be spokespeople for the local issues, but ambassadors for wider concerns. Parish members are appointed to reflect 'truly local concerns' but, in that, to represent the wider AONB view, not just that of their own parish.'

Appendix 2: OWG Terms of Reference

OFFICERS WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP (Core Funding Partnership), TERMS OF REFERENCE, STRUCTURE AND OPERATION

Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Officers Working Group – Terms of Reference

Membership

1. Somerset County Council
2. Somerset West and Taunton Council
3. Sedgemoor District Council – Regeneration and Landscape Officer
4. Forestry England
5. Friends of Quantock Chairman
6. Joint Advisory Committee – Chairman
7. Joint Advisory Committee – Vice Chairman
8. Quantock Hills AONB Service – Manager*
9. Defra

* Other team members as appropriate

Meeting Notes: Quantock Hills AONB Service

Purpose

To provide a liaison, support and monitoring body of Core Funding Partners in respect of management and financial matters for the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and to support partner organisations in fulfilling the statutory requirements set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Responsibilities

- To advise on and keep under review the management, liaison and staff structure for the Quantock Hills AONB Service.
- To make recommendations to the AONB Joint Advisory Committee (**JAC**) on its structure and membership and advise on methods of engaging members and the wider AONB partnership including Quantock communities, to ensure their active involvement in AONB work.
- To initiate and oversee appointment of the AONB Service Manager.
- To advise on the 5-yearly review of the AONB Management Plan.
- To maintain focus on the delivery of the Management Plan by the AONB Team and JAC.

- To ensure that the work of the AONB Partnership is appropriately integrated with the functions and policies of its partners.
- To monitor and ensure that all resources available for AONB management are used to their best advantage.
- To actively promote and support the aims and objectives of the AONB with partner organisations.
- To support JAC members at their quarterly meetings and propose JAC agenda items.

Frequency of meetings

The Officers Working Group should meet no less than four times a year and its meetings should be timed so that they link with the meetings of the JAC.

Location of meetings

The venue for the meetings of the Officers Working Group is the AONB Service HQ at Fyne Court, Broomfield or by **virtual meeting where appropriate.**

Chairing the Group

The OWG will elect a Chair from amongst its members (neither the Chair or Vice-Chair of the JAC nor the AONB manager are eligible for this post). The Chair will be elected on an annual basis.

Voting

Should a vote be required, each member present will have one vote, with the Chair having a second or casting vote if required.

Secretariat

The Secretariat for the Steering Group will be provided by the AONB Service.



Reimagining the Manor



Crowcombe Park Gate Application

**Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee
19th October 2021**

Item: Notification of submission of an application under s.38 of the Commons Act 2006 by the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme on behalf of the Friends of Quantock.

The QPLS has submitted an application on behalf of FoQ to the Planning Inspectorate for consent to create a shallow ditch and bank along 347m of the East and South side of the Crowcombe – Stowey road to deter illegal parking. This land is owned by FoQ.

s.38 of the Commons Act 2006

The consent of the Secretary of State, in the form of a determination by the Planning Inspectorate, is required for works of this type on registered Common Land. A formal legal notice (see Appendix 1) of the proposals must be posted on site, in the local paper, and sent to a large number of required consultees including all the active Commoners, the Parish Council(s), and the usual statutory agencies. Interested parties have 28 days to submit comments or objections to the Planning Inspectorate after which the applicant is notified of the comments received. An exchange of correspondence follows, seeking to resolve any difference or if that is not possible to inform the PI's final decision.

Note that in order to be considered any comments must be sent to the PI at the address listed on the legal notice, not to the applicant.

The window for comments on our application ends on 4th November and the process then usually takes a few months to complete.

The current situation

For many years cars have occasionally parked on the south and east side of the Crowcombe – Stowey road. Concerns about the impacts of this unauthorised parking on SSSI land owned by Friends of Quantock has been growing for several years as number have risen significantly. However, Covid lockdowns and travel restrictions saw a step-change in numbers that has brought the issue to a head and requires action.

Concerns are due to the erosive impacts of vehicle wheels spinning off road, particularly in winter when the ground is wet and most vulnerable to damage.



Opposite Crowcombe Park Gate parking area Xmas 2020



Opposite Wilmott's Pool Xmas 2020

Design details

To prevent unauthorised access from the road onto the east and south side of the Stowey road by motor vehicles, FoQ proposes to create a shallow ditch and low bank at places where cars can pull off onto the Common. A combination of terrain, bushes, and some historic banking already prevents this over some 1400m of the 1.8km length, the works will protect the remaining 347m.

The design will vary according to the terrain and slope, but as a maximum on flat ground will consist of a "tick" shaped ditch about 20cm deep and a small 10- 15cm high bank on the far side. This design has been chosen to make it easy to reverse out of the ditch but hard to drive over it,

and also with a view to visibility and durability once it has revegetated. Any surplus spoil will be removed and stored for use in the QLPS car park restoration project.

The ditch will be at least 1m from the edge of the highway for safety. It is on the inside of the bends so will not be a hazard to speeding out-of-control cars leaving the road accidentally.

It is not intended to be engineered as an impenetrable barrier – off road 4x4s will still be able to cross it if they are determined to do so but building a 4x4-proof barrier would be just too intrusive. However, it will prevent regular cars from parking illegally on the Common, and more importantly be a strong visual signal that one is not supposed to park off the road here.

The commoners are confident it will not impede their quad bikes used for stock management. It will also not impede walkers, horse riders, or mountain bikers, being well within the normal variation in terrain (including that found on Rights of Way or other paths) locally.

There is one place where a bridleway, BW26/95, crosses the ditch line. A gap will be left here so as not to disturb the surface of the RoW.

Informal consultations prior to submission

Informal consultations have been held with the Commoners, both the overall Quantock Commoners Association and, recognising that there are differing views, direct with the members of the Quantock Pony Breeders (which is a sub-group of the Quantock Commoners Association). We have also shared proposals with the OSS, the three nearby Parish Councils, Natural England, and the AONB.

The AONB, NE, and OSS are supportive.

The PCs have not responded to our informal consultation.

Views amongst the Commoners are split; the official view of the Commoner's Association is supportive, and very much in favour of the shallow ditch and small bank combination. However, a minority of the Pony Breeders have argued strongly for a bank and no ditch. They believe that a ditch is a trip hazard for ponies. Despite the strength of feeling, the practical difference between a shallow depression made as an explicit ditch and one made solely to scrape up a bank is minimal, especially in terrain that is so naturally varied anyway.

The application is based on the Quantock Commoners Association preference, as they are the official body representing all the Common rights users and their views represent those of the majority of Rights holders.

Legal Notice and map

See Appendix 1 below

Recommendations:

1) The JAC supports the application for consent

Appendix 1 – copy of legal notice and map

QUANTOCK COMMON CL10

The Friends of Quantock is applying to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for consent under section 38 of the Commons Act 2006 to carry out restricted works on Quantock Common CL 10. The Planning Inspectorate will decide the application on behalf of the Secretary of State.

The proposed works are:

Construction of a shallow bank and ditch to prevent illegal parking along the east side of the Crowcombe – Stowey road. The structure will be approximately 1m wide, ~20 cm deep at the deepest point, topped with a 10 - 15cm small bank made of spoil on the side away from the road. The steeper side, topped with the small bank for visibility and durability, will face towards the road to prevent vehicle access and the shallower side will face away from the road to allow a car that has inadvertently driven in to back out. Details will vary according to the exact terrain. Total length of proposed works is 347m in 12 sections along approx. 1800m of roadside. The overall line is crossed by one Public Right of Way bridleway where a 2m gap will be left.

A copy of the application form and accompanying documents may be obtained by writing to;

Bill Jenman (Agent)
Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme
Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Fyne Court,
Broomfield, TA5 2EQ
by email from wjenman@somerset.gov.uk

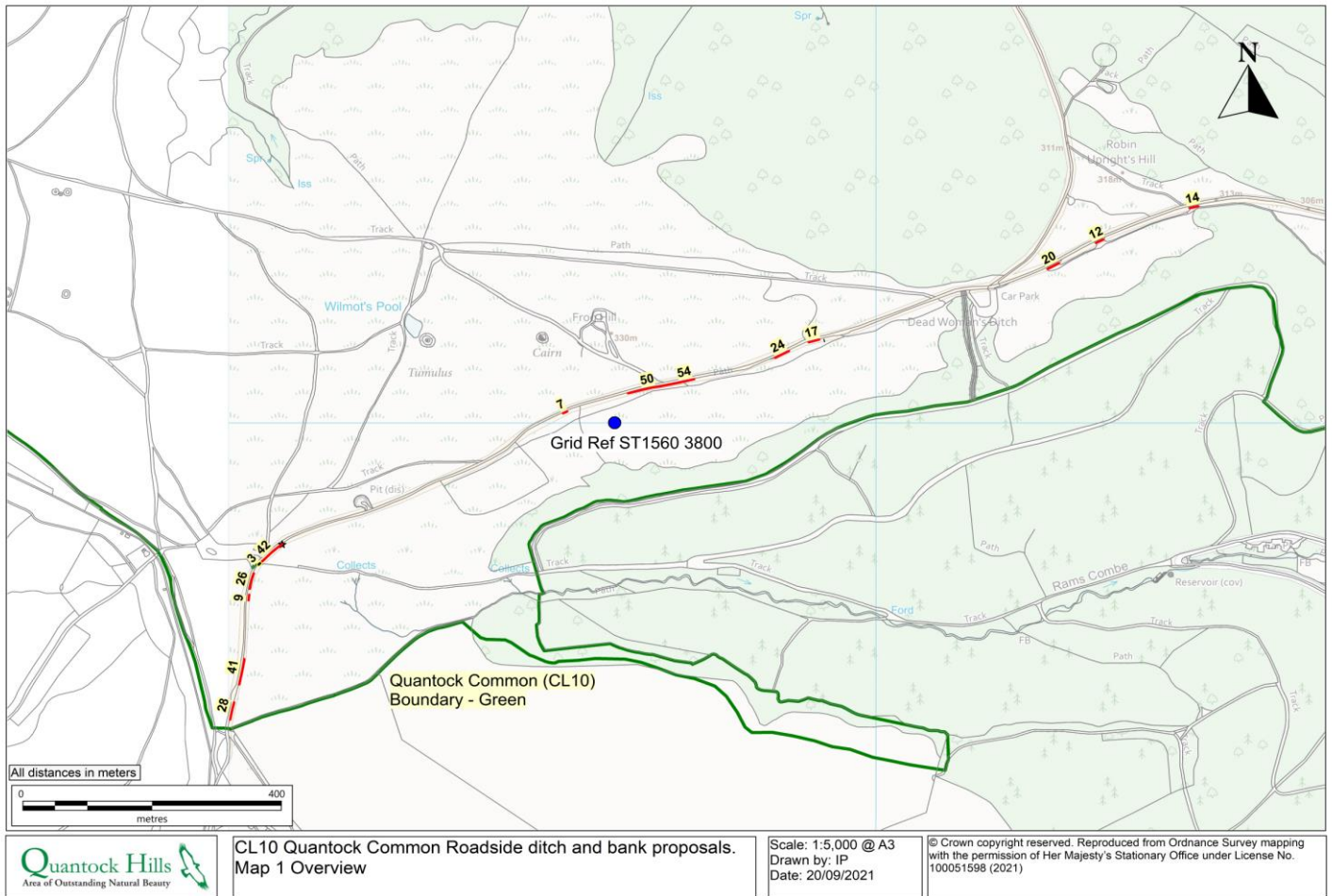
or calling 07811 308846. The application form and documents will be available until 4th November 2021.

Any representations should, where possible, be sent by email ON or BEFORE that date to [**commonlandcasework@planninginspectorate.gov.uk**](mailto:commonlandcasework@planninginspectorate.gov.uk).

Representations sent to The Planning Inspectorate **cannot be treated as confidential**. They will be copied to the applicant and possibly to other interested parties. To find out more about how the Planning Inspectorate uses and manages personal data, please go to the privacy notice.

The application is submitted on behalf of;

Friends of Quantock
22 Church Lane
Bicknoller
Taunton
TA4 4EL



Numbers in red are lengths in metres.

To: Quantock Hills JAC

Author: Owen Jones, Quantock Hills AONB & Forestry England Partnership Ranger
& Andy Stevenson, Quantock Hills AONB Ranger

Date: 04/10/2021

Subject: Rangers Report

INTRODUCTION

Since our last report in April 2021, the Rangers have witnessed reasonably high visitor numbers and visitor impacts on the Quantocks but not as high as expected or witnessed in the summer of 2020.

As with the restrictions last year, the Rangers have concentrated mainly on visitor management through patrols and working with the volunteers. Both Rangers attended various training courses over this period including a brushcutter refresher, ATV refresher, acid mire plant ID and a small mammal course.

The Rangers maintain a presence on numerous committees and build on relationships across the Hills and the southwest. They attend the Stowey Walkers meetings, Rural Crime Forum, South West Ranger Forum, England Coast Path steering group and the Somerset Hedge Group meetings.

1. Habitat Management

1.1 Cothelstone Hill – the Levels Up funded project focussing on woodland resilience has commenced with one block of ash, showing signs of ash dieback, felled and extracted and will be planted with a mixed range of native species. Another block of sycamore and beech will also be felled and replanted with a more diverse range of species. The project has also paid for the clearance of a block of scrub on the north of the site that will be planted to create a new area of woodland including fruit trees. In all over 6000 trees will be planted.

In other areas of the woodland the coppice rotation coupes are being cut using volunteers and some contractors. 3 coupes will be coppiced by volunteers supervised by the AONB staff and 1 by the LPS team. The hawthorn coupe is being thinned by volunteers and students from Taunton School.

Ash dieback is affecting more trees on the site and so the Rangers after a safety audit are felling any trees near to public paths and access points.

Usual summer practical activities have taken place including cutting the rosebay willowherb, pulling ragwort, watering the planted memorial trees, topping bracken, filling the water reservoir for the ponies trough, cutting and raking the glades and corals and keeping the car park and access paths clear. Volunteers have also been busy doing the butterfly and bat transects.

During the summer months Dr Michelle Whitham Jones from Hartpury University has carried out research into the relationship between the seven Exmoor ponies and the public/their dogs. She will be writing her findings up over the autumn.

1.2 Swaling / Cut and Collect – plans are in place to get the volunteers out for a practical training session in early November ready for the 2021/22 burning season. In addition a number of the commoners who helped out last year are keen to be involved again. The Rangers have met with the commoners, National Trust and local bird surveyors to discuss areas to be burnt.

1.3 Volunteer Rangers – throughout the summer the VRs have been getting up to speed with their activities whilst still being vigilant about Covid issues. They have carried out regular patrols and litter picks as well as some practical tasks such as clearing the drainage grips on roads near Sandy Beds, coppicing and dry stone walling.

1.4 Working Well group – this group has been back in action throughout the summer and early autumn carrying out dry stone walling and coppicing at Cothelstone Hill. The numbers remain fairly constant although we have had a few new participants.

1.5 QCV – similarly this group have been busy over the summer doing fence repairs at Cothelstone Hill, a beach clean at Kilve and coppicing.

1.6 Hedgelaying – two training events will take place this autumn run by leaders from the Somerset Hedge Group and the annual competition. These events have been funded by donations from Friends of Quantock and the LPS fund.

2. Visitor Management

2.1 Communications – the Rangers have continued their social media efforts to get across key messages such as keeping dogs on leads and explaining the new countryside code through videos and posts. In addition they have done radio interviews and articles for magazines about the Hills and how people should behave in the countryside.

2.2 Fly tipping / litter – despite the tips and refuse collections being back to normal there has been a regular issue of fly tipping across all parts of the Hills – not always huge amounts but different items ranging from builder's waste to bags of kids toys in different locations.

2.3 Patrols – the Rangers maintained a more regular routine of patrols during the week and at weekends/bank holidays. Joint patrols with the police have taken place as Covid restrictions allowed.

2.4 Events/activities – larger groups attending organised activities has slowly increased in the last six months. Lots of Duke of Edinburgh groups from schools and colleges have made up for lost time in the previous year venturing out on foot and bike; the Marines from 40 Commando at Norton Manor Camp have been doing navigation training and physical exercises; the Quantock Walking Festival took place over a weekend in September; the Quantock Quake mountain bike event was also held in early September; corporate volunteer tasks have been supervised with holly cutting in Holford Combe and coppicing at Cothelstone Hill; a Natural Flood Management walk on behalf of Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust looked at the Slow the Flow work on Wills Neck. We attended the first 'Know Your Countryside, Love Your Countryside' event hosted by Forestry England at Ramscombe in August with Volunteer Rangers and other organisations to explain key points to the public.

Upcoming events include the deer rut walks and the Volunteer Ranger led walks.

2.5 Circular walk routes – the Rangers have kept the various routes, such as the Quantock Greenway and waymarked trails, waymarked, litter free and clear throughout the growing season.

3. Wildlife Monitoring

3.1 Pied flycatchers – the usual combes around Holford were surveyed during the spring and summer months with good numbers of pied flycatchers as well as blue tits and great tits using the nest boxes. Adults and young of the pied flycatchers were ringed. In Holford Combe three adult females previously ringed returned to the same line of boxes. This data is fed through to the national data on these birds with the results issued later in the autumn.

3.2 Deer Count - the annual deer count took place on Sunday March 14th. As a follow up to our report in April the results showed that 551 red deer were counted of which there were 497 hinds and calves, 20 prickets, 19 young stags and 15 mature stags. 155 roe deer and 1 muntjac were also counted. The Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group met for the first time in two years during the summer at Quantock Lodge to discuss the management of the deer and the current activity of the animals and people.

3.3 Nightjar Survey – Rangers with the additional support of volunteers and staff have again undertaken a nightjar survey of selected km squares on Quantock Common. Numbers are yet to be finalised but are looking to be slightly down on previous years. A report will follow shortly, with information shared with Somerset Ornithological Society and Somerset Environmental Records Centre.

3.4 Tick Survey – the Rangers have continued to provide 50 tick samples from various locations across the Hills that get sent to the research station at Porton Down as part of a national survey into tick species and their levels of containing Lyme disease.

3.5 Dormouse surveys – the 70 dormouse boxes at Cothelstone Hill continue to be checked monthly – despite low numbers of dormice found there is evidence of them in the woodland. With the coppice regime restarting on the site it is anticipated that the numbers will increase as the habitat is more favourable. The boxes have been used by wood mice, blue tits and pipistrelle bats.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) The JAC notes the report

To: Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee
Author: Verity Jones, Quantock Hills AONB Volunteer Coordinator
Date: October 2021
Subject: JAC Volunteering Report

1. Volunteering has been up and running since the end of the most recent lockdown and has been really flourishing with having a longer uninterrupted spell of sessions without lockdowns! This has meant that we have been able to get all volunteering groups out again and have been back up to full group sizes (over 6 participants) which we hadn't done for over a year. It has also meant that we have been able to get out people who had been interested in becoming AONB volunteers during the pandemic but we hadn't managed to get out to a group yet. Luckily and surprisingly, we haven't lost many volunteers at all in the past year which is great news and still have stable numbers of around 90 volunteers. We did have a flurry of volunteer enquiries during the pandemic but as there were no groups activities occurring for most of the year we weren't able to utilise them and only a small percentage of these enquiries have gone on to become an AONB volunteer this year.
2. Community groups- this is the area which has slightly suffered in the last year and hasn't recovered completely, this is partly due to difficulties within these groups such as staffing issues but we hope to have them out when possible. The Working Well Group (participants referred through the mental health charity Mind) has been running throughout the year and is very well attended with many regulars. They spent a good chunk of the summer sessions rebuilding a section of the boundary dry stone wall at Cothelstone Hill with great results.
3. Wildlife Monitoring- this has continued without hitch this year, with a full survey season and even with new recruits getting out which has been a bonus. Surveying groups have included:
 - a. Dormice
 - b. Bats
 - c. Red Deer
 - d. Nightjars
 - e. Butterflies
 - f. Pied flycatchers
4. Quantock Countryside Volunteers (in partnership with the National Trust)- Andy and Owen have been taking this group out monthly since May with tasks up at Cothelstone Hill which have included fence repairs during the summer and then moving into woodland work such as coppicing and glade clearance during the autumn.
5. Volunteer Rangers- have been, as ever, a key part of the volunteering team getting out and about and engaging with the public- especially over some of the busiest weekends of the year. They clocked up a whopping 500 hours volunteering time in the summer alone. They have also

been meeting up as a group monthly- completing their own section of drystone wall over the summer and lately helping the LPS team to clear a glade at Broomfield Common.

6. School and corporate groups- we have several school groups out over the summer including Crowcombe primary school with the afterschool outdoor leaders club which was great fun and included sessions on wildlife I.D, orienteering and litter picking. We have also had Taunton school back out with us on Friday afternoons as part of their volunteering course doing hawthorn thinning work as part of the woodland management plan at Cothelstone Hill. There has been a number of corporate groups out at Cothelstone Hill too, many of them coming from the volunteering team in Somerset County Council with very good attendance and carrying out more of the woodland work such as coppicing again.
7. Recovery College - (an NHS organisation which runs activities for people with mental health issues) this group enjoyed the AONB guided walks so much last year that they have come back to monthly walks led by the AONB and LPS team at a variety of locations on the Quantocks.
8. Volunteer gatherings- it has been really great to actually be able to host larger volunteer gatherings this year once outdoor group limits were removed. We were able to have our summer volunteer celebration with BBQ and quiz at Fyne Court in July which was really well attended by the volunteers despite a few heavy downpours during the night!

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) The JAC notes the report




To: Quantock Hills JAC
Status: Quantock Hills AONB Service 2021/22 Q2 Summary Project Report


Date: 19/10/2021
Author: Iain Porter


Summary (year to date):


Quarter 2 – During this quarter much of the project work has been concerned with contract set up for Levels Up and engagement activities for Somerset Nature Connections. Embedding the Farming for Protected Landscape Programme and kick-starting the Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund has allowed the AONB Service to engage with farmers and landowners looking to deliver objectives for climate change adaptation and nature recovery.

The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, which contains 23 projects, is not reported here as it has its own reporting mechanism.

Project	Progress	RAG
Somerset Nature Connections	<p>Following the success of the Somerset Nature & Wellbeing Project the three Somerset AONBs joined with Somerset Wildlife Trust to develop and launch, in September, the Somerset Nature Connections Project. Funded by National Lottery Community Fund, HPC Community Fund, SCC Preventing Demand to Improve Lives Fund and the Discovery Fund the £500,000, 3-year project aims to support people to improve poor mental health, reduce demand on statutory mental health provision and to support community groups who support people at high risk of developing mental health problems, all through increasing confidence, knowledge and access to high quality natural environments.</p> <p>The project has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic with delays in recruitment of the project team and changing delivery models. The staff unit was fully recruited by March 2021, however the Project Officer covering the Quantock Hills area left in August with the recruitment of the new officer in September with a provision start in late October. Kristin Lambert, the Project Manager is currently on maternity leave and Kelly Bray, formerly of Avon Wildlife Trust, has taken on the role in the interim. Kristen is due to return from maternity leave in December.</p> <p>Delivery has started with group work and the referral courses starting in June 2021. The running of these courses has been adapted to ensure they are run safely and this has meant that numbers of participants per course are lower than first planned. Due to the impacts of Covid-19 on first year delivery there has been a significant underspend. The Project Board is currently working with funders to secure an extension to the end of the project to ensure the objectives are met.</p> <p>This project is supported by the Quantock Hills AONB Service, who secured funding from the HPC Community Fund and Somerset County Councils Preventing Demand to Improve Lives Fund.</p> <p>For more info: Somerset Nature Connections Somerset Wildlife Trust</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p>

<p>Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)</p>	<p>As announced in the Agricultural Transition Plan in October 2020 the Government has released the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. This is a £52m fund over 3 years for all protected landscapes to support farmers and land managers through funding projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to engage with the landscape and cultural heritage or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.</p> <p>Originally planned for an April launch date the Programme went live 24th June with the first application window open from 1st July. The turn around from getting official notification to launched was two weeks which has meant a lot of work behind the scenes and the AONB Service is keen to rise to the challenge to allocate this funding to support farmers.</p> <p>For the Quantock Hills the 2021-22 allocation from Defra is £159,430 of which a maximum of £13,198 can be used for 'Admin' and £22,437 can be used for 'advice and guidance'. Over the last quarter we have recruited Katie Read (F/T), Landscape Project Officer, and Vickie Sellick (12hrs / wk), Support Officer who are delivering FiPL and GQLDF due to the similarities between the two programmes.</p> <p>The initial phase of the programme has seen the guidance issued by Defra develop further and Protected Landscapes are clearer on what activities are eligible, where funding can be targeted and how FiPL dovetails with the other rural funding streams. We have received a number of expressions of interest and have approved one application to date. Due to the delay in getting the programme started we have concerns as to whether we will be able to commit and spend our first year allocation – there is no roll over with any underspend going back to HM Treasury. We, along with the majority of other protected landscapes, have raised this with Defra who are lobbying HMT to move some of the year 1 allocation into years 2 & 3.</p> <p>For more info: Quantock Grants & Funding (quantockhills.com)</p>	
<p>Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund</p>	<p>In October 2014 the Quantock Hills AONB Service launched a number of schemes which aimed to deliver landscape enhancement across the affected area associated with the new Nuclear Power Station development, Hinkley Point C. These schemes are delivered on behalf of the partners, EDF Energy, Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset West & Taunton Council and were funded through the S106 / DCO associated with the HPC development.</p> <p>The Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund (GQLDF) started in 2014 and provided grants to landowners, farmers, community groups and businesses to undertake small projects which will enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the Quantock Hills and area impacted by the development of Hinkley Point C, including its associated developments. Funding can be used to plant trees, plant hedgerows, create meadows, create or restore orchards. Metrics from the project:</p>	<p>J</p>

	<p>Enquiries / expression of interest: 196 Applications: 66 of which 48 have been approved. Funding allocated: £146,939 with £19,602 unallocated . 45 projects have completed. Outputs: 2.7km of native hedgerow created. 3.9km of hedgerow managed. 234 orchard trees planted. 12Ha of unmanaged woodland brought back into management. 4,200m² ponds created. 2,000 native trees planted. 11Ha of meadow created.</p> <p>In March 2021 the AONB Service was notified that the fund had been accruing interest and that there was a further £16,000 in the budget. This along with project underspend means there is a further £20,000 to allocate. With the launch of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme and the similarities between the two funds it has been decided to run the 2 schemes / programmes aside each other, meaning the GQLDF has an end date of 31st March 2024.</p> <p>The fund is currently prioritising applications that have community benefit and / or enhance biodiversity as well as enhance the landscape of the visually affected area of HPC.</p> <p>For more info: Quantock Grants & Funding (quantockhills.com)</p>	
<p>Quantock Landscape Improvement Scheme</p>	<p>Another landscape scheme associated with the HPC development, the Landscape Improvement Scheme funds works on the Quantock Hills and aims to increase the resilience of existing priority habitats through creation of new priority habitats and linking existing areas of priority habitat. The main priority habitats that the project is focused on are heathlands, oak woodlands and acidic grasslands.</p> <p>The project has undertaken ground preparation works at St Audries and Ramscombe in partnership with Forestry England and is working with National Trust on their landholdings between the north and south areas of Quantock Common. To date 21Ha of previous conifer plantation have been cleared and is reverting to acidic grassland and heathland. In 2021 the scheme will be removing rhododendron and laurel from open habitat in Ramscombe and holly in the SAC woodland. The project is due to continue running until 31st March 2024.</p>	
<p>ELMS Test & Trials</p>	<p>As the UK exits the European Union it will develop its own agricultural policy including the move to payments for public goods rather than area payments for agricultural land. One of the three pillars the UK Government is taking forward is the Environmental Land Management (ELM) system. ELM is due to come online in 2024 and Defra is keen to co-design the schemes under ELM with farmers and landowners. To inform this Defra has taken forward approximately 50 'Tests and Trials' which have been able to explore various elements of the new scheme such as the development of Landscape Spatial Framework, Land Management Plans or what the new Indicators of Success should look like.</p>	<p>J</p>

	<p>This Environmental Land Management systems (ELMs) trial for the Quantock Hills AONB is part of a National Association of AONBs (NAAONBs) collaboration – Farming for the Nation: AONB's as Test Beds for a new Environmental Land Management system, that includes a selection of AONB's from across England.</p> <p>The Quantock Test & Trial aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) prepare Landscape Spatial Frameworks (LSF) for protected landscapes and their ecological setting that will map natural capital, landscape character, cultural capital, social capital and ecosystem services to inform and target the delivery of environmental outcomes b) develop and test Integrated Land Management Plans (LMP) at the landholding scale, determining whether spatial policy objectives can be translated/ interpreted to a practical management level. c) develop a series of indicator of success for schemes that have been developed with farmers that are, where appropriate, capable of self-assessment <p>The project started in January 2020 and finishes in April 2021. The original timescale was due to be 2-years but due to delays with contract agreements with Defra it was reduced. The project has been heavily impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, especially as much of it was initially designed to be achieved through farmer workshops. While the number of farmers engaged has not been as high as first envisaged, FWAG-SW, contracted to facilitate the project, have worked very hard to seek input and feedback.</p> <p>COMPLETE.</p>	
Levels Up	<p>The Somerset AONB's were successful in applying to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The fund aims to deliver nature recovery projects supporting contractors and environmental NGO's in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Quantock Hills AONB is leading on 3 sub-projects which will enhance the priority habitats of the AONB. The projects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cothelstone Hill – selective felling of diseased ash tree's and underplanting with native tree species to enhance resilience of the woodland 2) SAC Woodland – thinning of holly in the 200Ha SAC woodlands to enhance the priority habitat 3) Acidic Mires – volunteer training and practical works to enhance the 16Ha of acidic mires on Quantock Common. <p>Originally intended as an 18 month project, due to delays by the NLHF the project is in practice a 12 month project with an end date of 31st March 2022. All works have been tendered with the felling underway on Cothelstone Hill and holly thinning due to begin in October. During the last quarter 2 engagement events have occurred aimed at staff and volunteers or partner organisations including plant id training on acidic mire plant communities and bats and woodlands with particular focus on the SAC woodlands.</p>	

Land Management Skills Scheme	<p>Somerset West & Taunton have asked the AONB Service to deliver a land management skills scheme aimed as NEETs and unemployed people. The scheme would be funded from the HPC S106 / DCO.</p> <p>The scheme aims to run 3 cycles of a 2-week course aimed at NEETS working with Somerset Works. The course will be a blend of introductory skill sessions (manual handling, H&S, team building) and practical courses such as first aid and brushcutter. For unemployed participants there will be 3 cycles of a 1-week course which introducing basic skills (manual handling, tool safety etc) and opportunity to sign up to 3 practical courses such as chainsaw, brushcutter, pesticides etc.</p> <p>Due to start in April 2021 the funding agreement had been delayed, finally being signed off in September. We are currently meeting with project partners to update the course timetable with the aim of completing the project by October 2022.</p>	😊
Access	<p>A small project for access improvements where these would not be the responsibility of the Rights of Way department. These could be increased signage or small-scale surfacing works on permissive routes.</p>	😊

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) The JAC notes the report**



Summary (year to date):

Project expenditure is lower than anticipated. For majority of projects this will not impact overall delivery of the project and funding is ring-fenced and not impacted by financial years. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is one fund where this is not the case and due to a four-month delay in release of the programme by DEFRA and the fact funding has been front loaded we have concerns that we will not be able to allocate and spend this years allocation. We have submitted a request for some of the current years allocation to be moved into years 2 & 3 as have the majority of other protected landscapes.

The Core budget is on track with underspend from some budget lines being used to cover overspend in other budget lines. The overspend in the Research & Development budget line is associated with the Nature Recovery work and will be covered from the RIA budget as this is where income from last financial year was parked at year end.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) The JAC notes the report

SUMMARY	Budget	Budget	Expenditure	Balance	Comment
	Core	£282,686	£152,939	£129,647	Budget largely on track. Showing slightly higher expenditure due mainly to front loaded expenditure associated with vehicle leases.
	Projects	£133,650	£1,700	£131,950	SNC & Levels Up. Delayed expenditure associated with SNC as project is reprofiled and this agreed with funders. Levels Up project expenditure expected in November and through to February.
	Landscape Scheme Ptn	£541,824	£109,027	£432,797	
	Projects [FiPL / LVS]	£244,430	£4,605	£239,438	FiPL and HPC Landscape Schemes – will operate zero balance budget
	Land Management	£2,000	£3,816	-£1,816	
	TOTAL	£1,204,590	£272,087	£932,503	
	<i>RIA (b/f 2019/20)</i>	<i>£38,000</i>	<i>£0</i>	<i>£38,000</i>	
	<i>Earmarked Reserves</i>			<i>£19,000</i>	<i>To cover 50% of cost of whole team redundancy as agreed in the core funding partners Statement of Intent. Reduced inline with updated estimates from HR</i>
	<i>Reserves</i>			<i>£25,287</i>	<i>Expected reserves at year end</i>

	Measure	Budget	Performance (Q1)	Comments	RAG
CORE / REVENUE	£ / % Budget line	£282,686	£152,939 / 54%		
	£/% [salaries, NI, SA]	£231,556	£115,905 / 50%	On track	😊
	£/% [training]	£1,500	£1,045 / 70%	Majority of required training undertaken. Other training requested to be considered against business need.	😊
	£/% [rent, rates, electricity, water, premise insurance]	£12,150	£3,131 / 26%	Showing rent / service charge for depot. Rent for AONB office due out Oct 2021 & February 2022.	😊
	£/% [stationary, post, phones, printing]	£3,310	£798 / 24%	Lower as printing & phone changes for Q1 & Q2 not showing.	😊
	£/% [travel, vehicle costs]	£18,700	£13,518 / 72%	Showing as high due to vehicle leases which were charged in July. Budget on track	😊
	£/% [Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform]	£3,000	£258 / 9%	Low – look to move budget to cover overspend on other budget lines.	😊
	£/% [Literature, publications, publicity]	£200	£1,107 / 553%	Replacement of vandalised interpretation panels	😞
	£/% [Meeting costs, hospitality]	£500	£124 / 25%	On track	😊
	£/% [Management fee, insurance]	£8,920	£8,860 / 99%	SCC management / hosting fee. Insurances include property, terrorism & computer / Employer Liability & Public Liability.	😊
	£/% [Memberships]	£2,750	£2,760 / 100%	Membership of National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) and Europarc Atlantic Isles.	😊
	£/% [Research & Development]	£0	£5433 / %	NAAONB Climate adaptation research & Nature Recovery Plan work invoiced this year from work undertaken last year. Allocated funding for this piece of work is in RIA code and will be moved across to core budget at year end.	😞
CORE / REVENUE INCOME	£ / % Grant – Defra	£166,239	£0 / 0%	Claimed in September (75%) and March (25%). Interim claim not showing yet.	😊
	£ / % Contributions – Local Authorities	£45,288	£24,480 / 54%	Core contribution from SWT & SDC received. SCC contribution at FY end	😊
	£ / % Contributions – Friends of Quantock	£1,000	£1,220 / 122%	Core contribution and land management recharge	😊
	£ / % Cost Recovery - Contracts	£32,300	£0 / 0%	Increased cost recovery from contracts - HPC Landscape schemes / LMSS. Due in Oct & Jan	😊
	£ / % Recharge – Contributions to staff posts	£35,688	£0 / 0%	Reclaimed October and March	😊
	£ / % Income – AONB led events	£500	£0 / 0%	Further income to be vied across from holding account	😊
P	Project (in-year budget / spend only)	Budget	Performance	Comments	RAG

	£ / % [Somerset Nature Connections]	£43,300	£0 / 0%	Grants due in and out in September	😊
	£ / % spend to date [Levels Up]	£50,350	£0 / 0%	Contracts let, works due September to February.	😊
	£ / % spend to date [ELMS Test & Trials]	£1,800	£1,700 / 94%	Budget for final report. Project has completed end of June 2021.	😊
LPS	£ / % spend to date [Landscape Partnership]	£541,824	£109,027 / 20%		😊
LVS / FiPL	£ / % spend to date [HPC - GQLDF]	£20,000	£0 / 0%	Anticipated full allocation of fund by March 2023. Claims to be finalised by March 2024. Estimated budget from projects in pipeline and applications received to date	😊
	£ / % spend to date [HPC - LIS]	£65,000	£0 / 0%	2 nd phase works starting in September due for completion by end of November. 3 rd phase due to start autumn 2022.	😊
	£ / % spend to date [FiPL]	£159,430	£4,605 / 3%	NEW – open for applications from 1 st July. Staff in post and application process live. Aware of considerable pressure to allocate and spend allocation in shorter time period. Request for some funding to be moved to yrs 2 & 3 has gone to DEFRA.	😊
Land Management	£ / % Contractors	£1,000	£3,575 / 357%	Tree works required which were not planned in. other works postponed to 2022.	😞
	£ / % Materials / equipment	£1,000	£241 / 24%	Reduced expenditure to take account of increased contractor expenditure.	😊
	£ / % Income	£3,000	£0 / 0%	Expected income from BPS	😊
	£ / % Income (Agri-environment schemes)	£5,110	£0 / 0%	Expected income from HLS and CS schemes. RPA delays in payments due to mapping error (RPA error)	😊