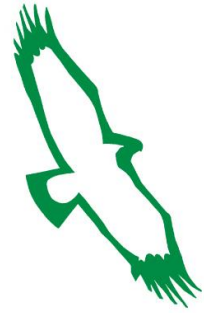


# Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**2.15pm, virtually via Microsoft Teams**

**THIS IS AN ADVISORY MEETING ONLY**

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 on 07976 695913 or email [asampson@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:asampson@somerset.gov.uk)

Guidance about procedures at the meeting is given on page 2.

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.

<b>Agenda:</b>	
1.	<b>Apologies for absence</b>
2.	<b>Declarations of interest</b> - an opportunity for members of the JAC to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter being considered at this meeting.
3.	<b>Accuracy of the previous minutes</b> (copy appended) <b>and to consider any matters arising.</b>
4.	<b>Public question time</b> - 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.	<b>Paper A - Team and Partnership Report</b> (Chris Edwards)
6.	<b>Paper B - Team Structure Assessment</b> (Iain Porter)
7.	<b>Paper C - Landscape Partnership Scheme Report</b> (Bill Jenman)
8.	<b>Paper D - Planning Report</b> (Chris Edwards)
9.	<b>Paper E - Government Response to the Landscapes Review</b> (Iain Porter and Chris Edwards)
	<b>Paper F - Business Plan 2022-23 Report</b> (Iain Porter)
10.	<b>Paper G - Quantock Hills AONB Finance highlight Report</b> (Iain Porter)
11.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Future JAC meeting dates:</b> (all start at 2.15pm)</p> <p>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 (face to face meeting, venue TBC) Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022 (virtual meeting)</p>
	<p><b>Note:</b> 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: <a href="mailto:quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk">quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>Meeting Guidance Notes:</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Virtual Council Public Meetings</b></p> <p>Please be advised that this an Advisory Board meeting and as a consultative meeting without any decisions to be made is not subject to the 1972 Local Government Act and therefore can take place virtually.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Inspection of Papers</b></p> <p>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 on 07976 695913 or email <a href="mailto:asampson@somerset.gov.uk">asampson@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Notes of the Meeting</b></p> <p>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 on 07976 695913 or email <a href="mailto:asampson@somerset.gov.uk">asampson@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Public Question Time</b></p> <p>At the Chairman's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about <b>any matter on the Committee's agenda</b>. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. <b>The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total.</b></p> <p>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, <b>before the meeting</b>.</p> <p>You must direct your questions and comments through the Chairman. You may not take direct part in the debate.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. <b>Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.</b></p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Substitutions</b></p> <p>Committee members can appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.</p>

## **QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)**

Minutes of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held at Holford Village Hall on **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October at 2.15pm**

### **Present:**

Anthony Trollope-Bellew (ATB) JAC Chair	- Somerset West & Taunton Council
Chris Edwards (CE)	- Quantock Hills AONB Service
Iain Porter (IP)	- Quantock Hills AONB Service
Julian Taylor (JT)	- North Petherton Town Council
Dixie Darch (DD)	- Somerset West & Taunton
Philip Comer (PC)	- Friends of Quantock
Alan Bradford (AB)	- Sedgemoor District Council
Dr Martin Jones (MJ)	- West Bagborough Parish Council
Hugh Davies (HD)	- Somerset County Council

### **Also present:**

Andy Stevenson (AST)	- Quantock Hills AONB Ranger
Owen Jones (OJ)	- Quantock Hills AONB & Forestry Ranger
Verity Jones (VJ)	- Quantock Hills AONB Volunteer Coordinator
David Stripp (DS)	- Kingston St Mary Parish Council
Josh Schweiso (JS)	- Spaxton Parish Council
Peter Paupe (PP)	- Williton Parish Council
Collin Falla (CF)	- Nether Stowey Parish Council
Sue Thompson (ST)	- Avon & Somerset Police
Sue Marks (SM)	- Avon & Somerset Police

### **1. Annual Election of JAC Chair and Vice Chair**

ATB was nominated to continue as JAC Chair and all agreed and ATB was happy to continue. CE confirmed in MC's absence that he was still happy to continue as JAC Vice Chair, ATB nominated MC to remain as JAC Vice Chair and all agreed.

### **2. Apologies**

Mike Caswell JAC Vice Chair/Sedgemoor District Council, Amanda Sampson Quantock Hills AONB Communications Officer, Mandy Chilcott Somerset County Council, Julie Cooper Sedgemoor District Council, Laetitia Kelly Friends of Quantock, Tina Luxton National Trust Area Ranger, Alicia Aras Somerset Local Access Forum, Jo Chesworth Natural England and Hugh Warmington Countryside Landowners & Business Association.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

ATB declared himself to be a member of Quantock Eco, Friends of Quantock, Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group and Quantock Stag Hounds, is also a Quantock Hills Landowner and is the Vice Chair for the County CLA. No other declarations were given.

ATB confirmed his wishes to withdraw from item 7 - Paper B as the application is within close proximity to ATB's land and in the absence of the Vice Chair asked for CE to chair that part of the meeting and all agreed.

### **4. Accuracy and matters arising from the previous minutes (20<sup>th</sup> July 2021)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were taken as read and agreed as an accurate record.

AB and JT - Page 5 are the meetings to continue as 2 virtual and 2 face to face meetings. ATB this is not set in stone but was agreed at previous meetings to be trialled as the attendance at virtual meetings was much greater and very beneficial. Will be discussed in more detail in Paper A.

### **5. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **6. Paper A – Quantock Hills Team and Partnership Update** (Chris Edwards)

The Fyne Court Office is still limited to 50% capacity under Covid rules, this is under constant review by IP following guidance from SCC. Recruitment for the Landscape Project Officer has been successful and the QH team is now at full strength with 13 members of staff, a number of these positions on a fixed term basis under the Landscape Partnership Scheme.

The proposal of trialling the 2 virtual and 2 face to face JAC meetings will be reviewed in the October 2022 meeting.

There were no questions.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC supports the draft amendment to section 1.1.3 of the JAC Constitution - supported all agreed
- 2) The JAC notes the report - noted

### **7. Paper B – Crowcombe Park Gate Application** (Chris Edwards)

Paper B is a formal submission under section 38 of the commons act. 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.

There were no questions.

### **Paper B Recommendations:**

1) The JAC supports the application for consent - supported all agreed

### **8. Paper C – Rangers Report** (Andy Stevenson & Owen Jones)

There has been reasonably high visitor numbers and visitor impacts on the Quantocks during summer 2021, 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 brushcutter, ATV, acid mire plant ID and small mammal handling.

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.

AST and OJ thanked the PCSO's for their continued support across the Quantock Hills.

ATB - is there any news about a possible new disease in Beech trees. OJ is not aware from a Forestry point of view and will look into this.

A group discussion was had about tree diseases in general.

There were no further questions to note.

### **Paper C Recommendations:**

1) The JAC notes the report - noted

### **9. Paper D – Volunteering Report** (Verity Jones)

VJ gave an update on the volunteering activities on the Quantocks over the past 6 months. Activities have picked up nicely once again after a very start/stop year last year due to covid restrictions and there has been an increase in corporate volunteering groups visiting the hills to help with the woodland work.

There were no questions.

### **Paper D Recommendations:**

1) The JAC notes the report - noted

### **10. Paper E – Project Report** (Iain Porter)

IP gave an update on the AONB projects. The Somerset Nature Connections project has been impacted by Covid, although the project started in September 2020 it only started on the ground delivery in January 2021. The project officer covering the Quantock Hills recently left the position and recruitment has been successful with the new officer starting late October / early November. Project Manager, Kristen Lambert, is due back from maternity leave in December.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes project has had lots of enquires to date but if anyone knows any farmers looking for funding please contact Katie Read [czread@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:czread@somerset.gov.uk) for more information.

The Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund has a small amount of funding left which is suited to small community projects such as tree planting, hedge planting, orchards and wildflower meadows.

The Elms Test and Trials report is now available to view, contact IP for more information or to request a copy of the report.

There were no questions.

**Paper E Recommendations:**

1) The JAC notes the report - noted

**11. Paper F – Quantock Hills AONB Finance Highlight Report** (Iain Porter)

IP updated the committee on the mid-year finance position. While there are minor variations in budgets / expenditure these are all within acceptable tolerances.

There were no questions.

**Paper F Recommendations:**

1) The JAC Notes the report - noted

**12. AOB –**

Question raised - Broomfield Hill, which is owned by the National Trust, looks as though it is not being maintained. IP – Aware that the site had been under a Stewardship Scheme but unaware of the prescriptions for management. It was suggested that the question be directly raised with the National Trust who would be able to respond more accurately.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 2.15pm, virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams.

**Meeting was closed at 3.45pm**



## **Joint Advisory Committee**

**25th January 2022**

### **AONB Team and Partnership Report.**

#### **1. Team**

- Working at the Fyne Court Office has returned to the 'only when strictly necessary' rule. Holding Team Meetings virtually every fortnight with a face to face meeting every 2 months is working well.
- The new AONB office for the Landscape Partnership Team has now opened in the Library building at Nether Stowey. Apart from the convenient location, the office has excellent broadband, which is a novelty for us, and there's a decent mobile signal there too. Use is currently limited by Covid restrictions.
- Verity Jones left the team at the end of December to join Young Somerset, the brilliant local charity that started as the Somerset Rural Youth Project in 1997, as a Youth Worker. We are sorry to lose Verity as she has become an integral part of the team, however for her to move to Young Somerset, an organisation we increasingly work with through the Landscapes Partnership Scheme, is great as it will strengthen our ties and engagement with them. Prior to recruitment we are amending the job description for this Quantock/Blackdowns role to encompass wider community engagement aspects that are increasingly part of the role.
- The recruitment process for the AONB Manager post from April this year, when I retire, was managed by SCC with Jon Doyle getting everything in place to allow a final decision before Christmas. I have already shared that result with you, but this is a good opportunity for me to congratulate Iain on his successful application for the role. I also thank Jon (line manager), Anthony (JAC Chair) and Julie (OWG Chair) for making up the interview panel along with me.

Iain and I have started discussing the handover, which should be a very straightforward process as Iain is already so familiar with all the elements. He has been considering the Development Officer Vacancy this will create and is looking at recruiting a temporary AONB Projects Officer (2 years) rather than directly replacing the broader Development Officer role he has created while in post. This will allow greater flexibility in what is likely to be a time of significant change for AONBs. – See the separate paper 'AONB Team – Changes in Structure' which goes through the proposed changes in more detail.



## 2. Partnership

- After a 3 year gap the Government published their response to the Glover Review earlier this month on Jan 15<sup>th</sup> and launched a 3-month consultation on their proposals. The response is in the form of a -page document and can be found on GOV.UK here: [Landscapes review \(National Parks and AONBs\): government response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs)


As part of the introduction Julian Glover, who led the review, is quoted:  
*This is our chance to make England's landscapes more beautiful, better for people who visit and live in them and far more alive with nature. Our countryside is there for all of us, but from the heaths of the New Forest to the high fells of the Lake District, it is under pressure in an urban world. It won't be enough just to try to conserve what we have inherited - we can change the story from decline to recovery, to make them greener, more welcoming and full of hope. The review I led showed what needs to be done and I'm pleased the Government has agreed to act. In a tweet on the same day he added "Loads more to do – need money (come on @DefraGovUK @hmtreasury) action, leadership and ambition next..."*

There is much to look at and consider here, Iain and I we will gather some initial responses from you based on a run through of Paper E at the meeting. Our proposal is that based on these comments and further consideration we will then develop a Quantock Hills AONB response to the consultation. We would then aim to share the draft response with the JAC for further comment (probably one-week turnaround) and to submit it to Defra once the support of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the wording has been received.

- Finally, after 33 years (and 130 JAC Reports) this will be my last Joint Advisory Committee before retiring in April. I would like to take the opportunity to thank JAC members and Chairmen, past and present, for the endless support the team and I have received during my time at the AONB. Having helped the AONB Service through several significant periods of development there is no-one I would have more confidence in leading and strengthening the Service through the coming changes than Iain.

**Chris Edwards**  
**Quantock Hills AONB Manager**  
**January 2022**



	To	Quantock Hills JAC
	Subject	AONB Team – Changes in structure
	Author	Iain Porter, Development Officer
	Ver / status	1.0 Reviewed by CE / JD / ATB 1.1 Amended new post title. Approved by OWG 11/01/2022
	Date	25/01/2022

## 1) Introduction

- a. The AONB Service has a structure, which to some extent has grown organically, that is able to deliver the vast majority of workstreams required. However the current core team structure is putting significant pressure on the core budget and with the change in staffing occurring in April 2022 with the retirement of the current AONB Manager, this allows a quick assessment of the most appropriate team structure for the immediate period (12 – 24months).

## 2) Current Structure.

- a. The AONB Service consists of a ‘Core’ team, ‘Projects Team’ and ‘Hosted Team’ – the Quantock Landscape Partnership.

Diagram 1: Quantock Hills AONB Service. Current structure.

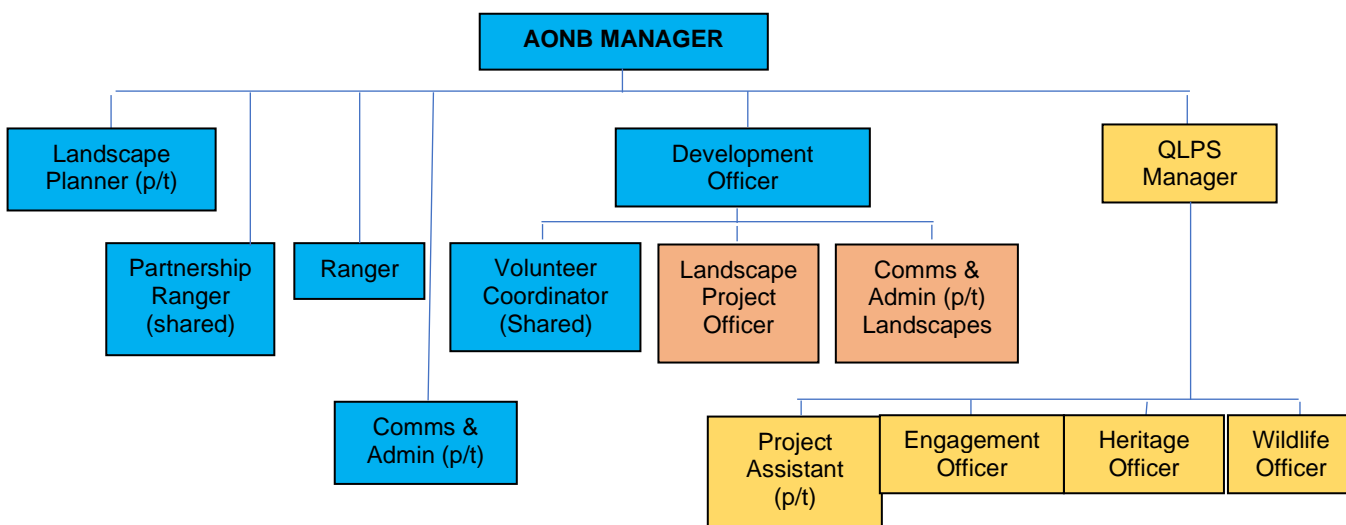


Table 1: Quantock Hills AONB Service current staff resource.

Post	Sub-team	FTE	Notes
AONB Manager	Core	1	Permanent
Development Officer	Core	1	Permanent
Landscape Planner	Core	0.4	Permanent
Ranger	Core	1	Permanent

Partnership Ranger	Core	0.4	1 FTE with Forestry England. Rolling 6-yr agreement with current MoU ending March 2026.
Volunteer Coordinator	Core	0.5	1 FTE with Blackdown Hills AONB. Renewed on annual basis
Comms & Admin	Core	0.8	Permanent
	<b>Core</b>	<b>5.1</b>	
Landscape Project Officer	Landscape	1	FTC Mar-2024. Funded through FiPL & HPC Landscape Schemes
Comms & Admin	Landscape	0.3	FTC Mar-2024. Funded through FiPL & HPC Landscape Schemes
	<b>Landscape</b>	<b>1.3</b>	
QLPS Manager	QLPS	1	FTC Mar-2025. Funded through NLHF (+)
Engagement Officer	QLPS	1	FTC Sep-2024. Funded through NLHF (+)
Heritage Officer	QLPS	1	FTC Nov-2024. Funded through NLHF (+)
Wildlife Officer	QLPS	1	FTC Dec-2024. Funded through NLHF (+)
Project Assistant	QLPS	0.6	FTC Mar-2025. Funded through NLHF (+)
	<b>QLPS</b>	<b>4.6</b>	

### 3) Proposed Structure

- a. The proposed structure covers the immediate period April 2022 – March 2024. This is to account for the project funded nature of the Landscape funded posts. It also allows delivery of the areas of work for which the AONB Service is funded, either through core grant (Defra) or contracts / agreements e.g. Farming in Protected Landscapes, Land Management Skills Scheme.
- b. The proposed structure will allow the AONB to deliver, either directly or through supported projects (e.g. Somerset Nature Connections) on the local and national priorities of nature recovery, climate and people.
- c. The proposed structure includes the following changes
  - i. Development Officer post to remain vacant until April 2024, with more comprehensive team review undertaken.
  - ii. A new Project Manager post is created. The post will lead on the Landscape Projects and Nature Recovery / Climate Change. The post will be fixed term until March 2024 with revenue funding available from the HPC and LMSS budgets covering the costs.
  - iii. Volunteer Coordinator post updated to Community Engagement Ranger, allowing post to recruit and manager volunteers and to undertake engagement activities. Post to be 1-yr FTC as funding is from core grant and shared with Blackdown Hills AONB.

Diagram 2: Quantock Hills AONB staff structure 2022-24.

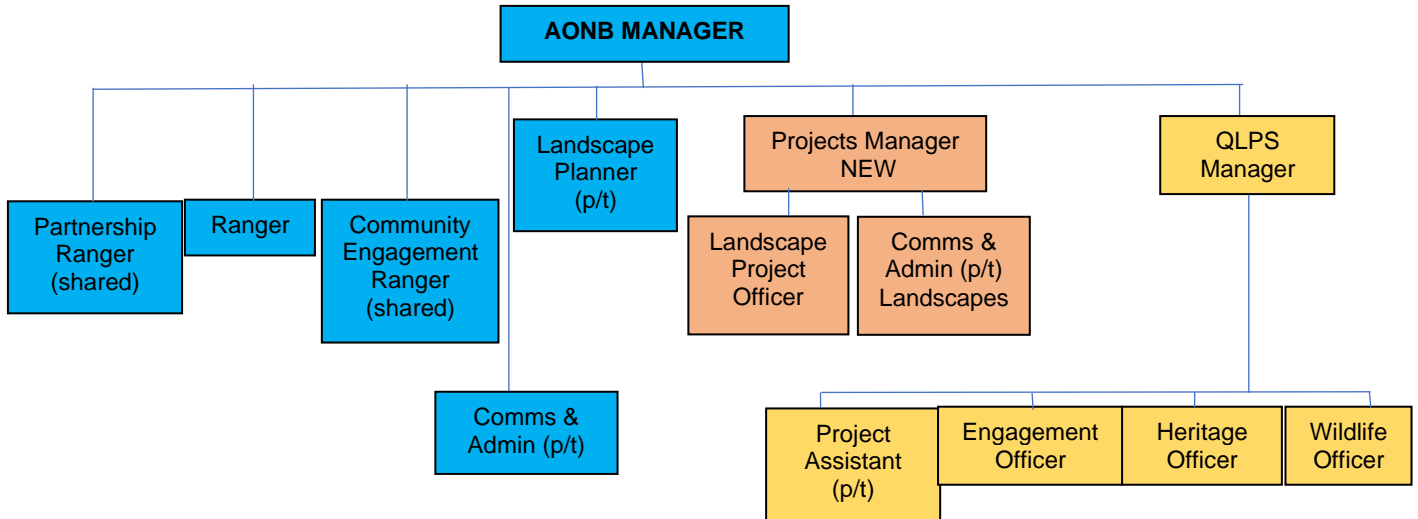


Table 2: Quantock Hills AONB Service – Proposed staff resource

Post	Sub-team	FTE	Notes
AONB Manager	Core	1	
Landscape Planner	Core	0.4	
Ranger	Core	1	
Partnership Ranger	Core	0.4	1 FTE with Forestry England. Rolling 6-yr agreement with current MoU ending March 2026.
Community Engagement Ranger	Core	0.5	1 FTE with Blackdown Hills AONB. Renewed on annual basis
Comms & Admin	Core	0.8	
	<b>Core</b>	<b>4.1</b>	
Projects Manager (Landscapes)	Landscape	1	NEW - FTC March 2024. Funded through HPC Landscape Schemes + LMSS
Landscape Project Officer	Landscape	1	FTC Mar-2024. Funded through FiPL & HPC Landscape Schemes
Comms & Admin	Landscape	0.3	FTC Mar-2024. Funded through FiPL & HPC Landscape Schemes
	<b>Landscape</b>	<b>2.3</b>	
QLPS Manager	QLPS	1	FTC Mar-2025. Funded through NLHF & others
Engagement Officer	QLPS	1	FTC Sep-2024. Funded through NLHF & others
Heritage Officer	QLPS	1	FTC Nov-2024. Funded through NLHF & others
Wildlife Officer	QLPS	1	FTC Dec-2024. Funded through NLHF & others
Project Assistant	QLPS	0.6	FTC Mar-2025. Funded through NLHF & others
	<b>QLPS</b>	<b>4.6</b>	

#### 4) Impact on Budgets.

- a. The budgets (table 1) identify the likely overrun in AONB budgets, for the current team structure and the proposed team structure, based on a number of assumptions.
  - i. Defra core grant remains at the same level as 2021/22.
  - ii. Local authority contributions are in line with Statement of Intent
  - iii. The AONB Service continues to deliver the contracts it currently is delivering
  - iv. Other core costs remain the same.
  - v. The Land Management and Quantock Landscape Partnership budgets are not shown as they are ring-fenced and operate a zero balance i.e. they do not draw on other AONB funding or contribute to other AONB budget lines.
  - vi. Grade of new post assumed at Grade 11 based on draft job description / assignment.
- b. Table 1 shows that if the current team structure was retained i.e. recruitment of a replacement Development Officer, the core budget would be £18,420 in deficit in 2022/23. Funding to cover this shortfall would come from the AONB reserves, which are predicted to be ~£35,000 at the end of 2021/22 financial year.
- c. Under the proposed team structure the core budget will have a small positive balance. This is because the staffing costs of the new post will be allocated to the Landscape Projects Budget with the revenue funding available from the HPC schemes and LMSS project.
- d. Other budget lines e.g. Land management, are not included as these are 'ring-fenced' and not impacted by proposed changes.

**Table 1:** Quantock Hills AONB budgets – current team structure & proposed team structure.

<b>Core - summary</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Salaries, inc travel & training	250,603	206,009
Office Running costs	14,850	14,850
Partnership Running costs	17,945	17,945
Management Plan development & monitoring	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>283,398</b>	<b>238,804</b>
Defra - core grant	-166,300	-166,300
Local authority - core contributions	-47,094	-47,094
FoQ contribution	-1,000	-1,000
Cost recovery	-14,922	-300
Recharges	-35,162	-35,162
Income events	-500	-500
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-264,978</b>	<b>-250,356</b>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>18,420</i>	<i>-11,552</i>

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Somerset Nature Connections - Expenditure	43,300	43,300
Land Management Skills Scheme	40,000	40,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>83,300</b>	<b>83,300</b>

SCF - HPC Community Fund	-30,000	-30,000
SCC -ILPD Fund	-13,300	-13,300
Somerset West & Taunton (LMSS Cont)	-40,000	-40,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-83,300</b>	<b>-83,300</b>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

<b>Landscape Projects</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Salaries, inc training	37,426	73,260
Travel, phones, ICT, equipment	780	1,660
GQLDF Grants	15,000	15,000
Landscape Improvement Scheme (contractor costs)	48,000	48,000
Farming in Protected Landscapes Grants	125,347	125,347
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>226,554</b>	<b>261,932</b>
Defra - FiPL grant	-156,978	-156,978
Somerset West & Taunton (LMSS Cont)	0	-6,000
Somerset County Council (HPC S106 grants)	-63,000	-63,000
Somerset County Council (HPC S106 revenue)	-6,576	-30,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-226,554</b>	<b>-255,978</b>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-42</i>

## 5) SWOT

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows core budget to be balanced for 2022-24</li> <li>• Increases flexibility with savings in core budget to be used for specific contracts e.g. Management Plan review.</li> <li>• Does not reduce reserves further</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of staff resource to undertaken strategic work currently undertaken by DO</li> <li>• High line management ratio for AONB Manager post</li> <li>• Loss of 'deputy' post within the AONB Team may reduce engagement with NAAONB</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilises revenue funding from HPC &amp; LMSS</li> <li>• Allows time to receive and understand impact of Government response to Landscape Review</li> <li>• Allows time to consider team structure required to deliver national / local priorities</li> <li>• Allows opportunity to consider any staff requirements as a result of the local government reorganisation (unitary).</li> <li>• Allows development of current staff to develop skills that will be required of new team</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced capacity to engage with project / programme development may mean AONB unable to take advantage of funding opportunities</li> </ul>



*Reimagining the Manor*



## **Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee - 25th January 2022**

### **Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Report.**

**Bill Jenman, QLPS Manager**

#### **1. Team update**

The team has continued to work well together through a very busy summer and Autumn delivering a wide range of events and activities. NLHF have indicated that they are very pleased with how things are going and with the range and quantity of activities and events we have run – we have engaged with over 2000 people since spring, the majority of that being in their home communities and so not adding significantly to visitor pressures in the AONB proper.

The new office in the Thomas Poole Community Library in Nether Stowey finally opened in November. It has had some use, but Covid restrictions have limited these for now; the intention is for the team to be office based two days a week (when we have regular team catch ups), wfh if desired on two more days, and the fifth day ad hoc according to need (all of us are quite often at meetings or site visits/tasks/events). We are already enjoying the access to excellent broadband! Other AONB staff will be able to use the office by arrangement when there is space.

Jem Gibson, our Wildlife Officer, has completed his six-month probation period with flying colours. He has put his new brushcutter qualification to good use already, with a chainsaw course booked for February.

We have had useful Project Learning Review session with our Evaluation consultant, Kate Measures of Heritage Insider. We've done well on informally recording outcomes, and counting outputs, but because we have been rushing to get events etc up from a standing post-covid start haven't really done much pre-planned evaluation works an integral part of event delivery, and we intend to rectify that next year.

## 2. Delivery

The programme is grouped into three themes, "Inspire", "Live", and "Learn".

### 2.1 Inspire

The outreach programme has continued.

We saw a very busy events programme during the October half term – which was both exciting and well-received but also tested our capacity. Many events have been new and untested, run primarily in-house.

This has brought its own demands, but feedback has been positive, especially for our unique offers – we tested events such as 'Lore and Draw' (an eclectic evening of life-drawing folkloric characters through the medium of shadow puppetry and Stone Age painting techniques!). We also had our first event in Wilstock during our project delivery phase, with *Can You Dig It?*, an introduction to archaeology with activities for families from the area.

We have seen an uptake in audience attendance at our regular events (themed walks run by the team such as 'StoryWalks' and 'PhotoWalks' have proved very popular). This has meant we've fostered good relations with many individuals, and many have subsequently volunteered to help lead events with us in the future, which promises a better balance in time.

We've continued to run regular community activities and trips – this quarter included our first camping trip during project delivery, as well as several one-day outings and activities. There has been a theme of working alongside our community groups and giving people the autonomy to decide which activities they would like to explore further.

Empowerment like this has increased trust in our organisation, resulting in a higher crossover of audiences joining our traditional ticketed public events – our trip on the West Somerset Railway, for example, saw a genuine mixture of audiences across public and targeted groups. This quarter we've also helped out-of-work individuals from our targeted groups get some practical training in courses such as first aid, which will enable them to better facilitate our own activities, as well as increasing their confidence and employability.

Mixed audiences have also increased our diversity profile, with events like the Photo Walks having a very encouraging representation of BAME audiences attending (a group of West African NHS nurses and their families, new to the UK) – this quarter saw an equal number of BAME audiences attend as it did our traditional demographic for this area.

Likewise, this quarter saw several outings with LGBTQ+ support groups in the area, helping with conservation work, or taking part in activity sessions. This has really helped bring invaluable resources to a younger audience of people. Work has included conservation efforts in Cothelstone which in turn strengthens the AONB and QLPS project delivery.



We recently had a catch up with the Somerset Nature Connections (mental health) project now that Kristen is back from maternity leave and I'm sure collaboration will grow as a result.

Overall volunteer numbers have continued to grow as new roles have been created and existing roles get underway.

The Young Rangers project is just getting started. Young Somerset won the contract and recruited Verity Jones, (ex AONB Volunteer Co-ordinator) to run it which is helpful continuity for us.

## 2.2 Live

The planning application for an enlarged new car park at Crowcombe Park Gate was submitted and the deadline for comments expires on the 18<sup>th</sup> January. There was one objection from Flood Defence but that was based on a standard response and at the time of writing it looks like any minor actual concerns can, in fact, be readily resolved. The s38 Commons application will follow but the s257 footpath diversion will probably be the last bit of the legal jigsaw to be determined. We remain hopeful of doing the work next winter (2022/23) but that will depend on the diversion being approved in time.

Consent for the parallel FoQ s38 Commons application for a low ditch to deter illegal off-road parking on the east side of the road was granted just before Christmas and the work will be done this winter.

We had a tree planting day at Cothelstone Hill where members of the public were invited to plant the native trees they have been growing over the last year as part of our 'From little acorns' event. More tree planting at Bromfield will start later this month.

The glade at Broomfield has now been felled and the wood chipped, and stumps removed allowing for more open space and hopefully better springtime flowers. More bramble has been cut to create better habitat and clear a space ready for replanting.

Hedgerow surveying continued into early autumn allowing our volunteers to gain more confidence in the survey method. We are ready to begin surveying again in early Spring.

In association with FWAG, Friends of Quantock, Somerset Hedge Group and the Quantock Hills AONB, QLPS supported training courses for Hedge laying providing people with an introduction into this countryside skill and sponsored a Hedge laying competition which was a great event day.

The QLPS has formed a great partnership with the Alfoxton Park Trust, and this provides a great opportunity for several of our projects. The parkland estate has been mostly unmanaged leading to overgrown bracken, but otherwise the park is in generally good condition. We are working together to help the Alfoxton Park Trust with a management plan including the creation of a 30-tree traditional orchard, new hedgerows and planting of some beautiful parkland trees. The site is of great ecological value and we have conducted an initial ancient and veteran tree survey, we will continue to survey the site for lichen, beetles, bat and other species of interest.

An opportunity has arisen to reinstate the purchase of an Alpine tractor for the AONB by the LPS, the plan being that FiPL purchases the associated kit. At the time of writing all the indications from NLHF are very positive and I expect formal confirmation later today. The FiPL panel meets on the 28<sup>th</sup> Jan. Purchase of a tractor will be extremely helpful for bracken control work across the AONB and especially for parkland restoration at Alfoxton. As part of the package, several staff and volunteers will undertake LANTRA training.

### 2.3 Learn

Our Test pitting programme started in earnest with the first event taking place in Bicknoller over the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of October.

Residents and local volunteers dug 10 archaeological test pits under the guidance of archaeologists at Past Participate CIC. Over the course of the weekend, over 3kg of pottery fragments were excavated, the vast majority of which date from the post medieval period. However, some fragments of medieval pottery were also recovered. Other finds included a number of prehistoric flints and fragments of Clay Pipe, Ceramic Building Material, Mortar and Plaster, and Animal Bone. Early indications appear to confirm Bicknoller's origins as a planned twelfth century village.

More than 50 beneficiaries and volunteers, with ages ranging from 9 to 90, were engaged over the weekend. These included local residents bolstered by support from volunteers who had previously taken part in our excavation on Cothelstone Hill. It is very encouraging that this group continues to be engaged with the wider LPS heritage programme and bodes well for the legacy of the Understanding the Landscape project.

Additionally, there were some clear well-being outcomes. Notably one participant who attended as part of a wellbeing programme was very nervous before attending, requiring extra support from our team, but enjoyed themselves so much they returned for the second day and provided some very positive feedback.

Historic England provided an intensive, bespoke training programme in the interpretation of LiDAR data for 20 volunteers. The training was provided on-line with training sessions recorded to enable additional volunteers to join us in the future.

Working closely with the Somerset Historic Environment Record, volunteers have subsequently been busy analysing the LiDAR results. At the time of writing 675 potential 'new' archaeological features have been identified. It is clear that there are many genuine new discoveries to be made, potentially including a number of previously unknown round barrows. We have begun a programme of ground-truthing these results in January 2022.

Trees in the Landscape research is now underway. Volunteers have at last been able to access the physical documents at the Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC). They have received specialist training from archivists at the SHC and are making steady process in extracting pertinent information from the archive material.

Volunteer recruitment is underway for the Unlocking the Archives project which will commence in earnest in February with two specialist training sessions at the SHC.

### **3. Budget**

We are on track with the revised (post Covid) budget.

Our regular meetings with the National Lottery Heritage Fund continue to go well and they have been very supportive and flexible through this unusual year.

### **4. Looking Forward**

We will have a review of progress and budget in April, but overall, I am very happy with where we are on the “people” and historic heritage aspects of the project. We’ve caught up quickly after Covid and are reaching the audiences we need to reach.

However, the delivery of practical nature conservation outcomes, like hedgerow and traditional orchard management and restoration, is much further behind and will be much harder to catch up on. The planned work to restore sections of The Drove is a particular concern given the contractor shortage and the lead-in time to obtain felling licences.

The Monitoring programme (biological and historic heritage) is also really only just getting going now, giving us only three years to produce results and create a sustainable legacy rather than the four or five years we had planned on.

These are therefore the areas where attention will be especially focussed in the coming year.

**To:** Quantock Hills JAC  
**Author:** Alex Meletiou, Landscape Planning Officer  
**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022  
**Subject:** Planning Report

## **Planning applications**

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 the AONB received 59 planning applications for consideration which have been followed up from the published lists or by direct invitation to comment. This level of applications is in keeping with the previous two years.

The distribution of applications between the two LPAs are listed below although two are SCC applications.

The distribution also shows the number of applications within each parish.

## **Sedgemoor**

Aisholt	- 2
Bridgwater	- 3
Broomfield	- 5
Enmore	- 5
Goathurst	- 1
Merridge	- 2
Nether Stowey	- 1
North Petherton	- 1
Over Stowey	- 2
Spaxton	- 3
	25

## **Somerset West and Taunton**

Bicknoller	- 7
Cothelstone	- 2
Crowcombe	- 3
East Quantoxhead	- 1
Holford	- 1
Kilve	- 7

Kingston St Mary	- 5
Lower Merridge	- 1
Weacombe	- 1
West Bagborough	- 3
West Quantoxhead	- 3
	34

The applications are made up of the following categories:

Access	- 2
Agricultural buildings	- 5
Agricultural/rural conversion to residential	- 2
Agricultural buildings to tourism	- 2
Agricultural to domestic use	- 3
Car park	- 1
Conversion to holiday let	- 1
Domestic extensions	- 12
Domestic buildings to residential	- 2
Granny annexe	- 1
Garage/car ports	- 3
Major development	- 3
Masts	- 2
Minor works – residential	- 8
New residential dwellings	- 1
Pond	- 1
Package treatment plant etc	- 2
Signage	- 1
Solar panels – residential roofs	- 2
Storage buildings	- 2
Variations of conditions	- 3
	59

48 of these applications attracted a 'no comment' response. The remainder were either objected to or comments were made raising some concerns.

## Current issues

A Prior Approval planning application for an agricultural fodder store in 2016, on a greenfield site of approximately 50 acres and within the AONB, went through the planning process at that time without any scrutiny, as the planning officer was off ill and no notification given to the AONB or anyone else.

The store was constructed and almost immediately used as a livestock building (for which full planning should have been sought). Last summer construction began on another building (a fodder store) and also on a new access and track formed in a field to the north of the site but not related to the new buildings. This also should have been the subject of a full planning application. The Parish Council, local residents and the AONB Service contacted the planning authority (Sedgemoor) with their concerns and the farmer was required to cease construction work and apply for retrospective planning. This amounted to 3 separate applications:

- 1) Conversion of a fodder store to livestock use
- 2) Erection of another fodder store
- 3) Creation of a new access and track

Unfortunately from the AONB perspective, applications 1) and 2) have been granted permission without any habitat, landscaping or wildlife consideration or mitigation measures. This included the filling in of a pond.

The application for the track and new access is still under consideration. It was due to go before the planning committee on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 but has now been deferred, hopefully to allow further information to be provided as the original application was lacking in many respects. I believe this is also true of the applications for the buildings, which in my view were not fully scrutinised.

The main concern is that this has all happened within and caused harm to the protected landscape. Obviously new buildings will be required within the AONB in certain circumstances but applications should provide evidence of a real need for the development. As planning laws are changing and with certain restrictions being lifted, the threat to our Protected Landscapes remains high and without proper scrutiny from the LPA, this can cause real damage and harm to the AONB.

A very recent application has been made for a 100 acre solar park near Washford, to the north of Tropicquaria and adjacent to an existing 33 acre solar development. The existing development is outside of the AONB but is visible from the top of the Quantocks (Beacon Hill) and therefore has an impact on views out from the hills as the site is about 4.2 kilometres away. The proposed scheme will certainly increase the impact as it is slightly closer to the hills and about 3 times larger. The LPA must make a judgement but need to consider the cumulative effect of these parks, as stated in the National Planning Policy Framework (revised July 2021).

The section on conserving and enhancing the natural environment (paragraph 176) reaffirms that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and AONBs, which have the highest status in relation to these issues. In addition to emphasising that the scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should

be limited, new guidance has been provided stating that *'development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas'*.

### **Upcoming news**

I will be attending a zoom meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> February with the South East Protected Landscape Planners, that have invited Emma Green from Defra to update the group on the Government's Landscape Review.

She states, "You may already be aware through other channels, but just to confirm that we are hoping to publish our Government response to the Landscapes Review and accompanying consultation this Saturday (15th). As part of the consultation, we will be organising a number of stakeholder engagement events, and we are currently co-ordinating a *'deep dive' into the planning focussed recommendations* for mid-February so there will also be an opportunity for members of this group to attend. I understand that the invites will go out via NAAONB and NPE, and I will pass across names of people in this group as potential planning representatives."

**Joint Advisory Committee**  
**25th January 2022**

## **Government Response to the Landscapes Review**

### **Government Response**

1. The Government response is in the form of a 33-page document and can be found on GOV.UK here: [Landscapes review \(National Parks and AONBs\): government response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs)
2. Below is a table from Defra showing their basic response to the key points of the review with an indication of proposed Government actions. Please see the link above for the full document giving a lot more information.
3. The Landscape review identified 27 wide-ranging proposals that, they felt, would enable protected landscapes to deliver for nature, climate and people into the future. The Government has identified which proposals their responses relate to in the table below.
4. The colour-coding in the table is the Government's view of whether their proposed response will achieve the desired outcomes proposed in the Landscapes Review. Green means they feel the desired outcomes will be achieved, Orange means outcomes achieved but in a different way to that proposed, Red means the Government does not intend to pursue this proposal.
5. At this meeting we will run through the 19 proposal areas given by the Government in their table, adding relevant information where we have it. This is the opportunity for JAC members to comment/criticise/support the Government Response to help in the drafting of an AONB submission to the consultation.

### **Chapter 1 – A more coherent national network**

#### **Strengthened AONB's (Proposal 24)**

- Package of reformed statutory frameworks and resources, bringing closer to National Parks
- Action to be prioritised in AONBs
- Step change represented by rebranding (NAAONB)

#### **Strategic Direction (Proposal 25)**

- A new national landscapes partnership between NPE, the NAAONB, and others - not a new public body
- A national landscapes strategy - clear national policy framework to guide the national landscapes partnership and inform local management plans
- Natural England's role to be reinvigorated, building on role as our statutory advisor on England's landscapes



## Chapter 2 – Nature and Climate Change

### The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30 (Proposal 4)

- Support preparing and delivery of LNRS, aligned with management plans
- Reform and investment targeted to achieve 30x30 (Green Paper)

### A stronger mission for nature recovery (Proposal 1)

- Amending the statutory purpose - more focus on nature recovery

### Setting ambition and monitoring progress (Proposal 2, 4)

- Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment will provide data on habitats, natural capital, and ecosystem function.

### Agricultural transition (Proposal 5)

- Options for how the special status of protected landscapes should be reflected in environmental land management schemes
- Will build on the success of FiPL

## Chapter 3 – People and Place

### Landscapes for everyone (Proposals 8, 9, 10, 11, 13)

- National landscapes partnership to develop national strategic partnerships and collaborative campaigns
- Rewarding farmers for enhance access e.g. FiPL
- Working across government to support health and wellbeing initiatives in protected landscapes

### A stronger mission for connecting people and places (Proposal 7)

- Extend 2<sup>nd</sup> purpose to AONBs and strengthen wording in relation to all part of society and public health

### Supporting local communities (Proposal 17)

- A 3<sup>rd</sup> statutory purpose could create unintended circumstances, but we will support the effective discharge of existing duties.

### Sustainable transport (Proposal 19)

- Supporting a pilot in the Lake District and updating guidance around Local Transport Plans

### Open access land (Proposal 16)

- Agree in principle, but any extension of rights will follow a review of current open access area maps.

- Aim to remedy barriers to the provision of permissive access by landowners

#### **National Trails (Proposal 15)**

- Potential role for new National Trails charity in national landscapes partnership

#### **Sustainable tourism (Proposal 14)**

- Producing a Sustainable Tourism Plan and will be engaging with representatives from protected landscapes teams to help inform that plan
- Greater range of enforcement powers available to National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority to help manage recreational pressures, including Green Lanes

#### **Planning reform (Proposal 6)**

- Planning reforms are ongoing
- Consulting on statutory consultee status for AONBs
- Future review of NPPF to reconsider protected landscapes policy
- Monitor the use of permitted development rights in protected landscapes and identify future opportunities to review their use

#### **Affordable housing (Proposal 18)**

- The appropriate policy response should address this issue in all rural areas through England-wide measures

### **Chapter 4 – Supporting local delivery**

#### **Local governance (Proposal 26)**

- A flexible package of measures to improve local governance, to be developed in consultation with board members e.g. appointments, performance management, strategic alignment, local partnerships.
- Replace the former Countryside Agency guidance on managing AONBs

#### **Management plans (Proposal 3)**

- Strengthening the duty of regard on public bodies and updating guidance
- NE to produce an outcomes framework to help link national landscapes strategy to local management plans
- NE to update guidance on management plans and review revised plans

### **Sustainable finance (Proposal 27)**

- Approximately 15% uplift to AONB grant in 21/22FY
- Expanding and accelerating private finance in nature recovery

### **General power of competence**

- Consulting on strengthening legal competence of NPAs and Broads Authority

### **Landscape Designation Programme (Proposal 20,21, 22)**

- Natural England undertaking new Landscape Designation Programme, with initial consideration of two new AONBs in Yorkshire Wolds and Cheshire Sandstone Ridge.

### **Consultation and National Association of AONBs response**

- Government has a question and answer consultation here: [Government response to the Landscapes Review - Page 1 of 12 - Defra - Citizen Space](#) please feel free to submit personal or organisational consultation responses through this channel. We propose the Quantock Hills AONB response is more of a narrative responding to sections of the Government response where we have something substantial to say.

The National Association of AONBs has given an initial response based on views of AONB Lead Officers around the country, and many months of work/negotiation with Defra leading up to this announcement:

### **National Association for AONBs welcomes Landscapes Review's call to 'do more for nature and beauty'**

This morning (Saturday 15 January) the Government published its response to the [Landscapes Review](#), an independent review led by Julian Glover and published in 2019, and opened a consultation enabling the public to express their views.

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty welcomes the Government's long-awaited response, particularly the opportunity to reinvigorate the status of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty with new purposes, powers and resources for the teams charged with conserving and enhancing these special places.

However, we believe the proposals as currently presented fall short of the ambitious, transformational change that Glover and his team envisaged. The Review recognised the enormous potential and frustrated ambition of the AONB network – 34 designated landscapes, covering 15% of England's land area – to deliver so much more for nature, climate and people, at this critical time.

The announcement in 2021 of plans to designate two new AONBs (Sandstone Ridge and Yorkshire Wolds) and extend two existing AONBs is a clear endorsement of the value of AONBs. Designation is a recognition of the national importance of these places, which are governed locally to reflect their unique combination of species, climate, geology and heritage.

Despite the chronic underfunding cited in the Landscapes Review, AONB teams are at the forefront of combatting climate change and restoring nature. Our joined-up approach to nature restoration is captured in the [Colchester Declaration](#). Extending the collaborative working ethos of AONBs to a national partnership could be effective, but only part of the answer.

**John Watkins, Chief Executive of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty said:**

“AONBs have a proven track record and a unique collaborative approach which helps to spread and scale best practice. Government funding for all 34 AONBs totals around £6m per year, roughly the same as a single medium sized secondary school. An uplift in core funding is essential to secure the financial future for England’s AONBs and an upscaling of their proven work. Extending the collaborative working ethos of AONBs to a national partnership could be effective, but only part of the answer.”

“The only limit on further delivery for nature, climate and people is AONB team capacity. We want Government to use this opportunity to work with us to strengthen AONBs as exemplars of twenty first century designated landscapes. Our response will put forward a clear road map for how Government could boost the impact of these areas for the good of the nation and nature.”

The UK government has set itself admirably stringent targets, with a strategy for net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and signing up to the United Nations leaders pledge to protect 30% of the country’s land and sea area for nature by 2030. Well looked after nature is accepted as the most effective and cheapest way to deliver on these targets – as a nation, we need to invest and cannot afford to allow these landscapes to fail.

**Next steps**


The Government’s response is accompanied by a 12-week consultation to seek views on the Government’s proposals, the National Association for AONBs will be submitting its views and we encourage members of the public to do the same.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks from today, closing on 9th April. This is an opportunity for people to shape how protected landscapes will deliver benefits for people and nature for years to come.

These are national landscapes, have your say, get involved.

**Chris Edwards & Iain Porter**  
**January 2022**



	To	Quantock Hills JAC
	Subject	AONB Service Business Plan 2022/23
	Author	Iain Porter, Development Officer
	Ver / status	2.0 Draft
	Date	25/01/2022

## 1. Introduction

- a. The Quantock Hills AONB Partnership is required to submit its grant application to Defra by the end of January. This report sets out the budget and main work areas that will form the basis of the grant application.

## 2. 2022-23 Work Priorities

- a. Work priorities and business planning is directed by the Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan and priorities of fundings e.g. Defra, local authorities. For 2022/23 these will include:
  - i. Maintaining 'on-the-ground' staff and volunteers for visitor management and land management.
  - ii. Provision of Nature & Wellbeing engagement through the Somerset Nature Connections Project.
  - iii. Provide opportunities for engagement through volunteering in a variety of roles.
  - iv. Production of a Nature Recovery Plan and embedding into statutory management plans and linking to national Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
  - v. Delivery of Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) and HPC Landscape & Visual Schemes, delivering nature recovery and climate objectives.
  - vi. Support and administration of the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme delivering engagement, landscape improvements and historic heritage works
  - vii. Provision of training in land management skills for young people to support growth in economic activity in the Quantock Hills and surrounds.
- b. The business plan will take account of opportunities and threats that may be realised during the year. This could include further impacts from the covid-19 pandemic or in-year funding opportunities, such as this year's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

## 3. Assumptions made for budgeting purposes

- a. There is currently a lot of uncertainty over how the medium-term funding 'landscape' will look. The Government response to the Landscape Review has just been released (see paper E), the Agricultural Transition Plan and ELMS will start to deliver the new components of Agricultural policy and the move to a single council structure in Somerset all have the potential to change how the AONB is funded and operates into the future.

- b. However it is necessary to make assumptions, especially in terms of next year's budget. The following assumptions have been made:
- i. Core staff unit is amended as set out in Paper B.
  - ii. Core expenditure is comparable to 2021/22 levels in terms of accommodation, vehicle and travel costs and partnership running costs.
  - iii. Local authority contributions have minor increase as detailed in the Statement of Intent.
  - iv. National government (defra) contributions remain at current levels.

#### **4. 2021-22 Budget**

- a. Table 1 shows the summary budget for 2022/23 based on indicative contribution figures supplied by the AONB partners at the January Officers Working Group. The funding will not be confirmed until March 2022 by local authority funding partners. Defra contribution (grant) is estimated at 2021 levels and is expected to be confirmed in March 2022. A full budget can be found in [Appendix 1](#).
- b. As a condition of the Statement of Intent (a requirement of the Defra grant) the AONB Service is required to hold an earmarked reserve which is to be used in the event of redundancies. This limits further financial liability from the partners. This is shown as a separate budget line and is not available as discretionary funds. It is updated annually and needs to cover 50% of the whole team being made compulsorily redundant.
- c. The budget will deliver the Unit Work Plan which will work to the priorities identified in Section 2 in delivery of the Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24. To this extent continued funding has been identified for a Community Engagement Ranger post (updated Volunteer Coordinator role) and volunteer activities.
- d. The budget shows income against Cost Recovery. This is primarily recharge for services or management fees where the AONB Service is hosting joint projects. The cost recovery elements are for land management activity such as swaling which the AONB Service undertakes on Quantock Common SSSI. For 2022/23 the AONB Service will operate a cost recovery system, though not necessarily full-cost, for any scheme where it is asked to undertake swaling. There is also recharge against the Amenity Land budget for management of Cothelstone Hill, Lydeard Hill car park and Triscombe car park on behalf of South West Heritage Trust and SCC.
- e. Since 2015 the AONB Service has delivered the Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund (GQLDF) and the Quantock Landscape Improvement Scheme (QLIS). Both these schemes are funded through the S106 / DCO associated with Hinkley Point C. The AONB Service is able to recharge for staff time in delivery of these scheme or directly employ a project officer to deliver them. This again is a funded element under the S106 / DCO. To ensure successful completion of the schemes within the timescales and budgets the AONB Service is looking to employ a

Project Manager, who will also be responsible for overseeing the other landscape projects including the LMSS and FiPL (excluding the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme).

- f. The Blackdown Hills AONB recharge is for the Volunteer Coordinator post. This is a joint post with Quantock and Blackdown Hills AONB. Quantock Hills will retain budget and line management with day-to-day supervision undertaken by the local AONB officer. The Forestry England recharge is for the Partnership Ranger post, employed by the AONB Service and managed jointly with Forestry England.

Table 1: Quantock Hills AONB Service Budget 2022-23 (summary)

Budget Heading	Expenditure	Income	Balance	Notes
Salaries inc travel & training	204,389			While budget is showing a surplus it is likely that some of this will be required to support the Management Plan review which due to start autumn 2022.
Office running costs	15,000			
Partnership running costs	19,645			
Management Plan development & monitoring	500			
<b>Core - Total</b>	<b>239,534</b>	<b>-250,156</b>	<b>-10,622</b>	
Projects	83,300	-83,300	0	
Landscape Projects	263,267	-263,267	0	Ringfenced with income from S106 HPC funding & Defra (FiPL)
Quantock Landscape Ptn Scheme	432,015	-432,038	-23	Ringfenced, April 2020 – March 2025
Amenity Land	6,000	-6,610	-610	Ringfenced for land management activities on SWHT land holdings within the Quantock Hills.
RIA	0	-44,744	-44,744	Estimated Reserves as of 31/03/2022.
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,024,116</b>	<b>1,080,115</b>	<b>-55,999</b>	
<i>Earmarked reserves</i>			16,000	50% of whole core team redundancy costs (figure tbc by SCC HR)
<i>Surplus / deficit at 31/03/2023</i>			-39,999	AONB will be surplus at March 2023.

Full copies of the Quantock Hills AONB Business Plan 2022/23 will be emailed to partnership members in early February. If members want a copy of the current draft Business Plan please contact Iain Porter [iporter@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:iporter@somerset.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1: Quantock Hills AONB Service Budget 2022/23 (full)

### Notes:

- 1) Somerset County Council (SCC) hosts the Quantock Hills and their contribution to AONB budgets is shown at the bottom of each budget line. This is a feature of their procurement and finance system.
- 2) Descriptions of line items are provided by SCC and fixed, therefore, some items of expenditure may not match the description accurately
- 3) RIA, Project and Quantock LPS budgets estimated as 2021/22 final year figures will be fixed 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022. As these budgets involved funding across financial years the overrun on 2021/22 budgets will impact the 2022/23 budgets.

### CORE / revenue Budget

Line Item	2022/23	Comments
APT & C-Pay	136,985	Salaries
APT & C-Add Hours	7,262	Additional Payments to Rangers
APT & C-NI	12,633	Based on SCC HR advice
APT & C-LG Pen	26,109	Based on SCC HR advice
LG ERS Def Red Cont	0	SCC contribution increased to cover Pen Def cost
Apprenticeship Levy	900	Based on 12 instalments of £75
Staff Training	1,500	
Electricity	400	New SCC contract
NNDR - Rates	1,550	As advised by SCC
Rents	10,200	Office rent = £6,4k, depot rent £3,8k
Water Charges	150	Estimate
Car allowance	500	
Travel costs	400	
Hired vehicle costs	600	minibus for Working well @ £50/mth
Vehicle Contract Hire	12,000	Estimated - new lease due Jul2022
Vehicle costs - Fuel	3,600	Based on 2021/22 costs
Vehicle costs - Tyres	300	
Vehicle costs - Licence	200	
Vehicle costs - Maintenance	1,400	
Equipment	1,000	
Equipment R&M	500	brushcutters £300 / chainsaws £200
Literature & Pubs	1,200	website & publications
Clothing & Uniform	1,000	Potential rebranding
Postage	200	Estimated on 2021/22 costs
Stationary	800	Estimated on 2021/22 costs
Printing	200	Estimated on 2021/22 costs
Telephone - calls	700	BT landline recharge @ £170/quarter
Telephone - mobiles	800	mobile phones for team
Hospitality	500	
Subsistence	100	
Subscriptions	2,775	NAAONB £2656 / AI = £125
Fees & Hired	1,000	Lone working system moved from 42004
Internal - Insurance	2,220	PLI £300 / ELI £340 / Property £80 / motor £1700
Publicity & Promotion	1,100	Coth Hill £100 / QVs £1000
Research & Development	500	
Cross Service Recharges	8,250	Management Fee to SCC
Grant - Defra	-166,300	Defra AONB Grant - estimated
Contributions - OLA	-12,485	SDC
Contributions - OLA	-12,485	Somerset West & Taunton



Fees & Charges	-1,000	FoQ Contribution
Fees & Charges	-300	Cost Recovery - swaling
Fees & Charges	0	Cost Recovery - LMSS Projects
Fees & Charges	-14,037	Recharge - Blackdown Hills AONB
Fees & Charges	-21,125	Recharge - Forestry Commission
Fees & Charges	-300	Income from AONB run events
Cross-Service		Moved RIA to core
<b>OUTRUN CORE</b>	<b>11,502</b>	
<i>SCC core cont</i>	<i>-21,224</i>	<i>As agreed under Statement of Intent</i>
<i>SCC pension + Apprentice</i>	<i>-900</i>	
<b>SCC Contribution</b>	<b>-22,124</b>	
<i>Balance (105232 Core)</i>	<i>-10,622</i>	<i>Showing surplus.</i>

### AONB Projects

Line Items	2022/23	Comments
Hired vehicle costs	4,000	LMSS Project
Clothing, uniform	3,180	LMSS Project
Cost of Meetings (External)	1,500	LMSS Project
Fees & Hired	43,300	Cont to SNC Project
Ctrctrs (not 3rd Part)	31,320	LMSS Project
Contributions - OLA	-40,000	Somerset West & Taunton - LMSS
Contributions - Oth	-30,000	Somerset Community Foundation (SNC project)
<b>OUTRUN PROJECTS</b>	<b>13,300</b>	
<b>SCC Contribution</b>	<b>-13,300</b>	<i>Improving lives to reduce demand funding</i>
Balance (103612 Project)	0	

### AONB Projects (Landscape)

	2022/23	Comments
APT & C-Pay	57,014	Landscape PO & Admins support / NR PO
APT & C-NI	4,526	Landscape PO & Admins support / NR PO
APT & C-LG Pen	10,320	Landscape PO & Admins support / NR PO
Apprenticeship Levy	200	Landscape PO & Admins support / NR PO
Staff Training	1,200	Landscape PO & Admins support / NR PO
Travel costs	600	Landscape PO & Admins support / NR PO
Equipment	700	HPC Landscape Project Officer
Printing	200	HPC Landscape Project Officer
Telephone - mobiles	160	HPC Landscape Project Officer
F&H - Prof/Tech Serv	15,000	GQLDF Grants (HPC)
Ctrctrs (Not 3rd Part)	48,000	Landscape Improvement Schemes (HPC)
Ctrctrs (Not 3rd Part)	125,347	Landowner grants (FiPL)
Grant - Defra	-156,978	Defra FiPL allocation
Contributions - OLA	-6,000	SWT - LMSS Contribution to staff costs
Cross-Service	<b>-37,289</b>	Income from SCC (HPC) - Staff costs
Cross-Service	-63,000	Income from SCC (HPC) - grants
<b>OUTRUN AONB SUSTAIN</b>	<b>0</b>	

### Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

Line items	2022/23	Comments
APT & C-Pay	119,623	Salaries
APT & C-NI	10,447	Based on SCC HR advice
APT & C-LG Pen	21,652	Based on SCC HR advice
LG ERS Def Red Cont	0	
Apprenticeship Levy	575	Estimate based on 2021/22

Staff Training	2,500	
Rents	6,000	
Car allowance	2,000	
Travel costs	450	
Equipment	51,500	Main expenditure - tractor
Equipment R&M	200	
Reprographics - photocopy/printing	500	
Postage	100	
Stationary	100	
Printing	200	
Telephone - calls	288	Shield lone working @ £24 / mth
Telephone - mobiles	600	@ £150/Qu
Cost of Meetings (External)	3,000	
Fees & Hired	25,000	
F&H - Prof/Tech Serv	4,800	
Ctrctrs (Not 3rd Part)	175,000	
Cross Directorate	7,000	Transport
Cross Service		
Internal - Insurance	480	Est PLI - £200 / ELI - £240 / Property - £40
Contributions	0	
Contributions	-25,000	Friends of Quantock
Fees & Charges	-336,000	NLHF
Fees & Charges		HE grants for SAM
Fees & Charges	-500	events
Cross Service	-4,000	CS from AONB
Cross Service	-66,538	SCC HPC S106 match funding (final tranche)
<b>OUTRUN HLF</b>	<b>-23</b>	

### Land Management

		Comments
Equipment, materials	1,000	
Ctrctrs (Not 3rd Part)	5,000	
GrantGovtOutsideAEF	-5,110	CS / ES income
Grant - Defra	-1,500	Basic Payment Scheme
<b>OUTRUN AMENITY</b>	<b>-610</b>	

## Summary (year to date):

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. The cost recovery from contracts will be less than planned and this is being managed through reducing spend and through use of reserves.

In late December Defra approached all English AONBs with the offer of additional core grant to be spent in year. Each AONB was invited within 4-days to submit a 'wish-list' for up to £25,000 to be spent by the end of March 2022. The additional grant would be separate to our existing grant and would not need to be match funded. We submitted a wish list which included purchase of a small van, consultancy for progressing the nature recovery plan and purchase of battery-operated power tools. Defra confirmed additional grant 13/01/2022.

Project expenditure tends to be rear-loaded with many of the land management projects (LVS, FiPL) works occurring during September to March and invoicing due in February and March. The FiPL budget has been reprofiled with lower allocation in year 1 and higher allocations in years 2 & 3. Spend is showing as low, which is due to the retrospective claiming of the grant. For the QLPS and LVS projects, which operate on a zero-balance the low spend is not an issue this year as the works will be rolled into 2022/23.

SUMMARY	Budget	Budget	Expenditure	Balance	Comment
	Core	£282,586	£221,724	£60,862	On track
	Projects	£115,450	£70,482	£44,968	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. LMSS budget reduced to allow for activity in 2022/23
	Landscape Ptn Scheme	£542,105	£171,855	£370,250	Budget revised October. Dependant on a number of projects spending towards end of financial year.
	Projects [FiPL / LVS]	£123,513	£20,495	£103,018	FiPL and HPC Landscape Schemes – will operate zero balance budget. FiPL and LIS reprofiled with lower budget. Expenditure due out February and March 2022.
	Land Management	£2,000	£4,260	£-2,260	Overspend associated with additional contractor costs.
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,065,373</b>	<b>£488,817</b>	<b>£576,556</b>	
	<i>RIA (b/f 2020/21)</i>	<i>£44,744</i>	<i>£0</i>	<i>£44,744</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.</i>
	<i>Reserves</i>			<i>£25,744</i>	<i>Expected reserves at year end</i>

	Measure	Budget	Performance (Q3)	Comments	RAG
CORE / REVENUE	<b>£ / % Budget line</b>	<b>£282,586</b>	<b>£221,724 / 78%</b>		
	£/% [salaries, NI, SA]	£231,556	£173,853 / 75%	On track	😊
	£/% [training]	£1,500	£1,137 / 76%	Majority of required training undertaken. Other training requested to be considered against business need.	😊
	£/% [rent, rates, electricity, water, premise insurance]	£12,150	£8,347 / 69%	Showing rent / service charge for depot. Rent for AONB office due out Oct 2021 & February 2022.	😊
	£/% [stationary, post, phones, printing]	£3,310	£1,682 / 51%	Expected charges now showing. Budget to be reprofiled to cover lines that are overspent	😊
	£/% [travel, vehicle costs]	£18,700	£16,157 / 86%	Showing as high due to vehicle leases which were charged in July. Budget on track	😊
	£/% [Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform]	£3,000	£894 / 30%	Low – look to move budget to cover overspend on other budget lines.	😊
	£/% [Literature, publications, publicity]	£200	£1,647 / 823%	Replacement of vandalised interpretation panels and website costs	😞
	£/% [Meeting costs, hospitality]	£500	£464 / 93%	On track	😊
	£/% [Management fee, insurance]	£8,920	£8,928 / 100%	SCC management / hosting fee. Insurances include property, terrorism & computer / Employer Liability & Public Liability.	😊
	£/% [Memberships]	£2,750	£2,885 / 105%	Membership of National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) and Europarc Atlantic Isles.	😊
	£/% [Research & Development]	£0	£5,730 / %	NAAONB Climate adaptation research & Nature Recovery Plan work invoiced this year from work undertaken last year.	😞
	CORE / REVENUE INCOME	£ / % Grant – Defra	£166,239	£124,679 / 75%	Claimed in September (75%) and March (25%)
£ / % 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%	Reduced income from contract delivery as some contracts such as LMSS now being delivered in 2022	😞
£ / % Recharge – Contributions to staff posts		£35,688	£21,613 / 61%	Reclaimed October and March	😊

	£ / % Income – AONB led events	£500	£1,045 / 209%		😊
PROJECTS	<b>Project (in-year budget / spend only)</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>RAG</b>
	£ / % [Somerset Nature Connections]	£43,300	£43,333 / 100%	Contributions to project received. Due to delays in project start up and lower delivery in year 1 project partners are currently seeking extension to project from funders.	😊
	£ / % spend to date [Levels Up]	£50,350	£25,449 / 51%	All contracts running and expected to finish on time and to budget.	😊
	£ / % 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]	£542,105	£171,855 / 32%	Budget re-profiled in October. Full expenditure dependant on a number of larger projects meeting deadlines.	😊
LVS / FIPL	£ / % spend to date [HPC - GQLDF]	£20,000	£5,000 / 25%	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]	£20,000	£0 / 0%	Revised budget as works postponed into 2022/23. 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase works starting in January due for completion by end of November 2022. 3 <sup>rd</sup> phase due to start autumn 2022.	😊
	£ / % spend to date [FiPL]	£83,513	£15,495 / 3%	Defra agreed to reprofile of allocation. Yr 1 allocation has decreased by approx. 50% with increase in yr 2 & 3. Yr 1 grant nearly fully allocated.	😊
Land Management	£ / % Contractors	£1,000	£3,909 / 390%	Tree works required which were not planned in. other works postponed to 2022.	😞
	£ / % Materials / equipment	£1,000	£350 / 35%	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)	😊