

Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 19th July 2022

2.15pm, Halsway Manor

Halsway Lane, Crowcombe, Taunton, TA4 4BD

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 email quantockhills@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.

Agenda:	
1.	Apologies for absence
2.	Declarations of interest - an opportunity for members of the JAC to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter being considered at this meeting.
3.	Accuracy of the previous minutes (copy appended) and to consider any matters arising.
4.	Public question time - The Chairman will allow members of the public to ask questions or make statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting or present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit.
5.	Paper A – Partnership activity report (Iain Porter)
6.	Presentation – iNaturalist and biological reporting (Friends of Quantock)
7.	Paper B – Farming in Protected Landscapes (Katie Read)
8.	Presentation – Historic Heritage work from QLPS (Dan Broadbent)
9.	Paper C – Landscape Planning Report (Alex Meletiou)
10.	Paper D – Business Plan Progress Report (Iain Porter)
11.	AOB
	<p>Future JAC meeting dates:</p> <p>Tuesday 18th October 2022 Tuesday 24th January 2023 Tuesday 18th April 2023 Tuesday 18th July 2023</p> <p>(all start at 2.15pm venues TBC)</p>
	<p>Note:</p> <p>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>

Meeting Guidance Notes:	
1.	<p>Inspection of Papers</p> <p>Any person wishing to inspect Minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact the Quantock Hills AONB Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson at quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</p>
2.	<p>Notes of the Meeting</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 the Quantock Hills AONB Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson at quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</p>
3.	<p>Public Question Time</p> <p>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.</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, before the meeting.</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. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.</p>
4.	<p>Substitutions</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 on
Tuesday 26th April 2022 at 2.15pm

Present:

Members:

Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew – JAC Chair (ATB)	- Somerset West & Taunton Council
Mike Caswell – JAC Vice Chair (MC)	- Sedgemoor District Council
Philip Comer (PC)	- Friends of Quantock
Hugh Davies (HD)	- Somerset County Council
Alicia Aras (AA)	- Somerset Local Access Forum
Hugh Warmington (HW)	- CLA
Dr Martin Jones (MJ)	- Parish Rep – West Bagborough
Tommy Muncie (TM)	- National Trust

Officers:

Iain Porter (IP)	- Manager, Quantock Hills AONB
Andy Stevenson (AS)	- Ranger, Quantock Hills AONB
Owen Jones (OJ)	- Partnership Ranger, Quantock Hills AONB

Also present:

John Andrews (Friends of Quantock), Julie Cooper (Sedgemoor District Council), Paul Trolley (AONB Volunteer), Colin Falla (Nether Stowey Parish Council), Julian Russell (Sampford Brett Parish Council), Joshua Schweiso (Spaxton Parish Council).

As a mark of respect a 1 minute silence was observed to pay the committees respect to Laetitia Kelly who recently passed away. Laetitia had served on the Quantock Hills JAC for many years in her role as chair of Friends of Quantock.

1. Apologies

Mandy Chilcott (Somerset County Council), Jo Chesworth (Natural England), Dixie Darch (Somerset West & Taunton Council), Jon Doyle (Somerset County Council), John Ebsary (Forestry England), David Stripp (Kingston St Mary Parish Council), Peter Payne (Williton Parish Council), Paul Bryan (Somerset West & Taunton Council), John Ebsary (Forestry England).

2. Declarations of Interest

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

Hills Landowner and is the Vice Chair for the County CLA. No other declarations were given.

3. Accuracy and matters arising from the previous minutes (25th January 2022)

3.1 Need to approve 2 sets of minutes as the October JAC meeting was virtual. ATB reminded the committee that the minutes from 19th October had been agreed at the JAC meeting in April.

3.2 Minutes of virtual meeting 25th January - P3. MAC – represent Sedgemoor District Council on the JAC not Somerset County Council.

The minutes of 19th October 2021 were agreed.

The minutes of 25th January 2022 were agreed

4. Public Question Time

No public questions.

5. Paper A – Partnership Activity Report (Iain Porter)

5.1 IP gave an update on team recruitment with Abby Wilkinson having started this week. Recruitment for the Project Manager has been offered to preferred candidate and currently going through HR checks with expected start date of June.

5.2 Defra grant settlement – increase of 14.7% on 2021 base grant (excluding FiPL and in-year increase). Welcome increase though have to be mindful of increasing costs and impacts on core budgets. Grant agreement still to be offered and accepted.

5.3 ATB – has raised this with MP and through the Landscape Review consultation that AONBs units cannot be expected to.

5.4 Nature Recovery Green Paper – IP will develop draft response and send to JAC members within 2 weeks. Once period of heightened sensitivity has passed (6th May) JAC members are encouraged to feedback comments or queries which IP will collate before sending respond by 11th May deadline.

5.5 2021/22 business plan overrun. Good level of delivery considering additional Question – JS - Did the highway signs project get delivered. IP – locally the QLPS is delivering this project and Somerset County Council highways team are also delivering training to parishes to be able to restore and maintain locally distinctive highway signs.

5.6 Hardcopy 2021/22 overrun figures were supplied to the meeting. These were emailed to members after the meeting. Financial position is positive with ~£30,000 surplus which has been possible through realising opportunities from FiPL and other project funds.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC supported the consultation response approach as set out in Sc 5(d).
- 2) The JAC noted the report.

6. Paper B – JAC future governance and meeting format (Iain Porter)

6.1 IP presented the requirement for changing the Joint Advisory Committee structure / Terms of Reference to account for the move to unitary in April 2023. It is likely there will be a requirement for a further review once Government have responded on board membership and operation which is due 2023.

6.2 HD – conscious that there could be significant change to the political makeup of the committee with the move to unitary. Has consideration been given to this? IP – This

will be look at through the terms of reference to ensure membership from local authorities has some relevance to the Quantock Hills. This could be geographical or thematic. ATB – Believes this is covered to a certain extent under the current ToR as there is an expectation that local authorities will put forward members ward covers part of the Quantock Hills.

- 6.3 IP asked for feedback from members about what they would like to see at future JAC meetings.
- 6.4 MC – Presentations are valuable however site visits would be very valuable as they would allow more time for discussion and to focus on particular issues or projects. This is supported by the JAC.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC approved the approach and timings to the governance review.
- 2) The JAC supported the July 2022 meeting being face-to-face.
- 3) The JAC noted the report.

7. Paper C – AONB Management Plan Review (Iain Porter)

- 7.1 IP ran through the requirements for the review of the AONB Management Plan noting that it is due for review and adoption by 1st April 2024. There are a number of external factors including NE new Management Plan guidance (due 2023), local government reform, Governments response to the Landscape Review that increase the risk of successfully reviewing the Management Plan by 1st April 2024. Having assessed these various issues the proposal is to extend current Management Plan by 12 months.
- 7.2 HD – Query why 1st April 2025 when next unitary will be in place 1st April 2023? ATB – This will allow enough time to properly engage with the unitary.
- 7.3 HW – the main issues for the AONB will not change greatly, priorities might, so impact of extending by a year will not be huge issue.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC approves option 2, to request a delay of 12 months for the adoption of the reviewed AONB Management Plan, with new date being 1st April 2025.

8. Paper D – Rangers Report (Andy Stevenson / Owen Jones)

- 8.1 AS / OJ gave a presentation on the work of the rangers over the past 6 months. Highlights included extensive tree planting and woodland resilience work on Cothelstone Hill as part of the Levels Up Project, starting volunteer tasks and activities, hedgelaying and preparing for the summer species monitoring programme. A highlight of the period was the introduction of 4 new Exmoor Pony foals to Cothelstone Hill bringing the number of ponies on the hill to 13. Questions from the members included.
- 8.2 ATB – on swaling, how often before burning are fire breaks cut. AS/OJ – as close to the burn as possible, usually the day before or even the morning of the burn.
- 8.3 ATB – did you have to stop burning due to the dry weather. AS – yes, with the very dry conditions higher risk of fires going out of control and damage to soils.
- 8.4 JA – Has work been done with fire brigade about access to the hills. AS – significant mapping work about 3 years ago which identifies rendezvous points and where fire and rescue service can get their appliance. IP – There will be opportunity through the

Moorland Implementation Plan (due for renewal in 2023) to undertake more comprehensive fire management planning.

- 8.5 HW – in northern England there has been a lot of anti-burning sentiment. AS – Difference between peatlands and heathland on other soils. Need to communicate this to public. There has been some reluctance from some organisations to continue swaling. AONB have been using alternative methods e.g. cut & collect where relevant and are assessing the impact on this on the heathland.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC noted the report.

9. Paper E – AONB Business Plan 2022 / 23 (Iain Porter)

- 9.1 IP ran through actions to be delivered by the AONB team and partners during 2022/23. Highlighted actions included development of the Nature Recovery Plan, FiPL, HPC Landscapes Schemes, LMSS Projects and the QLPS delivery.
- 9.2 JA – Is the LMSS delivering what Cannington College courses already do? IP – The LMSS will provide training at a basic level and also specific ‘tickets’ such as first aid, brushcutter etc. The LMSS is targeted at NEETS and long-term unemployed.
- 9.3 HW – seek clarification on the Nature Recovery Plan and how it sits with the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy. IP – The LNRS are at county level and is being developed by the Somerset LNP (led by Somerset Wildlife Trust). Due to covering the whole of the county the LNRS level of detail is quite high and it is envisaged that the Quantock Nature Recovery Plan will slot in and inform the LNRS, as will other areas such as Exmoor National Park, Mendip Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills AONB.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC noted the report.

10. AOB

- 10.1 IP informed the committee that Amanda Sampson (Communications and Support Officer) was currently on sick leave but due back shortly. ATB, on behalf of the committee wished Amanda a speedy recovery.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 19th July 2022 at 2.15pm (face to face meeting, venue TBC).

Meeting was closed at 4.05pm

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER A
Subject	Partnership activity report	
Author	Iain Porter, Quantock Hills AONB Manager	
Date	19 / 07 / 2022	

1. Staffing

- a) Amanda has returned to work after a period of leave for an eye operation. With the recruitment of Abby and Mark the team is now fully staffed and will be ramping up delivery of the Business Plan with the aim of full delivery by March 2023.
- b) Community Engagement Ranger – Abby Wilkinson started her role 25th April. Initial priorities have included introducing herself to the various volunteer groups and working to launch Assemble – the new SCC volunteer management portal. This post is shared with the Blackdown Hills AONB and Abby has been looking at common work across the 2 AONBs and what further engagement opportunities there are.
- c) Project Manager – Mark Baker has been appointed to the role of Project Manager. Mark started 20th June. This role is overseeing the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) and Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund (GQLDF) and delivering the Landscape Improvement Scheme (LIS) and Land Management Skills Scheme (LMSS). The role will also assist with the Nature Recovery Plan development.

2. Defra Grant Agreement / Landscape Review

- a) On 15th March Defra informed AONBs of the approved protected landscapes budget for 2022/23. There has been a 14.7% increase on the 2021/22 base budget - which excludes FiPL and the in-year top-up – and this will form the indicative budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25 though the draft settlement letter from Defra appears to show a reduction on 2021/22 figures – this is being queried with Defra. Defra have revised the grant agreement and sought comment from AONB Teams and host authorities. There were a few minor changes that we queried however Defra have responded that they wish to have these signed and agreed ASAP so will not be looking to make further changes.
- b) A new set of clauses involved working with the National Landscapes Partnership (NLP). Defra envisage this partnership being set up and running in late autumn 2022 and at the present time it is not clear how individual AONBs will engage with the partnership, or whether the engagement will remain with the NAAONB, who sit on the partnership. As the main route into Defra the purposes, scope and members of the NLP will be key so we may have to allocate resource to this partnership, initially at least.
- c) Defra are currently working through the responses from the Landscape Review consultation held earlier this year. Defra appear to be keen to see the name change from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to National Landscapes. While this would not be a legislative change it would be a public facing change. There is wide ranging opinion on the value of this change among other AONBs and the Quantock Hills Partnership has already stated a positive response to the name change also long as it comes with resources to be able to embed the changes properly.

- d) Another area Defra are taking forward is that of the wording options for the strengthened purposes and duties. They will be hosting a workshop with representatives from protect landscapes and local authorities to test Defra's thinking and understand better the implications of the options they are working through.

3. Partnership

- a) Jo Chesworth (Natural England) has moved to a new role within the organisation. After contact with Karol Zygula (Team Leader, Wessex Region) we have been assured that they will be recruiting to the Lead Advisor position so there will be an assigned Natural England representative for the JAC and other key areas of work. Somerset County Council have appointed Andy Sully (Lib Dem, Lydeard) and Lee Baker (Lib Dem, Taunton North) to the JAC.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC notes the report.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER B
Subject	Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme - Year 1 2021/2022	
Author	Katie Read, Quantock Hills AONB Landscape Project Officer	
Date	19 / 07 / 2022	

9 projects delivering for climate

Including:

- 0.5 ha of woodland creation
- 255 ha of land being managed with regenerative farming techniques
- 4 projects to improve soil quality
- 2 projects helping to reduce flood risk
- 7 projects increasing carbon sequestration
- 74 ha of woodland brought into management

4 projects delivering for people

Including:

- 1 project to support greater public engagement in land management
- 3.3 ha of new permissive open access
- 3 new visitor attractions created

We've been able to do this by working with a range of partners.

- 35 farmers
- 13 of farmers who have not engaged with agri-environment schemes before
- 16 of farmers who the Protected Landscape bodies have not engaged with before
- 2 new farm clusters created, and 1 existing farm cluster supported

Our **Local Assessment Panel** met 5 times in the first year of the programme. The Panel includes representatives from:

- Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee
- Natural England
- EDF Energy (HPC)
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Somerset West & Taunton
- Somerset County Council
- Local farming community

10 projects delivering for nature

Including:

- 420 metres of hedgerows planted
- 565 metres of hedgerows laid
- 1638 ha of positive management on SSSIs
- 1931 ha of habitat improvement for biodiversity
- 64 ha of improved habitat connectivity
- 7.8ha of species-rich grassland created
- 2 new traditional orchards created

13 projects delivering for place

Including:

- 5 historic structures and features conserved, enhanced or interpreted more effectively
- 4 projects increasing the resilience of nature friendly sustainable farm businesses, contributing a more thriving local economy
- 2 SHINE features maintained or improved



Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC notes the report.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER C
Subject	Landscape Planning Report	
Author	Alex Meletiou, Quantock Hills AONB Planning Officer	
Date	19 / 07 / 2022	

1. Planning applications

- a. From 1st January to 30th June 2022 the AONB received 53 planning applications for consideration and 4 applications for felling licences, which have been followed up from the published lists or by direct invitation to comment. This level of applications is consistent with previous years.
- b. The distribution between the two LPAs are listed below although one is a SCC application (Kilve).
- c. The distribution also shows the number of applications within each parish:

Sedgemoor		Somerset West & Taunton	
Aisholt	1	Bicknoller	5
Broomfield	5	Cothelstone	1
Fiddington	1	Crowcombe	5
Merridge	2	East Quantoxhead	1
Nether Stowey	4	Holford	3
North Newton	1	Kilve	5
North Petherton	4	Kingston St Mary	2
Over Stowey	2	Washford	1
Spaxton		West Bagborough	2
		West Quantoxhead	5
Total	23	Total	30

Planning applications by type

Access	1
Agricultural buildings	1
Agricultural / rural conversions to residential	2
Appeals	2
Agricultural workers dwelling	3
Battery energy storage site	1
Caravan / lodge sites	6
Conversion to holiday let	1
Conservatory / garden sheds	4
Domestic extensions	15
Garage / car ports	1
New residential dwelling	6
Outbuildings	1
Stables	4
Solar Park	2
Variations of conditions	3
Total	53

- d. 44 of these applications attracted a 'no comment' response. The remainder were either objected to or comments were made raising some concerns.

2. Current issues

a. 100 acre solar park application – Washford.

Briefly mentioned in my last report for the January 2022 JAC meeting, this application has yet to be determined by the LPA. Although not a feature of the AONB's comments, an Agricultural Land Classification report was commissioned by the applicant in 2018 and carried out by consultants RPS. This showed the land to be Grade 3b and (mostly) Grade 4 and therefore not subject to national and local policy to retain the country's Best and Most Versatile land (BMV - Grades 1,2 and 3a) for agricultural production.

RPS's Summary and Conclusion – "The detailed ALC survey work undertaken identifies that the Site comprises entirely lower quality Grades 3b and 4 agricultural land. The Site therefore comprises no "best and most versatile" agricultural land and the proposed development would not significantly harm agricultural interests in terms of paragraph 112 of the NPPF (2012) and Policy NH8 of the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032 (adopted in November 2016."

Also In 2018, the tenant of one of the farms in question commissioned a land classification survey (undertaken by Luscombe Maye) which showed the land as Grade 2 and 3a, which corresponded with Defra's Land Classification maps.

With this dichotomy of views, the LPA commissioned their own specialist (Mott Macdonald) to review RPS's report and carry out their own survey. This review has highlighted a number of fundamental errors in RPS's report. The most telling is that the report relied heavily on the fact that the soils showed 'gleying', a strong indication of poor drainage which would affect the land classification.

Mott Macdonald's review and survey found no signs of gleyed soils that would affect drainage on any of the samples taken across the site. This and other errors strongly infer that RPS's report is not to be relied on.

Mott Macdonald's conclusion – "Overall, given the factors summarised above and despite a strong general methodology, the conclusion of this review is that the previous ALC grading may not reflect the true distribution of ALC grades across the Site and be able to act as a sufficiently robust tool for planning. Specifically, in the RPS report, Wetness Class is the dominant limiting factor determining ALC grade. Wetness Class and grade are determined by topsoil texture, gleyed horizons, depth to a slowly permeable layer and FCD. Given the errors in topsoil texture and that no gleying was observed during ground-truthing, the ALC grade assessment is not considered to be sufficiently robust."

A rather damning conclusion and although not part of the AONB's remit, a lesson in not accepting everything at face value however technical and professional a report might appear.

The report can be viewed on Somerset Wests and Taunton Councils planning site, reference 3/39/21/028.

b. BESS, Thurloxton

Another case, currently with Sedgemoor's planners, is an application for a Battery and Energy Storage Site (BESS) close to Thurloxton. Described as a major application by the LPA (45 container size units and a new sub-station), the site is one kilometre from the

AONB boundary and although unlikely to be visible from the Hills, the impact of this industrial development in open countryside on the local lanes, character of the foothills and setting of the Quantock Hills, is of concern.

c. Caravans etc

A number of applications have recently been submitted concerning caravan pitches/lodges. In particular, EDF have applied for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Option on a site at Inwood Farm at Nether Stowey (to be used to accommodate Hinkley Point employees). This is to determine if the forthcoming application for a further 103 pitches will need a full EIA as part of the submission, as the proposal will significantly add to the existing sizeable (and visible) development.

Although the three examples above are all located outside of the AONB boundary, it shows the importance of scrutinizing applications that fall within the setting of the Hills, as this can have a dramatic impact on the landscape under protection. This has therefore been recognised in the current NPPF paragraph 176, which 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'.

3. Upcoming news

- a. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is working through Parliament and will replace the Planning Bill for many planning issues. The Second reading took place on 8th June and should be reported to the House in mid-September, after which there will be a further consultation. The details are not yet known but the Bill shows the general direction for the Government approach. Secretary of State Michael Gove has stated that a new document on how the Government will change national planning policy will be available in July. He also confirmed a new 'streamlined' approach for improving environmental outcomes for development to achieve high environmental standards.

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC notes the report.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER D
Subject	AONB Business Plan 2022/23 Qu1 progress report	
Author	Iain Porter, Quantock Hills AONB Manager	
Date	19 / 07 / 2022	

1. Introduction

- a. The business plan contains 83 actions. Table 1 show headline figures (RAG) based on progress at the end of Qu1. Table 2 identifies progress on the 3 headline areas of work from the AONB Business Plan for Qu1. A separate attachment reports on progress on all actions from the AONB Business Plan for quarter 1.

Table 1: Summary RAG of 83 actions

● – Complete, targets met.	● – on target	● – behind target but expected to meet targets by end of year	● – behind target and not expected to meet targets by end of year
0 (0%)	70 (84%)	11 (13%)	1 (1%)

Table 2: Qu1 progress on headline workstreams

Work area	Brief Description	Targets	Progress (Qu1)
Nature Recovery & Climate Change adaptation HPC S106 Funded. FiPL funded	The AONB Service will be delivering nature recovery and climate change work through advice and grant provision through the Landscape Development Fund and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. The projects approved include invasive species removal in woodland (rhododendron), native hedgerow planting, new orchard created and restoration of species rich grassland. Direct delivery of nature recovery work will also occur through the Landscape Improvement Scheme and land management work undertaken on Cothelstone Hill. Through the Landscape Improvement Scheme over 6Ha of scrub woodland will be enhanced through removal of conifer and invasive species. The AONB Service will be delivering a number of environmental stewardship schemes on Cothelstone Hill, enhancing the broadleaved woodlands and acidic / neutral species rich grassland.	12.18Ha of conifer / invasive species cleared to form broadleaved scrub habitat Enhancement of 51.44Ha of broadleaved woodland through on-going management Enhancement of 37.51Ha of acidic / neutral grassland through on-going management 220m native hedgerow planted 120 fruit trees (1 orchard) planted 29.7Ha of species rich grassland restored 5.75Ha of new broadleaved woodland created 1 new pond created 3 ponds restored.	Enhancement of 51.44Ha of broadleaved woodland through on-going management Enhancement of 37.51Ha of acidic / neutral grassland through on-going management Other elements due for delivery autumn / winter 2022/23.
Health and Wellbeing HPC Community Fund / NLCF / SCC	The AONB Service is a key partner in the Somerset Nature Connections Project that will be delivering health & wellbeing activities on the Quantock Hills. These activities include 6 week blocks of sessions that people can self-refer or be referred onto which will provide benefit to those with poor mental health. The project will also run sessions for community groups and will provide training and confidence sessions for group leaders to allow them to access the natural environment when the project ends. The AONB Service will be continuing with the Working Well volunteer group. This group is a	36 participants on SNC course 3 community group sessions through SNC 12 Working Well sessions run with ave 8 participants	18 participants (some repeat) on 6 sessions. 1 community group session. 3 Working Well sessions run with 21 participants (ave 7 participants / session)

	next stage volunteering opportunity for people who are suffering poor mental health and referrals / signposting come from MIND though it is expected that people engaged in the Somerset Nature Connections Project will also be offered the opportunity to volunteer with this group.		
Rural Skills Training HPC S106 Funded	Through the Land Management and Skills Scheme (LMSS) the AONB Service will be delivering courses for NEETS and unemployed adults. The training courses will introduce participants to basic skills such as basic health & safety, first aid in the context of land management employment sector before providing the opportunity to undertake specific land based qualifications that contractors and employers have told use are essential for their staff. The project will also be working with local contractors who will be providing guidance to participants about the skills and experience they require when looking to recruit.	16 young people undertaking introductory course 24 young people undertaking further qualifications 16 people undertaking introductory course 24 people undertaking further qualifications / training	Project start up delayed with recruitment of Project Manager. Project due for launch September and currently working with Somerset Works to assess likely numbers of Young People to be recruited.

2. 2022-23 Budget Qu1 position

- Overall budgets are on track with some showing significant underspend. This is due to large expenditure items, such as office rent or vehicle leases due out in the coming months.
- The core budget is lower than anticipated due to the longer recruitment timescales associated with the Community Engagement Ranger. Overall this will have minor impact on budgets are year end.
- The spend on the Projects budget appears low however most of the expenditure is due in winter / spring and is associated with grants given to farmers, land managers or community groups or contracts where the works are undertaken in the winter months.

Table 2: Summary Budget Position (Qu 1)

Budget heading	Budget £	Expenditure £	Balance	Comment
Core	£255,073	£41,729	£213,343	
Projects	£119,128	£0	£ 119,128	
Landscape Ptn Scheme	£414,776	£76,975	£337,800	
Projects [FiPL / HPC]	£267,804	£12,065	£255,739	
Land Management	£11,950	£140	£11,810	
Total	£1,068,731	£130,911	£818,692	
RIA (b/f 2020/21)	£71,422	£0	£71,431	
Earmarked Reserves			£19,000	
Allocated carry forward			£23,019	
Reserves			£30,249	Predicted figure based on full spend on commitments




Table 3: Budget Position (Qu 1): Core Budget

Measure	Budget	Performance (25% of yr)	Comments	RAG
£ / % Core Budget	£255,073	£41,729 / 16%		
£/% [salaries, NI, SA]	£187,748	£29,718 / 16%	Expenditure lower due to recruitment of Community Engagement Ranger	😊
£/% [training]	£2,500	£711 / 28%	On track	😊

£/% [rent, rates, electricity, water, premise insurance]	£12,380	£3,182 / 15%	On track. Rent for office due out July and January	😊
£/% [stationary, post, phones, printing]	£3,700	£315 / 9%	On track.	😊
£/% [travel, vehicle costs]	£21,280	£3,182 / 15%	Lower expenditure – lease costs due out July	😊
£/% [Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform]	£2,500	£690 / 28%	On track	😊
£/% [Literature, publications, publicity]	£2,700	£2,279 / 84%	High due to publication of SNB walk book	😊
£/% [Meeting costs, hospitality]	£600	£317 / 53%	High - monitor	😐
£/% [Management fee, insurance]	£8,890	£816 / 9%	Management fee (hosting costs) due out July.	😊
£/% [Memberships]	£2,775	£2,985 / 108%	Membership of National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) and Europarc Atlantic Isles.	😐
£/% [Research & Development]	£10,000	£0 / 0%		😊
£ / % Grant – Defra	£172,200	£0 / 0%	Claims due September (75%) and March (25%)	😊
£ / % Contributions – Local Authorities	£47,094	£0 / 0%	Invoices raised June 2022	😊
£ / % Cost Recovery - Contracts	£300	£0 / 0%		😊
£ / % Recharge – Contributions to staff posts	£35,162	£0 / 0%	Due December and March	😊
£ / % Income – AONB led events	£300	£0 / 0%		😊

Table 4: Budget Position (Qu 1): Projects

Measure (in-year budget / spend only)	Budget	Performance (25% of yr)	Comments	RAG
£ / % [Somerset Nature Connections]	£43,300	£0 / 0%	Contribution to project due out September	😊
£ / % spend to date [Land Management Skills Scheme]	£51,662	£0 / 0%	Project start delayed due to recruitment of Project Manager. Expenditure due to start September.	😊
£ / % spend to date [Nature Recovery]	£24,166	£0 / 0%	Projects to be developed during summer / autumn with works undertaken winter	😊
£ / % spend to date [Landscape Projects salaries, travel, on-costs]	£79,457	£6,333 / 8%	Expenditure low due to longer recruitment time for Project Manager. Underspend to be carried over financial year	😊
£ / % spend to date [HPC - GQLDF]	£15,000	£3,224 / 21%	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]	£48,000	£0 / 0%	One contract due for delivery September / October	😊
£ / % spend to date [FiPL]	£125,347	£2,509 / 2%	Claims due in autumn / winter	😊

£ / % spend to date [Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme]	£414,776	£76,975 / 19%	On track	
£ / % [Land Management: Contractors]	£10,350	£0 / 0%	Contractor costs from summer work programme due out October. Winter works programme due March	
£ / % [Land Management: Materials / equipment]	£1,600	£351 / 285%		

Recommendation(s)

- 1) The JAC notes the report.