



**Quantock
Hills
National
Landscape**

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday 22nd July 2026, 2pm

Crowcombe Village Hall

To: The members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Quantock Hills Communications 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.

JAC Agenda:	
1.	Apologies for absence.
2.	Declarations of interest - Members of the JAC to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter being considered at this meeting (see Sc 5 page 2).
3.	Accuracy of the previous minutes (copy appended) and to consider any matters arising.
4.	Public question time - The Chair 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 Update (Iain Porter).
6.	Paper B – Quantock Hills Management Plan / Delivery Plan update (Iain Porter).
7.	Paper C – Climate Adaptation Plan (Iain Porter).
8.	Paper D – Landscape Planning update (Alex Meletiou).
9.	Paper E – Landscape Projects update (Stewart Ford).
10.	AOB
11.	Future JAC meeting dates (provisional) Wednesday 21 st October 2026 (2pm – 4pm) venue tbc. Wednesday 20 th January 2026 (2pm – 4pm) venue tbc. Wednesday 21 st April 2027 (7pm – 9pm) venue tbc. Wednesday 21 st July 2027 (10am – 1pm) site visit tbc.
	Note: Further information about any of the reports for this meeting may be obtained from the report authors based at the Quantock Hills National Landscape Office, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Bridgwater, TA5 2EQ. Tel: 01823 451884 or Email: quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk

Meeting Guidance Notes:	
1.	Inspection of Papers Any person wishing to inspect Minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact the Quantock Hills Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson at quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk
2.	Notes of the Meeting Details of the issues discussed, and decisions taken at the meeting will be set out in the Minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. In the meantime, details of the decisions taken can be obtained from the Quantock Hills Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson at quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk
3.	Public Question Time At the Chairperson's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total. A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been signed. If you wish to speak, please tell Amanda Sampson, the committee administrator, before the meeting. You must direct your questions and comments through the Chairperson. You may not take direct part in the debate. The Chairperson will decide when public participation is to finish. If there are many people present at the meeting for one particular item, the Chairperson may adjourn the meeting to allow views to be expressed more freely. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group. An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.
4.	Substitutions Committee members can appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.
5.	Declarations of Interest It is a member of the JACs responsibility to declare a personal or prejudicial interest at all meetings where matters being discussed or to be discussed affect their interests. Full guidance can be found in appendix 3 of the JAC Constitution.



**Quantock
Hills
National
Landscape**

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

Minutes of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held on:
Wednesday 22nd April at 2pm, Holford Village Hall.

Present:

Members:

Hugh Warmington (HW)	CLA, Chair
Alan Bradford (AB)	Somerset Council, Vice-Chair
Cara Strom (CS)	Somerset Council
Mike Caswell (MC)	Somerset Council
Sam Tyson (ST)	Forestry England
Vernon Hughes (VN)	Friends of the Quantocks
Sarah Nason (SN)	Parish Representative - Holford Parish Council
Julian Taylor (JT)	Parish Representative - North Petherton
Mark Philipson (MP)	Parish Representative - West Quantoxhead Parish Council
Alicia Aras (AA)	Somerset Local Access Forum
Debs Savidge (DS)	Quantock Commoners Association
Dixie Darch (DD)	Co-opted Member

Officers:

Iain Porter (IP)	Quantock Hills National Landscape
Owen Jones (OJ)	Quantock Hills National Landscape/Forestry England
Stewart Ford (SF)	Quantock Hills National Landscape
Jules Jameson (JJ)	Quantock Hills National Landscape
Jon Barrett (JB)	Quantock Hills National Landscape

Also present:

Robin Stamp (RS)	Friends of the Quantocks
Josh Schwicio (JS)	Spaxton Parish Council
David Stripp (DSt)	Kingston St Mary Parish Council

1. Apologies:

Laura Daniells (Natural England), Fran Smith (Somerset Council), Martin Jones (West Bagborough PC), Tommie Muncie (National Trust), Bob Croft (South West Heritage Trust).

2. Declarations of Interest:

HW declared himself as a Quantock Hills landowner, a member of CLA (Country Land & Business Association), Friends of the Quantocks, Falcon and Rural Housing, Somerset Local Access Forum and the Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group.
No other declarations were given.

3. Accuracy and matters arising from the previous minutes:

The minutes of Wednesday 21 January 2026 were signed off as a true representation of the meeting.

4. Public Question Time:

No public questions.

5. Paper A - Partnership Update (Iain Porter):

Sally Pheasant our Farming Engagement Support Officer handed her notice in back in January and left the post at the end of March. IP would like to thank Sally for all of her hard work whilst doing a great job in the post and hopefully we shall see Sally return to possibly do some surveys for us on a consultation basis as she pursues her career in Ecology. After a successful recruitment process the post has now been filled by Jules Jamesson who was able to start in post just before Sally left to enable a short handover.

There will be a team review happening later this year. This is due to a new Management Plan that may require different skill sets within the team, the ending of the QLPS and loss of that project team and the HR changes at Somerset Council. If significant changes are envisaged views will be sought from the Partnership prior to implementation.

Ken Brown who worked for Somerset County Council for many years and was one of the founding members who pushed for better funding and support for AONB's, sadly passed away in February. IP and HW attended his funeral on behalf of the Quantock Hills National Landscape Partnership.

Core funding from Defra remains at the same level as 2025/26. The Team have been awarded further Capital funding which is likely to have the same criteria on spend as previously – 30by30 and invest to save (ItS). While the Access4All fund has now ended, Defra is looking to issue a similar capital fund for access works. We are still waiting for the spend criteria but would welcome access projects ideas from parishes / community groups.

Paper A Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

6. Paper B - Quantock Hills Management Plan / Delivery Plan update (Iain Porter):

At the end of the consultation process comments were received from Historic England. As these were received outside the consultation period the Partnership have options on how to consider them. IP went through the comments and suggested changes with the group, and the changes were accepted by the JAC members. IP will make the changes and consult with Somerset Council to ensure none constitute a material change. The Management Plan will be live and available on the website by mid-May, though the full integrated version will be available from mid-summer.

Delivery Plan has been discussed within the team and with the majority of partners, creating some great ideas for delivery going forward. IP will be putting all of this together ready to bring to the JAC partnership for approval in July. Unlike previous versions, which were a static document that formed part of the Management Plan, IP envisages the Delivery Plan being a live document on the website which is updated annually.

There were no comments or questions.

Paper B Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

2) The JAC approved the response to the comments by Historic England as set out in the report.

7. Paper C - Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (Stewart Ford):

HW introduced SF as the new Quantock Hills National Landscape Projects Officer. IP added that SF is currently working fulltime on FiPL. Stuart will also be working on other projects including a potential underground project with National Grid and the Landscape Improvement Scheme during the year. SF welcomed Jules Jameson to the FiPL Team, having started as the new Farming Engagement Support Officer at the end of March.

The members were pleased to see that FiPL was able to provide multi-year funding. IP and SF clarified that FiPL could be used to fund 30by30 outcomes, as could the Capital Grant. The Capital Grant is also likely to fund Invest to Save (ItS) type projects.

Members are keen to promote FiPL for orchard planting and the use of local contractors in FiPL projects.

Paper C Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

8. Paper D - Land Management (Owen Jones):

OJ gave a presentation on Forest England's Quantock Forest Design Plan, which is pertinent at present as Great Wood becomes operational later this year. OJ explained the process of Forest Design Planning and the works that will be happening in Great Wood. ST explained the longer term forest design programme and the vision for Great Wood into the future, include the role of PAWs.

DD thank ST for responding to her email re. felling of mature trees within Great Wood.

HW thanked OJ and ST for the presentation and updating the partnership.

Paper D Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

9. Paper E - Engagement Report (Jon Barrett):

JB moved into the core team in April following the end of the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme in March 2026. Operationally the QLPS ended in November 2025, with a further 4 months to complete the claims, evaluation and close the scheme down.

JB gave an update on the start of the Quantock Hills Team events programme for the 2026, starting with the 'Month of Mud' in February, 'Lide & Seek' in March and the 'April Open' in April. There were also 6 volunteer walk leader events running during this period with 25 events run in total. All of these events were very well received and well attended.

JB encouraged the Partnership to promote our events as much as possible where appropriate.

The Partnership was interested in the media interest in the events, noting the national media interest in the Month of Mud and whether there were any negative impacts of this.

JB responded that no negative impacts at present but would be assessing future events to ensure any issues e.g. parking, were managed.

JT – The Southwest Society of Botanical Artists (SWSBA) & National Landscape Team's 'Quantock Arts Project' has grown very well due to the encouragement and involvement from IP and the QH team. The project's scope has expanded to include art workshops open to the public, which have been fully attended without the need for any publicity everything has been done by informal networks within the Quantock Hills. IP added that there has been an additional 12 people join the group and there will be an art exhibition in the coming months which IP will notify the JAC members about nearer the time.

Paper E Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

10. Paper F - Planning Report (Alex Meletiou):

NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) Consultation - the Quantock Hills Team supported the response from the National Landscapes Association. IP to forward the NLA response to Partnership members. As well as the NLA a significant number of national bodies had concerns over the direction of travel of the NPPF.

Paper F Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC Noted the report.

11. AOB

IP – Since the change in agricultural policy from CAP to a UK based policy the support available to farmers / land managers on common land has been limited, usually with legacy schemes e.g. Higher Level Stewardship, being extended. With the core priority habitat area being a common (Quantock Common) and accounting for nearly 25% of the National Landscape, there is concern over the level of support accessible to commoners. While appreciating that commons can complex area to manage through schemes, the current lack of work on this issue by Defra, with no timetable for resolution, is causing concern for commoners and the National Landscape Team.

IP would like to raise the issue with our local MP's and would like to ask the partnership for approval to take this forward. The Partnership agreed to the request that IP writes to local MPs to raise the issue.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 22nd July 2026 at 2pm (Crowcombe Village Hall).

Meeting was closed at 3:45pm.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER A
Subject	Partnership Update	
Author(s)	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	22/07/2026	

1. Staffing

- a. Somerset Council is progressing through its Pay and Reward programme which will be setting the pay grades consistently for all roles within the authority. The roll out of the new framework is expected for next financial year (2027/28). As mentioned previously, I am going to undertake a team review due to:
- A number of the core roles have job descriptions that are very old that may need updating to reflect the activity of the role.
 - The new Management Plan and national / local priorities in terms of what the team needs to deliver over the next 5-10 years may require roles being amended or new roles altogether.
 - Current core Team costs exceed the core budget with the shortfall being met out of reserves.
 - Potential new core funding streams that could sit alongside our Defra core grant and Somerset Council contributions.
 - The new Pay and Reward framework may change the grading and pay of team roles that could have affordability impacts.

b. Proposed timeline

Activity	Jul - Aug	Sep - Oct	Nov - Dec	Jan - Feb	Mar - Apr	May - Jun
Engagement with SC HR Team						
Assessment of required roles						
Assessment of current roles – amendments						
Development of any new roles required						
Assessment of affordability						
Assessment for consideration by JAC						
Draft Team structure -						
Proposed Team structure considered by JAC						
Final team structure set						
Team structure in place (dependant on level of changes)						

- c. The Team will be engaged throughout the process through team meetings, business planning sessions and 1-2-1s. Somerset Council HR will oversee the process and engage, as necessary. While the Partnership will be informed of progress and consulted at the various relevant stages if any member wants to be more involved in supporting the process please let me know.

2. Partnership

- a. Parish Representatives. As required under the Quantock Hills JAC terms of reference, structure and operation, the Partnership is running an election process to secure four parish representatives on the JAC.
- b. As recommended from the ToR Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) has been contracted to run the election process. The election process will be hosted on the [SALC website](#) with Ewan Jones (CEO) being responsible. The Team will be notifying eligible Parish Councils w/b 27 July promoting the opportunity and signposting to the role profile and nomination forms. The nominations will close at the beginning of September with Parish Representatives confirmed at the beginning of October. The Parish Representative will be invited to an induction session, which will be before the JAC meeting in October.
- c. Partnership Meetings. Many thanks to the partnership members who responded to the survey regarding potential future meeting approaches. The response rate was 74% which is significant and gives confidence in the opinions given. The summary information:
 - i. A core of members attend JAC meetings regularly with others attending infrequently.

1. How often do you attend Quantock Hills Partnership Meetings (JAC)?



- ii. For those that responded who attend infrequently or never, four did not attend due to work commitments. Two of these are in unrelated employment and two have other work commitments but are representing a member organisation.

2. If do not attend or attend infrequently, what are the barriers to you attending



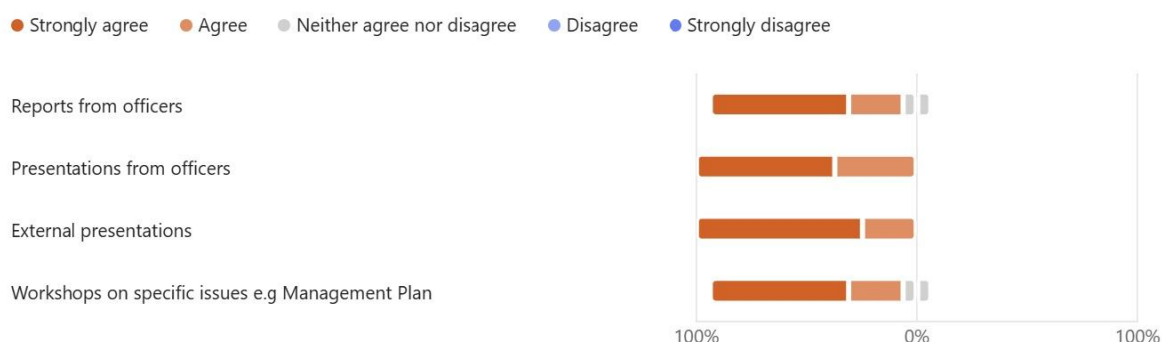
iii. Overall there is a high level of satisfaction in the meetings from those who do attend. This suggests the content is largely engaging and suitable.

3. If you attend regularly, how engaging do you find the meetings (1 star - not engaging at all, 5 stars - very engaging) [M](#)



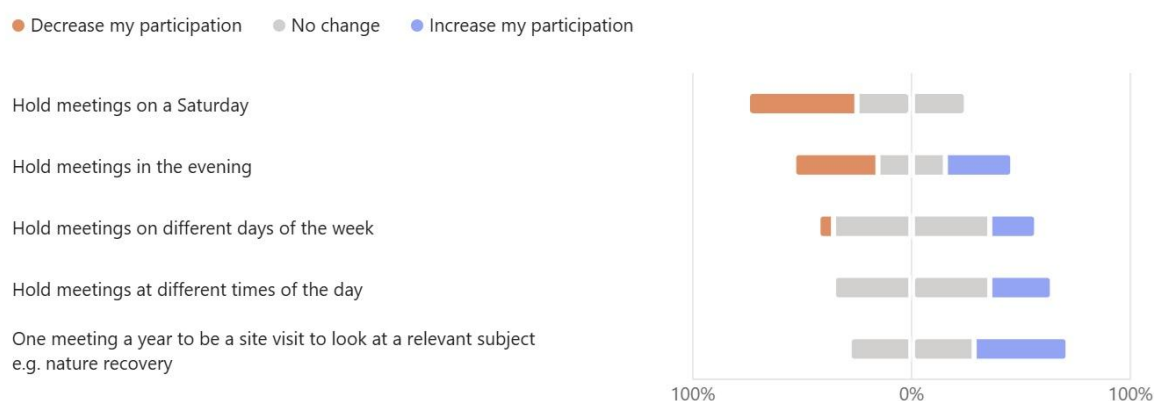
iv. In terms of the elements of the JAC meetings that members have found useful / engaging most scored highly with external presentations being of particular importance.

4. Thinking of meetings you have attended which aspect have you found useful / engaging? [M](#)



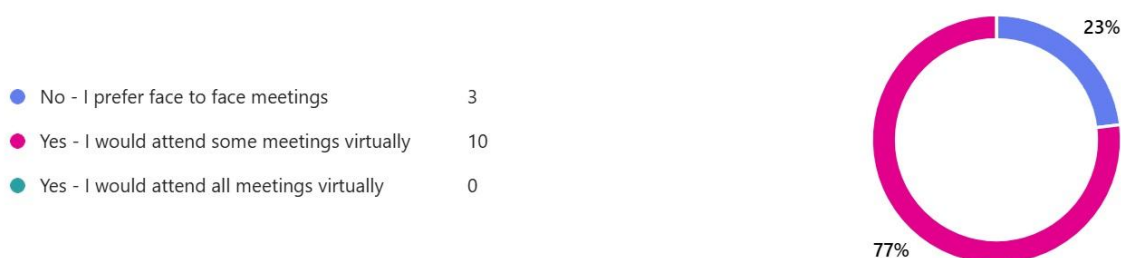
v. When exploring potential options for future JAC meetings it was evident that members do not favour Saturday meetings. Evening meetings had a split response with some members saying it would increase participation, while others said it would decrease their participation. Holding meetings at different times of the day had limited support while the reintroductions of site meetings was popular.

5. Would the potential options below increase or decrease your participation in Partnership meetings? [Moi](#)



- vi. The overwhelming response regarding hybrid meetings - where people could join remotely – was positive.

6. We are investigating hybrid meetings where people can join virtually. Would you find this option valuable



- vii. The majority of respondents were aware that substitutes could attend JAC meetings if they were unable to.

7. Are you aware that members of the Partnership can send substitutes if they are unable to attend a meeting?



- d. Recommend approach to JAC meetings –
- The July JAC meeting to become site based, with members able to explore one or more of the issues or opportunities affecting the National Landscape.
 - One meeting in any financial year to be an evening meeting, rotating each year.
 - Prioritise setting up of hybrid meeting system. NOTE – the system currently used by Somerset Council's LCNs has received poor reviews both from officers and some members. A request has been made to Somerset ICT on alternative models and systems.
 - The team continue to secure external speakers on relevant subjects affecting the National Landscape.
- e. With the above recommendations in mind the proposed future JAC meeting dates are:
- f.
- Wednesday 21st October 2026 (2pm – 4pm) venue tbc.
 Wednesday 20th January 2026 (2pm – 4pm) venue tbc.
 Wednesday 21st April 2027 (7pm – 9pm) venue tbc.
 Wednesday 21st July 2027 (10am – 1pm) site visit tbc.

3. National Landscape Association / Protected Landscapes Partnership Update

- a. PLP – a new modelling and feasibility team is being hosted by the PLP to support scoping activities within Protected Landscapes to drive forward green finance and nature-based solutions funding and activity. It is expected that they will be delivering eight full feasibility assessments a year.
- b. NLA – the Nature Based Solutions Team within the NLA is growing with two new Nature Recovery Officers able to support individual National Landscape Teams in initiatives such as habitat banks, developing regenerative agricultural models alongside LENS and unpicking and developing potential carbon offers.
- c. The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) is conducting a review of legal, governance, and policy aspects of Protected Landscapes. We are awaiting the timetable for the work and opportunities to engage.
- d. The Countryside & Community Research Institute have now completed their scoping study into 'soft' governance in Protected Landscapes on behalf of Defra. Originally it was expected that this work would cover both 'hard' and 'soft' governance but as the work progressed it concentrated on 'soft' governance with the OEP being requested to take forward the study into 'hard' governance. The final report is now with Defra and is expected to be published in the autumn.
- e. The NLA is available to support the further embedding of arts programming into National Landscapes activity and programming following the great success of Nature Calling. A focus going forward is on facilitating ambition public engagement and connecting communities to their heritage and natural environment. New bids should consider including a public engagement strand of this type as this can unlock match funding from organisations such as the Arts Council and Trusts.
- f. NLA Conference 7 – 9 July. Iain and Jon attended this year's NLA conference based in Norwich. The conference focused on the role of National Landscapes into the future, with sessions on nature recovery, climate and engagement and opportunities to see examples of projects and work from the eastern Protected Landscapes.
- g. Last year Government launched the All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks and National Landscapes, chaired by Barry Gardiner MP. Staff from the NLA attend these meetings to report back on National Landscape work. Currently none of the MPs who's constituencies include or are adjacent to the Quantock Hills National Landscape are involved in this group so I will be writing to them to encourage them to get involved.

4. Nature South West

- a. Nature Southwest now one of 4 Nature investment 'zones'. Nature North was the first one, which was launched about 4-years ago. These are green finance special purpose vehicles that aim to join up the work that is already happening in the south west building nature based solutions 'packages' to identified issues.
- b. Nature Southwest has been in development for just over 2 years with many partners involved including National Landscapes, National Parks, Forestry Commission, National Trust, RSPB, NFU, research partners as well as a host of others. During this time, the project partners undertook stakeholder mapping to understand key organisations, what was already being done and what was needed.
- c. From the stakeholder mapping three key needs were identified (i) Critical infrastructure (ii) Resilient coastline (iii) Rivers & wetlands. During 2025 the group, with RSPB leading, submitted a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for the recruitment of a project manager and support funding to allow projects go forward with key roles include

technical capacity building, skills sharing and collaboration. The project is in the process of appointing the project manager.

- d. The Quantock Hills National Landscape have agreed to be one of the project partners. The rationale to join the project was (i) potential to learn for other partners (ii) potential to engage in NbS development in respect of critical infrastructure protection (iii) acknowledgement that on its own the Quantock Hills National Landscape operates at a scale smaller and that by joining with others presents a large investable opportunity. National Landscape representation on the project board is through Tim Youngs (Manager, Blackdown Hills National Landscape Team).
- e. At two-years there is a limited time to demonstrate the value of a regional-wide approach however the learning from the project should be useful to the Quantock Hills National Landscape Team into the future.

5. Agri-environment scheme update for Common land

- a. Partnership members will remember at the April JAC meeting discussions over the issue that there was no mechanism for Common Land to enter into the new ELMs schemes, specifically Countryside Stewardship or Sustainable Farming Incentive. The issue was becoming acute as a number of commons are in legacy schemes, such as Higher-Level Stewardship and will be ending in 2027/28.
- b. I wrote to relevant MPs on behalf of the Partnership, supporting the messaging of the Foundation for Common Land, requesting MPs lobby Defra to investigate this issue urgently.
- c. At the beginning of July the RPA confirmed that it was making progress in incorporating the functionality necessary into their systems that will allow commons to apply for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT). The RPA plans to trial the process, inviting a small number of commons to apply for CSHT in September 2026. Once the system has been tested then other commons will be invited to apply as their legacy schemes come to an end though the RPA acknowledges that due to the demand there is likely to be a gap between expiry of legacy schemes and the start of new CSHT schemes.
- d. While this is great news for the long-term management of commons, those managing commons are still unable to apply for SFI schemes with Defra, the RPA and other stakeholders, such as the Foundation for Common Land meeting regularly to explore options to ensure common land has equitable access to ELMs as non-common land.

6. National Landscape Team 2025/26 budget overrun

- a. After a delay with getting overrun figures from Somerset Council we have now been able to produce the 2025/26 statement of accounts. (Table A1 below). We are still seeking clarification on the Somerset Council contribution, which appears high, though this may be because the 2024/25 Somerset Council contribution was not allocated to our budgets and therefore represents two years' worth of contributions.
- b. The core budget overspent, which was expected, though the level appears higher as the Somerset Council contribution was not applied to this budget line.
- c. General projects appear to have underspent, though some of this is due to Defra FiPL income being placed in this budget line rather than the Landscape Projects budget line.
- d. Quantock Landscape Partnership, which closed in January 2025, overspent. As this was the final year the overspend has to be accounted for in the National Landscape budgets. It was identified in August 2025 that the QLPS would overspend, with efforts concentrating on reducing the overspend by the end of the scheme.

- e. Land Management is showing an underspend. This is due to the fact that the majority of the income associated with this budget line is linked to calendar years, not financial years and therefore is carried forward and allocated back into the Land Management budget this financial year.
- f. Overall budget position was largely where expected except for the Somerset Council contribution. We are working with finance to develop a better system, which works within Somerset Council's financial systems and yet allows transparency and easy of budgetary planning.

Table A1: Quantock Hills National Landscape Team – 2025/26 outrun

Opening balance			-296,885
Budget Line	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Core	-249,808	375,918	126,110
General Projects	-247,583	166,585	-80,998
Quantock Landscape Partnership	-240,617	259,242	18,625
Landscape Projects	-193,843	236,118	42,275
Land Management	-44,855	23,863	-20,992
RIA	-85	7,210	7,125
<i>Somerset Council Contribution</i>	-92,144	0	-92,144
Total	-1,068,936	1,068,936	0
Closing balance			-296,885

7. National Landscape Team 2026/27 Budget

- a. As reported in April Defra sent indicative funding figures for the National Landscape which allowed confirmation of the budget for 2026 / 27 (appendix A1). Table A2 below shows the summary expenditure / income for each of the National Landscape's budget lines.
- b. As can be seen from the budgets in Appendix A1 the core, Quantock General Projects and Land Management budgets are expecting a small overspend which will be met from Reserves. This is inline with Somerset Council financial policy, where it has been indicated that we need to reduce our overall reserves down over a 4-year period.

Table A2: Quantock Hills National Landscape Team – summary budget 2026/27

		Opening balance (01/04/2026)	-296,885
Budget	Expenditure	Income	Balance
Quantock Core	347,561	-343,249	4,312
Quantock General Projects	210,509	-209,508	1,001
Quantock Landscape Projects	346,511	-346,511	0
Land Management	58,600	-56,055	2,545
RIA	0	0	0
Total	963,181	-957,223	7,958
		Earmarked reserves (redundancy)	45,000
		<i>Expected balance 31/03/2027</i>	<i>-244,027</i>

Recommendation(s):

1. The JAC notes the report.
2. The JAC approves the recommendations on future JAC meetings.

Appendix A1: Quantock Hills National Landscape Team Budget 2026/27.

Core (Revenue)		
Line Item	2026/27	Comments
APT & C-Pay	184,461	Salaries
APT & C-Add Hours	11,366	Additional Payments to Rangers
APT & C-NI	28,678	Based on SC HR advice
APT & C-LG Pen	38,959	Based on SC HR advice
Apprenticeship Levy	1,000	Estimate
Staff Training	2,800	
Electricity	600	Estimate energy charge increases
NNDR - Rates	1,600	As advised by SCC
Rents	10,200	Office rent = £6,4k, depot rent £3,8k
Water Charges	150	Estimate
Car allowance	500	
Travel costs	200	Reduced with new AONB van
Hired vehicle costs	1,500	Minibus - working well & events
Veh Contract Hire	21,000	Confirmed - lease Mar25 - Mar30
Direct Transport - Fuel	5,500	Estimated based on increased fuel costs
Direct Transport - tyres	400	Increased with AONB van
Direct Transport - MOT / Service	2000	£2500 general maintenance.
Direct Transport - Unscheduled R&M	2,000	Increased with AONB van
Equipment	1,500	
Equipment - Main R&M	500	brushcutters £300 / chainsaws £200
Clothing & Uniform	500	Excludes rebranding costs
Postage	200	Estimated on 2022/23 costs
Stationary	800	Estimated on 2022/23 costs
Printing	300	Estimated on 2022/23 costs
Telephone - calls	1,142	BT One recharge @ £810 /
Telephone - mobiles	900	mobile phones for team
Hospitality (cost of meetings)	2,500	Includes volunteer costs
Subsistence	100	
Subscriptions	3,225	NAAONB £3100 / AI = £125
Fees & Hired	2,000	Events charges for specialist contractors
		Motor (£1,850) / Premise (£70) / Employers (£280) 3rd Party (£530)
Internal - Insurance	2,730	
Publicity & Promotion	5,000	Websites
Fees & Hired - Research & Development	5,000	Consultant fee - bid development
Internal - Cross Service	8,250	Management Fee to SCC
Grant - Defra	-79,735	Uplift Defra revenue funding (estimate)
Grant - Defra	-190,604	Defra QHNL Core Grant
Fees & Charges	-500	Cost Recovery - swaling
Fees & Charges	-25,910	Recharge - Forestry Commission
Fees & Charges	-300	Income from AONB run events
OUTRUN CORE	50,512	
<i>SC core cont</i>	<i>-46,200</i>	<i>As agreed under Statement of Intent</i>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>4,312</i>	<i>Any overspend to come out of Reserves</i>

General Projects		
Line Item	2026/27	Comments
Equipment	18,000	
Fees & Hired	29,000	
Sup & Ser other - Contractor Costs	163,509	
Grant - Defra	-60,292	Access for all
Grant - Defra	-30,009	Wildlife Rich Habitat funding
Grant - Defra	-119,207	Capital fund
OUTRUN - General Projects	1,001	Any overspend to come out of Reserves

Landscape Projects		
Line Item	2026/27	Comments
APT & C-Pay	47,310	LPO & FESO
APT & C-NI	5,597	LPO & FESO
APT & C-LG Pen	9,509	LPO & FESO
Apprenticeship Levy	300	LPO & FESO
Staff Training	1,100	LPO & FESO
Car allowance	400	
vehicle contract hire	2,000	LMSS - hire of participant transport
Equipment	2,000	LMSS - PPE / tools / maintenance
Printing	1,281	
Telephone - mobiles	240	2 x smartphones @ £120ea
Grants - Grants Project Work	1,600	GQLDF Grants (HPC)
Grants - Grants Project Work	185,227	Landowner grants (FiPL)
Supplies & Services	28,650	LMSS - training for participants
Sup & Ser other - Contractors Costs	1,297	FiPL A&G costs (exc salaries)
Sup & Ser other - Contractors Costs	60,000	LIS - contractor costs
Grant - Defra	-250,980	Defra FiPL allocation
Contributions - OLA	-33,931	Income from SC (HPC) - LMSS
Internal - Cross Service	-60,000	Income from SC (HPC) - LIS
Internal - Cross Service	-1,600	Income from SC (HPC) - GQLDF
OUTRUN - Landscape Projects	0	

Land Management		
Line Items	2026/27	Comments
Equipment, materials	11,600	
Rent	5,000	New Stowey Farm
Su & Ser other - Contractor Costs	42,000	
GrantGovtOutsideAEF	-5,110	HLS (Coth Hill)
Grant - Defra	-3,000	Rents (New Stowey)
Grant - Defra	-25,675	CS capital grant (NSF)
Grant - Defra	-12,207	CSHT (Coth Hill woodlands)
Cross-Service	-10,063	SFI (New Stowey)
Cross-Service		From Reserves
OUTRUN LAND MANAGEMENT	2,545	

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER B
Subject	Quantock Hills Management Plan / Delivery Plan update	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	22/07/2026	

1. Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026-2031 Delivery Plan.

- a. Provided with the JAC papers is the draft Delivery Plan. Initial discussions have taken place with many of the partners and stakeholders who have indicated the workstreams they hope to take forward over the next five years.
- b. Please note that this is the first draft which has not been back to the various partners / stakeholders for comment and feedback. This is due to other workstreams taking priority over the last two months.
- c. The Delivery Plan allows Partnership members to see the direction of travel, and I would welcome feedback on actions members would like to see within the plan.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. The JAC notes the report.**
- 2. The JAC email Iain with any comments or feedback on the Delivery Plan by 14th August 2026.**

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER C
Subject	Quantock Hills Climate Adaptation Plan	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	22/07/2026	

1. Under the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcome Framework (Environment Improvement Plan 2023) National Landscapes are required to have Climate Adaptation Plans (CAPs) embedded in their Management Plans by 2028.
2. The Climate Change Act (2008) gave a new directive power to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. This allows them to ask public authorities, statutory bodies and other organisations performing functions of a public nature, to report on their progress in adapting to the impacts of climate change. For the current reporting round (ARP4), Defra asked the Protected Landscapes to report as a family. This was put together through the Protected Landscapes Partnership, led by the National Parks but with input from the National Landscapes. In the next reporting round, Protected Landscapes are likely to be required to report individually.
3. Warmer wetter winters, increased severity of storms; and hotter, drier summers are symptoms of a changing climate. These impacts are already being felt and will increasingly affect the special qualities and ecosystem services of the Quantock Hills landscape.
4. National Landscapes can play a vital role in adapting to climate change and building resilient landscapes for future generations. Climate adaptation planning provides an opportunity to identify relevant climate risks, incorporate them into management processes, and encourage early engagement with stakeholders to adapt and mitigate the risks.
5. The process starts by assessing the risks of climate change, a process the Partnership undertook in 2025 (see accompanying Quantock Hills National Landscape – Climate Risk Assessment 2025). The risk assessment identifies risks to key assets and features of the Quantock Hills. The Climate adaption plan assess these risks and describes mitigation actions, the policy response and identifies relevant stakeholders to engage.
6. Principals for creating a climate adaption plan –
 - a. Identify the key assets and features of the landscape.
 - b. Assess the vulnerability of these assets and features to the impacts of Climate Change.
 - c. Consider sectoral impacts for principle land uses such as farming and forestry, as well as the natural, built and historic environment.
 - d. Assess the impacts based upon current climate change projections.
 - e. Score these risks and opportunities based on their likelihood, impact and risk over the short, medium and long term.
 - f. Identify possible high-level mitigation actions.
 - g. Identify existing policy responses and identify any gaps.
 - h. Identify relevant local stakeholders that can support or lead the action.
 - i. Assess the acceptability of these options, their interdependencies, and potential barriers to delivery.
 - j. Set out planned actions for the short, medium and long term.
7. During the JAC meeting we will check the identified risks and make any amendments or identify missing risks. We will also start to consider the high level mitigation actions that can be included. Further work will be undertaken with the partnership to consider more detailed mitigation actions and using the Resist-Accept-Direct (RAD) framework assess pathways of implementation and for how long.

Recommendation(s):

1. **The JAC notes the report.**

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER D
Subject	Landscape Planning Report	
Author	Alex Meletiou, Landscape Planning Officer	
Date	22/07/2026	

1. Consultation on Permitted Development Rights

- a. A new consultation on Permitted Development Rights (PDR) has been opened by the Government. Of particular interest from a National Landscape perspective, a number of paragraphs from the Consultation Document identify the Government “are consulting on new permitted development flexibilities to support the development of conservation measures within Environmental Delivery Plans by Natural England as part of the Nature Restoration Fund.” Particular sections of interest are:
- b. “This consultation seeks views on a national grant of planning permission via new permitted development flexibilities to support the implementation of conservation measures within Environmental Delivery Plans by Natural England, as part of the proposed Nature Restoration Fund, set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025. Environmental Delivery Plans will include a package of conservation measures sufficient to address one or more environmental impacts to protected sites and species of local development (such as new housing) and secure an environmental uplift, supporting the delivery of sustainable development.”
- c. “Certain conservation measures that may be included within an Environmental Delivery Plan may themselves constitute development (for example, erecting small scale structures to provide roosting or hibernation places for protected species, or excavations to create ponds), and as such the government wants to support the implementation of these conservation measures through a national grant of planning permission.”
- d. “Conservation measures within an EDP may include measures which reduce or remove pollution, reduce disturbance, enhance or restore existing habitats, and create new habitats or habitat features. Elements of these conservation measures may constitute development and therefore require planning permission, including for operational works and erecting new structures. In order to facilitate the delivery of EDPs, we are proposing a national grant of planning permission via permitted development flexibilities.”
- e. “It is proposed that the national grants of planning permission would apply to most land in England, including in article 2(3) land (which includes National Parks, the Broads, National Landscapes, conservation areas, and World Heritage Sites). This would provide Natural England with the flexibility to deliver conservation measures in places that will provide the most benefit, even if the land already has a designation.”
- f. “The current approach to discharging environmental obligations too often delays and deters development, placing unnecessary burdens on housebuilders and local authorities. It requires housebuilders to pay for localised and often costly mitigation measures, only to maintain the environmental status quo. By not taking a holistic view across larger geographies, mitigation measures often fail to secure the best outcomes for the environment.”
- g. Although this appears to be all for the benefit of the environment, the final paragraph is the most telling. Given the variable impacts of developments which have been granted through permitted development rights to date within the National Landscape, the team

will be submitting a response, highlighting the potential impacts of the recommended changes could have. A draft response has yet to be compiled, and discussions will be had with the National Landscape Association who will also be submitting a national response.

- h. The Consultation closes on 5th August 2026.

2. Land Character Assessment – Setting of the National Landscape.

- a. In 2019, as part of the development of the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was produced. As the LCA was specifically produced for the QLPS it was constrained by funder requirements on geographical size – Landscape Partnerships maximum areas were 200km² – and therefore while it did go beyond the boundary of the National Landscape it was constrained, not by landscape type, but by the artificial size imposed by the funding.
- b. In a recent planning appeal the Planning Inspector made reference to the 2019 Landscape Character Assessment, stating that a development would not have a negative impact. It was apparent that the Planning Inspector had assumed that the 2019 Landscape Character Assessment was a full assessment of the National Landscape and its setting and had not taken account of the false ‘boundary’ imposed by the size restriction of the funding.
- c. Due to the issues above, which the Team felt were only going to increase with the potential development planned for the setting of the National Landscape, the Team are taking forward a Landscape Character Assessment for the setting of the National Landscape, expanding on the work undertaken in 2019. The 2019 LCA had limited consultation with key stakeholders, but identified eleven landscape types which were described and mapped in GIS. A main aim of the updating will be to make sure the LCA remains relevant and easily accessible for a wide audience.
- d. A tender process has been undertaken and Fiona Fyfe Associated have been appointed to deliver the contract. The main purpose of this contract will be to undertake a process, producing a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment based on Landscape Character Types of the fringing and setting of the Quantock Hills, supporting the existing comprehensive LCA of the core area of the National Landscape. The LCA will be used to inform Management Planning in respect of the National Landscape, not only for the National Landscape Partnership but relevant authorities such as the local planning authority in the formation of Local Plans and other relevant policy.
- e. The Partnership will have opportunity to engage with the LCA development work during 2026 prior to its final version.

3. Recent cases involving (existing) permitted development rights.

- a. An application for prior approval was made to Planning West for a barn located in the middle of a 20 acre site at West Bagborough. Understanding that the National Landscape Service or anyone else is not formally consulted on prior approval applications I nevertheless e-mailed the planning officer to make my case for the National Landscape. I was surprised that the officer suggested that my e-mail be included in the comments on the planning portal. The Parish Council and a number of neighbours also submitted comments which were accepted on the portal. The

application was subsequently refused and part of the reason for refusal is quoted below.

- b. "The proposed development would be sited within a National Landscape. Permitted development rights are not intended to permit development that would cause demonstrable harm to nationally important landscapes or erode their special qualities. The siting of the building is visually prominent and poorly related to existing farmstead structures. Its isolated location on elevated, open land would result in significant landscape and visual harm, introducing an incongruous built form into an otherwise undeveloped and sensitive rural setting. This undermines the characteristic openness and scenic qualities that underpin the national designation."
- c. In contrast, an application for prior approval was made on a similar in-field location and at a similar time, for a barn on a 16 acre site at Nether Stowey and this was granted by Planning North in 3 days.

4. Planning Appeal regarding non-determination of an application within the required timescale.

- a. This is a relatively unique situation. A planning application was submitted in November 2025 to develop a field on the edge of West Bagborough for the provision of 6 new dwellings. This application was refused in December 2025.
- b. A subsequent application was made in April 2026 for the provision of 4 new dwellings on the same site. Before determining this application the local planning authority were waiting for further information. As the deadline for making a decision approached, the LPA wrote to the applicant requesting an extension of time. The applicant refused to grant this extension and shortly thereafter lodged an appeal for non-determination of the application.
- c. My understanding is that now the Planning Inspector will be required to make a determination without the LPA's formal report and decision.

5. Somerset Local Plan

- a. Local Plans are a statutory document produced by local planning authorities which sets out how much housing, economic and development is needed and where it should be. It also identified the infrastructure needed to support new development and sets out which areas should be protected for heritage, cultural, recreational and environmental reasons.
- b. When Somerset Council was created in April 2023 the Local Plans of the previous district councils were immediately adopted with the aim that they would all be reviewed and a new Local Plan produced. Since 2024 Somerset Council has been undertaking evidence gathering, engagement and a call for sites, which meets the requirements of the new plan making system for England that came into force in March 2026, they are now looking to progress the development of the Local Plan.
- c. The first consultation stage in the new plan-making system is on the scope of the Local Plan. Views are invited on the best form of engagement with the public and on what the local plan should contain. [Scoping consultation \(Reg 20\) June to July 2026](#)
- d. Somerset Council have released the interim Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), which is the initial stage of the site assessment process. [Initial HELAA REPORT](#). While it is high level and only the initial stage there are concerns over the level of large sites identified within the National Landscape and these are points the Team wish to explore with Somerset Council.

- e. Contact has already been made with the Council's Lead Officer on the Plan providing details of the process to be followed and the most beneficial time to engage. The Scoping Consultation ends on 24th July 2026

6. Planning Meeting

- a. The Partnership may remember that a meeting was held between the NL Partnership, including the teams from the Blackdown Hills and Mendip Hill National Landscapes and planners from Somerset Council in 2025. The meeting came about due to a number of issues with planning processes and decisions in National Landscapes and a lack of engagement or feedback from Somerset Council.
- b. The meeting was positive with all parties agreeing that an annual meeting would be beneficial. After a bit of reminding, Somerset Council planners are engaging and it is hoped a meeting will happen in the next month. A verbal update will be given on progress.

Recommendation(s):

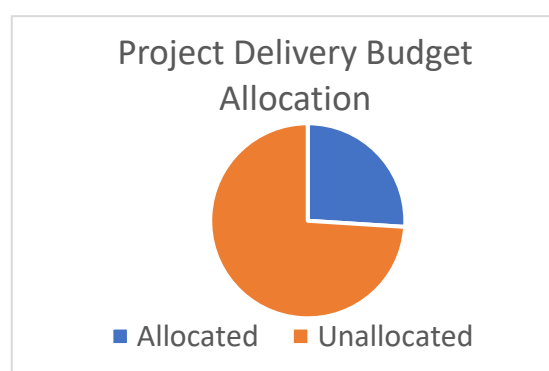
- 1. The JAC notes the report.**

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER E
Subject	Landscape Projects report	
Author	Stewart Ford, Landscape Projects Officer	
Date	22/07/2026	



Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

1. Year 6 of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has made a strong start, with **seven grant agreements** issued across the first two panel meetings of the year. These projects account for **26% of the annual project delivery budget** and collectively deliver a broad range of FiPL outcomes. Six projects contribute towards the **Nature, Climate and Place** themes, while three also deliver benefits under the **People** theme.

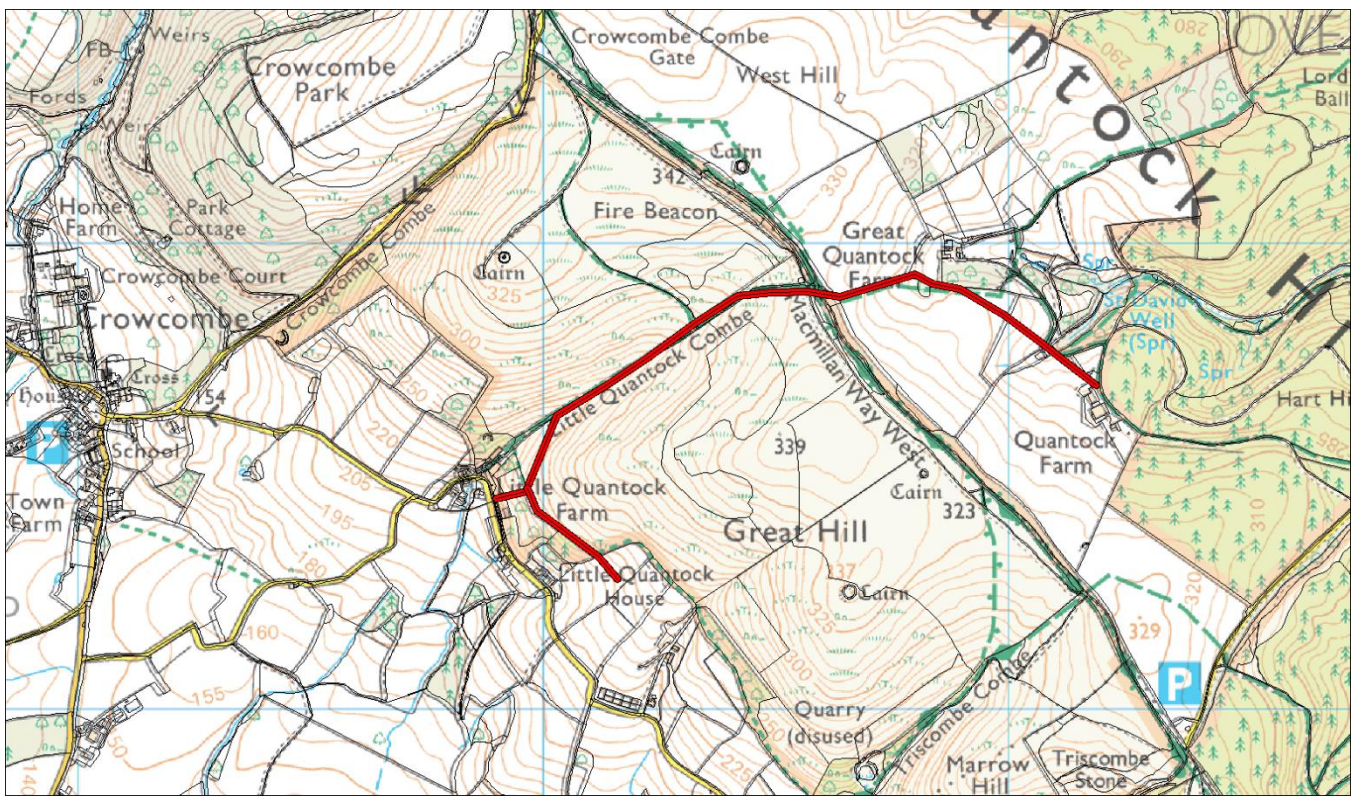


2. We continue to build on the success of the mailshot campaign issued in March, which targeted farmers and landowners across the Quantock Hills who had not previously engaged with FiPL or, in many cases, any agri-environment schemes. The response has been extremely encouraging. From **150 mailshots**, we have received **44 enquiries**, resulting in a healthy pipeline of projects currently under development. It has been particularly rewarding to work with many new applicants and help bring their ideas through to the panel for consideration.
3. We are currently working to revive the **Quantock Farmer Cluster** and, although our inaugural meeting had to be postponed due to the extreme heat experienced in late June, plans are now well underway for the rescheduled event. The aim of this first meeting is to bring together farmers and landowners from across the Quantock Hills, build new relationships and better understand the topics and challenges that matter most to them. We hope this will provide the foundation for a number of special interest groups, encouraging collaboration, knowledge sharing and targeted training opportunities. The rescheduled event will take place at **Over Stowey Village Hall on 30th July**, where attendees are invited to join us for a pie and a pint as we begin these important conversations.
4. We are also in the process of recruiting a new panel member to strengthen the panel's local knowledge and expertise, helping to guide the delivery of the remaining programme budget. Our next panel meeting is scheduled for **13th August**, where we expect to present a further range of diverse applications for consideration.

National Grid – Overhead Powerline enhancement Projects

1. As part of Ofgem approved voluntary initiative National Grid Electrical Distribution (NGED) a Visual Impact Project within Protected Landscapes. There are 2 elements to the project, the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, which will fund mitigation measures where high voltage lines cross Protected Landscapes and an underground scheme for lower voltage lines.
2. In 2024 we explored a scheme at Fyne Court to underground the power lines that go across the site. Unfortunately, this has been held up as the National Trust were unable to secure the relevant permissions. Earlier this year we started looking at another scheme near Crowcombe, the only place in the National Landscape that lines run across unenclosed land and across the ridge of the hills – the map below shows the location.
3. Our EoI was successful and we have submitted a full application. The scheme is not a grant, rather NGED fund the costs associated with the undergrounding. The staff and landowner input is seen as 'in-kind' costs. As some of the land is SSSI it will require Natural England consent, but landowners and NE are supportive. Landowners and relevant bodies such as Natural England are supportive.

Map 1: scheme location showing existing line.



Hinkley Point C s161 / DCO funded schemes.

The National Landscape Team currently deliver three schemes under the HPC development s161 / DCO agreement. These funded schemes aim to mitigate and / or compensate for the impacts of the HPC development in relation to nature, landscape and rural skills.

Scheme	Budget	Spend to date	Balance
Landscape Improvement Scheme	£443,670	£316,773	£126,897
Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund	£163,458	£161,784	£1,674
Land Management Skills Scheme (phase 2)	£60,000	£27,045	£32,954
Total	£667,128	£505,602	£161,525

Landscape Improvement Scheme (LIS)

1. The National Landscape Team have been operating a Landscape Improvement Scheme for 10-years. The aim of the scheme to improve and create priority habitats associated with the Quantock Hills National Landscape including heathland, species rich grassland and broadleaved woodland. One of the projects under the scheme is the conversion of 9Ha of conifer plantation to a scrub / grassland mosaic in Ramscombe, Great Wood. Forestry England, landowners, cleared the site in 2015 and at that time the project funded works to remove rhododendron.
2. Unfortunately the site is scrubbing up with undesirable species, mainly Western Hemlock, which the scheme will look to remove later this year. In subsequent years Forestry England are keen to explore management on the site including grazing. The Landscape Improvement Scheme will use Wildlife-Rich Habitat funding from Defra to support this work.

Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund (GQLDF)

1. The GQLDF is a discretionary funding scheme managed by the National Landscape Team that landowners, communities and groups can apply to for projects that will enhance the landscape of the Quantock Hills and its fringing farmland.
2. This year we have allocated the last of the funding on a project near Nether Stowey restoring a number of small ponds. The project is due to complete in late autumn which will allow the Team to close the scheme down and complete its evaluation reports.

Land Management Skills Scheme (LMSS)

1. The Partnership will be aware that last year we recruited a Landscape Skills Project Officer, Lucy Stockton, to deliver land management skills programmes with the aim of upskilling young people and those in long-term unemployment. While the programmes were very successful in certain aspects, it became clear that their main outcome was health focused rather than the skill, which caused issues with the funding requirements.
2. In discussion with Somerset Council we are redesigning the scheme to focus more on upskilling through provision of grants for young people and long-term unemployed to achieve accredited training. We are hoping to launch the scheme later in autumn once it has been approved by Somerset Council.

Recommendation(s):

1. The JAC notes the report.