QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday 21 January 2026

Spaxton Village Hall
Management Plan Review – 11.30am [Partnership Members]
Main JAC Meeting - 2pm [Partnership Members/Public]

To: The members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

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

Management Plan Review Agenda:	
1.	**Paper 1 – Management Plan Review** (Iain Porter).
2.	**Apologies for absence.**
3.	**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).
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 – Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme** (Iain Porter).
7.	**Paper C – Quantock Hills National Landscape Business Plan 2026/27** (Iain Porter).
8.	**Paper D - National Landscape Finance Report** (Iain Porter).
12.	**AOB**.
13.	**Future JAC meeting dates** (all start at 2.00pm) Wednesday 22nd April 2026 Wednesday 22nd July 2026
	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.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	**PAPER**
Subject	Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan Review	**1**
Author(s)	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	21/01/2026	

1. Introduction.
    a. The Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan review started in January 2024. Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) places a duty on local authorities within a National Landscape to act jointly to prepare and publish a Management Plan. National Landscape Management Plans are required to be reviewed every five years. However in 2022 the Government provided an option for National Landscape Partnerships to delay review of Management Plans due to the expected new Management Plan Guidance and the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcome Framework.
    b. The new Management Plan guidance was published, in draft form, in April 2024 and the Targets & Outcome Framework in January 2024, allowing the Management Plan review to begin in earnest.
    c. This meeting aims to consider the latest draft of the Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026- 2031, to approve it or to make amendments to allow approval for the plan to be considered by statutory stakeholders – Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency – and to be adopted by Somerset Council, the relevant local authority.

2. Progress to date.
    a. Table 1 below identifies the progress to date on the Management Plan review.
    b. Progress during the previous three months, since the last JAC meeting, and for consideration at this meeting include:
        i. Equalities Impact Assessment.
        ii. Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report.
        iii. Consultation Report.
        iv. Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026 – 2031 (v2).
    c. Within the Quantock Hills National Landscape there is one Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods - Special Areas of Conservation , and under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations, this requires that an 'appropriate assessments' of the implications of the Plan for the conservation objectives of the SAC is undertaken. This assessment has been contracted out due to the need to specific knowledge and understanding of the potential impacts on the relevant SACs. The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is due to be completed by 21 January 2026.

Table 1. Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan Review key milestones (progress to date)

Date	Type	Detail
January 2024	Partnership	Consultation and engagement on the Condition of the National Landscape date & report.
April 2024	Public	Understanding what public value most about the Quantock Hills, the special qualities, issues and what communities want to see protected and prioritised.
April 2024	Partnership	Management Plan review principles.
July 2024	Partnership	Introduction of PLTOF and consultation on approach to take when setting apportionments.

July 2024	Partnership	Consideration of the Quantock Hills Carbon audit and approval of the Climate Risk Assessment
January 2025	Partnership	Workshop session assessing Vision, Themes and Topics and Outcomes.
April 2025	Partnership	Consultation and approval of Quantock Hills contribution to the Protected Landscape Targets & Outcome Framework
July 2025	Partnership	Online survey. Consideration of current Aims and Objectives. Limited responses.
October 2025	Partnership	Consultation and approval of draft policies
November – December 2025	Partnership & Public	Consultation on the draft (v1.1) Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026 – 2031 including the appendices.
December 2025	-	Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Scoping report.
December 2025	-	Equalities Impact Assessment completed.

3. Timeline for adoption
    a. The timeline for adoption below assumes that the JAC approves the Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026 – 2031 (v2) and supporting documents and that the HRA does not require significant amendments to the plan policies.
    b. It also assumes that none of the statutory stakeholders require significant amendments to the plan. As the statutory stakeholders were consultees on the draft plan and any responses considered – only Natural England responded – it is hoped that any further amendments will be minor in nature.

21 Jan 2026	Habitat Regulation Assessment completed.
26 Jan 2026	Submit final Management Plan (inc SEA & HRS) to statutory stakeholders (Natural England, Historic England, Environment Agency)
9 March 2026	Submit final Management Plan to Somerset Council (Responsible Authority) for adoption.
April 2026	Launch the reviewed Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31.

Recommendation(s):

1. **The JAC notes the report.**
2. **The JAC approves the SEA Scoping Report.**
3. **The JAC approves the Equalities Impact Assessment.**
4. **The JAC approves the Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026 – 2031 (v2.0) for consideration by statutory stakeholders and adoption by Somerset Council.**

Quantock Hills National Landscape

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

Minutes of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held on:
Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 2.00pm
Enmore Memorial Hall, Enmore

Present:
Members:

Hugh Warmington (HW)	CLA/ JAC Chairman
Mike Caswell (MC)	Somerset Council
Fran Smith (FS)	Somerset Council
Laura Robertson (LR))	National Trust
Alicia Aras (AA)	Somerset Local Access Forum
Bob Croft (BC)	South West Heritage Trust
Sarah Nason (SN)	Parish Representative - Holford Parish Council
Julian Taylor (JT)	Parish Representative - North Petherton
Mark Philipson (MP)	Parish Representative - West Quantoxhead Parish Council
Dixie Darch (DD)	Co-opted member

Officers:

Iain Porter (IP)	Quantock Hills National Landscape
Andy Stevenson (AST)	Quantock Hills National Landscape

Also present:

Stephen Dury (SD)	Somerset Council
Josh Schwieso (JS)	Spaxton Parish Council
Paul Trolley (PT)	Quantock Hills National Landscape volunteer

1. Apologies
Laura Daniells (Natural England), David Stripp (Kingston St Mary Parish Council), Cllr Bill Revans (Somerset Council), Cllr Lee Baker (Somerset Council), Cllr Alan Bradford (Somerset Council), Martin Jones (West Bagborough PC), John Ackland-Hood (Fairfield Estate).

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
Amendments to the minutes to reflect that Laura Daniells sent apologies. No other accuracies or matter were raised. Minutes signed.

4. Public question time
No public questions.

5. Presentation – Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Steve Dury, Nature Recovery & Partnerships Manager, Somerset Council)

6. Paper A – Land management and engagement (Andy Stevenson)

AS presented on the Working Well Group, a volunteer / participation group that stems from the Nature & Wellbeing Project. The group is aimed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for those with poor mental health & wellbeing providing land management, wellbeing and engagement activities. After the end of the Nature & Wellbeing project the value of the group was deemed to be sufficient that it became part of the business as usual activity of the National Landscape Team. Since its inception there have been a number of success stories as participants move onto other more mainstream volunteering opportunities, employment or report that their health has improved significantly.

The Partnership members commented on the value of these type of activities and it was noted that other opportunities, such as a similar group in Taunton, that had not continued, increased the need for the QHNL Team to deliver this type of work.

Paper A Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

7. Paper B – Partnership update (Iain Porter)

Member attendance – Those with low attendance levels (<40%) had been emailed. For those that continue to not attend IP will email to ask if they want to step down.

MC – Aware that members are incredibly busy, often with conflicting meetings at different locations across the county.

FS / MP – Could hybrid meetings be introduced. ACTION – IP to contact the LCN team to discuss the technology used and whether it would be appropriate for JAC meetings.

BC – offered the Heritage Centre as a venue for future JAC meetings.

IP – will look to set venues for JAC meetings where dates are set (January, April & July) to allow members to plan.

There were no further comments or questions.

Paper B Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

8. Paper C – Management Plan review (Iain Porter)

The committee undertook a workshop session to consider the draft policies for the revised Management Plan. Comments and suggestions will be considered and taken account of in the first draft Management Plan which aims to be out for consultation at the beginning of November.

Paper C Recommendation(s):

1) **The JAC noted the report.**
2) **Recommendation approved.**
3) **Recommendation approved.**

9. Paper D - Finance and Business Plan report (Iain Porter)

DD- Notes the overall good delivery of the team and great to see the breath of activity being undertaken. Feels it should be noted that some of the actions are impact by factors outside the control of the team, such as land management advice, which is very complex and uncertain at this time.

Paper D Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

10. Paper E - Planning report (Alex Meletiou)

MP – Was the team aware whether the enforcement activity of Somerset Council had improved as aware that Alex (Landscape Planning Officer) had sent through a number of enforcement issues.

IP – at meeting with planning teams we were informed that the enforcement team were in the process of filling the last vacancy. Assuming that as with development control there is a significant backlog and that they will be working through this. Iain and Alex have it in the calendar to contact the planning team at Somerset Council next week as this will the end of the 12 weeks that planning control had given themselves to reduce the backlog of planning applications.

Paper D Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

11. AOB

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 21 January 2026 at 2.00pm (venue TBC).

The meeting was closed at 4.14pm

To	Quantock Hills JAC	**PAPER**
Subject	Partnership Update	**A**
Author(s)	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	21/01/2026	

2. **Staffing**

   a. Landscape Projects Officer. After considerable delay I am pleased to welcome Stewart Ford to the Team as the Landscape Projects Officer. As members may remember the role was a full-time role that had previously been filled on a job-share basis by Katie and Helen. Due to the HR issues at Somerset Council the time to recruit to the post being full-time has been nearly 12 months. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sally, Farming Engagement Support Officer, who has gone above and beyond over the last few months ensuring FiPL continues to function and deliver.

   b. Community Engagement & Volunteer Officer. With the end of the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, Jon Barrett, the schemes Community Engagement & Volunteer Officer, has moved into the core team. This is to embed the engagement work of the QLPS in the core work and to develop further engagement projects.

   c. Vacant posts. With Somerset Council's restructure the Team had to identify posts that it wished to remain open, i.e. that the team would be looking to recruit to when resources allowed. The current vacant posts are:

      i. Development Officer.
      ii. Community Engagement Ranger.

   d. With the Defra Governance review, the ending of the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme and the new Management Pla the team will need to look at its current structure to ensure that financially it is sustainable in the longer term and will deliver the priorities of the Partnership and Government. This has been flagged with Somerset Council's HR team, and we have been informed that we will need to wait until the outcome of the Council's current Pay & Grading review process, which will hopefully be later in spring. We are waiting for the outcome of the Defra business planning process which should indicate funding levels for the next three years (see section 5) allowing us to plan accordingly.

3. **Partnership**
   a. As discussed at previous meetings, attendance at some meetings has been low. At the last meeting members asked whether the meetings could be hybrid, which we are investigating. I asked Somerset Council's LCN team about the systems they use which does have a number of issues. I have asked other PL Teams about remote meeting systems and will look to update the Partnership at a future meeting.
   b. Cllr Bill Revan (Somerset Council) has stepped down from the Quantock Hills JAC. Cllr Revans has a significant workload in his role with Somerset Council and wanted to ensure that Somerset Councils representation on the JAC remained high. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Revan's for his significant support of the Partnership and Team over the past 3-years, especially during the initial phase of the new unitary

authority. I wish to welcome Cllr Cara Strom who has been appointed as the replacement representative from Somerset Council.

c. This coming summer we will need to run an election process for our parish representatives. The current parish represented are West Bagborough, West Quantoxhead, Holford and North Petherton. I will be contacting SALC to provide guidance and support in the process.

4. **Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme**
   a. The 5 ½-year Landscape Partnership Scheme ended 30 November 2025. During December and January the Team have been completing the final claim and closing the scheme down. Jon Barrett, Community Engagement and Volunteer Officer has moved to the core team to continue the engagement work and to look at development opportunities, including external funding bids.
   b. While the scheme has closed a huge wealth of resources and information will be available on the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme website and via the core team.

5. **Consultations**
   a. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. Reform to the statutory consultee system. The Team scoped the consultation as the Landscape Review (2019) had identified the potential benefits for Protected Landscape Partnerships / bodies to become Statutory Consultees. However it was evident that the consultation was concerned with reduction of Statutory Consultees and improving performance of those that remained. With the lack to engage in any meaningful way the Team did not respond to the consultation.
   b. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework. National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK . Closes 10/03/2026. Following the royal assent of the Planning & Infrastructure Act on 18/12/2025 Government is seeking views on proposed changed to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Team have not had opportunity to consider the revised policies in relation to Protected Landscapes, however Alex is engaged with the National Landscape Association planning group, and we will contact the Partnership with our proposed response to the review. The main changes appear to include:
      i. Changing from “great weight” to “substantial weight” when LPA & relevant authorities consider impacts on Protected Landscapes.
      ii. Emphasising importance of mitigation measures and use of compensation..
   c. Defra. Protected Landscape Governance Research Project. Launched this month, the project will inform Defra in the development of Protected Landscape Governance Framework, expected to be published towards the end of 2026. Initial engagement will be through interviews and a workshop in February. The initial email from the project lead, Dr Charlotte Chivers has been sent to Partnership members and while I will be engaging with the process I would encourage Partnership members to also engage, or if you are unable to I am happy to communicate wider views of the Partnership to the project team.

6. **Defra / National Government updates.**
   a. Defra are nearing the end of the budget setting process for next financial year, though have not indicated when core grant offers will be made. As mentioned at our last meeting we had been asked to indicate the potential impacts of (a) a flat rate settlement

of the core revenue grant and (b) a 9% reduction of the core revenue grant. Due to limited time to feedback – 2 days – initial calculations showed:

i. Removal of all non-essential revenue spend to leave budget for salaries & on-costs, office & depot rent / leases, vehicle cost, insurances, SC Management fee.
ii. Flat settlement (same as 2025/26) – reduction in staff of 1.3 FTE.
iii. 9% reduction in settlement – reduction in staff of 1.7 FTE.

b. In November the Nuclear Regulatory Review (or Fingleton Review) recommended the repeal or weekending of the protected landscapes duty for local authorities. The duty required local authorities as well as other public bodies to take active, positive steps to ensure their actions seek to conserve and enhance natural beauty, and that planning and development decisions properly consider the impact on the landscape. The Chancellor has instructed the team at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to look at how to take the recommendations forward. Given that no nuclear development has been or is being held up or delayed due to protected landscapes it is hard to see the rationale for this move. I will be feeding into the National Landscape Association response / engagement to highlight our experience with the recent Hinkley Point C development and the subsequent impacts on the Quantock Hills.
c. On 9 January, Environment Minister, Emma Reynolds, announced the extension of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme by a further 3 years. This is great news and reflects the huge success of the programme over the past four years. While budgets for 2027/28 and 2028/29 are indicative it does allow the Team to develop longer term projects with applicants to deliver better outcomes for farmers / land managers and the Quantock Hills.

Recommendation(s):

1. The JAC notes the report.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	**PAPER B**
Subject	Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) Programme	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	21/01/2026	

1. Four-year national report
    a. National Parks England and the National Landscape Association have recently released the FiPL year 4 report. The report builds on the great work that has happened nationally with some pretty astounding metrics. The report also features a case study from the Quantock Hills showcasing one of our great projects.

2. Four-year of FiPL on the Quantock Hills
    a. Since June 2021 the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme has invested £1,066,745 into farming and land management on the Quantock Hills.
    b. Table 1 shows the types of investment and the outputs from the FiPL funded projects.

Table 1: Summary of FiPL on the Quantock Hills.

FiPL funding	£1,066,745
- Project Delivery	£893,311
- Advice & Guidance	£127,584
- Programme Admin	£45,850
Number of applications	73
Number of accepted Projects	64
Woodland created	0.2Ha
Woodland Managed	87Ha
Land managed to improve soil health	894Ha
Projects reducing carbon emissions	12
Native hedgerows planted	1,807m
Existing hedgerows managed	1,238m
New native trees planted (outside woodlands)	2,542
Wildlife rich habitat created or restored outside protected sites	27.39Ha
Positive management on SSSI	3,169Ha
Historic structures conserved / enhanced	3
Total farmers engaged in FiPL	59

3. 2025/26 FiPL progress
    a. With the issues with staffing we were expecting an underspend in FiPL for 2025/26. To ensure continued deliver of FiPL FWAG-SW were contracted in December to support potential applicants and with Stewart joining the team we are confident that we can deliver FiPL successfully this year. Table 2 shows the latest FiPL position.
    b. During the year 25 applications have been considered, with 18 approved, 3 pending and 4 rejected.

Table 2: FiPL 2025/26

	Budget	Committed / spent	Unallocated
Project Delivery	£185,227	£142,697	£42,530
Advice & Guidance	£43,753	£17,365 (40%)	
Admin	£22,000	£16,755 (76%)	
Total	£250,980	£176,817 (70%)	

4. FiPL Extension
    a. Last week Environment Minister, Emma Reynolds, announced a 3-year extension to the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. The 2026/27 budget nationally is £30m and we have been told to plan for a similar level of budget – there will be a few minor changes to the funding formula so our actual FiPL budget may go slightly up or down. This will allow the Team to start working with farmers and land managers to develop applications including multi-year projects.

Recommendation(s):

1. The JAC notes the report.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	**PAPER C**
Subject	Quantock Hills National Landscape Team Business Plan 2026/27	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	21/01/2026	

1. Introduction
   a. The Quantock Hills National Landscape Team Business Plan outlines the budgets and work plan for the Team. It is developed in November / December for submission to Defra in support of the core grant. As in some previous years the development of the Business Plan has been delayed until a clearer picture of Defra's priorities and funding were available.
   b. The draft Business Plan (attached) enables the Team to submitted it when required to Defra and Somerset Council. The plan will be updated when further detail on budgets become available.
   c. There are a number of significant changes from 2025/26 to 2026/27. The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, a 5½-year NLHF funded scheme, ended in November 2025. With the ending of the scheme the delivery associated with it, whether directly by the QLPS team or through contracts, has ceased. The Quantock Hills Management Plan review will be complete, and the Business Plan will need to reflect its priorities and actions of the Delivery Plan.

2. Assumptions. A number of assumptions have been made when developing the draft Business Plan including:
   a. The governance structure remains the same, with the Team hosted by Somerset Council, and the Partnership constituted as a Joint Advisory Committee under Somerset Council.
   b. Hosting fees and contributions remain at existing levels.
   c. The National Landscape reserves budget remains ring-fenced and is not impacted by Somerset Council financial constraints.
   d. The Pay and grading process within Somerset Council does not significantly change staff costs.

3. Priorities for 2026/27
   a. The Business Plan reflects the themes from the Management Plan, Place, Nature, Climate and People. With the new Management Plan and the ending of the QLPS, action in 2026/27 will prioritise development of larger scale externally funded schemes / projects with the aim of delivering the aims of the Management Plan over the subsequent 3-4 years.
   b. Workstreams have also been designed to recognise the priority placed on the Governments Environmental Improvement Plan and 30by30 with direct management supporting project support and 3rd party grants.

4. Budget
   a. The budget includes a number of assumptions such as Defra core contribution remaining at 2025/26 levels, Somerset Council's hosting fee remains at the same level, a 2.5% pay award is applied and utility and contractor costs do not increase (or decrease) significantly.
   b. The Business Plan proposes retention of the Community Engagement & Volunteer Officer. The cost of this post will be met from the reserves budget. While this will

reduce the overall level of the reserves, it will still have a sufficient balance to meet the identified risks and commitments e.g. budget to be able to cover 50% of the cost if the whole team had to be made compulsory redundant.

Recommendation(s):

1. **The JAC notes the report.**
2. **The JAC approves the Quantock Hills National Landscape Business Plan.**

To	Quantock Hills JAC	**PAPER D**
Subject	Financial Report	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	21/01/2026	

1. 2025/26 Financial position.

a. Finance budget reports have been run for the period April to December. The 2024/25 outrun figures were confirmed in September allowing us to know the full situation with our budgets.
b. Last year a number of budgets underspent including FiPL, Access4All, Land Management Skills Scheme and Land Management. For FiPL and Access4All the carry forward amounts come into this year's budgets and this year's grant claims are reduced by an equal amount to bring the budgets back to zero balance. The Land Management Skills Scheme funding is carried forward as the scheme runs across financial years. Similarly for the Land Management budget the carry forward is due to agri-environment funding coming in 2024/25 which is for spend in 2025/26.
c. The QLPS overspent is higher than anticipated and the Team is catching up with the finance team to understand where the overspend has come from. The Team are currently submitting the final claim to the NLHF which will allow the budget to be closed at the end of the financial year.
d. Further detailed financial report will be tabled at the meeting.

Table D1: Summary of Quantock Hills National Landscape budgets (mth 1 – 9)

Budget	Expenditure	Income	Budget
Opening balance (c/f 01/04/25)	*205,014*	*296,885*	91,900
	Notes: 'expenditure' shows allocated carry forward such as FiPL, LMSS, A4A, QLPS & redundancy charges		
Core (Revenue)	234,925	169,962	265,400
	Notes: Defra final grant claim not due in until February. Some expenditure being queried such as getting charged twice for vehicle insurance. Otherwise budget on track.		
Landscape Projects (FiPL / GQLDF / LIS / LMSS)	109,255	72,972	363,600
	Notes: Overall budget dependant on expenditure on LIS which is projected for spend during 2025 – 27. Low expenditure in FiPL as claims tend to be paid towards end of financial year. FiPL and LMSS carry forward not showing in budget.		
QLPS	293,220	97,654	168,000
	Notes: Expenditure high but within tolerances. Income lower as NLHF retain last 10% of grant (~£160k) until final claim is approved. This is due in January 2026. Budget outrun currently predicted at £12k deficit, though this will hopefully reduce if we can show grant 'project costs' on which we can claim additional NLHF grant.		
Projects (Capital grants / A4A)	19,520	201,224	179,500
	Notes: Expenditure includes small project pots (Nature Calling, Arts Project) and capital grants. Miscoding of income means income higher. Small level of miscoding of expenditure. Committed expenditure on track for full expenditure by year end. Carry forward not showing in budget.		
Land Management	71,252	33,478	19,000

	Notes: Miscoding of £16,700 included. Needs to be vied to correct cost code, which will bring budget back on track. Income includes SFI, HLS and FETF (from 2024/25). Capital Grant income not showing.		
Total	**613,276**	**470,723**	**1,087,400**

Recommendation(s):

1. The JAC notes the report.

Appendix D1: Quantock Hills National Landscape Business Plan. Mid-point review by action.

NATURE			
Ref	**Action**	**Milestone / Target**	**Progress**
1	Provide advice to land managers and support in the development of suitable funded schemes such as CS, Landscape Recovery, green credits to secure funding for nature positive schemes.	Promotion of advice service, running of 3 workshop sessions to promote schemes running in 2025.	☹ Unable to set up advice sessions due to quickly changing funding situation. Signposting to opportunities through green finance provided.
2	Deliver Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund discretionary fund providing grants to landowners & communities to deliver landscape enhancement projects.	Applications developed, processed and approved by panel. Fully allocated GQLDF with confirmed timeline for completion of scheme.	☺ On track with final applications received.
3	Support QCA in delivery of HLS on Quantock Common SSSI, source funding for scrub removal.	Swaling & scrub management undertaken to NE prescription.	☺ On track.
4	Support QCA in securing appropriate Agri-environment scheme for Quantock Common to ensure appropriate management.	Engagement with QCA and support given where required to secure appropriate agri-environment scheme to enhance Quantock Common SSSI.	☺ Support given through production of MIP and engagement with stakeholders such as DSFRS and NE.
5	Provide 3rd party grants through the FiPL / GQLDF for hedge management and planting schemes.	All eligible projects worked up to application and decisions given.	☺ On track.
6	Promote Nature Recovery Plan, ensuring it is embedded in the National Landscape Management Plan and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.	Nature Recovery Plan produced and available on website. Nature Recovery Plan fed into LNRS as appropriate.	☺ On track.
7	Undertake land management activities on SWHT land holdings.	37Ha extensive grassland enhanced through management. 44Ha of mixed broadleaved woodland enhanced through management.	☺ On track with summer work programmes delivered.
8	Secure Agri-environment scheme agreements for Cothelstone Hill woodland to allow continued management.	Agri-environment scheme approved. 44Ha of mixed broadleaved woodland enhanced through management.	☺ On track, CS pre-application approved by FC, awaiting application window to open.
9	Assess replacement agri-environment scheme for Cothelstone Hill hilltop HLS extension.	Agri-environment scheme assessed and best option secured. 39Ha of grassland / scrub enhanced through appropriate management.	☺ Assessment undertaken and existing AE scheme extended.
10	Undertake land management activities on New Stowey Farm in partnership with local community groups and Somerset Council.	30Ha grassland enhanced through regenerative agricultural practices 13Ha woodland and hedgerows enhanced through positive management.	☺ Fencing and water infrastructure work on track to allow mob grazing. Other works due in autumn / winter.
11	Agree stream restoration plan with stakeholders at New Stowey Farm. Secure funding through relevant scheme to undertake necessary works.	Stream restoration plan agreed. Funding secured.	☺ Plan approved. Works planned to start in autumn 2025.
12	Delivery of schemes under Landscape Improvement Scheme targeting creation or enhancement of priority habitat.	1 LIS projects delivered.	😐 With Defra capital grant pot this funding stream is lower priority.
13	Deliver Quantock Bat Monitoring programme ensuring 6 transects are completed.	6 transect records analysed and submitted to NMBP.	☺ 6 transects completed with 2 further sites monitored.

14	Deliver Quantock Butterfly Monitoring programme ensuring 2 transects are complete.	2 transect records submitted to national monitoring programme.	☺ On track.
15	Provide support to FotQs in the delivery of the White Letter hairstreak butterfly project through monitoring of the target areas.	Volunteer support for monitoring activity.	☺ On track with 12 new sightings of WLH compared to 5 previous sightings over the last 75 years.
16	Deliver Dormouse monitoring scheme for Cothelstone Hill.	Dormouse monitoring carried out as part of PTES national monitoring programme.	☺ On track.
17	Lead on the annual Quantock deer count.	Annual deer count completed and figures available to the public.	☺ On track.
18	Support monitoring of pied flycatchers on Quantock Hills and feed into regional project on effects of climate change on indicator species.	Monitoring of 150 boxes in key location throughout AONB.	☺ On track with all boxes monitored. Early indications point to good season.
19	Undertake annual nightjar monitoring of Quantock Common and adjacent land of interest.	10km grid squares monitored annually.	☺ Monitoring completed and results being complied.
20	Embed hedgerow monitoring volunteers and continue to undertake targeted monitoring of hedgerows.	Core group of volunteers trained and secured to undertake hedgerow monitoring.	😐 With resignation of Wildlife Officer 4 months earlier than anticipated this initiative has not been completed. Planned to take forward in autumn.
21	Support FotQ to take lead role in adder monitoring programme.		☺ Monitoring completed and results being promoted.
22	Develop hibernaculum monitoring programme for constructed hibernaculum.	Monitoring of all constructed hibernaculum undertaken.	☺ Monitoring methodology developed with advice from Mendip Hills NL and first season monitoring completed.
23	Enhance website content to include monitoring reports from work led by or engaged with by the QHNL Team.	All relevant monitoring promoted on website and all relevant reports available.	☺ Completed.
24	Pursue Landscape Recovery Scheme application (dependant on 3rd round being released).	Funding secured to undertake development phase starting in 2026/27.	😐 Awaiting new round of LR to open.
25	Deliver a Wildlife Monitoring Symposium with FotQ. The event will bring together all individuals / groups involved in habitat / species monitoring across the Quantock Hills to celebrate the amount of work being undertaken, to create links and engagement and to understand gaps in monitoring work.	Wildlife monitoring symposium event delivered.	☺ Held on 5 July. 42 attendees with very positive feedback including desire for these to become annual event.
26	Support QDMCG in the development of coordinated and sustainable deer management including cooperative deer management initiatives.	Completion of contracts to created shared facilities and enhancement of group set up to increase cooperation.	☺ On track with potential for capital grant funding to drive initiative forward.
27	Use Defra Capital Fund to delivery projects that achieve 30by30.	To be confirmed.	😐 Delaying in confirming funding and what funding can be used for has delayed starting projects.

CLIMATE			
Ref	**Action**	**Milestone / Target**	**Progress**
28	Undertake sampling of carbon store potential in different habitats to further refine Cranfield University Carbon Store & Stock study.	Statistically robust sampling across all main habitat types of the National Landscape. Refined figures published of carbon store of the National Landscape.	☹ No progress due to reduced staffing.
29	Deliver events for the Quantock Farm Cluster that include promotion of climate beneficial actions such as talks, knowledge sharing, training courses etc.	Six events delivered throughout 2025/26.	😐 Engagement with farm cluster has occurred through no events delivered due to reduced staff.
30	Promote opportunities for woodland creation through SM feeds and events.	Sharing of all FC SM posts.	☺ On track.
31	Develop natural flood management solutions for Quantock Common and secure funding to complete works.	1 scheme developed, agreed and delivered.	😐 scheme developed, delivery behind schedule.
32	Develop a management plan for New Stowey Farm in partnership with Somerset Council and relevant community groups that will develop the carbon sequestration potential alongside other public goods.	Management Plan approved by Somerset Council First year work programme completed.	☺ On track with Somerset Council engaged in terms of carbon and green finance initiatives.
33	Pursue Landscape Recovery Scheme application (dependant on 3rd round being released).	Funding secured to undertake development phase starting in 2025/26.	😐 Awaiting new round of LR to open.
34	Production of a Climate Adaptation Plan for the Quantock Hills linking to the reviewed Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy.	Climate Adaptation Plan embedded in the reviewed National Landscape Management Plan.	☺ On track with climate risk assessment adopted and CCAP being drafted alongside Management Plan review.

PEOPLE			
Ref	**Action**	**Milestone / Target**	**Progress**
35	Support a Quantock Farmer / land manager cluster and run a series of events to share good practice and support farmers.	Farmer cluster created with a minimum of 12 members. Run 6 events.	😐 Engagement with farm cluster has occurred through no events delivered due to reduced staff.
36	Undertake public events promoting special qualities of the Quantock Hills.	Events programme run with at least 24 events / 300 attendees.	☺ On track with 31 events and 95 attendees (numbers for some events during summer to be updated).
37	Promote activities by other organisations where they promote the special qualities of the Quantock Hills.	All relevant events, where notified, promoted via National Landscape website and SM feeds.	☺ On track.
38	Ensure information from staff / organisations which will increase accessibility of AONB to individuals and groups, especially those considered to be missing groups, is promoted via website, e-newsletter and SM feeds building upon the website accessibility work undertaken in November 2025.	Enhanced information provision available on website.	☺ On track with increased descriptive and video content especially on visitor and user facilities e.g. circular walks.

39	Undertake audit of AONB promoted routes.	Annual access audit of AONB promoted routes completed. Action plan produced and works undertaken.	☺ On track.
40	Enhance usability of one promoted route through increasing accessibility.	Cothelstone Hill promoted route enhanced through physical access works and increased information.	☺ On track for works in autumn 2025.
41	VOLUNTEERS – engage with tasks for QCV (joint group).	Leading 12 QCV tasks based on National Landscape Team tasks.	☺ On track.
42	VOLUNTEERS – Ensure volunteer involvement in local events and other visitor management to raise AONB profile.	Visitor information points resources purchased. Visitor information points undertaken at key car parks during Easter and summer holidays Attendance at key local events.	☺ On track with new material produced and volunteers undertaking 3 sessions providing information to visitors.
43	VOLUNTEERS – Undertake heritage based volunteering activities such as monitoring of scheduled monuments and historic building recording.	Scheduled Monument monitoring undertaken twice for each SM. Enhanced historic building monitoring.	☺ On track with new cohort of volunteers recruited and new monitoring system developed in conjunction with HE.
44	VOLUNTEERS – Enable Heritage Monitoring Group (QLPS legacy group) to undertake heritage survey / investigation activity and support the group to become sustainable.	Quantock Heritage Group lead on heritage investigation activity / project.	☺ Group set up and operating with reduced support from team. Group has undertaken test pitting in local town including supporting event such as talks and walks.
45	VOLUNTEERS – undertake oral history interviews to record cultural and community heritage ensure resource is secured for future use.	2 local community members interviewed, and interview output processed.	☺ All interviews completed, need for recordings to be available and investigating method to have them on website.
46	VOLUNTEERS – undertake species based volunteering activities such as bird monitoring.	Wildlife surveying / monitoring activities for volunteers provided.	☺ Recruitment for wildlife surveyors successful. All required wildlife surveys completed.
47	VOLUNTEERS - Support existing AONB led volunteer groups to ensure training, support, equipment and materials are provided.	VR, WMV, HMV, ET, CEV groups all supported with same level of outputs.	☺ On track for all existing groups.
48	VOLUNTEERS – increase communication with volunteers to provide greater information on activities, opportunities and increased learning.	Produce four volunteer newsletters during the year. Start SM feeds that will promote volunteering value and work.	☺ Newsletter produced, SM feeds starting.
49	VOLUNTEERS – Set up volunteer led events / walks and promote through the NL events programme. Embed volunteer walk leaders as being primary support for NL Team led events.	8 volunteer led walks on themes of interest fitting into NL events programme.	☺ On track with 3 walks delivered.
50	Respond to request for schools & youth groups as resources allow.	Where resources allow schools engaged.	☺ On track.
51	Provide a number of introductory courses aimed at NEETS in rural skills training under the LMSS Project.	12 courses with 8 participants on each (96 total) aimed at NEETS undertaking introductory course with 20 undertaking further training.	😐 Delay in recruitment of project officer has delayed start of project. Courses now due to start in October / November.

52	Provide a number of introductory courses aimed at unemployed in Rural skills training under the LMSS Project.	12 courses with 8 participants on each (96 total) aimed at unemployed undertaking introductory course with 20 undertaking further training.	😐 Delay in recruitment of project officer has delayed start of project. Courses now due to start in October / November.
53	Run Working Well group on monthly basis to provide opportunity for those with poor mental health to access health benefits of natural environment.	Run 12 sessions with 100 participatory visits.	☺ On track.
54	Undertake events programme covering a number of activities / themes to increase awareness of the special qualities of the Quantock Hills. Aim to increase diversity of participant and offer. Potentially including – • LGBTQ+ Pride walk / camping weekend (Pride month?) • Migrant communities • AfriQuan • Art based activities • Wild Wednesday • Young Rangers	Events programme delivered. Confirm legacy approach of the different groups / activity types.	☺ On track with activities / events delivered for – • LGBTQ+ Pride walk / camping weekend (Pride month?) • Migrant communities • AfriQuan • Art based activities • Wild Wednesday
55	Deliver targeted events based on nature and wellbeing theme.	10 events with 90 participants.	☺ On track with 4 events and 32 attendees.
56	Undertake timely promotion of key messages to provide information / educate users of the National Landscape.	Promote key messages - dog worrying (spring) / fire risk (summer) / inappropriate vehicle use (autumn / winter).	☺ On track with significant visitor messaging on issues such as dog worrying and wildfire risk.
57	Delivery Nature Calling 'spoke' project commissioning an artist through Somerset Art Works to enhance a communities connect with the Quantock Hills meeting the Nature Calling outcomes.	One staff member to have been involved in the Nature Calling national training programme. Delivery of a series of workshops for local community groups.	☺ On track with activities / events delivered.
58	Delivery projects enhancing access opportunities funded through the Defra Access for All fund.	To be confirmed.	😐 Delay in confirmation of funding has impacted delivery of projects.

PLACE

Ref	Action	Milestone / Target	Progress
59	Support delivery of projects to enhance scheduled monuments / heritage features based on HE priority works working with SWHT / QCA to secure SMC and funding.	4 SM / heritage features enhanced. 2 SM restoration projects developed and delivered. Funding secured.	😐 2 projects supported / funded (Goathurst & Enmore Church) with delay in completing works.
60	Support conservation of Stowey Castle foundations with contractors and volunteers.	Stowey Castle foundations conserved.	☺ On track.
61	Provision and allocation of small grants pot for historic heritage projects.	Fund allocated and projects delivered.	☺ On track.
62	Undertake archaeological investigation of charcoal burning platforms increasing understanding of industrial use of the wooded combes.	Four charcoal burning platform excavated including sampling.	☺ Excavations complete with radio carbon dating being undertaken.
63	Support the Heritage Monitoring Volunteer Group enabling them to undertake SM monitoring.	All SM's surveyed in summer and winter months.	☺ recruitment completed, new monitoring agreed with HE.

64	Publish and promote results of SM monitoring.	Pdf summary of survey available Dec 2024 and posted on website.	😐 survey data collated but not in format that can be upload onto website.
65	Screen woodland management plans ensuring opportunities for broadleaf conversion or creation of open ground is realised.	All consulted WMP screened and relevant comments submitted.	☺ On track.
66	Screen all relevant forward planning strategies and submit comments to ensure National Landscape special character is conserved and enhanced.	All relevant forward planning strategies comments on.	☺ On track.
67	Ensure resources available to respond to LPA forward planning strategies.	All relevant forward planning strategies commented on.	☺ Landscape Planning Officer resource assessment undertaken and assessed as sufficient.
68	Screen and collate planning applications for consideration by National Landscape Team / partnership.	All relevant planning applications forward to LPO.	☺ On track.
69	Comment on relevant development applications.	All relevant planning applications comments on.	☺ On track.
70	Collate metric on planning applications within the National Landscape.	Metrics presented by LPO in annual report.	☺ On track.
71	Support, comment and engage with the development and adoption of Neighbourhood plans that are within or will impact the setting of the Quantock Hills National Landscape.	Relevant Neighbourhood Plans assessed and where relevant comment or engagement given.	☺ On track.
72	Support landowners in the management of visitor facilities to increase understanding of the special qualities of the Quantock Hills, enhance user experiences and reduce anti-social behaviour.	Support funding bids that will enhance on farm facilities increasing opportunities for farm visits.	☹ No progress due to reduced staffing.
73	Enhance sense of place through updating branding such as village gateway signage.	New template designed / developed. New gateway signs installed in 2 villages.	☺ On track.

CORE / STRATEGIC			
Ref	**Action**	**Milestone / Target**	**Progress**
74	Pursue funding opportunities for landscape enhancement project / scheme through National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections / Main grants programme as appropriate.	Funding secured for multiyear scheme.	😐 Limited progress as resource allocated to host authority processes for HR and finance.
75	Pursue funding for Landscape Recovery Scheme developing the work undertaken in 2023 including setting up of separate Steering Group to take scheme forward.	Landscape Recovery group set up. Funding application submitted NOTE - Dependant on pilot 3 being released by Defra.	😐 Awaiting LR application window to open.
76	Complete fixed-point photography for 2025 to allow comparison with 2009 baseline and to provide a narrative of landscape change for 2025 Management Plan review.	Take photographs from 12 sites during 2025.	☹ No progress due to reduced staffing.
77	Review National Landscape Management Plan inline with Natural England guidance – NOTE significant resource required.	Management Plan adopted by 31st December 2025.	☺ On track.

78	Undertake scoping and environmental report (SEA) for National Landscape Management Plan.	Scoping report completed, resources identified if full report required.	☺ On track.
79	Undertake scoping work (equalities impact assessment) for National Landscape Management Plan.	Scoping report complete, resources identified if full report required.	☺ On track.
80	Coordinate event notification (groups >20 per) for the Quantock Hills.	All notified events assessed and appropriate advice given. Promotion of event notification process sent to relevant organisations.	☺ On track.
81	Re-engagement of police liaison with aim of increasing police resource to tackle issues such as raves, anti-social behaviour and wildlife crime.	Meeting with relevant police staff twice a year.	☺ On track.
82	Support Quantock Commons Management Group by attending meetings when appropriate.	Attendance at 2 QCMG meetings / site visits.	☺ On track.
83	Support Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group.	Provide advice and support to QDMCG.	☺ On track.
84	JAC reports produced. These reports will provide monitoring against the action plan targets.	4 JAC reports produced.	☺ On track.
85	Host 4 JAC meetings – April, July, October and January to allow informed and engaged ownership of partnership by JAC.	4 JAC meeting held.	☺ On track.
86	Complete and return key performance indicators for NLA reporting purposes.	Key Performance Indicators completed and submitted within deadline.	☹ Awaiting indicator requirement other than PLTOF.
87	Write /DEFRA National Landscape bid with input from stakeholders and Partnership.	Defra bid accepted.	☺ On track.
88	Complete and submit Defra claims.	Defra claims submitted and paid.	☺ On track.
89	Following NE publication of Protected Landscapes Management Plan Guidance, undertake a partnership governance review to ensure partnership is fit for purpose.	Undertake partnership governance review in line with national guidance.	😐 Quick refresh undertaken in April. Prioritising Management Plan review to inform governance review.
90	Develop 'Honesty Box' visitor giving scheme at key locations.	Increased uptake of Honesty Box with 100% increase in donations.	😐 Lower priority due to other workstreams.
91	Regular meetings of National Landscape team to review Management activities and issues.	12 meetings held.	☺ On track.
92	Membership and involvement in the NLA to ensure national and regional liaison and to ensure that the NLA represents the views of the Quantock Hills partnership.	Attendance at Lead Officers meetings and other meetings where applicable Presence / attendance at NLA Conference.	☺ On track with 4 staff attending NLA conference in July.
93	Engagement with the National Landscapes Partnership and Defra to ensure the revised funding formula enhances the sustainable core funding for the Partnership.	Attendance / feed into relevant meetings / workstreams.	☺ On track.
94	Annual risk assessment reviews, instigate new H&S procedures in line with good practice.		☺ On track with good engagement with new SC H&S procedures.

95	Undertake finance monitoring and provide reports in various formats to partners, hosts and grant giving organisations.		☺ On track.
96	1-1 management meetings, annual PRaD meetings staff management.		☺ On track.
97	Organise and run training on SM use for Team to increase targeted SM delivery.	All relevant Team members to undertake SM training.	☺ 3 team members undertaking SM training.
98	Develop legacy actions from Landscape Improvement Scheme due to finish November 2026.	Legacy action plan produced. Required / agreed actions resourced.	☺ On track.
99	Deliver QLPS celebratory event in June 2025 to bring partners, stakeholders and participants together.	Celebratory event held with all partners, stakeholders and relevant participants able to engage.	☺ Complete with 42 attendees.
100	Deliver QLPS end of scheme exhibit in local urban centres of Taunton and Bridgwater to promote success of the scheme.	1 week exhibit held in both Taunton and Bridgwater with significant promotion to ensure scheme success if fully recognised.	😐 1 exhibit delivered. Exhibit to be promoted at Nether Stowey for next 12 months.
101	Ensure NLHF claims completed for QLPS.	Full NLHF grant claimed.	☺ On track.