



**Quantock  
Hills**  
National  
Landscape

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

**Wednesday 23 October 2024**

**2pm, Kingston St Mary Village Hall**

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](mailto: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.

<b>Agenda:</b>	
1.	<b>Apologies for absence</b>
2.	<b>Declarations of interest</b> - 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.	<b>Accuracy of the previous minutes</b> (copy appended) <b>and to consider any matters arising.</b>
4.	<b>Public question time</b> - 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.	<b>Presentation – QLPS Hedgerow research project</b> (Paddon)
6.	<b>Paper A – Land management &amp; engagement report</b> (Andy Stevenson)
7.	<b>Paper B – Management Plan review PLTOF</b> (Iain Porter)
10.	<b>Paper C – Article 4 Direction report</b> (Alex Meletiou)
11.	<b>Paper D – Partnership update</b> (Iain Porter)
12.	<b>AOB</b>
	<p><b>Future JAC meeting dates:</b> (all start at 2.00pm)</p> <p>Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025 - (Spaxton Village Hall)  Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025 - (Crowcombe Village Hall)  Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 - (West Quantoxhead Village Hall/St Audries)</p>
	<p><b>Note:</b>  Further information about any of the reports for this meeting may be obtained from the report authors based at the Quantock Hills National Landscape Office, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Bridgwater, TA5 2EQ.  Tel: 01823 451884 or Email: <a href="mailto:quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk">quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>Meeting Guidance Notes:</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Inspection of Papers</b></p> <p>Any person wishing to inspect Minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact the Quantock Hills Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson at <a href="mailto:quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk">quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Notes of the Meeting</b></p> <p>Details of the issues discussed, and decisions taken at the meeting will be set out in the Minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. In the meantime, details of the decisions taken can be obtained from the Quantock Hills Communication and Support Officer Amanda Sampson at <a href="mailto:quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk">quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Public Question Time</b></p> <p>At the Chairperson's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about <b>any matter on the Committee's agenda</b>. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. <b>The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total.</b></p> <p>A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been signed. If you wish to speak, please tell Amanda Sampson, the committee administrator, <b>before the meeting</b>.</p> <p>You must direct your questions and comments through the Chairperson. You may not take direct part in the debate.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. <b>Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.</b></p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Substitutions</b></p> <p>Committee members can appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>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.</p>



**Quantock  
Hills  
National  
Landscape**

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

Minutes of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held on:

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 at 2.00pm, Kilve Village Hall**

### **Present:**

#### **Members:**

Hugh Warmington (HW)	JAC Chair
Dixie Darch (DD)	JAC Vice Chair
Bill Revans (BR)	Somerset Council
Mike Caswell (MC)	Somerset Council
Alan Bradford (AB)	Somerset Council
Laura Robertson (LR)	National Trust
Tim Whittingham (TW)	Friends of the Quantocks
Mark Phillipson (MP)	Parish Representative – West Quantoxhead
Martin Jones (MJ)	Parish Representative – West Bagborough
Julian Taylor (JT)	Parish Representative – North Petherton Town Council

#### **Officers:**

Iain Porter (IP)	Quantock Hills National Landscape Manager
Katie Read (KR)	Quantock Hills Landscape Project Officer
Amanda Sampson (AS)	Quantock Hills Communications & Support Officer

#### **Also present:**

Barbara Larkin (BL) Somerset Council, Julie Cooper (JC) Somerset Council, Thomas Mansfield (TM) FWAG-SW, Robin Stamp (RS) Friends of the Quantocks, Paul Trolley (PT) Quantock Hills National Landscape Volunteer and Doug Wilson (DW) Broomfield Parish Council.

#### **1. Apologies:**

Tommy Muncie (National Trust), Fran Smith (Somerset Council), Laura Daniells (Natural England), John Acland-Hood (Fairfield Estate), John Ebsary (Forestry England), Bob Croft (South West Heritage Trust), Alicia Aras (Somerset Local Access Forum), Gwil Wren (Somerset Council).

## **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 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were signed off as a true representation of the meeting.

HW confirmed that Bob Croft from South West Heritage Trust had accepted the invitation to become a member of the JAC.

## **4. Public Question Time:**

No public questions.

## **5. Presentation – Quantock Common Moorland Implementation Plan**

(Thomas Mansfield, FWAG-SW)

TM gave a presentation explaining the aims, objectives and process in developing the Quantock Common Moorland Implementation Plan.

The committee raised points about grazing, the management of rhododendron and how the plan was expected to be delivered. TM responded that the Quantock Commoners Association are currently in an extension to a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) which will continue to 2027. There is opportunity to apply for a new scheme (Sustainable Farming Initiative or Countryside Stewardship) earlier and the Moorland Implementation Plan allows the submission of an application to do so.

HW thanked TM for a very interesting presentation.

## **6. Paper A – Economic Outlets Position Statement (Iain Porter)**

HW declared a personal interest in the position statement due to having a pop up campsite and offered to leave the room. Members felt knowledge would add to discussions and voted to HW remaining engaged with the agenda item.

IP presented the position statement which had been developed from feedback from the Partnership members.

HW mentioned that the word allowing may not be the best term to use as it is more 'guidance' to land owners.

DD considers the list of questions are really useful and summarizes the balance to the approach very well.

All members voted to approve the position statement.

### **Paper A Recommendation(s):**

**1) The JAC noted the report.**

**2) The JAC approved the Quantock Hills National Landscape Partnership Position Statement – Small scale economic activity in wider countryside (appendix A1).**

## **7. Paper B – Farming in Protected Landscapes (Katie Read)**

KR gave a presentation on the current position of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) including the Historic Buildings Grant, which the Quantock Hills had accessed for two projects.

In May KR reduced working hours to 2 days per week. The team have been recruiting a job-share to backfill the time with current recruitment due to end in mid-August.

HW thanked KR for doing such a great job with the FiPL programme.

### **Paper B Recommendation(s):**

**1) The JAC noted the report.**

## **8. Paper C – Management Plan Review Progress Report (Iain Porter)**

IP gave a brief update on the Management Plan Review Progress Report noting the slippage in timescales due to staff resource being required to undertake other core activities.

### **Paper C Recommendation(s):**

**1) The JAC noted the report.**

## **9. Paper D – Quantock Hills Carbon Audit & Risk Assessment (Iain Porter).**

IP gave a presentation on the Quantock Hills Carbon Audit Climate Risk Assessment. The committee raised points around the accuracy of the carbon audit data, and it is acknowledged that the work done to date is desk based but that it gives a good starting point. Through field testing, which is being done through some FiPL projects the hope is that we can hone the figures in the desk based study to form a more accurate picture.

### **Paper D Recommendation(s):**

**1) The JAC noted the report.**

## **10. Paper E – Article 4 Direction Report (Iain Porter on behalf of Alex Meletiou)**

IP gave a brief update on Article 4 Direction Report in the absence of Alex Meletiou, Quantock Hills National Landscape Planning Officer.

DD have there been any issues raised from any of the other 2 Somerset National Landscapes. IP unaware if AM has had any contact with either of them about this.

ACTION – IP to check with AM if either the Mendip Hills or Blackdown Hills have had any issues. AM to check with them if hasn't heard.

MC thinks this is a great idea and supports this being put in to place.

HW local planning authorities have been struggling to recruit planning officers and are really stretched at the moment and there is a real problem which may not be any different with Article 4. The committee acknowledged the significant pressure local authorities are under in

regard to planning and felt that support from the National Landscape Team in terms of working in the development of an Article 4 would prove beneficial.

**Paper E Recommendation(s):**

- 1) **The JAC noted the report.**
- 2) **The JAC approved and supported the request to Somerset Council (Local Planning Authority).**

**11. Paper F – Partnership Update (Iain Porter)**

IP reported that due to personal reasons Joanna Hicks has resigned from her post as the Community Engagement and Volunteering Officer which was a new shared role with both the core Quantock Hills National Landscape Team and the QLPS Team. Joanna will be continuing her wellbeing walks work with the Quantock Hills Team on a freelance basis.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 the QLPS project will come to an end, and we are keen to try and continue some of the great work they have achieved over the 5-year project.

Sally Pheasant has joined the Quantock Hills Team as the new Project Support Officer working 3 days per week and is settling into the post well.

After significant delay, the Land Management Skills Project Officer recruitment has been approved. This will be moving forward in August for interviews in September.

The Quantock Hills National Landscape Team has been confirmed by Somerset Council as being 'out of scope' from the current 'Transformation' Programme. This will mean that the Team is not part of the staff restructuring happening from now until October.

The national Protected Landscapes Partnership funding currently ends in March 2025. IP will update if any of the work continues into the future.

While there are still a few issues with 2023/24 overrun figures this year's budgets are now confirmed.

**Paper F Recommendation(s):**

- 1) **The JAC noted the report.**

**12. AOB -**

IP presented 'Beyond the Protected Landscape' to the committee, a publication produced by the QLPS promoting their engagement work. Everyone is welcome to take a copy and contact the QLPS team direct for any further copies.

Bill Jenman, QLPS Manager, and the QLPS evaluation consultants wish to do a workshop session with partners and stakeholders and had requested to present at the autumn JAC. In discussion with Bill IP has decided that it will be better to hold as a separate meeting which can allow other stakeholders engaged with QLPS to attend. IP and BJ are currently looking at dates in October and once set will confirm with partners.

National Heritage Lottery Fund have launched a new Special Initiative called Landscape Connections. The new initiative will fund 20 projects over the next 10 years with each project

able to apply for up to £10 million for a 10-year scheme. The fund is for projects that occur in Protected Landscapes including National Landscapes, National Parks and their equivalents in Scotland and Northern Ireland and the expectation is that the relevant protected landscape organisation is a lead or major partner in any projects coming forward. IP is meeting with other regional PLs next week to discuss potential collaborations.

DD - can you apply for a continuation or does it have to be a new project. IP continuations are not accepted but we are in a fortunate position that the QLPS is coming to an end, and we can utilise the evaluation work and successes to inform a new scheme.

HW - Julie Cooper is taking early retirement at the end of this month and the Chair thanked JC for all of her help and support for the Quantock Hills over many years. Julie has been involved with the Quantock Hills over many years, first representing Sedgemoor District Council and more recently Somerset Council including chairing the Steering Group and the Landscape Projects Panel.

JC feels very fortunate to have been able to be a part of the great work of the Quantock Hills National Landscape.

IP also thanked JC for being an excellent supporter and advocate over the years.

**Date of next meeting:**

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 at 2.00pm (venue TBC).

**Meeting was closed at 3:51pm.**



To	Quantock Hills JAC	<b>PAPER</b> <b>A</b>
Subject	Land management and engagement report	
Author	Andy Stevenson, Ranger & Owen Jones, Partnership Ranger	
Date	23/10/2024	

## 1. Land Management

- a. Cothelstone Hill – The two new purpose built adder hibernacula structures have been completed. One early in the summer by the Volunteer Rangers and one during the school holidays by the Young Rangers. Both took quite a team effort to install the big ash logs followed by the 2 tons of stone for each one. Adder surveyors will start to monitor any activity; several common lizards have been seen basking on the stone so far. The Woodland Management Plan has been approved by Forestry Commission, opening the way to apply for Countryside Stewardship. No significant woodland works are planned this winter other than a few hazel coupes being cut by volunteers. The rides, glades and two corrals have been cleared, as well as the main paths throughout the summer. The annual audit of the ash trees and other tree species near to the main paths has been carried out; more ash have been affected by the dieback disease and will be felled.
- b. Swaling / fire management – our team of volunteers are primed and ready to go for the upcoming season that starts on 1<sup>st</sup> November. With such a limited season last year due to the rain we have many areas to burn as part of the Moorland Implementation Plan /Swaling Plan. The rangers have monitored the fire risk throughout the summer and will work with the Commoners to ensure the fire breaks are cut again this winter.
- c. Hayman's Pond – the restoration of this feature is currently being undertaken with a local contractor digging out the silt from the pond and reconstructing the stone walls. A team of volunteers have helped take down sections of the unstable wall and salvage as much of the original stone as possible.
- d. Fly tipping / litter – 6 larger deposits of flytipping were reported and Somerset Council contractors have been pretty swift to collect any reported items. However there are regular smaller deposits in car parks and gateways to fields which all require resource from rangers and volunteers to remove.

## 2. Engagement

- a. The annual volunteer BBQ at Fyne Court was held in July to thank them for all of their time and effort; it was a great opportunity to mix everyone from Heritage Monument Surveying volunteers to Working Well attendees. In the last month we hosted volunteers from the Mendip Hills National Trust dry stone wallers group to do some repairs to the wall along the Rap at Cothelstone Hill and will return the exchange in the spring with our Volunteer Rangers. The Team hosted the South West Rangers Forum with site visits to St. Audries Wood and New Stowey Farm for approximately 40 people involved in conservation from across the South West.
- b. Volunteer Rangers – our 12 new Volunteer Rangers have bedded nicely into the existing team and been very active with patrols as well as helping out at events and practical tasks. We visited the Avalon Marshes centre at Shapwick in August to see where the coppiced hazel stems from Cothelstone Hill had been used to construct a round house; in addition, the volunteers had a chance to continue the creation of a

mosaic in the Roman dining hall reconstruction. They have also been on a visit to Wind Down, a Forestry England site, to watch how commercial forestry work is done with machinery.

- c. Working Well group – sadly, numbers attending this group have fluctuated over the year, but we have established a new link with Arc, a homeless charity, in Taunton. Tasks, based at Cothelstone Hill, over the summer have included raking the glade, dry stone walling and coppicing.
- d. QCV – this group continue to provide skilled work in large numbers so that a lot can be achieved during each activity. Over the summer they have helped maintain the fence line and do dry stone walling at Cothelstone Hill. We have re-established their annual training day at Fyne Court with the National Trust which allows us to explain what projects are coming up and gain feedback about their experiences.
- e. Estates Team – our band of 2 trained volunteers with extra help from volunteers trained to use brushcutters have kept parts of the Quantock Greenway clear as well as paths at Cothelstone Hill and the waymarked trails across the Quantock Hills. Most Tuesdays they assist the rangers with general repairs to signs and furniture, moving materials to locations where we need them such as the adder hibernacula and keeping paths clear.
- f. Patrols – the rangers maintained a regular routine of patrols during the week and at weekends/bank holidays focussing on the key messages at the time of year. Sheep worrying by dogs and people trying to feed/stroke the ponies tend to be the ongoing issues.
- g. National Landscape Team events – The annual events / walks hosted by the National Landscape Team has nearly completed for the year. The usual walks such as deer rut walks, fossil/geology walks etc have been supplemented with a series of Wellness Wanders, led by Joanna Hicks. We hosted a charcoal burning weekend at Cothelstone Hill in collaboration with the QLPS where a professional charcoal burner used the coppiced hazel to carry out a metal kiln burn, and a clamp burn over three days with the middle day open to the public.
- h. External Events – The rangers have co-ordinated requests from groups wishing to hold events throughout the summer months; these have included Duke of Edinburgh activities, running and cycling events and school geography field trips.
- i. We hosted a charcoal burning weekend at Cothelstone Hill in collaboration with the QLPS Team where a professional charcoal burner used the coppiced hazel to carry out a metal kiln burn, and a clamp burn over three days with the middle day open to the public. Other walks and events hosted by us were the deer rut walks, fossil/geology walks and a family rock pooling day, a wildlife family quiz walk and a nightjar and glow worm walk.

### **3. Wildlife Monitoring**

- a. Pied flycatchers – the boxes were checked weekly during the nesting season with the early blue tits struggling to have successful broods, whereas the pied flycatchers appearing to be consistent with previous years.
- b. Dormouse surveys – the boxes at Cothelstone Hill continue to be checked monthly with some additional dormouse tubes being installed too.
- c. Tick Survey – the annual national survey was carried out in May. 50 ticks from 4 locations around the Hills were sent off to Porton Down for analysis of their species and percentage carrying Lyme disease.
- d. Summer Heathland bird survey - The summer heathland bird survey has now undertaken its two surveys, and the data is currently with the contractor. A report is

due by the end of 2024 which will hopefully give us a clear picture on the current trends and species assemblage utilising Quantock Common.

- e. Butterfly surveys – the transects at Cothelstone Hill and Fyne Court were walked every week between April and the end of September. The results mirrored those reported across England with butterfly numbers being very low, perhaps 50% down on the previous year. This was put down to the wet and windy spring.
- f. Nightjar Survey - The survey was undertaken for the fourth consecutive year and initial results are positive. Nightjar (calling males) were heard in every square of the 10 kilometre-squares surveyed. Final numbers will be compared to previous years and monitoring will continue to take place to analysis trends over the coming years.

### **Recommendation(s)**

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

To	Quantock Hills JAC	<b>PAPER B</b>
Subject	Management Plan Review. Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcome Framework	
Author(s)	Iain Porter, National Landscape Manager	
Date	23/10/2024	

## 1. Introduction.

- a. Earlier this year the Government updated its targets and outcomes that will be required to achieve the Environmental Improvement Plan - [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-2023) – which is the first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan and updates the environmental targets under the Environment Act 2021.
- b. As a response to the 2019 Landscape Review, the Government has set ambitious outcomes for protected landscapes (National Landscapes and National Parks), in delivering on the Government's goals for nature recovery and climate.
- c. In January 2024 Defra released ten targets for protected landscapes that covered nature, climate, people and place (table B1). Of these ten, seven require action by partnerships to achieve the target. Defra and Natural England recognise that protected landscapes will have different opportunities to deliver three of the targets, numbers 1, 7 and 8 in the table below, depending upon their landscapes.
- d. Each protected landscape board or partnership will be required to incorporate the targets into their Management Plans by July 2025. If the Management Plan, or reviewed plan in the case of the Quantock Hills National Landscape, will not be published by this time the board / partnership is required to publish the provisional targets on their website.
- e. As a reminder the targets and outcomes are for the protected landscape NOT the bodies charged with their conservation and enhancement. It is recognised that there will need to be active participation by a wide range of stakeholders from across all sectors to achieve bold ambitions set out by the Targets & Outcomes Framework.

**Table B1: Protected Landscape Targets**

<p><b>Target 1</b> Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).</p>
<p><b>Target 2</b> Bring 80% of Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.</p>
<p><b>Target 3</b> 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.</p>
<p><b>Target 4</b> Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.</p>
<p><b>Target 5</b> Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.</p>
<p><b>Target 6</b> Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by at least 2050 relative to 1990 levels.</p>

<b>Target 7</b> Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050 .
<b>Target 8</b> Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).
<b>Target 9</b> Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using metrics based on those in our Access for All programme.
<b>Target 10</b> Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

## 2. Natural England baseline figures

- a. During the summer Natural England has produced a set of baseline figures for protected landscapes to allow proper consideration of the outcomes (table B2). These are produced to allow protected landscape partnerships to prioritise actions and help to decide the level of ambition in setting the apportionments for targets 1, 7 and 8.
- b. In some instances, the figures require further refinement to be able to assess delivery against the targets into the future. Others will require the QH Partnership to develop the baseline, such as the greenhouse gas emissions (target 6) and the indicators for access (target 9). The Team are currently going through the detail behind the baseline figures to understand how they have been compiled in order to better inform the most effective actions to deliver the target.

**Table B2: Targets and baseline figures.**

Target	Baseline figure	Notes
<b>Target 1</b> Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline)	Priority Habitat Inventory (combined) = 3,364.15Ha (34.01%).	Wildlife-rich habitats based on Priority Habitat. Baseline data supplied does not provide separate out PH outside protected sites (SSSI / SACs etc). Figure slightly higher than QHNL State of report (81Ha). Given small relative difference accept baseline figure.
<b>Target 2</b> Bring 80% of Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042	Total no of SSSI features = 14 No. in favourable condition = 6 (42.9%).	Note new assessment techniques, now based on SSSI features rather than unit area. Only 2 of the 14 features have been assessed recently so confidence in the baseline figure is low.
<b>Target 3</b> 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028	NE identified 22 actions required.  15 (68%) of these actions is 'underway – on track'.	Difficult to fully understand actions due to lack of detail. Note that if feature does not have up to date condition assessment then it cannot have actions on track and cross referencing shows that all 15 of the actions deemed to be on track occur on features that have not been assessed recently.
<b>Target 4</b> Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in	Area in AES = 3,400Ha (34%).	Issue with data supplied as does not indicate if AES area is on priority habitat OR aims to restore or create priority habitat. Data does not differentiate

favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042		between AES on SSSI or outside SSSI. Does not take account of PH restored or created outside of AES, for example the heath / scrub restoration within Forestry England landholdings.
<b>Target 5</b> Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030	No baseline currently provided.	Awful indicator due to two scale factors – is it 65% of land managers adopting nature friendly farming on 10% of their land OR 80% on 15% of their land! What constitutes nature friendly farming not fully described.
<b>Target 6</b> Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by at least 2050 relative to 1990 levels	Assessment of GHG emissions required for QHNL.	Requirement to complete GHG emission assessment prior to developing strategy to achieve net zero. Carbon stock / stores baseline assessment undertaken, though needs ground truthing. Next phase is to assess impact of development, traffic, industry.
<b>Target 7</b> Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050	Existing deep peat = 14.87Ha.	Figure largely coincides with the figures we have for acidic mire extent on Quantock Common therefore appears correct. See below for apportionments.
<b>Target 8</b> Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline)	Tree / woodland cover = 3,133.98Ha (31.69%).	The figure differs from the QHNL State of Report, being 95Ha lower. Given the relatively small difference accept the base line figure. See below for apportionments.
<b>Target 9</b> Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using metrics based on those in our Access for All programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- m of accessible path as % of total path.</li> <li>- No of accessible toilets &amp; rest stops.</li> <li>- No of disability accessible parking spaces.</li> <li>- No of accessible gates &amp; gaps.</li> <li>- No of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment.</li> <li>- No of schools engaged.</li> <li>- No of volunteer days.</li> <li>- No of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved.</li> </ul>	The indicators have been developed from the Capital Access Grant funding. While the resource required to assess the impact on indicators by the funding has been light, it is a much bigger and harder task to apply to the whole of the QHNL. For example – we are able to quickly assess the number of accessible gates and gaps on projects delivered by the CAG but would need to undertake a full access audit of the whole of the Quantock Hills to properly report on this indicator. Also collecting data from partners on engagement will be difficult to assess.

	- Policies in places to ensure PLs are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers.	
<b>Target 10</b> Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.	Listed buildings – Grade I = 8, Grade II* = 27, Grade II = 170. Scheduled monuments = 51, RPG = 3. Total nationally designated heritage assets = 259. Heritage at Risk = 8 .	Need to query data as local records identify 206 listed buildings.

### 3. Apportioning targets

- a. The apportionment of targets 1, 7 and 8 depends upon the landscape of the protected landscapes and opportunities it provides and the ambitions of the Partnership. Natural England have started the process with each protected landscape receiving their 'baseline' data and engaging in the initial round of meetings.
- b. The first stage of the process is to agree on the baseline figures provided by Natural England, to understand the starting position of the Quantock Hills. The Partnership is in the fortunate position that a recent State of the Quantock Hills National Landscape Report has been produced. There are minor differences between the nationally produced figures and those locally derived and therefore it is recommended that the baseline figures provided are accepted. The table above identifies where the data is not yet provided or at sufficient detail to be usable for measurement of delivery against the target e.g. Target 1 is concerned with priority habitat outside of SSSI/SACs, but the baseline figure does not provide data on current extent of priority habitat outside SSSI/SACs.
- c. The second stage is to set the ambition, to look at the opportunities for the Quantock Hills National Landscape. Table B3 shows some considerations for the targets that require apportionment. A medium level figure has been derived by pro-rating the national target by the area of the National Landscape.
- d. On **20<sup>th</sup> November** in the morning the Team will be running a session on the Management Plan review. Part of that meeting will include a session on the apportionment of targets for inclusion in the Management Plan.

Table B3: Possible options for apportioned targets.

Target	Baseline	Considerations
<b>Target 1</b> Restore or create more than 250,000Ha of wildlife rich habitats within Protected Landscapes outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).	3,364.15Ha (34.01%).	Pro-rata figure = 781.16Ha (39.06Ha /yr).  Significant proportion of QHNL is SSSI (27%) which increases pressure on meeting target outside of SSSIs. For comparison Somerset Econet figures for QHNL identify approximately 1,800Ha of buffer and stepping stone potential, however this also includes the SSSI.
<b>Target 7:</b> Restore approximately 130,000Ha of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.	14.87Ha (0.15%).	Pro rata figure = 6.23Ha (0.22Ha / yr).  The current extent of deep peat soils on Quantock Hills is assessed as being in good condition. There is little opportunity to enhance these areas and opportunities to create deep peat is constrained due

		to geology and shallow soils over much of the Quantock Hills.
<b>Target 8:</b> Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050	3,133.98Ha (31.69%).	Pro-rata figure = 296.71Ha (10.60Ha / yr).  The QHNL has significant woodland cover. Opportunities for tree planting and woodland creation are further constrained by the significant areas of non-woodland priority habitat, such as heathland and species rich grassland.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 1) The JAC notes the report.
- 2) Note 20<sup>th</sup> November (morning) date for Management Plan Review Partnership session (venue – Holford Village Hall).



To	Quantock Hills JAC	<b>PAPER</b> <b>C</b>
Subject	Article 4 Direction	
Author	Alex Meletiou, Landscape Planning Officer	
Date	23/10/2024	

## 1. Introduction.

This report follows on from that provided to the JAC on the 23rd July 2024 (Paper E) which hopefully explained what an Article 4 Direction is and where it could potentially be used.

In summary, an Article 4 Direction would result in the removal of certain permitted development rights and therefore require a full planning application to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The effect of a Direction is therefore not to prohibit development but to enable the LPA to give proper consideration to, and have control over, the proposal.

## 2. Research

A request for evidence where other National Landscapes Partnerships have sought Article 4s the following responses have been received:

### Cotswolds

“LPA’s generally quite reluctant....”

“Doubt (that we) would get an Article 4 Direction for all of the Quantock Hills”.

### Lincolnshire Wolds

The local planning authority was approached with a similar case regarding farm buildings, but the planning officers wouldn't contemplate an Article 4 Direction for even a small area and certainly not for the entire National Landscape.

A similar question was raised with the National Landscape family in 2014, and a few Protected Landscapes do have some Directions in place, but these are relatively old and only for small areas

- Cornwall – campsites,
- Chilton's – sub-division of small plots,
- Wye Valley – sub-division of woodland.

However the Gower has an Article 4 Direction in place (issued in 1979) over the whole of the National Landscape. In that case the concern was on the “environmental impact of uncontrolled caravan and camping expansion and in particular the visual impact of this on the (then) AONB”.

It must be noted that these responses in the preceding paragraph were made over 11 years ago and there have been changes to Permitted Development rights since then along with further changes to planning legislation.

## 3. Next step

Current national policy already accepts the need for more control within Protected Landscapes and this is shown by the existing exclusion of Class Q permitted developments rights (conversions of agricultural buildings to dwellings) within these Landscapes.

A formal approach should now be made to Somerset Council as the local planning authority, with a view to discussing the potential for implementing an Article 4 Direction over the whole of the Protected Landscape. It may help that the new duty recently placed on local authorities

(under the revised section 85 of the CROW Act, “**to seek to further the purpose of**” - see JAC 20th April 2024 paper E for an explanation) could allow the planning authority to fulfil its obligation by applying an Article 4 Direction with regard to isolated agricultural buildings, thereby requiring proper scrutiny of landscape and mitigation matters.

Unfortunately on other planning matters very little or no response has been received from Somerset Council planners. Most recently a query was raised as to how the new duty (as mentioned in the above paragraph) will be interpreted and what actions might be taken to ensure compliance. As yet, no response has been received.

Although agricultural buildings are considered as minor development compared to other planning matters within the County, it is very important that in National Landscapes proper consideration should be given, by way of a planning application, to the choice of location and therefore potential impact on landscape and character, as these structures (with their functional and stark design) will be there for many years.

The recent and ongoing changes to the structure of Somerset Council have added complications to achieving a line of communication but I believe a formal request regarding an Article 4 Direction should still be made.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 1) The JAC notes the report.**
- 2) The JAC continues to support a request to Somerset Council.**

To	Quantock Hills JAC	<b>PAPER D</b>
Subject	Partnership Update	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	23/10/2024	

## 1. Staffing

- a. Landscape Project Officer. We have recently recruited Helen Richardson, as job-share in the Landscape Project Officer role. Helen will be officially starting on 4<sup>th</sup> November but has already engaged in some FiPL activities with Katie and Sally. Katie Read has recently resigned from the Landscape Project Officer position and will leave us on 27<sup>th</sup> November. Katie reduced her hours in May to take up a part-time position on a Landscape Recover scheme in Dorset. That role now requires more of her time meaning it is not possible to undertake the Landscape Project Officer role. Katie has done a fantastic job setting up and running FiPL and the other Landscape Projects over the last three years and will be sorely missed. We wish her the best for the future.
- b. Communication and Administration Support Officer. With the shared Community Engagement & Volunteer Officer position being vacant, due to the resignation of Joanna Hicks, and concerns over the ability to fill it in a timely manner the Team looked at what tasks were required and how best to fill it. In the short term the administration of the volunteers was putting resource pressure on the rangers, and it was decided to recruit a part-time administration & communications support officer for the short-term. A good candidate pool applied, and interviews are being held w/b 21<sup>st</sup> October.
- c. Land Management Skills Project Officer. This post is funded by the HPC s106 / DCO and will deliver the Land Management Skills Scheme on behalf of Somerset Council. The post has finally been released for recruitment after significant delays with the application deadline w/b 21<sup>st</sup> October.
- d. Vacancies. As the partnership will be aware there has been a significant amount of movement in the staff unit of the National Landscape Team, including its project teams. The following posts are currently vacant –
  - i. Development Officer (core). This post was recently undertaken by Mark Baker, though titled Project Manager. Since Mark left in June the post has been vacant. This is a key post in supporting the National Landscape Manager as well as developing project bids and initiatives. With the uncertainty over future budgets it has been decided to hold the post vacant with the aim of recruiting in the new financial year.
  - ii. Community Engagement Ranger. This post was held vacant after Abby left in February as we knew we would be recruiting a shared Community Engagement & Volunteer Officer. With the resignation of Joanna from that post earlier this year we have not looked to fill this position in the short-term, rather looking to increase administrative support within the team. Longer term we need to assess the best way of delivering the work of this role which may require development of a new job profile.

- e. Somerset Council restructure. As you will be aware Somerset Council is undertaking a significant restructure to ensure it is fit for the future. To date the restructure has set the senior management structure and is now looking at the rest of the organisation. The National Landscape Team is out of scope though there may be impacts in where the National Landscape Team / Partnership sit within the newly structured authority. It is likely that there will continue to be impacts on delivery through the support services received by the National Landscape Team e.g. HR or Fleet.

## 2. Protected Landscapes Partnership

- a. The PLP has developed its training offer during the last six months, with training opportunities in Green / Private finance and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion for protected landscape staff. The PLP has also supported the development of the Big Chalk Initiative, a landscape scale scheme that aims to enhance chalk grassland across southern England.
- b. We are waiting to hear the outcome of the spending review to see if further funding is going to be allocated to the PLP beyond March 2025.

## 3. Partnership

- a. Cllr Dixie Darch (Somerset Council) has resigned as a councillor leaving that position on the JAC vacant. An approach has been made to Democratic Services about a replacement but at the time of writing no response has been received. I would like to thank Dixie for all her support and guidance to both the Partnership and the Team and wish her the very best for the future.

## 4. Management Plan Review – timeline

- a. The JAC will be aware of the resource pressures on the National Landscape Team, especially due to issues regarding staff and recruitment. This has had particular impact on the Management Plan review workstream. The following elements have been completed –
  - i. Initial public consultation – issues, opportunities & priorities.
  - ii. State of the Quantock Hills National Landscape.
  - iii. Quantock Hills National Landscape – Nature Recovery Plan.
  - iv. Management Plan principles agreed.
  - v. Climate adaptation plan (stage 1) – Climate risk assessment.
- b. While significant progress has been made in the background and initial survey work the main element of work, the Scoping Report, has not begun. At the last meeting in July the JAC agreed the use of funds to contract consultants to aid with this work. A request for quote was issued in the beginning of August however none of the four consultants' approach was able to take this work on as they are engaged in other protected landscape Management Plan reviews.
- c. To ensure a robust Management Plan process I propose that the timeline is extended (see figures D1 and D2) due to the following rationale –
  - i. The extended timeline will allow the considered incorporation of the Targets & Outcome Framework (due July 2025).
  - ii. By extending the timeline it will allow the Partnership to benefit from national workstream on climate adaptation plans (due March 2025).
  - iii. The extension is within the required period.
  - iv. The extension allows greater opportunities to employ a suitable consultant to deliver the scoping report element of the review.
- d. The Team will be undertaking a Management Plan review session for the partnership and stakeholders on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November (10am – 12 noon)** at Holford Village

Hall. During this session there will be opportunity to start prioritising the themes from the Partnership based on the work undertaken to date. Please note that for those that are interested there will be an evaluation session for the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme that same afternoon at Holford Village Hall.

Figure D1 – Original Management Plan review timeline.

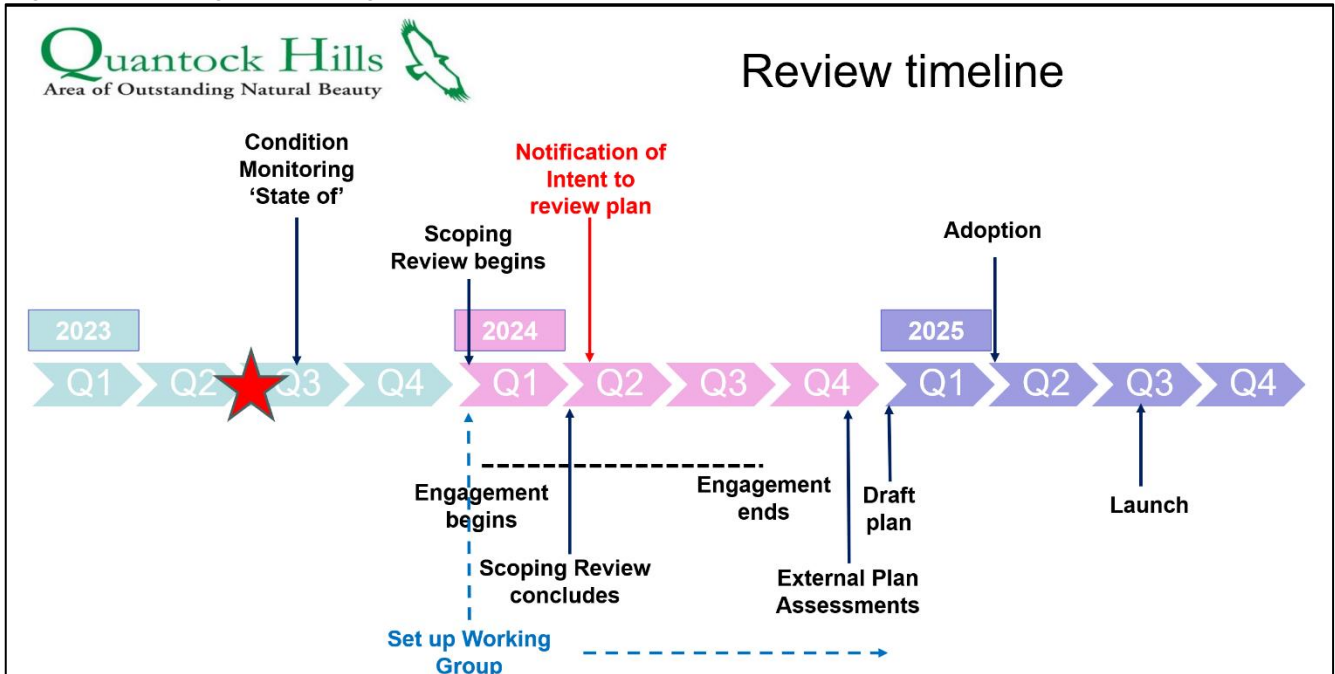
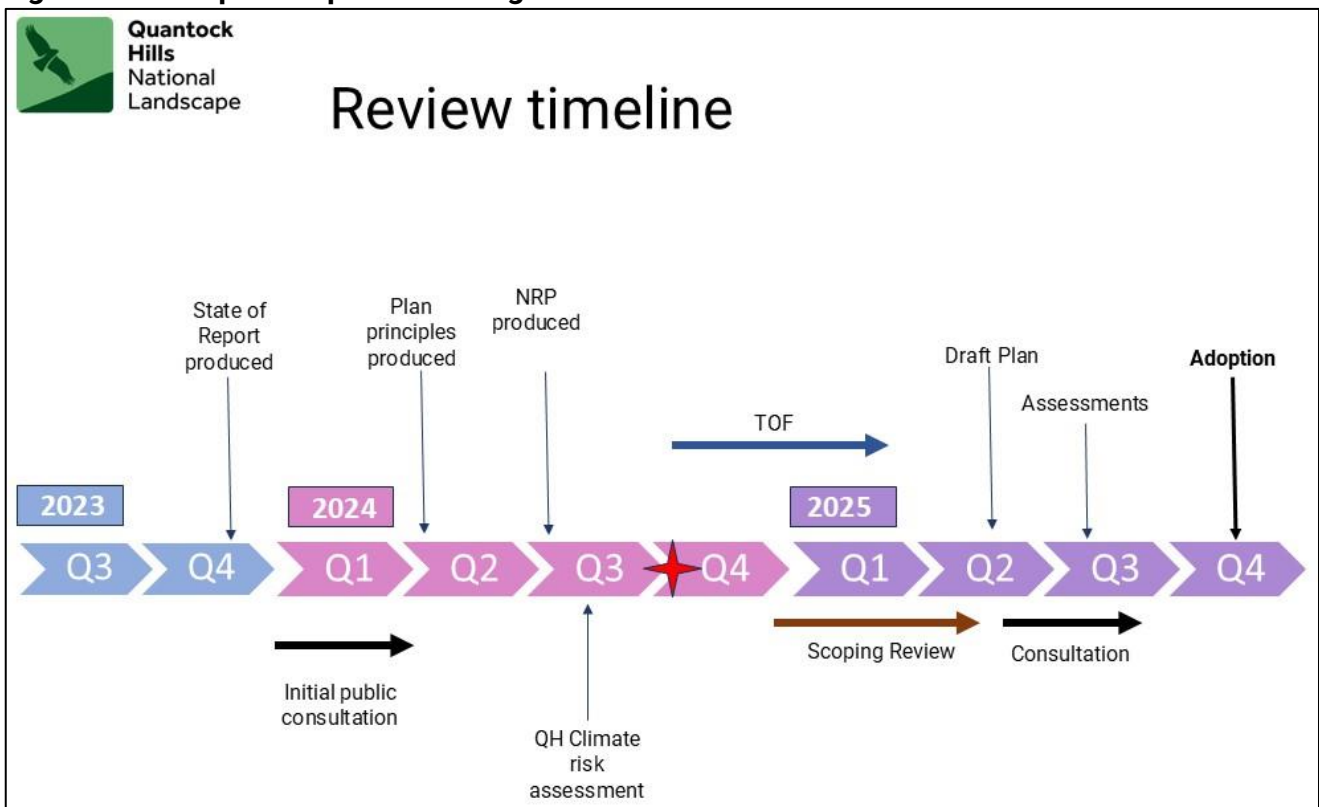


Figure D2 – Proposed updated Management Plan review timeline.



5. 2025/26 Budget

- a. At a meeting with Defra at the beginning of October we were advised to plan for a continuation of the current base grant (not including the revenue or capital uplift from this financial year). Due to the changing priorities of the Government Defra believes it will not be in a position to confirm grant levels until early spring 2025. The Team have a business planning meeting in November after which the draft budget will be developed to be presented to the JAC in January.
- b. The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme is due to complete in March 2025. The present financial predictions are indicating that some elements of the scheme will be able to continue into financial year 2025/26. Bill Jenman, QLPS Manager, is currently firming the expenditure and budget figures to ensure any extension is fully funded.

## 6. 2023 / 24 Budget position (month 6) – See appendix D1.

- a. Core. The core budget is currently within tolerances with adjustments needed in salaries and Management Plan review. These will be met through reductions in spend in the Partnership running costs. There is potential overspend in vehicles which is associated with the changes in lease vehicles. Currently we are paying short-term lease hire, which is considerably more expensive over the eight month period, due to the delay in delivery of the new lease vehicles. If these arrive in March and payment is required it will mean likely £9,000 overspend which will be met through reserves.
- b. The core budget has had an uplift in revenue grant from Defra £33,897 which is being used to fund the additional staff costs (addition 0.5 days for Landscape Planner, CEVO and admin support additional costs) as well as activity related to the Management Plan review.
- c. Projects. Project budgets are largely on track through spend in some is lower than expected. This is due to delays in works starting. At this point all project spend is expected to occur this financial year.
- d. The first round of claims have been submitted to Defra. Due to conflicting guidance these are still being processed for payment.

## 7. Projects (not covered in other reports)

- a. Village gateway signs. With the additional Defra Capital grant we will be replacing the strap sign on the traditional village gateway signs. The signs currently read Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are being replaced with Quantock Hills National Landscape. Engagement with the parish councils has identified a number of missing signs, though replacement of the whole sign has not been costed.
- b. New Stowey Farm. The Team has had management control of New Stowey Farm for six months now. The grazier is on site with 25 cattle and has taken cuts on some fields in line with the management plan. After a number of issues a water supply has finally been secured and the first phase of works has been completed. During the winter works are expected on the barn to make it fit for purpose and further water supply works to enable the whole farm to be grazed.
- c. Quantock Hills Flora Arts Project. In partnership with the South-West Society of Botanical Artists the Team are taking forward an arts based project based on the flora of the Quantock Hills. The project consists of a number of 'art days', usually one a month, where the groups artists will convene and undertake arts-based activities. The project is expected to last between 12 – 18 months, though may be extended if the group is keen. At the end, the National Landscape Team is keen to organise an exhibition of the works to raise the awareness of the special floral interest of the Quantock Hills.

- d. Capital Access Grant. Capital funding from Defra for access improvements throughout the Quantock Hills. The funding will be used to enhance physical access at a number of sites and to increase accessibility of our digital offer, a key recommendation of our accessibility audit undertaken last year.
- e. National Grid Undergrounding. National Grid will undertake undergrounding of key low voltage power lines in protected landscapes where it can be shown it will enhance the historic and landscape amenity. The Team has developed one proposal with the National Trust at Fyne Court, which is currently with National Grid to work up. It is hoped that this will link with other enhancement works at Fyne Court being undertaken by the National Trust. There will be opportunity to apply for future schemes.
- f. Project Development. I have started discussions with other National Landscape Teams and the National Lottery Heritage Fund over a potential application to the Landscape Connections Strategic Initiative. In partnership with the Blackdown Hills, East Devon and Mendip Hills National Landscapes we are looking to submit an early expression of interest to see if our proposal is acceptable in principle.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 1) The JAC notes the report.
- 2) The JAC agrees the extension to the Management Plan review timeline.
- 3) Note the 20<sup>th</sup> November for the Management Plan review session for the Partnership (and afternoon session for the QLPS evaluation).

**Appendix F1: Quantock Hills National Landscape Partnership 2024/25 Budget.**

**Summary**

Opening Balance 01/04/2024 -95,805

	<b>Expected Expenditure</b>	<b>Expected Income</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Core	315,727	-316,082	-354
Projects	71,038	-71,035	3
Landscape Projects	439,234	-438,287	947
QLPS	675,346	-675,346	0
Land Management	13,000	-13,000	0
Reserves account	17,378	0	17,378
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,531,724</b>	<b>-1,609,554</b>	<b>-77,830</b>

Earmarked reserves (redundancy) 21,000

*Expected balance 31/03/2025 -56,830*

**Core**

<b>Core – Top budget line</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Expenditure (mth 1-6)</b>	<b>Predicted (mth 7-12)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Salaries, training	222,982	84,321	147,634	231,954	8,972
Travel & Vehicles	34,236	8,590	25,636	34,226	10
Office running costs	12,550	6,629	6,302	12,931	381
Partnership running costs	35,959	5,671	13,050	18,721	17,238
Management Plan development & monitoring	10,000	500	13,000	13,500	3,500
	<b>315,727</b>	<b>105,710</b>	<b>205,622</b>	<b>311,332</b>	<b>4,395</b>

## Projects

Projects	Budget	Spend	Estimate Spend	Total	Balance	Notes
Farming in Protected Landscapes	254,153	77,146	177,007	254,153	0	
Capital Access Grant	37,138	5,000	32,150	37,150	-12	
Land Management Skills Scheme	19,200	0	14,218	14,218	4,982	Ring-fenced - to be carried forward.
Landscape Improvement Scheme	131,520	0	131,520	131,520	0	
Landscape Development Fund	5,339	1,715	736	2,451	2,888	Ring-fenced - to be carried forward.
Capital uplift*	33,897	5,327	28,504	33,830	66	
Monument Management Scheme	6,790	4,146	0	4,146	2,644	
<b>Total</b>	<b>488,037</b>	<b>93,334</b>	<b>384,135</b>	<b>477,469</b>	<b>10,568</b>	

### \*Capital Uplift

Item / Sub-project	ETD	Predicted	Total
Nature Recovery	1,985	13,650	15,635
Heritage signs	0	9,094	9,094
Volunteer uniform	3,342	0	3,342
Interpretation Panels + frames	0	4,860	4,860
Equipment for exhibitions, shows etc	0	900	900
	<b>5,327</b>	<b>28,504</b>	<b>33,830</b>

### Land Management

	Expenditure	Comments
Equipment, materials	673	Materials used for sites Coth Hill, New Stowey Farm.
Contractor Costs	5,095	
Fees	2,500	
GrantGovtOutsideAEF	0	CS / ES income.
Grant - Defra	0	Basic Payment Scheme.
Cross-Service	-5,000	Other grants.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,268</b>	

### Reserves Account

	Expenditure	Comments
Budget transfer	15,078	LMSS income brought forward.
Budget transfer	4,146	Heritage at Risk (MMS).
Budget transfer	5,000	Land Management income brought forward.
Budget transfer	92,319	Farming in Protected Landscapes.
Funds brought forward	-196,192	Funds brought forward 2023/24 .
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-79,649</b>	

### Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

Budget currently being updated as part of final year assessment.