



**Quantock
Hills
National
Landscape**

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday 22nd October 2025

Enmore Memorial Hall – 2pm

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.

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.	Presentation – Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Steve Dury, Nature Recovery and Partnerships Manager, Somerset Council)
6.	Paper A - Land Management & Engagement (Andy Stevenson / Owen Jones)
7.	Paper B - Partnership Update (Iain Porter)
8.	Paper C - Management Plan Review – Policy workshop (Iain Porter)
9.	Paper D - National Landscape Finance Report (Iain Porter)
10.	Paper E - Planning Report (Alex Meletiou)
11.	Workshop - Management Plan Review (Iain Porter)
12.	AOB.
13.	<p>Future JAC meeting dates (all start at 2.00pm)</p> <p>Wednesday 21st January 2026 Wednesday 22nd April 2026 Wednesday 22nd July 2026</p>
	<p>Note:</p> <p>Further information about any of the reports for this meeting may be obtained from the report authors based at the Quantock Hills National Landscape Office, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Bridgwater, TA5 2EQ.</p> <p>Tel: 01823 451884 or Email: quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</p>

Meeting Guidance Notes:	
1.	<p>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.</p>
2.	<p>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.</p>
3.	<p>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.</p> <p>A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been signed. If you wish to speak, please tell Amanda Sampson, the committee administrator, before the meeting.</p> <p>You must direct your questions and comments through the 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.</p> <p>Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.</p>
4.	<p>Substitutions Committee members can appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.</p>
5.	<p>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.</p>



**Quantock
Hills
National
Landscape**

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

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

**Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at 2.00pm
West Quantoxhead Village Hall, St Audries**

Present:

Members:

Hugh Warmington (HW)	CLA Chair
Alan Bradford (AB)	Somerset Council Vice-chair
Tommie Muncie (TM)	National Trust
Alicia Aras (AA)	Somerset Local Access Forum
Bob Croft (BC)	South West Heritage Trust
Tim Whittingham (TW)	Friends of the Quantocks
Martin Jones (MJ)	Parish Representative - West Bagborough
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
Amanda Sampson (AS)	Quantock Hills National Landscape
Bill Jenman (BJ)	Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme
Lucy Stockton (LS)	Quantock Hills National Landscape

Also present:

Tracey Hamson (TH) Devon Wildlife Trust, David Stripp (DS) Kingston St Mary Parish Council, Colin Falla (CF) Nether Stowey Parish Council.

1. Apologies

Bill Revans (Somerset Council), Fran Smith (Somerset Council), Lee Baker (Somerset Council), Laura Daniells (Natural England).

It has been noted that some members of the JAC appear to have not attended a meeting for a significant period. Non-attendance reduces the collective voice of the JAC and when member attendance is significantly low means the meeting is not quorate to be able to vote, impacting on the Teams ability to deliver the business plan.

ACTION – IP to email those members of the JAC who have not attended to prompt for better attendance at future meetings.

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 the previous meeting on Wednesday 30th April 2025 were agreed as a true representation of the meeting.

4. Public Question Time

No public questions.

5. Presentation - Two Moors Pine Martin Project (Tracey Hamston, Devon Wildlife Trust Two Moors Pine Martin Project Lead).

Tracey Hamston from Devon Wildlife Trust gave a presentation to the group about the Two Moors Pine Martin Project.

IP thanked Tracey for her very interesting presentation about the project.

ACTION – IP to send out the information about the project to the JAC members.

6. Paper A - Partnership Update (Iain Porter).

IP gave an update on the Partnership Paper A and welcomed Lucy Stockton to the Quantock Hills National Landscape Team to the role of Landscape Skills Project Officer.

HW gave a brief update on the meeting between the Partnership and Somerset Council's Planning Department.

DD was pleased to hear that the meeting had finally taken place.

AB would have liked to have attended the meeting and does not consider a virtual meeting is the best way to have meetings as you cannot gauge individual reactions properly. IP it is a start after a very long wait to meet with the Planning Department.

HW there will be a follow up meeting with the Planning Department in 3 months' time.

There was a brief group discussion with no further comments or questions.

Paper A Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

7. Paper B - Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (Bill Jenman).

BJ gave an update on the 5-year Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme which will finish in November 2025 with both BJ the QLPS project Manager and Paddon the QLPS Wildlife Officer leaving their positions next week and the rest of the team, Jon Barrett, QLPS Community

Engagement & Volunteering Officer, Dan Broadbent, QLPS Historic Heritage Officer and Lisa Whittle, QLPS Project Support Officer remaining in place until November 2025.

BJ added anyone interested in a copy of the LiDAR Report should contact Dan Brodbent at dan.broadbent@somerset.gov.uk.

IP commended the QLPS Team for a great job done over the past 5 years and thanked them all for their hard work.

HW considers that we have been incredibly lucky having found BJ for this project and thanked BJ for all of his hard work.

There were no further comments or questions.

Paper B Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

8. Paper C - National Landscape Finance Report (Iain Porter).

IP gave a brief update on the Finance Report, Paper C.

There were no further comments or questions.

Paper C Recommendation(s):

1) The JAC noted the report.

9. AOB

JT wanted it noted that the Wildlife Symposium event was a very successful event and very well received.

IP – The intention is to hold the event again in the future possibly on an annual basis.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 22 October at 2.00pm (venue TBC).

The meeting was closed at 4.12pm

Workshop - Management Plan Review (Iain Porter).

The planned workshop for the Management Plan Review had to be postponed due to presentations overrunning during the meeting. IP will send out a survey via email to everyone in the partnership for responses.

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER A
Subject	Land Management & Engagement Report	
Author	Owen Jones, Partnership Ranger / Andy Stevenson, Ranger	
Date	22/10/2025	

1. Nature Recovery

An extremely warm and dry summer period on the Hills between June and early September has meant lovely conditions for visitors and some wildlife species, but extremely high risk for wildfires.

1.1 Cothelstone Hill – Our annual tree surveys continue to highlight ash trees showing significant signs of ash dieback and whilst the rangers have removed a large number over the previous 4 years a further 20 will be felled this autumn near to public paths and access points.

A separate compartment of the woodland that was badly damaged by one of the named storms at the end of last winter is currently being clear-felled of ash and will be replanted with a mix of native broad-leaved species.

During May we welcomed three new Exmoor pony mares from Exmoor National Park to replace the geldings that were relocated due to their boisterous behaviour and ability to escape. Whilst the two herds of mares aren't often found together they do move around the open grassland grazing in different areas.

1.2 Swaling – During the 2024/25 season 2 trial plots were created on Quantock Common. These plots had three land management techniques undertaken, swaling, cutting and cut & collect. We are awaiting feedback from Natural England who initially have been positive on the different management techniques but will formally monitoring and feedback if these types of interventions can continue. This will allow us and the Commoners to carry out vegetation work even when conditions are not favourable for swaling. The rangers have worked with the Commoners to submit a FiPL application to provide updated equipment for the swaling activity. In addition the rangers have held meetings with the Devon and Somerset Fire Service to discuss how heathland management is carried out and public information delivered in other areas of the region.

The Quantock Commoners undertook vegetation cutting alongside some of the tracks during the winter of 2024/25 as part of the effort to reduce the fire risk from wildfires.

1.3 QCV – tasks since April have included dry stone walling, repairing the stock fencing at Cothelstone Hill, installing vehicle barrier bollards at Lydeard Hill car park and finishing coppicing along a lane at Bincombe.

1.4 Estates Team – these individuals help most weeks to assist the rangers with practical work that is more specialised and have been active on our alpine tractor cutting back bracken at Cothelstone Hill.

2. Engagement

2.1 Volunteer Rangers – Continue to carry out a mix of vital patrol activity and practical tasks. A number have completed their Walks Leader training and are starting to offer walks for the other volunteers, National Trust volunteers and the public. Practical tasks for the group have included a beach clean, litter picks, coppicing, spreading heather cuttings on West Hill and removing Himalayan Balsam. The information point resources have been updated and provide interesting activities for visitors. Furthermore, the volunteers assist the team at a wide range of events throughout the year.

2.2 Working Well group – there has been interest from new contacts for this group including a retired military veterans group and a few new Community Engagement Volunteers to help run the sessions. Tasks have included dry stone walling, coppicing, pulling rosebay willowherb and raking bracken from the glade.

2.3 Heritage Monitoring Volunteers – During the summer Caroline and Dan (QLPS) have refreshed and relaunched the Heritage Monitoring volunteers. With support from Historic England, recruitment and training of volunteers has occurred and over the next few months they will be out undertaking condition assessments on all the Scheduled Monuments within the National Landscape. Caroline is currently working with one of the volunteers to ease the reporting process, making it more streamlined.

2.4 Corporate Volunteers – the number of corporate groups approaching us offering a day of free labour has increased since Covid. The groups vary from national organisations such as the Environment Agency, to Somerset Council departments to local businesses from the surrounding towns. Recently we have hosted groups doing coppicing and gorse cutting and burning.

2.5 Work experience/school connections – on an annual basis we host a student from a local school or college during their year 10 work experience week. We have been lucky that these students tend to be very enthusiastic about the outdoors and engage positively with the different activities we throw them into. This year the team hosted two students during the week and a student who was studying a Countryside Course at Cannington College for a 6-month period one day a week.

The rangers have also worked with students from Bridgwater College on a number of their study trips.

2.6 Events – the team have delivered and worked with partners to provide a range of events for the public. As well as the regular offerings such as nightjar & glowworm, rock pooling, bats, and the Quantock Hills at night this year has also introduced a number of new or enhanced events including

- 6 Wellness Wanders covering a variety of themes
- 2 Public painting days in partnership with South West Society of Botanical Artists.
- Charcoal demonstration weekend.

In total 17 National Landscape led events have been held with an estimated 260 attendees.

Rangers also liaise with external event organisers to ensure that external events run smoothly and they adhere to restrictions imposed by landowners or the suitability and scale of the activity.

2.7 Access and information – over the last few months many of the interpretation panels at key locations within the National Landscape have been replaced with updated information and new National Landscape branding. The remaining panels are due to be replaced later this year through the Access 4 All fund. Other infrastructure including the bespoke public footpath and bridleway fingerposts and logo discs on information posts have also been replaced over the past 18 months.

A new oak bench has been installed on top of Cothelstone Hill to replace an old one that rotted after 25 years. This was kindly donated by a local landowner and crafted by a contractor.

Last financial year a series of easy to use self closing gates were installed in the parish of Kingston St Mary along a public footpath used frequently by the primary school and nursery. This was funded from the Defra Access 4 All funding.

As a measure to increase the accessibility of the Quantock Hills the rangers and Jon Barrett (QLPS) have been working on a series of videos for the National Landscape website to highlight the facilities on site, the terrain and the specific waymarking at each location. Currently [Cothelstone Hill](#) and [Hawkridge Woods](#) are available with Kilve and Ramscombe soon to be added.

2.8 Patrols – a number of new Police staff have joined the local stations and the rangers are looking to do more joint patrols going forward. The usual key messages through the summer months have been imparted to the public with added emphasis on the fire risk. The Rangers and other team members have done a number of radio interviews and articles for the local BBC websites on these issues.

2.9 Fly tipping / litter – Numbers of fly tipping reports have been sporadic with Birches Corner and Volis Hill featuring regularly. Items are wide ranging from household waste, abandoned vehicles and tires. The main road across the Commons (Crowcombe – Nether Stowey) is a regular litter pick area which is kept clean with additional help from FoQ volunteers as well as our own volunteer rangers.

3. Wildlife Monitoring

3.1 Pied flycatchers – the boxes showed good numbers of pied flycatchers including returning females to the same combs. The birds benefited from a summer of higher numbers of caterpillars and insects than in 2024.

3.2 Nightjar surveys – these were undertaken again by volunteers and staff members. Numbers have yet to be collated but initial results are supportive of strong ongoing population in the chosen 10 km squares.

3.3 Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers – The Quantock Hills Nature Recovery Plan (2024) identified Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers as a species of interest, with historic records showing their presence around the Quantock Hills. However recent survey efforts by volunteers and other organisations found it difficult to identify territories. At the beginning of 2025 the National Landscape Team purchased 2 specialised monitoring devices that can record audible sound and using specialist software identify bird species. Working with a local dedicated volunteer who used the monitoring units we have found that the carrying

capacity of this significant species is higher than first thought. Work will continue to look at locating potential territories and ranges of the Lesser Spotted woodpecker into next year with additional training and support for the project.

3.4 Dormouse surveys – the boxes at Cothelstone Hill continue to be checked monthly but animals are rarely found to be using them despite the evidence that they are there. A Ranger is working towards his dormouse license and has had to work alongside other partners including Forestry England ecologists to gain more experience.

3.4 Butterfly surveys – the transects at Cothelstone Hill and Fyne Court have produced good consistent numbers of butterflies throughout the season from April to the end of September. The results are being compiled and sent off to the national UK butterfly monitoring scheme.

3.5 Bat surveys – The team undertook six transects this year, Fyne Court, Cothelstone Hill, Ramscombe, Hodders Combe, Holford Combe and Alfoxton as part of the National Bat Monitoring Programme. These surveys would not happen without the support of volunteers and this year we were supported by 12 volunteers providing the equivalent of 20 work days. In addition to the regular surveys we have been able to undertake site surveys through the use of static detectors. This has been very successful, identifying use of the Quantock Hills by different species, including the Barbastelle bats (Nature Recovery Plan Champion Species).

3.5 Tick survey – the Rangers continue to take part in the annual national tick survey at 3 locations across the Hills. The captured animals are sent through to Porton Down where they are analysed to see what percentage of the ticks locally and nationally carry Lyme disease and how many different species of ticks there are.

3.6 Adder Hibernacula – the two hibernacula constructed by volunteers in 2024 have been monitored weekly this summer to assess the temperature and humidity of the habitats and to establish whether adders and other reptiles or amphibians are using them. Results indicate that there are adders and common lizards in close proximity to the hibernacula but not actually using them yet.

Recommendation(s):

1. The JAC notes the report

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER B
Subject	Partnership Update	
Author(s)	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	22/10/2025	

1. Staffing

- a. Landscape Projects Officer. At the beginning of September Helen Richardson left the team to pursue more time with her family. Since that time I have been trying to get permission to recruit to this position, finally getting the required authority on 10 October. At the time of writing HR are still to action the recruitment. Sally Pheasant, Farming Engagement Support Officer, has been doing a sterling job ensuring FiPL applications and projects are supported. I have taken on some of the elements of the role and have been exploring short-term opportunities to get support to deliver FiPL.
- b. 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.
- c. Team Structure. At the end of July Bill Jenman (QLPS Manager) and Paddon (QLPS Wildlife Officer) left the team. Bill's post was planned to end in July as the role of the scheme manager had limited actions in the last four months of the scheme. The Wildlife officer post was due to run to the end of the scheme – end of November 2025 – however Paddon left to take the opportunity to travel. With the limited time left on the post and the issues over swift recruitment the decision was taken to not recruit to the role. The team and QLPS Board gave Bill and Paddon a good send off at the end of July with an end of scheme celebratory event at Great Wood.
- d. As reported in April 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 though 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).
- e. On 2 October I attended the Economic Development, Skills & Climate Service away day. It was an opportunity for all the teams, including those that are hosted, to learn more about the service and our host organisation. I took the opportunity to raise awareness of the issues the Team has encountered such as HR, recruitment, fleet and finance. I was heartened to hear Duncan Sharkey, CEO, acknowledge that the Council has not got the processes right yet and that there is a piece of work happening over the next couple of months which aims to streamline a lot of processes, especially around HR and recruitment.

2. Partnership

- a. It had been noted that attendance at JAC meetings this year has been lower than that in previous years. An assessment of attendance from April 2023 – when the partnership membership was significantly updated due to the move to a unitary authority - to July 2025 with those members of less than 40% attendance contacted to request attendance or future meetings or if they were unable to attend to inform me to re-allocate their seat on the JAC.
- b. For clarity the current membership of the JAC is:

Organisation	Nominated Representative
CLA	Hugh Warmington (Chair)
Somerset Council	Alan Bradford (Vice-chair)
Somerset Council	Bill Revans
Somerset Council	Fran Smith
Somerset Council	Lee Baker
Somerset Council	Mike Caswell
Somerset Council	Tom Deakin
Natural England	Laura Daniells
Forestry England	Sam Tyson
South West Heritage Trust	Bob Croft
Quantock Commoners Association	Mike Rawle / Deborah Prestwich
Somerset Local Access Forum	Alicia Aras
National Trust	Tommy Muncie
Friends of the Quantocks	Tim Whittingham
Parish representative	Martin Jones (West Bagborough)
Parish representative	Sarah Nason (Holford)
Parish representative	Julian Taylor (North Petherton)
Parish representative	Mark Philipson (West Quantoxhead)
Co-opted member	Dixie Darch

3. National Landscape Association

- a. Nature Calling. Earlier this year the team became part of the Nature Calling initiative. This national initiative aims to connect under-represented groups with the outdoors through arts opportunities. Funded from Arts Council England, Defra and match funded by the National Landscapes the programme has engaged 26 National Landscapes and 2 National Parks with 6 ‘hubs’ and 22 ‘spoke’ locations. The Quantock Hills joined as a spoke location linking with Somerset Art Works to offer a series of creative workshops for AgriQuan groups and communities. The theme of the project is myths and legends of migratory birds and their significance in the Quantock Hills ecosystems. Lead: Jon Barrett.
- b. Carbon Literacy Training To support National Landscape Teams in developing the Climate Adaptation Plan the NLA have been offering carbon literacy training for all NL teams. While the training is aimed at individual / team ability to develop pathways to net zero the principles can be applied an area, in this way it will support PLTOF Target 6 – Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels. The training can be used with the information we already have linked to climate change to develop the Quantock Hills Climate Adaptation Plan:
 - i. [Somerset’s Climate Emergency Strategy](#)
 - ii. DESNZ greenhouse gas emissions data cut to Protected Landscapes boundaries (via PLTOF)
 - iii. Cranfield University soil carbon audit (2022)
 - iv. Method comparison of Small World Consulting’s results based on 6 National Landscapes and 10 National Parks.

v. Quantock Hills Climate Risk Assessment.

4. Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

- a. As mentioned above the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme is in its closing stages. However Jon, Dan and Lisa continue to deliver activities centred around the engagement and historic heritage workstreams.
- b. A small permanent display has been installed at the Thomas Poole Library in Nether Stowey, where the QLPS staff had an office. This legacy display allows the QLPS to continue to have a community presence along with the digital resource of the website.
- c. As a result of the discussion on the QLPS display the National Landscape Team have agreed to provide a permanent visitor display to support the libraries aim of becoming the Quantock Hills Information Centre. The display is being designed at present with the aim of being installed by the end of the calendar year.

5. Defra / National Government updates.

- a. As the partnership are aware there was the move by MHLGC to revoke the enhanced Protected Landscapes duty by introducing an amendment in the Planning Infrastructure Bill that is currently going through Parliament. Please see Report D section 2 for further information.
- b. Defra are nearing the end of the budget setting process for next financial year. Of concern has been a request asking for 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 feed back – 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.
- c. The situation in 2026/27 will be compounded with the end of the QLPS scheme and associated loss of staffing and delivery. The Partnership have been in the situation previously with funding partners asking for scenario's on grant reduction notably 2009, 2014, 2015 and 2018. If we become aware that grant reduction is more of a possibility which will impact the core team the JAC will be notified and, if required, an additional meeting will be convened to discuss options.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. The JAC notes the report.**

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER C
Subject	Management Plan Review	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	22/10/2025	

1. Engagement to date.

- a. The Management Plan review has sought views and feedback at various stages including –

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 consultation on the draft 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 Targets & Outcome Framework
July 2025	Partnership	Online survey. Consideration of current Aims and Objectives. Limited responses.

- b. As well as the above consultation consideration has been taken of national and local policies and priorities in drafting the Management Plan.
- c. To date limited feedback has been received on the current Management Policies to be able to inform drafting of new policies. This paper sets out the current Management Plan Management Policies and suggested revisions.

2. Management Plan Policies

- a. A separate paper sent along with these papers lists the current Management Plan policies and recommended policies for the reviewed plan. The current plan has 44 policies, though some of these are more akin to actions, and there are 45 recommended policies.
- b. During the meeting there will be opportunity to undertake a workshop session that will examine the policies and ensure they are fit for purpose for inclusion in the draft Management Plan.

3. Next steps – Timetable to adoption.

Timescale	Details
Oct 2025	Following the Partnership meeting the policies in the draft Management Plan will be updated taking into account the responses and suggestions from Partnership Members.
End Oct 2025	draft Quantock Hills Management Plan will be released for public and partnership consultation. The consultation will be open for six weeks.
Mid-Dec 2025	consultation will close. The draft Management plan will be amended and updated based on responses received.

Jan 2026	2 nd draft Management Plan consultation for partnership members & Natural England. Undertake SEA / HRA process.
Mid-Feb	Submit final Management Plan to Somerset Council (Responsible Authority) for adoption.
April 2026	Launch the reviewed Quantock Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31.

4. Climate Adaptation Plans

- a. In 2019 all National Landscape Partnerships and Conservation Boards adopted the Colchester Declaration, a commitment to increase the scale and pace of nature recovery in Protected Landscapes in response to climate change. The Colchester Declaration states that *Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change and commits to ensure all AONB Management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero.*
- b. A requirement under the Government’s third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) is the production of Climate Change Adaptation plans (CCAP) for each Protected Landscapes by 2028. The Partnership have complete the first element of this with the production of the Climate Risk Assessment and further objectives, policies and actions will be included in the reviewed Management Plan.
- c. While it is acknowledged that production of the CCAP inline with the review of the Management Plan would be ideal there is insufficient resources within the Team to do this in a meaningful way. Therefore it is proposed to start the engagement and consultation on the Climate Adaptation Plan in April 2026 with the aim that a plan is adopted by April 2027. This is dependent upon resource availability.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. The JAC notes the report.**
- 2. The JAC approves the revised Management Plan review timeline**
- 3. The JAC approves the recommendation to undertake the Climate Change Adaptation Plan during the period April 2026 – April 2027.**

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER D
Subject	Finance & Business Plan Report	
Author	Iain Porter, Manager	
Date	22/10/2025	

1. 2025/26 Financial position.

- a. Finance budget reports have been run for the period April to August only as we had a change of finance manager and it has taken a while for our budgets to be transferred to them. The 2024/25 overrun 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 which, though the figure appears worse due to the last claim of the 2024/25 year not being received until 2025/26, which accounts for approximately half of the overspend.

Table D1: Summary of Quantock Hills National Landscape budgets (mth 1 – 5)

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)	133,057	0	265,400
	Notes: Defra grant not due in until October. Some expenditure being queried such as getting charged twice for vehicle insurance. Otherwise budget on track.		
Landscape Projects (FiPL / GQLDF / LIS / LMSS)	25,261	36,531	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.		
QLPS	178,860	114,483	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 overrun 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)	48,800	9,000	179,500
	Notes: Expenditure includes small project pots (Nature Calling, Arts Project) and capital grants. Committed expenditure on track for full expenditure by year end.		
Land Management	22,284	13,824	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 and FETF (from 2024/25). HLS claims not yet received.		
Total	613,276	470,723	1,087,400

2. 2025/26 Business Plan Progress

- a. Delivery of 101 actions under the Quantock Hills National Landscape Business Plan. The actions are themed into Nature, Climate, People, Place and Core Activity to align with the Defra priorities.
- b. With delayed confirmation of Capital Grant and Access for All funding the Business Plan is currently being updated to include deliverable actions through these funding streams.
- c. Issues such as staffing and additional resource required for Management Plan review will impact on project delivery.
- d. See appendix D1: Business Plan mid-point assessment by action.

Table D2: Summary Business Plan delivery

 On Target	 behind target, likely to have reduced output	 - Behind target will not deliver outputs
78 (77%)	18 (18%)	5 (5%)

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 3 rd 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 compiled.
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 FotQs 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 3 rd 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 3 rd 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 202	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.	😊 On track

		Action plan produced and works undertaken	
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 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 community's 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	All consulted WMP screened and relevant comments submitted	😊 On track

	conversion or creation of open ground is realised.		
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 multi year 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 31 st 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 inline 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

To	Quantock Hills JAC	PAPER E
Subject	Planning Report	
Author	Alex Meletiou, Landscape Planning Officer	
Date	22/10/2025	

1. Planning applications

- a. From 1st April 2025 to 1st October 2025 the National Landscape received 46 planning applications for consideration and 3 applications for timber felling licences, which have been followed up from the published lists or by direct invitation to comment. The level of applications is a little less than average.
- b. The distribution between the two planning regions is listed below together with the number of applications within each Parish (table E1) and by application type (table E2).

Table E1. **Planning applications by area.**

Planning North		Planning West	
Bridgwater	3	Bicknoller	3
Broomfield	3	Crowcombe	1
Goathurst	2	Holford	1
N. Stowey	3	Kingston St Mary	1
N. Petherton	4	Kilve	2
Over Stowey	4	Staplegrove	2
Spaxton	10	Taunton	2
		W. Bagborough	4
		W. Quantoxhead	1
Total	29	Total	17

Table E2. **Planning applications by type**

Type	No	Type	No
Agricultural buildings	6	Minor works	6
Agricultural conversions	2	National Grid	2
Domestic extensions	9	New dwellings	5
Domestic buildings	4	Tracks	2
Educational facilities	1	Variation / conditions	1
Holiday lodge / tourist	2		
Major residential	6	Total	46

6 applications were either objected to or comments made raising some concerns.

2. Current issues

- a. Over the past 18 months you will recall mention of the introduction of a new revised duty for relevant authorities (public bodies and statutory undertakers), where Section 85 of the CRoW Act was amended to strengthen the protection for Protected Landscapes.

Up to November 2023, Section 85 of the CRoW Act stated "In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, **a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of**

conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”.

This duty was strengthened (under the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 [LURA]) and the wording to Section 85 changed to “In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, **a relevant authority must seek to further the purpose** of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Government, about 2 weeks ago, appear to look to water down this new Protected Landscape duty which, as reported in the national press at the time, appeared to be in pursuit of housing and infrastructure development targets through an amendment in the Planning Infrastructure Bill. This would be a serious reversal to the Government’s stated aims of protecting important landscapes.

A joint letter to the Secretaries of State for both Housing, Communities and Local Government and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was delivered and signed by the Chairs of both National Parks England and the National Landscape Association, arguing for a retention of the new duty. This was followed by a letter sent directly to the Prime Minister and signed by over 180 organisations, urging that this new legislation remains in place.

Apparently it has now been agreed at Cabinet on the 7th October that there would be no change to the duty as amended under LURA which is very good news.

However caution should remain as there are other opportunities that the Government might take to amend this legislation possibly via the Environment Bill currently working its way through parliament.

- b. Following our meeting with Somerset Council’s Head of Planning (Alison Blom-Cooper) on 26th June, an email was sent to Dawn deVries (Service Manager, Development Management) on 29th July, outlining details of cases that have caused concern within the National Landscape. We were informed that the Planning Department would be focusing solely on outstanding applications for a period of 12 weeks in order to clear a very large backlog. Hopefully we will get a response once the period has ended, which should be around the 20th October.

Recommendation(s):

1. The JAC notes the report