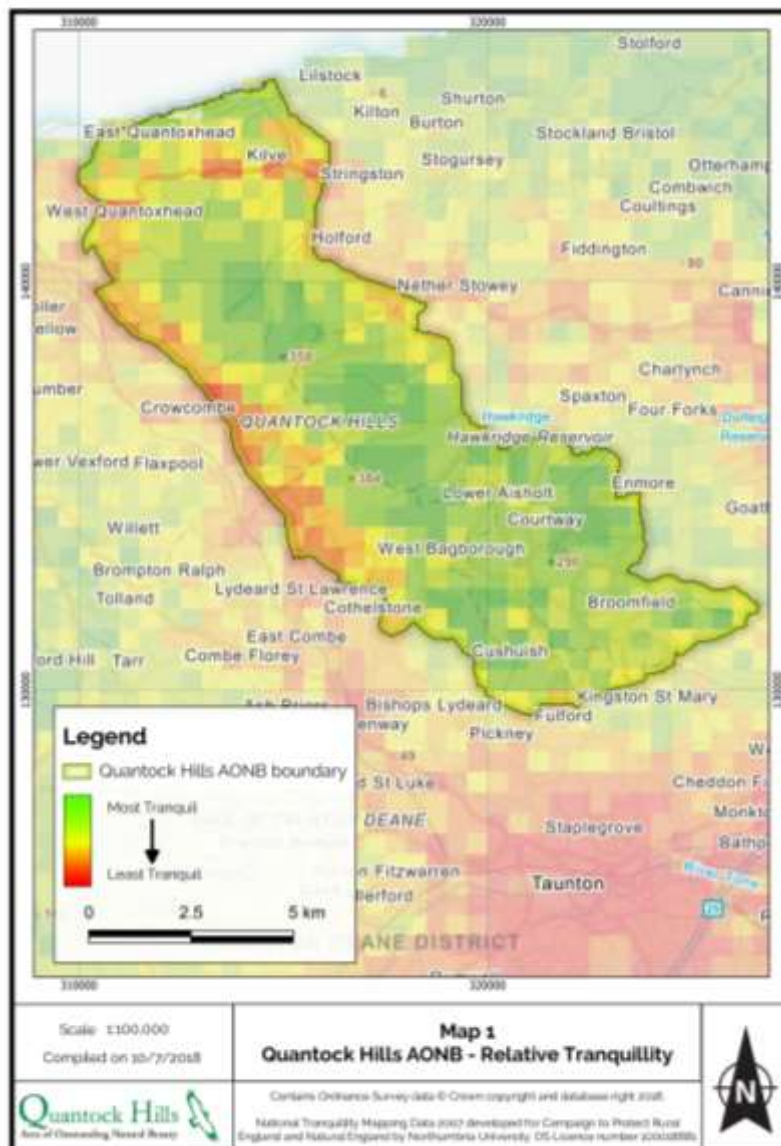


Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-24



Strategic Environmental Assessment Consultation Draft Environmental Report September 2018

Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Management Plan 2019-24

Report on the Strategic Environmental Assessment as required under European Directive 2001/42/EC

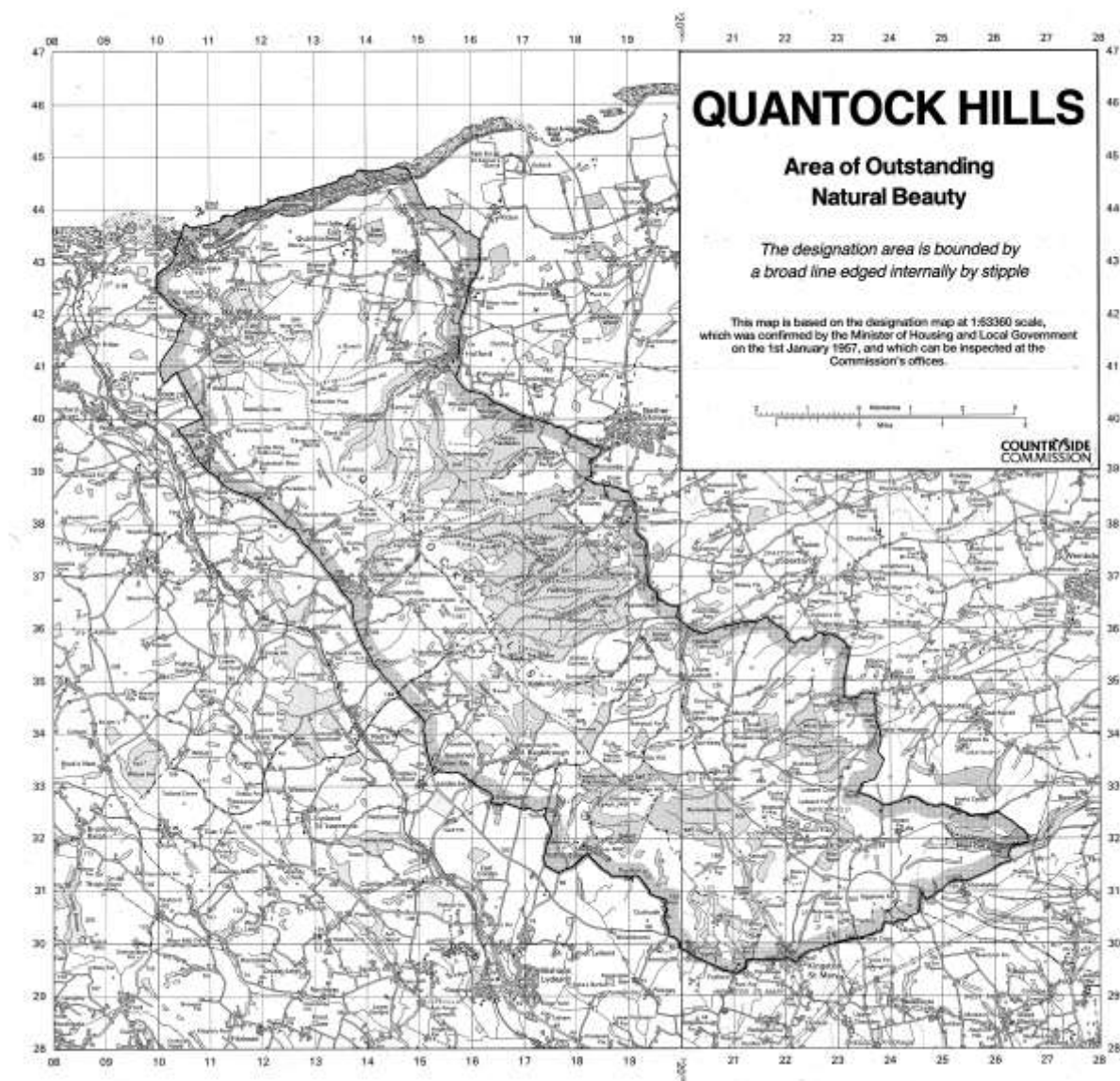
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1. The Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Quantock Hills AONB was designated in 1956 and confirmed in 1957. It covers 99sq kms in the County of Somerset, from Kingston St Mary above Taunton in the south to the Bristol Channel coast at East Quantoxhead in the north.

Designation Map



The AONB Joint Advisory Committee is made up of 17 key organisations including County, District and Parish Council representatives alongside NGOs, Charities and Agencies. These partner organisations will seek to directly and through the activities of others ensure implementation of the AONB Management Plan. A wider partnership of over 60 consultative bodies is engaged with the JAC.

AONB Management Plans are a requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and must be reviewed at least every 5 years. The Draft Management Plan 2019-24 has been produced to provide the statutory and policy basis for the protection and management of The Quantock Hills AONB's natural and cultural assets. It is designed to outline a **Vision**, identify the AONB's **Special Qualities** and provide **Objectives** and **Management Policies** for action across a range of **Themes** in and around the AONB, once finalised a **Delivery Plan** with **Actions** will be developed and published.

This Scoping and Environmental Report has been prepared as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) undertaken on the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Consultation Draft (2018).

2. The SEA Methodology

The methodology used for this SEA is based on the Guidance to English AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of AONB Management Plans, provided by Natural England July 2007.

In England the SEA Directive (2001/42EC) came into force on 20 July 2004¹. The revised AONB Management Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment and thus falls under the SEA regulations. The regulations require the "responsible authority" (normally the AONB partnership on behalf of local authorities) to consider a number of questions in relation to the SEA screening process.

The purpose of a SEA is to ensure that land-use plans and programmes, that are likely to have significant effects on the environment, are subjected to a **strategic level** (high and overarching) assessment of options and alternative courses of action during plan preparation to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects. The Management Plan review process fulfils many of the requirements set out in the SEA process. As the Management Plan is aiming to conserve and enhance the landscape, it is already putting the environment at the heart of the plan-making process, which is a key aim of SEA, and the steps for both processes have strong parallels. Natural England's strong advice is to make the SEA pragmatic, expedient, and fit for purpose with the documentation being as slim as possible. The SEA of AONB management plans will be an iterative process which is likely to require revisiting, during the plan process, as more information, updated guidance, new issues and examples of good practice are identified.

¹ SEA Regulations - Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2004/sch1>

Stages in the Management Plan Review and SEA process

This is a joint Scoping Review and Environmental Report that is subject to comment and review from the specified Consultation Bodies: Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. It is further open to public consultation alongside the draft Management Plan - stage (iv) below.

(i) Scoping

The Scoping section below:

- Identifies the context scope: a range of relevant strategies, policies, plans and legislation that could influence or be influenced by the AONB Management Plan.
- Identifies the processes which will provide the environmental baseline.
- Identifies indicators for consideration.
- Records an initial assessment of key environmental issues affecting the AONB
- Identifies sets of environmental objectives
- Outlines the SEA methodology, including the decision that the need to review each policy would be judged from the outcome of the assessment. This effectively means that alternatives will only be developed where the assessment reveals an adverse effect.

(ii) Identification of current issues and objectives carried out July/August 2018 through:

- Consultation with the interested public through social-media questionnaire survey
- Consultation with the Quantock Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee and wider AONB Partnership through questionnaire survey
- Analysis of significant regional and local plans and strategies

(iii) Developing SEA Environmental Report (May-September 2018)

Parallel process alongside the drafting of the AONB Management Plan

- (iv) Consultation on SEA Environmental Report and AONB Management Plan (September/October 2018)
- (v) Analysis of responses to consultation (November 2018)
- (vi) Summary of issues raised from SEA consultation produced as appendix document to AONB Management Plan (November/December 2018)
- (vii) AONB Management Plan (including appendices) approved by AONB Joint Advisory Committee (Jan/Feb 2019) and submitted for adoption by local authorities and partner organisations
- (viii) AONB Management Plan published and launched by end March 2019.

3. Scoping

3.1 Context Scope – the review of relevant plans and policies

The strategic context consists of the main directives, plans and strategies that influence the aspects of the AONB that the new Management Plan is seeking to address.

Table 1: Strategic Context

Directive, Plan, Strategy (published /produced)
Selected European directives and international conventions
Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat - 1971
The Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), (1979)
Nitrates directive: water pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources
Agenda 21, (1992)
The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), (1992)

Convention on Biodiversity, (1992)
Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Adopted December 1997)
Aarhus Convention 1998
Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC
The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC)
EU DIRECTIVE 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information, (2003)
EU Sustainable Development Strategy (June 2006)
European Landscape Convention (UK ratified 2006)
The Flood Directive: Assessment and Management of Flood Risks (2007) (2007/60/EC)
Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) 2008
The Waste Framework Directive, (2008/98/EC) (2008)
Copenhagen Accord United Nations Climate Change Conference 2009
Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020, European Commission, 2011
National
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, (1979)
The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 & amendments)
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act, (1990)
EU Habitats Directive (1992 & amendments)
The Conservation (Natural habitats etc.) Regulations (1994 & amendments)
The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)
Climate change – UK programme (2000)
Sustainable Energy Act (2003)
Secure and Sustainable Buildings Act (2004)

The UK Government sustainable development strategy – securing the future (2005)
The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)
The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain, Defra, 2008
Climate Change Act 2008
Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
UK Renewable Energy Strategy, 2009
UK Geodiversity Action Plan, 2009
Flood and Water Management Act (2010)
Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010
Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England, the Health White Paper (Dept. of Health, 2010)
National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England, Environment Agency, 2011
Future Water: The Government's Water Strategy for England, 2011
Localism Act (2011)
Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (Defra 2011)
Safeguarding our Soils – A Strategy for England (Defra 2011)
Local Transport White Paper 2011
Government Tourism Policy (DCMS) 2011
Water for Life, the Water White Paper (Defra, 2011)
The Natural Choice, the Natural Environment White Paper (Defra, 2012)
Healthy lives, healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency, Department for Health (2012)
Natural England Designations Strategy, July 2012
Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement 31 January 2013

National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England, Defra, 2014
Sporting Future – A New Strategy for an Active Nation, December 2015
Creating a great place for living: Defra’s strategy to 2020, 2016
State of Nature Report England 2016
Conservation 21, Natural England’s Conservation Strategy for the 21st Century 2016
Defra Single Departmental Plan: 2015 to 2020, 2016
25 Year Environment Plan: A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, Defra, 2018
National Planning Policy Framework (amended 2018)
Environment Agency Catchment Flood Management Plans
Environment Agency Catchment Abstraction Plans
Regional
South West Sustainability Framework (2000) - Sustainability South West
Heart of the South West Productivity Strategy 2018.
Tourism in Somerset a Destination Management Plan 2015 - 2020
South West Biodiversity Action Plan (1997) South West Biodiversity Partnership
South West Water Vision 2015 South West Water 2017
Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2016 and Sustainable Communities South West (2005) – South West Housing Body
Regional Waste Strategy for South West – Rubbish to Resource 2004-2020 – (2004) South West Regional Assembly
Regional Tourism Strategy South West – Towards 2015 (2005) South West RDA
Strategy for sustainable Food and Farming – Making a difference SW Delivery Plan (2004) – SWRDA/GOSW
Strategy for the Historic Environment in the South West – English Heritage

South West Culture Strategy – In search of chunky Dunsters (2000) Culture South West
SW Regional Woodlands and Forestry Framework 2005- 2015 (2005) Forestry Commission
Regional Renewable Energy Strategy for South West England 2003-2012 (2003) SWRDA/GOSW
Changing State of the South West 2012 South West Observatory
State of the Natural Environment in the South West Natural England 2009
Developing the Regional Transport Strategy (2004) South West Regional Assembly
Local
West Somerset Council: Biodiversity Action Plan 2008 The Adopted West Somerset Local Plan to 2032 West Somerset Economic Strategy - Responding to Change 2011 Watchet 2025 Community Strategy
Taunton Deane Borough Council: Taunton Deane Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy 2011-2028 Joint Waste DPD Preferred Options consultation June 2007 Taunton Deane Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2008-18 Taunton Deane Landscape Character Assessment 2011 Taunton Deane Play Strategy 2015 Taunton Deane Green Infrastructure Strategy 2009 The Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Neighbourhood Plan July 2016 West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Neighbourhood Plan April 2018

<p>Sedgemoor District Council:</p> <p>Core Strategy Adopted 2011</p> <p>Port of Bridgwater, Watchet & Minehead Harbours Oil Spill Contingency Plan 2014</p> <p>Sedgemoor Community Strategy (2006)</p> <p>Sedgemoor Biodiversity Action Plan 2008</p> <p>Sedgemoor District Green Infrastructure Strategy 2011</p> <p>Sedgemoor Historic Environment Assessment 2017</p>
<p>Somerset County Council:</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Somerset 2013 – 2018</p> <p>Somerset Minerals Plan (2015)</p> <p>Somerset Waste Local Core Strategy 2013</p> <p>Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2015</p> <p>Somerset Biodiversity Action Plan</p>

3.2 The Environmental Baseline

The following statistical information is available in the first State of the AONB Report produced for the Quantock Hills from data and mapping by Consultants David Dixon & David Partridge in July 2018. This information will record change in the State of the AONB and indicate the effectiveness of Management Plan policies.

Table 2: Environmental Baseline

Topic	Data or Indicator	Held by
Indicator 1 - Water Quality	A number of the water bodies that rise on the Quantock Hills watershed are monitored for ecological and chemical condition:	Environment Agency
Indicator 2 - Tranquillity	The % of the protected landscape that is relatively tranquil	CPRE

Indicator 3 - Light Pollution	Map-based data – uncertain future availability	CPRE
Indicator 4 - Condition of Historic Assets – Numbers and at Risk	4.1 Scheduled Monuments 4.2 Listed Buildings 4.3 Scheduled Parks and Gardens	Historic England
Indicator 5 - Population Change	Main AONB Parishes	Census Data
Indicator 6 - Volunteer contribution achieved	AONB-specific volunteering hours	AONB Service
Indicator 7 - Agri-environment Investment	7.1 The area managed under agri-environment agreements 7.2 The total annual value of agri-environment agreements (CSS, ESA and different levels of ES) 7.3 The uptake of 6 themed groups of ES options that contribute to conserving and enhancing landscape character	Natural England
Indicator 8 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	8.1 The area of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in favourable or recovering condition: 8.2 Condition of broad habitats within SSSIs 8.3 Number of geological SSSI unit features, and % in favourable or recovering condition	Natural England
Indicator 9 - Woodland	9.1 Total area of woodland Forestry Commission 9.2 The % area of woodland under management	Forestry Commission
Indicator 10 - Accessibility	10.1 % of the protected landscape as 'accessible natural environment' 10.2 Length of Public Rights of Way 10.3 Length of National Trails	Somerset County Council
Indicator 11 - Housing	11.1 New housing development 2001 - 2011	CPRE

Development:	11.2 Housing development 1985 -2011	DEFRA
	11.3 Large scale housing development (over 10 units) 2011 -2017	

3.3 Environmental Objectives

Each proposed Management Plan Objective in the revised Management Policy will be assessed against the eleven SEA objectives to determine whether or not they are likely to have significant effects on the environmental assets of the AONB. The SEA objectives in Table 3 below are adapted from those provided in Natural England Guidance to AONBs. They have been re-ordered to reflect the purpose of AONB Designation.

Table 3: SEA Objectives

E1	To protect and enhance landscape
E2	To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)
E3	To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)
E4	To maintain cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)
E5	To protect material assets including natural resources
E6	To protect and enhance soil quality
E7	To protect water, air and climate
E8	To reduce risks associated with, and increase resilience in respect of climate change and extreme weather
E9	To safeguard human health
E10	To ensure no adverse effect arises on population (i.e. demographic balance)
E11	To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships

3.4 Current Issues

The Management Plan review process identified key forces for change affecting the environment and important features of the AONB. Issues were identified from:

- Quantock Hills AONB Management Strategy 2014-19
- Public engagement July/August 2018
- The review process - professional judgement and the consultation feedback

The significance of the AONB is given in the consultation draft of the Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan, the “Statement of Significance”. Further detail and context can be found under each theme in the plan.

4. The Environmental Assessment

This environmental assessment has been structured around analysis of the Objectives and Management Policies in the Management Plan Consultation Draft, against a set of environmental objectives (the SEA Objectives). This suite of objectives is adapted from those recommended in the Natural England guidance on the SEA of AONB Management Plans and conforms to the SEA Directive requirements.

Assessment stages were as follows:

1. Initial appraisal reviewed all Management Plan Objectives against the SEA Objectives with a view to identifying obvious and significant adverse effects.
2. The policies were formally reviewed against the SEA Objectives.
3. The Plan’s environmental performance in terms of meeting the SEA Objectives was recorded using the SEA six-point scale, see Table 5 below.
4. The assessment examined each of the policies in isolation. That is to say, the assessment did not take into account the wording in the supplementary text or that of the Key Objective under which the policy lies. In practice most times the policies are used, reference will be made back to the context of the Management Plan, but this assessment approach ensures individual policies are strong enough to ‘stand alone’ when used out of context and still able to conserve and enhance the AONB.
5. The need to revise each policy was judged from the outcome of this assessment.

4.1 Initial Appraisal

Compatibility of SEA Objectives: it is useful to test the internal compatibility of the SEA objectives. There may be tensions between objectives that cannot be resolved: the compatibility assessment will clarify these so that subsequent decisions are well based, and mitigation or alternatives can be considered. Table 4 presents this compatibility assessment and illustrates that there are no potential conflicts between the objectives of the SEA and the draft Management Plan.

Table 4 Internal compatibility of SEA Objectives

✓: Objectives are compatible

Blank: No clear impact

X: Objectives are incompatible

E1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
E2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
E3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
E4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
E5	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
E6	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				
E7	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓					
E8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
E9	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
E10	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	
E11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	L1	LMP1	BWH1	BWH2	HE1	GC1	GC2	DPI1	ARW1	LEV1	CV1	PUI1

4.2 Assessment of policies against the SEA Objectives

Policies from the Management Plan have been individually assessed against each of the SEA Objectives.

The assessment uses the following scale:

S++	Strongly supports the SEA objective
S+	Supports the SEA objective
N	Is neutral in effect
C-(C = conflicts)	Potentially works against the SEA objective
C--	Strongly works against the SEA objective
X	Effects uncertain (more information is required to ascertain effects, or impact depends on implementation)

Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty Management Plan - Table 5: Assessment against SEA Objectives

Policy No.	Management Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of Environmental Implications of Policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LP1	To protect, understand and enhance the landscape and character of the AONB and support those delivering these elements.	S++	S++	S+	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	X	N	S+	<p>This policy is supportive or neutral when applied to individual SEA Objectives.</p> <p>Uncertain: There are potential positive effects on human health though improved landscape character however more research is required to quantify the scale and significance of these benefits.</p> <p>Demographic implications are neutral.</p>	
LP2	To promote the highest standards of landscape management in respect of landscape beauty, natural capital and ecosystem services for all land uses.	S++	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S++	S+	X	S+	S+	<p>Positive</p> <p>Uncertain: There are potential positive effects on human health though improved landscape character however more research is required to quantify the scale and significance of these benefits.</p>	

Policy No.	Management Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of Environmental Implications of Policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LP3	To encourage public understanding and support for landscape conservation and enhancement.	S++	S+	S+	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N		Positive or Neutral effects	Broad interpretation of landscape gives the widest benefits.
LP4	To further develop, promote and utilise the landscape character approach in AONB management and policy, including development of LCA-based design guidance.	S++	S+	S+	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	X	N	S+	Mainly Positive with Neutral and Uncertain effects see above for E9 uncertain effects	

Policy No.	Management Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of Environmental Implications of Policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LP5	To continue to offer landscape character advice to Local Planning Authorities in strategic and development management consultations.	S++	S+	S+	S++	S+	S+	S+	N	X	N	S+	Mainly Positive with Neutral and Uncertain effects see above for E9 uncertain effects	
LMP1	To protect, maintain and where appropriate extend the dry acid grassland, acid flushes/mires, open moorland and upland oakwoods with their important bird assemblage, of Quantock Common.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S++	S++	S+	N	C-	Interrelationships: Habitat management can conflict with archaeological site management and an appropriate balance needs to be struck on an individual site basis.	Assessment and prioritisation at project development stage to minimise conflict

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LMP2	To encourage and support the positive management of Quantock farmland, woodland and water catchment through engagement with the development and delivery of a high quality locally responsive land management scheme.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S++	S++	S+	S++	S+	N	S++	Design of the scheme will be Quantock-specific addressing these objectives	
LMP3	To support the understanding, conservation and proper management of Quantock hedges and associated banks.	S++	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	The network of hedgerows across the AONB is integral to its special qualities and ecosystem services delivery.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LMP4	To support the sensitive management of woodland and plantations to enhance and extend the distinctive character, landscape and wildlife of the Quantocks.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	X	N	N	Mainly Positive with Neutral and Uncertain effects see above for E9 uncertain effects	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LMP5	To encourage and support the creation and positive management of privately owned woodland and orchards, bringing more into management to increase the wide range of ecosystem services provided.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S++	S++	S+	X	N	N	Mainly Positive with Neutral and Uncertain effects see above for E9 uncertain effects	
BWHP1	To engage with development of land management, agri-environment and/or other innovative schemes to protect, connect and expand valuable habitats in the AONB.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	C-	Interrelationships: Habitat management can conflict with archaeological site management and an appropriate balance needs to be struck on an individual site basis.	Assessment and prioritisation at scheme development stage to minimise conflict

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
BWHP2	To monitor biodiversity through regular surveys of key species across the AONB.	S+	S++	S++	N	N	N	N	S+	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	
BWHP3	To monitor and manage harmful invasive species and diseases across the AONB.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	
BWHP4	To support the managed conversion of plantations (wholly or in part) to heathland or semi-natural woodland where this strengthens the existing network of habitats.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S++	S+	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
BWHP5	To research and monitor the populations and ecological networks of key Quantock species and use the information gained to inform management actions that will maintain or restore robust populations of these species.	S+	S++	S++	S+	S+	N	N	N	N	N	N	Impacts are positive or neutral across the SEA objectives.	Ensure habitat creation/management does not impact on historic landscape.
HEP1	Support the protection, conservation and reinstatement of historic and culturally significant Quantock landscapes and features, particularly assets on the Heritage at Risk Register.	S++	N	N	S++	S+	N	N	N	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	Ensure projects do not impact on habitats/biodiversity.

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
HEP2	Support the further investigation and recording of historic and culturally significant Quantock landscapes and features.	S+	N	N	S++	S+	N	N	S+	N	N		All positive or neutral	
HEP3	Promote public understanding of the significance of the Quantock historic and cultural landscape through community engagement and appropriate interpretation.	S+	N	N	S+	S+	N	N	S+	N	N	N	All positive or neutral	

GCP1	To maintain representative example exposures of Quantock geology with public access where safe, and interpret them for the public where appropriate.	C-	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	N	N	N	The negative potential impact on landscape is from maintaining open quarries in the landscape where they form a prominent scar.	Exposures that have a high landscape impact will be screened out at project design stage.
GCP2	To protect the high quality of Quantock coastal landform and their distinctive landscape contribution from inappropriate development and activities.	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
GCP3	To assess the climate change adaptation priorities and possibilities in respect of the special qualities of the AONB through implementation of the Natural England Climate Change Adaptation Manual (NE546).	S++	S++	S+	S+	S++	S+	S+	S++	S+	N	N	Increased understanding of climate change impacts will enable management and decision-making within and affecting the AONB to be informed. This includes management for landscape, biodiversity, geology, and heritage, protection of natural resources, land, air, water and climate.	
GCP4	To take a strategic landscape scale approach to the creation, restoration and maintenance of habitats in the AONB to maximise Quantock wildlife and landscape resilience to the impacts of climate change.	S+	S++	S++	S+	S+	C-	S+	S++	S+	N	N	Positive: Increased resilience to climate change impacts will reduce the degradation of the AONB's special qualities. Negative: Extending semi-natural habitats could negatively impact soil quality and conservation.	Soil impacts need to be assessed and addressed on an individual project basis

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
DPIP1	Ensure development and infrastructure in the AONB is appropriate in location, landscape sensitivity, scale and design respecting its distinctive character described by the LCA and its special qualities outlined in the Statement of Significance.	S++	S+	S+	S++	S+	S+	S+	N	N	S+	N	Positive/Neutral	
DPIP2	Protect the special qualities of the AONB through appropriate recognition in forward planning documents and significant planning applications reflecting AONB	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	N	Positive/Neutral	

	Service consultation, comments and advice.													
DPIP3	Protect the views in to and out of the AONB through involvement in the planning process.	S++	N	N	S++	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
DPIP4	Protect local distinctiveness in AONB settlements and Quantock lanes and roads.	S++	S+	N	S++	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	
DPIP5	Ensure development in the setting of the AONB does not harm the natural beauty, character and special qualities of the AONB or otherwise prejudice the delivery of AONB purposes.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
DPIP6	Ensure major development impacting on the special qualities of the AONB is mitigated or compensated for with management funding to address the issues caused.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral where development is permitted in spite of significant impacts on the AONB compensation/mitigation funding will be provided by the developer to the AONB Service and/or others to reduce or offset the impact.	
DPIP7	Consider the impacts of Permitted Development on the special qualities of the AONB and whether they can be mitigated.	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral permitted development can have significant impacts on this protected landscape without safeguards in place to protect the AONB landscape. The AONB Service will work on the impacts of permitted development and possible benefits of an Article 4 Direction.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
DPIP8	Ensure development in the AONB maintains or delivers nett gain in biodiversity, protects significant trees and other important landscape features and promotes the conservation of the historic environment.	S++	S++	S+	S+	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Positive/Neutral	
DPIP9	Protect the dark skies and tranquillity of the AONB.	S++	N	N	S+	N	N	N	N	S+	N	N	Tranquillity and dark skies for an important element of the landscape and cultural heritage of the AONB, tranquillity has been shown to have concrete benefits to human health.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
ARWP1	To actively seek opportunities to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits the AONB can offer through partnership working and projects.	S+	S+	N	N	S+	N	N	N	S++	N	N	Projects benefitting public health have additional indirect benefits of establishing further the value and importance of protecting and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB	Project design to ensure no significant negative impacts on natural capital.
ARWP2	To pursue high quality sustainable access to popular AONB visitor locations through the Active Travel Routes approach.	S+	N	N	N	S+	N	S+	N	S++	N	N	The infrastructure making it more attractive for people to walk or cycle to popular sites has significant benefits to human health. Further benefits are accrued through reduced vehicle use to access the hills.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
ARWP3	To ensure public access areas, Rights of Way and promoted routes are useable and maintained to a high standard.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	S++	N	N	Useable access land and rights of way is good for public health and allows users to access the hills safely while minimising negative impacts on natural beauty such as disturbance to wildlife and soil erosion.	
ARWP4	To reduce user conflict and limit damage to rights of way and landscape quality from recreational uses including off-road driving.	S++	S++	S++	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	N	S+	Positive/Neutral	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
ARWP5	To maintain practical AONB staff on the ground to support volunteers, manage Rights of Way misuse and reduce access problems such as sheep worrying and summer fires.	S++	S++	S+	S++	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	N	S+	The Rangers deliver objectives and policies across the plan, turning policies into action.	
LEVP1	To work with local businesses and support new markets for farmers that promote sustainable growth and the special qualities of the AONB.	S+	S+	N	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	Working with and supporting farmers and local businesses with sustainable and sensitive business models will provide benefits across a wide range of environmental objectives.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
LEVP2	To provide evidence for decision making through monitoring visitor trends and activities, including economic benefits and impacts on the special qualities of the AONB.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	N	N	S+	This is important evidence to avoid conflicts between management policies and protect and enhance the AONB. Also provides evidence for local economic benefits.	
LEVP3	To Support landscape-sensitive delivery of fast broadband throughout the AONB.	C-	N	N	N	N	N	S+	N	N	S+	N	The potential negative landscape impact is from inappropriately located or designed infrastructure. Fast broadband does provide numerous benefits including quality of life and sustainability benefits of less people commuting to work.	Ensure broadband infrastructure is sensitively designed and located.

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
CVP1	To support sustainable village and rural projects which address AONB Management Plan related issues.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	Potential benefits across the board from greater engagement with local communities in this way.	
CVP2	To further develop the role of community groups and volunteers in the management of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	N	N	The practical support from local communities and individuals in protecting and enhancing the AONB brings multiple benefits.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
CVP3	To support, within available resources, Quantock communities in the development and delivery of Community and Neighbourhood Planning where there is no conflict with AONB objectives.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	Potential benefits across the board from greater engagement with local communities in this way.	
PUIP1	To maintain varied, regular and stimulating social media outputs, promoting core messages.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	Promoting core messages increases recognition of the value of the AONB and supports protection of its special qualities.	

Policy No.	Policy	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11	Summary of environmental implications of policies	Recommendations to improve environmental performance
PUIP2	To further develop and populate the AONB website as a public source of information and interest.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	Providing information and promoting core messages increases recognition of the value of the AONB and supports protection of its special qualities.	
PUIP3	To develop and deliver interpretation and activities that increase visitors' understanding of the landscape and heritage of the Quantocks and encourage them to actively care for the area.	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	S+	N	S+	Providing information and promoting core messages increases recognition of the value of the AONB and supports protection of its special qualities.	

6. Developing Strategic Alternatives

Part 3 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, Section 12(2) states that an Environmental Report should:

‘identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of

- (a) implementing the plan or programme; and
- (b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.’

Common SEA practice uses alternatives including ‘Do Nothing’, ‘Business as Usual’, ‘Best for Environment’ options, and others specifically developed for the plan being assessed. The appropriateness of these to AONB Management Plan Review is discussed below.

Do Nothing Alternative

Preparation and revision of AONB Management Plans is required by law; therefore, this is not a viable option.

Business as Usual Alternative

This alternative considers the implications of keeping the 2014-19 Management Plan in place and assessing them against the SEA objectives. The review process has clearly identified a number of areas that require updating.

Best for Environment Alternative

The primary purpose of the Management Plan is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, it represents a ‘Best for environment’ option. The assessment of the policies has confirmed the improvements made to ensure the best environmental performance of individual policies within the Management Plan.

7. Conclusion

The findings of the SEA are that the policies in the Management Plan will not give rise to any significant adverse environmental effects.

The assessment process was conservative in its evaluation of environmental effects, applying the precautionary principle. This approach has highlighted some policies which have the potential for adverse effects at the delivery level - specifically policies relating to habitat management and extension, geological exposures and broadband infrastructure. Potential impacts for all these are minor and any residual potential for negative effects will be screened out during the development and implementation of actions and projects. This, plus the controls afforded by legislative measures to protect landscape, heritage and biodiversity will result in no adverse environmental effects.