

Fyne Court
Broomfield
Bridgwater
TA5 2EQ

Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 5th February 2019

at

2.15pm

in the

Spaxton Village Hall, Spaxton TA5 1BS

To: The Members of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Quantock Hills AONB Communication and Support Officers, Katy Coate and Amanda Sampson: tel 01823 451884, email klcoate@somerset.gov.uk and asampson@somerset.gov.uk

Guidance about procedures at the meeting is given on the last page.

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 Item No.	
1.	Apologies for absence
2.	Declarations of interest – an opportunity for members of the JAC to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter being considered at this meeting.
3.	Accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November (copy appended) and to consider any matters arising.
4.	Public question time – The Chairman will allow members of the public to ask questions or make statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting, or present a petition on any matter within the Committee’s remit.
5.	Paper A – Team and Partnership Report – Chris Edwards
6.	Paper B – Planning Report – Alex Meletiou
7.	Paper C – Management Plan Review – Chris Edwards
8.	Paper D – Finance Reports – Iain Porter
9.	Paper E – Quantock Hills LPS Update – Bill Jenman
10.	Paper F – NP and AONB Review – Chris Edwards
11.	Any other business of urgency – Future dates and locations JAC – 4th June 2019 Bicknoller Village Hall 13th August 2019 Enmore Village Hall
	Note : Further information about any of the reports for this meeting may be obtained from the report authors based at the Quantock Hills AONB Service, The Quantock Office, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Bridgwater, TA5 2EQ. Tel No 01823 451884 or e-mail : quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk

THE MEETING – GUIDANCE NOTES

1. Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect Minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Quantock Hills AONB Communication and Support Officers Katy Coate or Amanda Sampson: tel 01823 451884, email klcoate@somerset.gov.uk, asampson@somerset.gov.uk

2. Notes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and decisions taken at the meeting will be set out in the Minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. In the meantime, details of the decisions taken can be obtained from Quantock Hills AONB Communication and Support Officers Katy Coate or Amanda Sampson: tel 01823 451884, email klcoate@somerset.gov.uk, asampson@somerset.gov.uk

3. Public Question Time

At the Chairman's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about **any matter on the Committee's agenda**. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. **The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total.**

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been signed. If you wish to speak, please tell Katy Coate, the committee administrator, **before the meeting**.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chairman. You may not take direct part in the debate.

The Chairman will decide when public participation is to finish. If there are many people present at the meeting for one particular item, the Chairman may adjourn the meeting to allow views to be expressed more freely. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting.

Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.

4. Substitutions

Committee members can appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.

QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held at West Bagborough Village Hall on Tuesday 27th November 2018.

Present

West Somerset Council	Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew (Chairman)
Somerset County Council	Cllr Hugh Davies
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Cllr Gwilym Wren
Sedgemoor District Council	Cllr Alan Bradford Cllr Mike Caswell (Vice Chairman)
Forestry Commission	Mr Nick Salter
Friends of Quantock	Mr Philip Comer
CLA	Mr Hugh Warmington
Parish Representatives	Mr Julian Taylor

Also Present Martin Jones (West Bagborough PC in replacement of Stuart Parkman), Josh Schwieso (Spaxton PC), Edward Warmington, Terry Ayres (Holford PC), Paul Trolley (Broomfield PC), Iain Porter (AONB Project Officer), Chris Edwards (AONB Manager), Andy Stevenson (AONB Ranger), Owen Jones (Partnership Ranger), Katy Coate (AONB Comms and Admin, notetaker), Amanda Sampson (AONB Comms and Admin)

- 1. Apologies** Stuart Parkman (West Bagborough PC), Natasha Bradshaw (Kingstone St Mary PC), Tim Burton (TDBC/WSC Officer), Charlotte Russell (Historic England), Steve Dury (SCC Officer), Stuart Riggs (National Trust), Jo Chesworth (Natural England), Julie Cooper (SDC Officer), Nick Townsend (TDBC Cllr), Stuart Dowding (WSC Cllr), Debbie Salvidge (QCA), Alan Hughes (FofQ), Mandy Chilcott (SCC Cllr).
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
Anthony Trollope-Bellew declared being a member of Friends of Quantock, Quantock Eco, Crowcombe Parish Council and a Quantock Landowner.
Hugh Davies declared to being on the Somerset Wildlife Trust Board.
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting** – with the addition of Julian Taylor’s attendance and correction of surplise to surplus at section 9 the minutes were signed off as a true representation of the meeting.

Matters Arising – Kingston St Mary Community Partnership transport improvement scheme – Chris Edwards has responded to this consultation, mentioning a potential concern for over use of road signage but overall in support

of encouraging safe access via bikes. AONB will look forward to seeing the final plan.

4. Public Question Time – None

5. Quantock Hills AONB Team and Partnership Update

5.1 Alex Meletiou has settled in and brings a wider understanding of agriculture and buildings to the team, already this has proved useful. Alex will be reporting to the JAC every 6 months.

5.2 There has been extra funding from public health (17k) to extend the Health and Wellbeing project onto September 2019. Kristen is returning from maternity leave in the new year and Danielle is leaving in mid-December.

5.3 Chris Edwards added that Danielle has done a great job over the past year continuing the project, the JAC thanked Danielle for all her hard work and wishes her well in any new path she takes.

5.4 It is planned for the next JAC (5th February) to be preceded by a stakeholder event, this will be a chance to share the management plan and involve workshops as part of development of the LPS. Further information will be distributed in the new year.

5.5 With regard to the AONB Partnership it was suggested that the current Sol be extended for a year to give new council 'Somerset West and Taunton' time to settle before renegotiation regarding new arrangements.

5.6 The JAC supported all 3 recommendations (supports the Stakeholder Event, agrees the extension of the Sol until April 1st 2020 subject to individual Authorities agreement, supports presence of Chris Edwards and Mike Caswell at the chairman's conference) and noted the report.

6. Management Plan Review

6.1 Chris reminded everyone what makes up the Management Plan and highlighted that today will be a last look at the objectives and management plan policies. Reminded all that it was to be a light touch review, is commissioned by LA's and all stakeholders have been consulted. He also outlined the process and how the various stages have fed back and forth.

6.2 Chris also ran through the AONB Vision points and the special qualities which will remain unchanged. He also drew attention to the State of the AONB report which was commissioned to collate the various data available about the changing areas of the AONB, it is on the website Management Plan page to download. There was a mixture of findings, Water Quality (just outside the boundary) low, Light pollution worse (Hinkley and Town Spread), Historic Assets down (maybe because we have assessed and therefore know more), Agri environment up, SSSI quality up, Woodlands up.

6.3 Chris took each theme and the Management policies under each and via powerpoint ran through what had been altered or added from the last plan. Below is an outline of those amended. He asked for any comments or discussion on these changes.

Landscape Character – LP1, LP4 (new design guidance), LP5

Land Management farming forestry and catchment – edited to add in catchment LMP1, LMP2, LMP5

Wildlife and Habitats – BWH2&5, BWH1

History and Culture – HEP1

Geology and Climate – GCP2, GCP3, GCP4

Development planning and infrastructure – DPIP2, DPIP5, DPIPS6, DPIPS7, DPIPS8, DPIPS9

Economy and Visitors – all same

Access, recreation and wellbeing ARWP 1 and 2

Community and volunteering – CVP 3

Public understanding and interpretation – PUP1, 2 & 3

6.4 The JAC were happy with the above changes and made no additional comments.

6.5 Chris asked if there were any questions –

- a. Gwil Wren asked if consultation on **fracking** could fall under permitted development and added that this brings the article 4 issue forward as an important one. CE replied that Emma-Jane wrote a report for Tim Burton outlining the impact of having or not having an article 4. The issues around Fracking may move the discussion on. Currently no well head can be in a protected landscape, but you can do it outside and then go under. Hugh Davies added that all of East Quantoxhead water is served via wells, important issue to consider
- b. Hugh Davies asked about the issue of **cycling** and having potential restricted areas on the hills – CE responded that cyclists have legal right to be on any Bridleway. If 'furious' riding or drunk riding this can be challenged but generally beyond what we can enforce. Owen added that the main focus has been about education and imparting knowledge to people, so they know where they should be. Forestry Commission do have an area which they leave for riders to create wild trails which they monitor. He added that they have seen an increase in night riding. The rangers focus is trying to speak to people and educating them. Hugh Davies suggested giving advice to clubs and put info in the papers, Chris replied that the AONB and rangers do already have links into these groups. Hugh Warmington asked if it is really a problem? CE replied that it is seen as a problem by some - apart from hunting it can be one of the most common issues people mention. Commoners are particularly concerned, and they are a very important group for the AONB. Nick Salter added that there are very few incidents and he would think that the perceived risk is far higher than the actual. CE added that it may be more of a cultural divide between users rather than a real on the ground problem.
- c. Hugh Warmington asked if there was a target for **woodland** on the ground especially considering agricultural subsidies could be reducing. Chris replied that he's unsure of a specific plan of exactly where and how many, but it would be part

of any ELM scheme. He reassured that woodland and farmland wouldn't be viewed separately. Alan Bradford highlighted the scheme 'Somerset Wood' which plans to have 24 thousand trees planted as part of remembrance between Nerrols Farm and Kingston

- d. Paul Trolley (Broomfield PC) bought up the issue they have in Broomfield of many single track roads but due to lack of funding no way to link into the cycling access scheme planned from Kingston.

6.6 The JAC agreed the final draft plan subject to minor further comments/amendments.

7 Ranger Report

7.1 Andy Stevenson took us through the highlights of the rangers over the past 6 months - The Working Well Group has been running very successfully. Members are referred from MIND charity are averaging about 6 volunteers per month, work is being done mainly at Cothelstone Hill due to transport issues. They've been enjoying tree id work, walking, spending time outdoors and various practical tasks. Very worthwhile and successful for all.

7.2 Improvement to Cothelstone Hill car park. Andy also highlighted the various practical work involved in keeping the site looking as people expect. Grazing of old ponies is reducing and looking forward other means of keeping the vegetation down is being considered.

7.3 Hedgelaying – 2 training days and a competition in partnership with FWAG. Focus has been on encouraging younger people, laid about 190m in varying styles during the competition. Volunteers really enjoy this and the public really appreciate the results.

7.4 Quantock Conservation Volunteers are planned to visit Stowey woods this month and with Stowey Open Spaces group are planting 400 trees. The plan is to gradually return the area to broadleaf woodland and opening up access.

7.5 Over the summer 4 unofficial fires, lucky that the retained fire service at Nether Stowey arrived in time to control these. Swaling has started with the addition of a team of 14 commons farmers that are trained and can be called on. There has also be a trial of cut and collect, but this can prove more expensive and quite heavy in man power. The rangers are working with FWAG and Natural England to see whether there is machinery which can help.

7.6 Owen reported that the Summer Heathland bird survey results are about the be published – initial results are good. Owen will be working with RSPB to draw the report together and released it in January. Owen also reported that regarding the Pied flycatcher survey – an initial emailed report has seen slightly better year as a whole, fewest young lost and more rung than previously. 25 years so far and ongoing to see if the trends continue.

8 Quantock Hills 2018/19 Budget Highlight Report

8.1 Iain reported that at this half way point the core budget on track, variations cancel each other out. Projects budget also on target. RIA – AONB must have earmarked reserves to cover redundancy, this has proved a useful way to take money across years. In summary it has gone from a deficit to a surplus, this has been through managing to get more money coming in.

9 National Parks and Review Update

9.1 It was agreed at last meeting that the Chairman would meet with Exmoor – The Chairman reported that following his meet up with Steven Pugsley (Exmoor Cllr) and Sarah Bryan (Exmoor NP Chief Exec) the NP would not even consider with the current process of changing boundaries etc taking so long. Exmoor is the smallest NP and it would only work if there was an increase in funding. The Chairman added that the Glover review is more about looking at the process of potential change rather than actual on the ground changes.

9.2 The Chairman moved on to say that Chris will be looking for guidance from the JAC as to what he should send into the Glover review. He added that independently members and their organisations are very welcome to put their own comments in. The Call for Evidence online survey is very easy to just fill in the bits that you are concerned with.

9.3 Chris took the committee through the NAAONB's 'asks' for the point by point to establish what the feeling was about each point.

Purposes –

General support for the 3 points.

There was extensive discussion about the balance of recreation and a second aligned purpose relating to recreation. Terry Ayres and Julian Taylor suggested quiet areas or quiet days, although access to areas can't be restricted the idea of quiet days where car parks etc are closed was considered a possibility to look into. In conclusion due to the small area of the Quantocks it was considered very important that any impact on the initial purpose from an inclusion of a second aligned purpose would be carefully monitored and managed especially in the case of open access areas.

Governance –

Support for points 1 and 4.

No support for point 3 or 5

In relation to point 2, extending the review period to 10 years, it was considered this could possibly undermine the relevance of the current work and also that financial resources over this extended period were very hard to predict. Definite decision that JAC would rather to stick to 5 year plans.

(At this point 4.15pm Gwil Wren and Hugh Warmington had to leave).

Land Management –

Support for all 3 points

Planning –

There was support for all points except number 9 – extending designation offshore, the concern was for the resourcing of this as the current AONB set up does not have the expertise or resources to cover this extension

Point 3 there was concern that a duty on authorities to support delivery could potentially be without any additional funding which could put further strain on dwindling resources.

In relation to point 4 (AONB's becoming statutory consultees) although all in favour, Julian Taylor added that the impact on the current committee set up was worth considering.

There was discussion about point 5 (dedicated development plans for AONB's) how and whether they could help deliver 'duty of due regard' and how they would work in the context of Local Authority Local Plans, but Chris added that our needs are not what this point is aimed at.

Resourcing –

All 6 of these points were supported.

In relation to point 2 the Chairman added that he felt the expectation to fund with less money was not ok. Also the removal of the reference to '10 year management plans' from point 3 was suggested.

Status and Profile –

Point supported.

9.4 Nick Salter added that Forestry Commissions as an organisation are submitting a response so asked if they could not be names in this one so as not to give any conflicting responses. Philip Comer also added that Friends of Quantock will be putting their own response in soon.

9.5 Chris will circulate the drafted response once complete.

10 AOB

None

Meeting closed 4.55pm

To: Quantock Hills JAC

Author: Chris Edwards, AONB Manager

Date: 5/2/19

Subject: Team and Partnership Report

AONB Team and Partnership Report

1. Team

1.1 Nature and Wellbeing Officer Kristen Lambert returned to the team from maternity leave at the start of this month. She has taken up the role again with enthusiasm and with the additional funding from Public Health will be continuing the project until September next year. As a part of this extension Kristen will be working on establishing a sub-regional liaison network for nature and wellbeing practitioners and organisations.

1.2 The upgrade of Fyne Court's broadband to ultrafast fibre has been delayed. Currently the promised of spring 2019 start to works and summer completion (which was changed to autumn at the end of last year) has been removed from Gigaclear's website and replaced with a notice stating: *"Great News: Gigaclear is bringing the UK's fastest broadband to your property. Gigaclear is planning to install a new, Fibre to the Premises broadband network in your area over the next 4 years bringing speeds from 30Mbps up to 1000Mbps to properties included in the project. Currently, Gigaclear is finalising the rollout schedule for the coverage area and will send out communications to the properties involved as soon as the scheduling process is complete."*

2. Partnership

2.1 Working from the direction given at the last JAC I submitted a JAC response to the Glover Review Call for Evidence on the 9th December. The submitted response is included as a paper.

2.2 Development of the Big Lottery bid for the follow-on Nature and Wellbeing project is developing well with the three AONBs and the Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) working to submit a £300,000 bid in the autumn. As previously described the new project is being developed along similar lines to the current successful model, with greater resources and additional elements.

2.3 Vice-Chairman Mike Caswell and I attended the annual Chairman's Conference at the end of November last year. Mike managed to have a chat with Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Under Secretary of State Defra) who spoke with real enthusiasm about his responsibility for the future protection of our countryside. Julian Glover was not unusually giving little away in his brief presentation and Sarah Bryan, Chief Executive of Exmoor National Park Authority spoke interestingly about developing greater collaboration between protected areas. Partly in response to this I had a meeting with Sarah and two of her senior staff in Dulverton a fortnight ago. This was an exploratory meeting at which we identified a number of areas for potential collaboration and I will keep the JAC informed of developments.

2.4 At the last meeting of the JAC it was agreed that the current Statement of Intent agreed between our core funding bodies will be extended by a further year to allow the new Somerset West and Taunton Council time to become established we will commence a new Sol from April 2020. This is subject to the agreement of our constituent councils and I will be approaching OWG members to gain this agreement this month.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The JAC notes the report

Chris Edwards

February 2019

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Quantock Hills AONB Partnership

Statement of Intent 31/3/2015-1/4/2019 - One Year Extension for the period April 1st 2019 - March 31st 2020

This document extends the agreed Quantock AONB Core Funding Partners Sol 31/3/15-1/4/2019 by one year to allow the transfer of power from Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council to the new Somerset West and Taunton Council to become established prior to re-negotiating this Sol for the period starting 1st April 2020. The statements agreed by TDBC and WSC in this Sol will be deemed in good faith to apply to SW&T Council for the extended year.

As local authorities covering parts of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty we; Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council and the Forestry Commission are committed to the purpose and functions of the AONB Partnership as set out in Schedule 1 – Quantock Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee Terms of Reference.

To deliver duties and obligations arising from Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 including the operation and management of an AONB Partnership (“the Partnership”), a Staff Unit (as defined in Schedule 2) to act on behalf of the Partnership in the publishing, monitoring and review of the Management Plan. We commit together with the other partners to provide to the best of our abilities the following contributions

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Organisation	FY 2015/16	FY 2016/17	FY 2017/18	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20
SCC	£21,500	£21,500	£21,500	£21,500	£20,400
SDC	£11,500	£11,550	£11,500	£11,500	£11,500
TDBC	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	
WSC	£5,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	
SW&T					£11,000*
FC	£17,868	£18,386	£18,002	£19,502	£19,900
Defra	£153,111	£155,767	£158,446	£161,172	£163,944

*Showing contribution from the new Somerset West & Taunton Council from 1st April 2019.

Contributions will be paid to the Host Authority by June 30th in each year. The host authority is Somerset County Council and thereby responsible for administration of the Partnership's finances and employment of AONB staff.

In case of redundancy

Whilst it is envisaged that Defra and Local Authority partners contributions will be sufficient to maintain the AONB staff unit and core functions, in the event of a redundancy situation the following will apply :

- Any redundancy payments legally due to AONB Core Staff under Part XI of the Employment Rights Act 1996 or other relevant legislation on termination of employment will be met by an existing specific / ring fenced Partnership budget (Earmarked Reserves) that has been allocated to cover 50% of such costs.
- This budget will be maintained at a level to cover 50% of AONB Unit costs, excluding 50% redundancy cost of the Partnership Ranger (detailed in the Forestry Commission / Quantock Hills AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2017 - 2020), currently £24,000 for FY 2018/19, to cover compulsory redundancy costs of the current team. This figure will be reviewed annually and the budget amended accordingly, using additional funds if required, from partner (excluding Forestry Commission) contributions.
- Any redundancy payments legally due to the Partnership Ranger postholder under Part XI of the Employment Rights Act 1996 or other relevant legislation on termination of employment will be met as outlined in the Forestry Commission / Quantock Hills AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2017 – 2020.

Reduction in contributions

Any intention to reduce funding, from the contributions indicated on page 1, should be given to the AONB and host authority no less than 6 months before the end of the financial year (31st March).

<p>Signed:</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>For and on behalf of</p>	
<p>Signed:</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>For and on behalf of</p>	
<p>Signed:</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>For and on behalf of</p>	
<p>Signed:</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>For and on behalf of</p>	
<p>Signed:</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>For and on behalf of</p>	

Schedule 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The JAC shall:

- (a) act as a forum for the discussion and investigation of issues affecting the Quantock Hills AONB and to promote action by the constituent Local Authorities and relevant bodies to further the interests and purposes of the AONB and to recommend action to its constituent organisations;
- (b) co-ordinate the decisions of the local authorities in the exercise of their powers in the AONB, through the implementation of approved and existing Local Plan policies;
- (c) oversee the implementation of the AONB Management Plan and associated Service and Action Plans;
- (d) guide the operation of the Quantock Hills AONB Service (day to day management of the Service to be undertaken by Somerset County Council);
- (e) make observations on development control matters referred to the Committee for its views by the relevant Local Planning Authorities.

Schedule 2: STAFF UNIT CORE FUNCTIONS

1. MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 1.1 Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the Management Plan
- 1.2 Promoting the AONB vision and Management Plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside
- 1.3 Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan
- 1.4 Accessing resources for management activities
- 1.5 Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB
- 1.6 Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB Partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level
- 1.7 Problem solving with the unit acting as co-ordinator and facilitators

2. ADVISORY / ADVOCACY

- 2.1 Advising Local Authorities and other partners on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to attain the highest possible standards in AONBs
- 2.2 Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, sharing advice and best practice nationally and regionally.
- 2.3 Providing landscape related planning advice (to local planning authorities and in conjunction with Natural England as appropriate in line with, and underpinned by protocols)
- 2.4 Financial support for NAAONB
- 2.5 Contribution and support to activity between AONBs and protected landscapes to strengthen the status of the AONBs individually and collectively.

3. MONITORING

- 3.1 To monitor and report on progress against Management Plans and Annual Business Plans to the Partnership.
- 3.2 To provide monitoring and reporting information to Defra in accordance with any guidance issued by Defra.

Paper B

To: Quantock Hills JAC

Author: Alex Meletiou, AONB Landscape Planning Officer

Date: 5/2/19

Subject: Planning Report

Landscape Planning Officer – report for JAC 5th February 2019

Introduction

I started with the AONB service on 28th September 2018 and am employed for 2 days per week. In discussions with the AONB Manager we have concluded that a 6-monthly report of this type may be considered of value to the JAC.

To recap the current position regarding the AONB's planning status, overall responsibility for planning within the AONB (both the development of policy and the day-to-day dealing of planning applications) falls to the three constituent Local Planning Authorities which are Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council (in their current form) and with Somerset County Council in respect of County matters (minerals and waste). However, the AONB Service does have a responsibility to be involved in the planning system in order that it can properly fulfil its main statutory duty as outlined in the CRoW (Countryside and Rights of Way Act) 2000 – '**conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB**'.

Recent planning applications

From the end of September to date (23rd January 2019) the AONB has received 52 planning applications for consideration which have either been followed up from the published lists provided by the individual LPAs or by direct 'invitation' to comment. The distribution of applications between each LPA is set out below:-

Sedgemoor – 27

Taunton Deane – 13

W Somerset – 12

36 of these applications received no comments as the proposals were considered unlikely to have an adverse or significant impact on the AONB.

Of those that have received comments, the applications have fallen under the following categories:-

New agricultural buildings - 6

New residential units (domestic) - 5

Barn conversions - 3

Detached garage - 1

Footpath – 1

In just over half of these cases the comments made to the LPAs on the proposals have either been supportive or given cautious approval usually subject to specific detail.

However, the following have concerns and therefore objections have been raised:-

36/18/00014 – Jackson Lane, Nether Stowey - new residential unit

36/18/00011 – Butchers Lane, Nether Stowey – new residential unit

3/18/18/007 – Kilve – new residential unit

45/18/0012 – West Bagborough – detached garage

45/18/0015 – West Bagborough – new agricultural building

45/18/0019 – West Bagborough – 2no: new residential units

3/16/18/006 – Holford – new agricultural building

Meetings

A meeting was held on 22nd January with the Landscape Planning Officers for the Mendip and Blackdowns AONBs. Amongst items of mutual interest, a future training day was proposed, similar to one held in 2017 on the design of agricultural buildings but in this case featuring tourism and recreation. Cindy Carter from Mendip will be taking the lead for this event probably to take place in November.

Regarding pre-application advice which has been the subject of previous discussions and offered by this AONB in the past, only the Blackdown Hills now offer this service (via the particular LPA involved) but very few enquires have been received.

Future work

I would like to engage with the LPAs on the subject of prior approval notification for agricultural buildings and the lack of input that the AONB is therefore able to give in such cases. This can result in more complex and time-consuming problems arising as shown in a current case (3/16/18/0006 above). It is possible for the LPAs to issue an 'Article 4' direction which would then require applicants to submit a full planning application. Currently a prior approval notification is usually very light on content such as materials etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2. The JAC supports receiving a 6-monthly Planning Report**
- 3. The JAC notes the report**

Alex Meletiou

Landscape Planning Officer

23rd January 2019

Paper C

To: Quantock Hills JAC

Author: Chris Edwards, AONB Manager

Date: 05/02/2019

Subject: Management Plan Review

Management Plan Review

1. Progress

1.1 Timeline for the review

As can be seen from the timeline table we are now in the final stages of the Management Plan Review, the plan is at an advanced stage with the designers close to its final form. I am currently talking to members of the Officers Working Group about its adoption by the Local Authorities for whom it has been developed.

Timing	Action	Who	Status
Aug/Sept 2017	Local Authorities confirm AONB Partnership to undertake Review and indicate requirements/expectations; Natural England/Defra notified of review	Local Authorities, Natural England	Done
Aug-Dec 2017	Review of existing plan: gap analysis, relevance, impacts and new trends	AONB Manager	Done
Oct/Jan 2017/18	AONB Team undertake initial appraisal of scope of Review		Done
Nov/Feb 2017/18	Consult Partnership on scope of the Review	JAC	Done MP Review Group (OWG) 30 th Jan, JAC papers and meeting 13 Feb 2018
Jan – May 2018	Review	AONB Manager /Comms Officer (engagement/surveys/technical input)	Done/ongoing
April 2018	Initial Draft of Review	AONB Manager	Done

May – July 2018	Produce Consultation Draft	AONB Manager/ Comms Officer (design, publishing), JAC/ MP Review Group (OWG)	Ongoing JAC 17 th July 2018, MP Review Group 3 rd July 2018
July 2018	Scope requirement to amend SEA and EIA	AONB Manager	Started
Sept – Nov 2018	Six week Public Consultation on revised Plan	AONB Manager/ Comms Officer	
Nov 2018	Local Authority Comments	Local Authorities	
Nov – Jan	Final Draft prepared taking account of consultation comments	AONB Manager/ Comms Officer, JAC, MP Review Group (OWG)	
Jan 2019	Consult Natural England final draft	Natural England	
Jan-Mar 2019	Local Authorities Adopt Plan	LAs, AONB Manager	
March 2019	Plan Adopted and published	AONB Manager. Comms Officer	

1.2 Final Text

The JAC-agreed final text of the draft Management Plan has been passed to the designers with a few minor amendments. These are essentially made in the interests of clarity, they do not affect the aims, objectives or management policies of the plan. I attach a copy of the current final proof received this week from the designers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

4. The JAC notes the report

Chris Edwards
February 2019



To: Quantock Hills JAC

Date: 05/02/2019.

Author: Iain Porter

Status: Quantock Hills AONB Service 2018/19 Budget Highlight Report (mth 9 – 75%)

Due to request at Officer Working Group the budget reporting has been changed to include actual expenditure and commitments allowing a projected overrun at year end.

Key

- Budget - Budget as revised in September 2018.
- Actual to date All expenditure including invoices, payroll etc
- Commitments Open purchase orders or contracts. Also includes estimated costs of regular outgoings such as fuel for AONB vehicles.
- Projected Outrun The projected expenditure or income at financial year end (31/03/2019)
- Diff The difference in projected overrun and original budget

Quantock Hills AONB - Summary	Expenditure Outrun	Income Outrun	Required carry forward	Balance	Comments
Core	284,996	-273,041	0	11,955	Core budget was expected to overspend by £8,500 with RIA covering shortfall. Taking into account miscoding of income into RIA the balance would be £3,500.
Projects	32,089	-33,599	-9,491	7,981	Budget shows overspend as project carry forward from 2017/18 not vied across from RIA
Projects (HPC)	30,000	-30,000	0	0	Ringfenced budget with project delivery expenditure being recharged quarterly.
Projects (Landscape Partnership)	75,176	-94,792	-19,616	0	Ringfenced budget with HLF grant paid upfront, hence large carry forward.
Amenity Land	6,226	-13,084	-6,858	0	Ringfenced budget used to managed SWHT landholdings under MoA
RIA	0	-67,888	-24,500	-43,388	RIA also showing required earmarked reserve to cover 50% of team redundancy cost.
Total	428,487	-512,404	-60,465	-23,452	

Core	Budget	Actual to date	Commitments	Projected Outrun	Diff	Comments
Salaries, NI, SA	216,133	172,792	51,849	224,641	8,508	Includes pension deficit & Apprentice Levy, not in original budget
Training	1,550	1,441	280	1,721	171	
Rent, rates, electricity, water, premise insurance	13,428	3,816	11,700	15,516	2,088	Rent higher than anticipated due to SCC / NT delay in lease agreement
stationary, post, phones, printing	2,400	1,249	800	2,049	-351	
travel, vehicle costs	17,484	15,551	1,100	16,651	-833	
Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform	4,100	4,206	300	4,506	406	
Literature, publications, publicity	600	726	2,200	2,926	2,326	Management Plan design & printing
Meeting costs, hospitality	800	488	600	1,088	288	
Management Fee, Insurance	8,700	646	8,250	8,896	196	
Memberships	2,500	2,693	0	2,693	193	
Research & Development	4,300	2,308	2,000	4,308	8	
Income Defra	-161,172	0	-161,172	-161,172	0	Interim claim Jan19 + final claim 31/03/19
Income Local Authorities	-42,900	-22,500	-20,400	-42,900	0	SCC contribution recharge 31/03/19
Income Cost Recovery	-24,452	-7,652	-7,500	-15,152	9,300	Low due to mis-coding into RIA
Income Friends of Quantock	-1,000	-1,000	0	-1,000	0	
Recharge - staff posts	-34,098	-23,224	-10,900	-34,124	-26	
Recharge - SCC Pen Def & AL	0	0	-18,693	-18,693	-18,693	Recharge 31/03/2019
Total	8,373	151,541	-139,586	11,955	3,582	

Projects	Budget	Actual to date	Commitments	Projected Outrun	Diff	Comments
Nature & Wellbeing	12,904	17,330	4,232	21,562	8,658	includes new contract - BUT need to carry forward -£9,491
Hills to Levels (NFM)	8,762	8,287	0	8,287	-475	
Quantock Views	0	773	300	1,073	1,073	
HE Capacity Building	600	267	600	867	267	
Access	1,000	0	300	300	-700	
Income B/f 2017/18	-15,914	0	0	0	15,914	Not yet transferred from RIA
HECB Grant	-397	0	0	0	397	

NFM Grant	-10,557	-10,557	-2,300	-12,857	-2,300	Additional NFM grant Jan2019
Grant - SCC Public Health	0	-17,500	0	-17,500	-17,500	New contract for N&W Project Sept2018
Recharge - SCC Pen Def & AL	0	0	-3,242	-3,242	-3,242	Recharge 31/03/2019
Total	-3,602	-1,400	-110	-1,510	2,092	

Projects - HPC (RINGFENCED)	Budget	Actual to date	Commitments	Projected Outrun	Diff	Comments
GQLDF	30,000	6,676	23,324	30,000	0	
LIS	0	0	0	0	0	in-year project delivery moved to autumn 2019
Income - S106/DCO	-30,000	0	-30,000	-30,000	0	
Total	0	6,676	-6,676	0	0	

Projects - Landscape Partnership (RINGFENCED)	Budget	Actual to date	Commitments	Projected Outrun	Diff	Comments
Salaries, NI, SA	35,327	29,429	8,832	38,261	2,934	Include Pension Deficit & Apprentice Levy which will be recharged at year end
Development Officer on-costs (travel, equip etc)	2,000	1,644	0	1,644	-356	
Professional fees	38,590	11,733	23,325	35,058	-3,532	
Other costs	3,300	63	150	213	-3,087	
Income B/f 2017/18	-9,451	-9,451	0	-9,451	0	
HLF Grant	-82,170	-45,650	-36,520	-82,170	0	
Recharge - SCC Pen Def & AL	0	0	-3,171	-3,171	-3,171	Recharge 31/03/2019
Total	-12,404	-12,232	-7,384	-19,616	-7,212	Need to carry forward -12,400

Amenity Land (RINGFENCED)	Budget	Actual to date	Commitments	Projected Outrun	Diff	Comments
Contractors	10,500	5,668	0	5,668	-4,832	Woodland work + tree works now due to go ahead autumn 2019 due to delay with felling license.
Equipment & Materials	1,500	140	200	340	-1,160	
Travel costs	200	144	50	194	-6	
Equipment R&M	400	-176	200	24	-376	
Income B/f 2017/18	-9,100	-9,252	0	-9,252	-152	
Income - HLS Payment (RPA)	-3,832	-3,832	0	-3,832	0	
Total	-332	-7,308	450	-6,858	-6,526	

Receipts in Advance (RIA)	Budget	Actual to date	Commitments	Projected Outrun	Diff	Comments
Income B/f 2017/18	-53,900	-57,088	0	-57,088	-3,188	
Cross budget transfer - Project code	15,914	0	0	0	-15,914	
Cost Recovery - LMSS	0	-10,800		-10,800	-10,800	
Total	-37,986	-67,888	0	-67,888	-29,902	

1. The budget is based on SCC HR figures for salaries, NI and SA. Unlike previous years the pension deficit and apprentice levy payments are factored into the budget and the appropriate SCC contribution line increased to cover the expenditure. SCC base contribution to the AONB Service has not increased.
2. The budget below will be submitted to Defra at the beginning of February in support of the AONB Service's grant application.
3. Note that the expected carry forward has decreased to £2,312, meaning the budget in its current form is unsustainable into future years. The AONB Service is partner to a number of funding bids, such as the Landscape Partnership, as well as exploring options for increasing income from non-traditional sources.

Quantock Hills AONB - Summary	Expenditure	Income	Required carry forward	Balance	Comments
Core	301,891	-272,144	0	29,747	Increase in budget due to inclusion of pension deficit payment in AONB Budget. SCC increase their budget to the AONB to cover the payment.
Projects	11,191	-11,191	0	0	Final year of the current Nature & Wellbeing Project.
Projects (HPC)	100,000	-100,000	0	0	
Projects (Landscape Partnership)	27,216	-27,216	0	0	Final year of Development stage of the Landscape Partnership. Will hear outcome of application late 2019 / early 2020.
Amenity Land	14,750	-14,858	-108	0	Ringfenced fund to allow AONB Service to manage SWHT landholdings under a MoA.
RIA	0	-47,952	-16,000	-31,952	
Total	428,487	-512,404	-60,465	-2,312	

Core	Budget	Comments
Salaries, NI, SA	250,031	Budget now includes pension deficit and apprentice levy payments
Training	1,00	
Rent, rates, electricity, water, premise insurance	13,260	Rent higher than anticipated due to SCC / NT delay in lease agreement
stationary, post, phones, printing	3,000	
travel, vehicle costs	18,300	Increase in budget due to high % increase in SCC vehicle insurance charge
Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform	3,500	

Literature, publications, publicity	0	
Meeting costs, hospitality	800	
Management Fee, Insurance	8,700	
Memberships	2,500	NAAONB & Europarcs
Research & Development	300	
Income Defra	-163,944	
Income Local Authorities	-42,900	Includes Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset West & Taunton
Income Cost Recovery	-11,500	Includes recharge for services such as swaling, delivery of HPC projects.
Income Friends of Quantock	-1,000	
Recharge - staff posts	-32,900	Recharge to Forestry Commission (Partnership Ranger) and Blackdown Hills AONB (Volunteer Coordinator)
Recharge - SCC Pen Def & AL	-19,900	

Projects	Budget	Comments
Nature & Wellbeing	11,191	Current project due to end 30/09/2019.
Income B/f 2018/19	-9,491	
Recharge - SCC Pen Def & AL	-1,700	Recharge 31/03/2019

Projects - HPC (RINGFENCED)	Budget	Comments
GQLDF	30,000	
LIS	70,000	
Income - S106/DCO	-100,000	

Projects - Landscape Partnership (RINGFENCED)	Budget	Comments
Salaries, NI, SA	22,957	Include Pension Deficit & Apprentice Levy which will be recharged at year end
Development Officer on-costs (travel, equip etc)	1,159	
Professional fees	2,000	
Other costs	1,100	
Income B/f 2018/19	-16,146	
HLF Grant	-9,130	
Recharge - SCC Pen Def & AL	-1,940	Recharge 31/03/2019

Amenity Land (RINGFENCED)	Budget	Comments
Contractors	11,000	
Equipment & Materials	2,000	
Travel costs	250	
Equipment R&M	1,500	
Income B/f 2018/19	-6,858	
Income – HLS, CS, BPS Payments (RPA)	-8,000	

Receipts in Advance (RIA)	Budget	Comments
Income B/f 2018/9	-47,952	

To: Quantock Hills JAC

Author: Bill Jenman, QLPS Development Officer

Date: 28/10/19

Subject: Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme update

Project Officer's Report October to 28th January 2018

1 General LPS Development

1.1 General progress and LPS submission date

Over New Year and immediately afterwards we reviewed progress to date and estimated the additional time required to complete the project development, evidence gathering, and overall LCAP. Although we are making good progress, it was clear that we would not be able to make the July 2018 application window with a sufficiently robust application. It is therefore now our intention to submit the bid in October 2019.

Part of the concerns about meeting HLF requirements related to what appeared to be significantly increased requirements for forward planning – for example last November we learned that they would expect a full list of all the hedgerows we proposed to plant or restore over the 5 years, with quotes and landowner consents in place, out to 2025. Following our recent meeting with HLF, however, the conversation seems to have moved on and they have confirmed that they will be content with established practice after all – ie a list of proposed year one projects and a process for assessing further applications for funding. I'm not sure how the misunderstanding about expectations arose but the atmosphere at the last meeting was noticeably more collaborative and supportive which can only bode well for the future.

1.2 Engagement and Liaison

I visited the FUN engagement project at Exmoor NP which is just starting delivery. It is funded by Public Health and is aimed at young people during school holidays. There is some overlap of interests in the Watchet and Williton areas and good opportunities for mutual support and information exchange.

I visited The Foresters Forest LPS in the Forest of Dean, now in delivery. The key benefit was the discussion about digital outputs. FFLPS has very successfully (3000+ downloads so far) used a commercial augmented reality app that allows you swipe in historical views (old photographs or drawings) over a modern view. It is a proven product that can be used in the field or on a desktop. It would meet several of our digital ambitions in a low risk and relatively low-cost way – we would want to add audio but this would not be difficult.

1.3 Nether Stowey Library

Like many Somerset libraries NS Library is likely to pass into community management soon; there is strong local interest in a very active and engaged village, and, given the likely alternative of closure, a community take-over is probably the best outcome now. It's a historic building, with meeting room space, car parking and public toilets.

I was contacted by the Friends of Coleridge who wanted a display space in the revamped library to compliment Coleridge's Cottage (NT). The Friends of Quantock are also interested in the possibility of some public facing display space and it's easy to see value for the AONB and the LPS too.

The library is ideally placed in Nether Stowey, which is the closest thing to a tourist centre that the Quantocks have. From an LPS perspective, there is quite a critical mass of projects and activity centred on the village; we'll be working with the NS Walkers are Welcome on Health Walks and the Walking Festival, probably doing some work to the castle mound, and the local woodland volunteers will be key to both the hedgerow survey and the community woodlands project.

1.4 LPS Office Location

There have been growing concerns about the practicalities of the LPS team being based at the AONB Office. It would have been a bit of a squeeze but until now the benefits of integration have been thought to exceed the inconvenience of more crowded accommodations. However we have just heard from Gigaclear, the broadband provider, that the long planned fibre connection for Broomfield which was due to be installed in the next 12 months has now been postponed indefinitely. Poor IT connectivity is already a major issue for the AONB, and the addition of four more staff based at the office trying to use the existing copper wire connection would make the situation untenable. Unless there is an unexpected breakthrough, the LPS will need additional office space in a different location.

As it happens Nether Stowey Library has the perfect room with a fast wifi connection (so no need to create a new office requiring SCC IT to service it). Subject to agreeing a lease at a satisfactory cost, we now intend to base the delivery phase of the LPS there. There are many benefits from co-location with the community library and as noted above NS is already a hub of proposed activities, so this would be a very positive development for the project. LPS staff will still be able to work out of the main AONB offices and will be expected to ensure that the close working relationship with the rest of the AONB team is maintained.

1.5 Project development by partners

Halsway Manor National Centre for Folk Arts have written the project plan for "In the Footsteps". They have outlined a promising mixture of activities, schools work, publications,

and a digital resource for local folk and music traditions. They propose that for both impact and budgetary reasons the project should be concentrated in one year (probably year 2) and I'm happy with that plan. They are aware that the project will need to be competitively tendered.

Young Somerset are writing the project plans for Young Rangers and Quantock Futures (the apprentices). They are aware that we do not yet have HLF agreement for sole provider status. They are also interested in the digital community interpretation elements of several projects – we'd certainly want to openly advertise these contracts irrespective of value, but it is good to be able to report firm progress on the digital aspects of the project proposals.

The South West Heritage Trust are writing the project plan for their elements of Follies and Features, the built heritage elements of Quantock Volunteers, the bulk of Quantock memories which relates to archiving collections, and the whole of Understanding the Landscape (Archaeology). They are clearly the sole potential provider for data management including archiving (there is only one heritage data repository for Somerset and neighbouring areas) but other elements will need to be tendered and SWHT has not decided which, if any, it may wish to bid for.

FUSE (Somerset Outdoor Arts) are writing a plan for the first year's big event, a night-time extravaganza at Fyne Court.

Dialogue Matters are helping me to write the project plan for Quantock Futures – again they are aware that the project will be subject to open procurement but they do have good experience of the delivering the sort of consultative and consensus building event I have in mind so their input at this stage is very helpful.

1.6 Hedge Survey

HLF wanted to see a pilot of the hedge survey, and the Nether Stowey woodlanders have obliged. It's an interesting and fun activity, so the volunteers are keen, and you can cover 2 – 3 x 100m samples in a half day surveying. The survey follows Defra methodology so will also be contributing to a national picture, and fieldwork is nearly complete. I'm hoping for a volunteer to conduct the data entry and analysis which I suspect will still be interesting but rather less fun to do.

1.7 Landscape Character Assessment contract

The work by Cookson and Tickner (specifically from EJ Preece, who used to work for the AONB) is now nearly complete. There will be some minor boundary tweaks to align the LPS boundary with identifiable features on the ground, and in one case to avoid "slopping over" into what has been identified as a separate, non-Quantock landscape character area at Lilstock. A revised LPS boundary is attached.

1.8 LiDAR (light detection and ranging)

Talking to SWHT we've agreed that it is worth spending the extra £25k on a 25cm resolution LiDAR survey. This will show archaeological features much better than coarser resolutions.

It will have many other uses for individuals and organisations, so it will also have a wide legacy benefit.

1.9 Fyne Court (NT)

Early on we decided not to proceed with the Andrew Cross "Electric Experience" project, not least because interpreting his life had since become part of a wider NT redevelopment plan for Fyne Court. Instead we worked on a plan to restore the walled garden here, which would have offered huge engagement and interpretation possibilities.

Unfortunately, NT informed us just before Christmas that the walled garden was now also part of the overall redevelopment scheme, and together with the walled garden at Holnicote would be restored by new NT in-house staff. Frustratingly, given how similar NT's initial regional ideas are to the plan we were developing with local staff, their timescale does not quite mesh with the LPS submission schedule. The walled garden will be restored, it will be an excellent engagement and interpretation resource for the LPS, but NT's plans will not have firmed up enough to make definite proposals in time for inclusion in the LCAP.

NT have however confirmed that the match funding they will provide for the LPS is still secure.

1.10 Follies and Features

There is still significant work to do in terms of landowner permissions for these proposals, but the package is now coming together.

A new element has been added – restoration of the iconic white Quantock highway fingerposts. This was suggested by one of the Parish Councils, and it appears that there are quite a few such historic signposts in need of attention. They are an important part of the area's identity so this is a very good new proposal from the community.

1.11 Quantock Walking (was Quantock Links)

Nether Stowey Walkers Are Welcome have come on board as a new partner, we will be working with them to develop and promote the Quantock Walking Festival, with the objective of making it more inclusive, more accessible, and more sustainable in the longer term. It will be an investment of staff time more than money, but will have associated volunteer time and help us deliver several inclusion and accessibility ambitions.

As it happens they're also an existing Health Walks Partner in Sedgemoor DC so we will no doubt also be working with them as one of the small delivery partners for Heritage Ambassadors.

1.12 Staffing

Proposed staff JDs have been submitted to SCC for grading evaluation. We understand the process will take around 2 months.

2 Building relationships with Private Landowners securing their participation for the delivery phase

2.1 Private Landowners

I have held site visits with two private landowners interested in hedgerow restoration, plus the National Trust (who would also like to develop a grassland enhancement proposal). All are supportive in principle but we have not yet agreed a specific costed proposal.

I've also maintained liaison with the Quantock Commoners Association.

As part of the mid development review we realised we need to refresh conversations with the major estate owners as soon as possible, and translate their general interest into specific agreements.

2.2 FWAG

Iain and I went to see FWAG, who run the Farmer Facilitation group (Stewardship funded training group) covering the Quantocks are happy to help us develop the hedgerow and other land management projects and intend to expand the group area to cover the whole LPS area. FWAG's contacts should enable us to have at least a solid indicative list of potential hedgerow and other projects.

Meanwhile there are a couple of AONB landowners already interested in year one work.

2.3 Broomfield Common

The PC at Broomfield remains keen to include the Common, or at least part of it, in the LPS as a Community Woodland. There are some local sensitivities for a few individuals which I hope can be resolved by addressing their particular concerns (eg for one, privacy is probably an issue so let's not do any work near their boundary). The plan is for me to return to a PC meeting in January and seek a more formal consensus so that we can get a Management Plan outlined.

This all also hangs on Sedgemoor DC being willing to create a legal Scheme of Management, which would need to be finalised before we submit (certainly before HLF decision day).

3 Audience development including consultation with schools and local people

3.1 Schools work

We have commissioned Alice Crane of SPAEDA to develop the formal education programme and through her work I've met with several primary, special school and PRU teams. There's strong interest, especially from the Special Schools and Taunton PRU, and some promising ideas developing.

We have a target of 10 schools engaged; we're starting with a mix of Special Schools and PRUs, with Primaries from target communities within Bridgwater, Taunton, and the Quantock area itself. As always with schools work, the key is finding interested staff within the school, so as the path of least resistance meets our desired audiences we're going with the schools keenest to engage at this stage. I anticipate that more will come on board once the programme is in delivery.

3.2 Audience Development by Consultants

The visitor survey has been completed. We have just received the nearly final draft report – we have asked for a couple of very minor presentational tweaks before publication.

Heritage Insider's Audience Development work (ie identifying the people who do not currently visit the area, and why they don't do so) is also well underway – they have interviewed the young people who went on the field trip last summer and are currently conducting telephone interviews with various people from Taunton and Bridgwater. The first draft of the audience development report has been produced and returned with comments for amendment.

I am arranging a couple of focus group meetings with Compass Disability, specifically for people with mobility restrictions and another for people with visual impairments (the latter specifically about the bat monitoring project).

3.3 Other

I have continued meeting stakeholders including landowners, Commoners, key staff in other organisations and other potential project partners.

4 Review of budgets for individual projects

The draft budget has evolved significantly. It is still a work in progress.

Removing the Fyne Court Walled garden restoration costs from the draft budget does put us in a position where the working draft cash budget total is currently about £80k less than the Stage 1 total figure. This gives us some room for manoeuvre for any new ideas coming from consultation or any increased in projected costs that may arise as individual project proposals are firmed up.

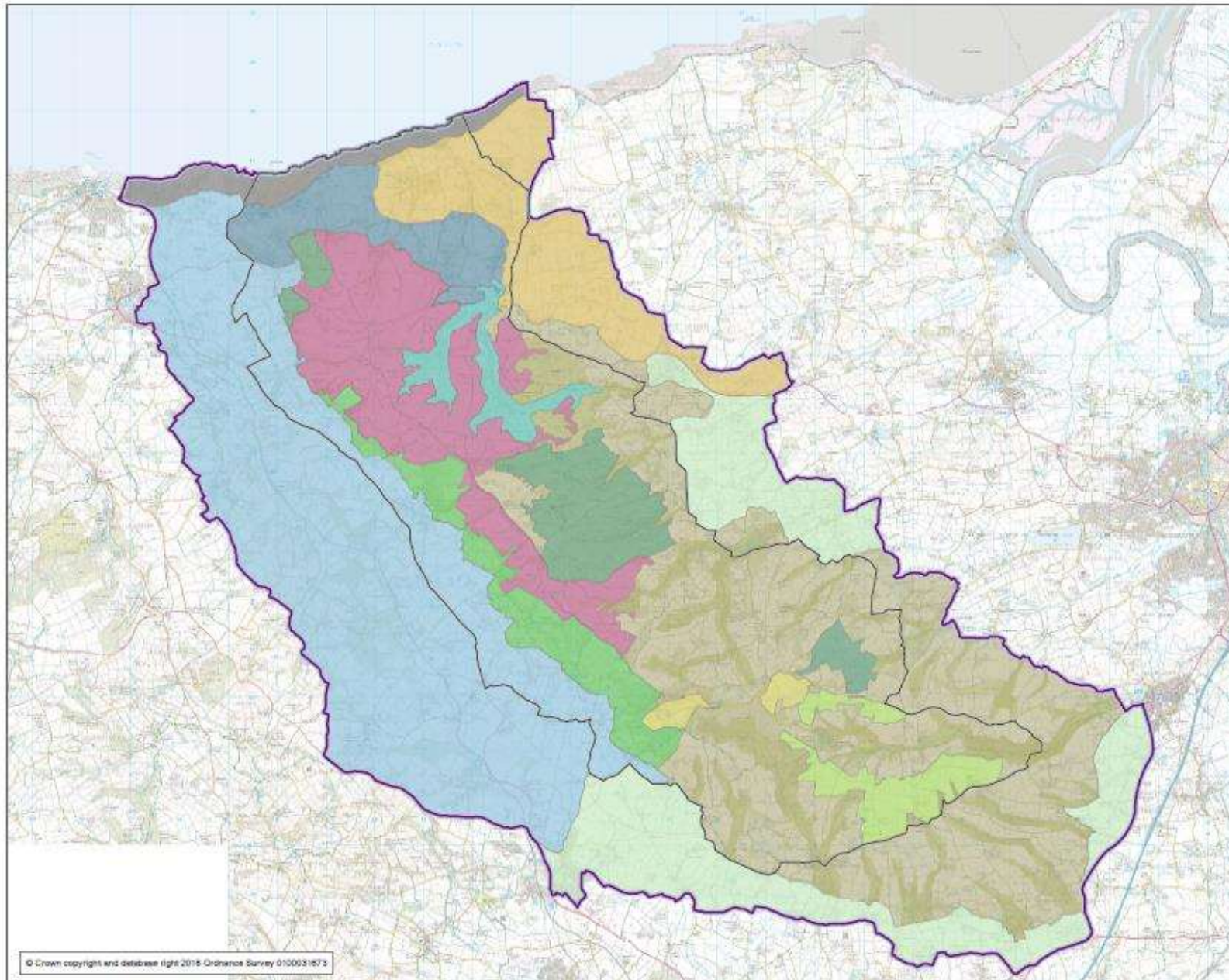
Set against this, the draft budget currently shows a ~£50k shortfall in volunteer time compared to Stage 1 projections – we will need to make this up with other volunteer input, or cash, if the total budget and grant % request is to remain unchanged.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The JAC notes the report**

Bill Jenman

January 2019



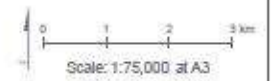
**QUANTOCK LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**

Figure X: Draft Landscape Character Map

- Quantock Hills AONB
- Quantock Landscape Partnership Area

- Landscape Character Types**
- River Valley and Agricultural Fringe
 - Agricultural Fringe to Coast
 - Arable Plateaux
 - Enclosed Wooded Coombes
 - Forested Hills and Coombes
 - Heathland Hills and Coombes
 - Lowland Hills to Coast
 - Open Hills
 - Rolling Farmland and Settled Coombes
 - Wooded and Farmed Escarpment
 - Agricultural Foothills
 - Jurassic Coast

DRAFT



COOKSON&TICKNER
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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To: Quantock Hills JAC

Author: Chris Edwards, AONB Manager

Date: 5/2/19

Subject: NPs and AONBs Review

National Parks and AONBs Review

Government Review of Protected Landscapes- Call for Evidence **Quantock Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee response submitted 9th** **December 2018.**

1. What do you think works overall about the present system of National Parks and AONBs in England? Add any points that apply specifically to only National Parks or AONBs

The English network of AONBs and National Parks delivers the significant function of protecting and enhancing this crowded nation's most treasured and beautiful landscapes.

In partnership with farmers, foresters and other land managers the dedicated staff and partnerships of these protected areas directly influence the protection and management of the landscape. Though a wide range of partnerships they deliver planning protection and projects and programmes supporting natural beauty, culture, wildlife, public enjoyment and health. This support helps maintain coherent ecosystems and landscapes that deliver a wide range of public goods and services including biodiversity, historic and cultural heritage, water quality, flood alleviation and the health benefits that come with public access & recreation in a high quality natural environment.

Each National Park and AONB provides a focus on a geographical area that crosses local government and civil boundaries, often identifying pre-existing community identities associated with significant landforms. AONB Partnerships provide a locally representative and accountable body able to draw down national and independent funding while working exclusively for the protection and enhancement of the protected area's special qualities. AONB teams and partnerships have been repeatedly shown to deliver remarkable value for money, often using the comparatively limited core funding as seed money for larger bids to heritage funding bodies to deliver protection and enhancement of the AONB.

Each AONB consultatively produces a statutory Management Plan on behalf of its Local Authorities, reviewed every five years. The Management Plan is focussed on the statutory purposes of the designation and gives an essential robust backbone and programme of activities to the work of the teams and partnerships.

2. What do you think does not work overall about the system and might be changed? Add any points that apply specifically to National Parks or AONBs

There is a widely accepted misconception that that the protection afforded to National Parks is greater than that in AONBs. Explicitly the NPPF states that that AONBs are areas of equal landscape and environmental importance however this misunderstanding can lead to a lack of proper AONB recognition across relevant authorities and the public at large. This could be addressed in part by the alignment of purposes for NPs and AONBs – add “wildlife and cultural heritage” to the current duty of AONBs to “Conserve and Enhance Natural Beauty” and add a second purpose reflecting the role of promoting public enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of AONBs. Strong clarity that the “public enjoyment” purpose is subject (and subservient) to the first purpose is particularly important for some AONBs which due to scale and/or land-use may be more vulnerable to excessive use than most National Parks. These changes to the statutory purposes for AONBs would recognise the activities already taking place and better reflect the true contribution of these protected areas.

Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 – the “Duty of Regard” - is potentially of great value however it does not seem to have had significant impact since the Act was passed. This seems to be partly wording - Section 85 should be amended to require public bodies and statutory undertakers to have “duty of *due* regard” - the enforcement body/process for section 85 also need clarification. Further to this AONBs could be made even more effective through a duty on relevant authorities to support the delivery of the AONB Management Plan, rather than simply its production.

AONBs recognise the need to be realistic and pragmatic in relation to planning, however a formal planning objection from an AONB to a planning application needs to carry more weight than it currently does - perhaps in line with County Highways and Environment Agency objections. AONB Partnerships should be given statutory consultee status for Town and Country planning matters.

The pressure of development is particularly increasing around the boundary of the Quantock Hills AONB, particularly to the west of Bridgwater and the north of Taunton. Adequate funding of Town and Country planning activity is required so that AONB officers can achieve effectively involvement in major planning applications and properly manage a new statutory consultee responsibility.

The AONBs advisory role to Local Authorities is not sufficient (or sufficiently resourced) to adequately supplement diminishing Planning Authority landscape assessment resources. In addition, the weight attached to AONB status in relation to planning can be low amongst relevant authorities, including Local Authorities and other statutory bodies. There is considerable potential for production of national guidance explaining how to interpret and apply weight to the designation, particularly in respect of other competing interests in the planning balance and other decision making.

AONBs' scope for making change is limited compared to National Parks due to lack of resources. It would be very valuable if core resourcing was aligned with the delivery of the Management Plan 5-year financial agreements with Defra and Local Authorities. This would help address the issue of financial vulnerability for AONBs. With appropriate funding AONB Partnerships could take on a statutory role both for planning and future Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMS) design and delivery.

3. What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in nature conservation and biodiversity?

AONBs – in our case the Quantock Hills AONB - have been managing partnership initiatives and projects supporting habitats and biodiversity at the landscape scale for decades. Significant leverage has been achieved through developing key local partnerships, influencing agri-environment schemes and securing external funding to restore and reconnect priority habitats and associated species. One of the core activities of the Quantock Hills AONB Partnership for the last 40 years has been restoring and maintaining coherent and resilient ecosystems which in themselves form strong Nature Recovery Networks – the language has of course changed over that time, but the necessary activities remain essentially the same. Working in this way the Quantock Hills AONB have seen the status of our large (25km²) hilltop SSSI move from largely failing to almost entirely good or recovering condition over the last 15 years – sound management reflected in the upland bird surveys showing the Quantocks bucking nationally declining trends. Developing new partnerships reconnect these networks with more distant coherent ecosystems such as those in Exmoor National Park is a challenge that we look forward to addressing.

It is clear that AONB Partnerships and Management Plans already have a central role in the restoration of nature and ecosystem services. As shown above this is in part through direct AONB project delivery on the ground but becomes most effective when the AONB “umbrella” role for land management and nature conservation organisations and individuals is fully developed. Much of the genuinely forward-looking government environmental policy enshrined in both Biodiversity 2020 and the 25 Year Environment Plan reflects a role AONBs are in many cases already delivering and are well-placed to deliver further.

The key role of AONBs in delivering nature conservation and biodiversity objectives has emerged from the primary function to conserve and enhance natural beauty, this would be better reflected in a primary purpose that includes direct reference to wildlife/habitats. There is significant support for post-Brexit Environmental Land Management Schemes to be delivered at a much more local level and many protected landscapes are eager to fulfil this role. The ability for AONBs to provide a truly joined up approach to landscape scale working based on solid locally-specific landscape character and ecological data would be significantly promoted through their management and delivery of ELMS. This work would be truly based in the land-management knowledge and business acumen of local farmers and foresters matched with the environmental expertise and local landscape knowledge of AONB teams.

There is clearly an important role for Designated Landscapes to understand and deliver climate change adaptation for these well-loved landscapes and through our work, particularly in respect of land management, mitigation measures such as carbon-capture are likely to be significant.

4. What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in shaping landscape and beauty, or protecting cultural heritage?

Shaping landscape beauty and protecting cultural heritage is central to the work of protected landscapes, however this role would be clearer if AONBs had a primary purpose with direct reference to cultural heritage. Statutory AONB Management Plans identify a Vision for the place and include a key list of “Special Qualities” that deliver detail in respect of natural beauty and cultural heritage. Protecting, promoting and supporting landscape beauty and cultural heritage is a key component of the partnership activities and projects directed by the Management Plan.

The development of a current, detailed Landscape Character Assessment for the Quantock Hills by the AONB Team has been a key step in understanding and protecting its natural beauty in the planning system. The LCA has become a core tool in managing and protecting the AONB’s landscape beauty and cultural heritage and we will continue to develop this work adding cultural layers and perceptions to the assessment and identifying extended Quantock character areas that reach well beyond our boundaries.

We work closely with Historic England and have a highly effective Monument Management Scheme that relies on AONB Volunteers to understand and monitor all our Scheduled Ancient Monuments, allowing us in partnership with Historic England to intervene jointly when issues or potential issues are identified. We have run many projects together and currently have a £2.5m HLF bid in it’s final stage (Stage 2) of development to deliver cultural enhancement across this landscape.

5. What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in working with farmers and land managers and how might this change as the current system of farm payments is reformed?

The ability of farmers and foresters to manage this landscape in such a way that its most valued wildlife and landscape features and other benefits to society are sustained and enhanced is tied to the financial viability of appropriate land management practices. The role of the AONB is to help identify those best practices for farmers and foresters and help ensure they are financially viable – often they are less profitable and efficient than more modern or disruptive forms of agriculture however the public benefits justify public funding for the shortfall.

The Quantock Hills AONB Partnership includes farming representatives and works closely with landowners and managers across a range of projects and core activities. A particularly strong example of this key role from the Quantocks started 15 years ago when the AONB Service with the support of local Farming And Wildlife Group officers brokered what was at the time the largest Countryside

Stewardship agreement in the south-west. This agreement was for Quantock Common, an area of heathland and upland oak woodland of approx. 25km² and it included multiple signatories/supporters (landowners, commoners and statutory bodies with designation interests). This agreement has been re-confirmed and amended as schemes changed and is still in place achieving excellent management of this major area of prime natural capital.

Further to this the AONB Partnership have helped bring groups of farmers together through stewardship projects - the Quantock Hills Farming Cluster was recently established through a successful joint bid from the AONB and FWAG to the Facilitation Fund scheme. Mitigation funds from EDF for the visual impact of the new nuclear reactors under construction at nearby Hinkley Point has allowed the AONB to offer land managers financial support for environmental enhancement in the protected area and have paid for us to provide training such as hedge-laying courses/competitions.

There is significant opportunity to work through the AONB Partnership and AONB Management Plans to provide the vehicle for delivering the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) to make best use of public money by maximising public goods and services. As outlined in the Agriculture Bill, future rural support schemes need to focus on delivering public goods and services outcomes, AONB Partnerships are uniquely well placed to deliver this in a locally tailored way that works with land managers rather than imposing a “one size fits all” top-down system of agricultural subsidy.

6. What views do you have about the role National Parks and AONBs play in supporting and managing access and recreation?

Both National Parks and AONBs play the key role in supporting and managing access and recreation in their areas. This is not however reflected in the statutory purposes of AONBs and should be better recognised, acknowledged and resourced.

In the Quantock Hills AONB the Partnership and Team provide numerous activities such as guided walks, talks and Nature and Wellbeing events, alongside providing access information (increasingly on-line but also printed) and waymarking for self-guided trails. Impacts of public access are addressed through volunteer activities remaking paths and litter-picking while volunteers also man on-site “pop-up” information stalls at popular locations. We provide and maintain on-site information boards, have helped develop and manage a long-distance path (the Coleridge Way that joins the Quantocks and Exmoor) and a middle-distance path around the Quantocks (the Quantock Greenway) that encourages visitors into the pubs and village shops rather than only visiting the sensitive Quantock hilltops. We also monitor and vet organised events and offer advice on scale, routes, landowner permission and minimising environmental impacts.

Our Rangers work on the ground supported by volunteers to give access and heritage advice, reduce visitor conflict and challenge illegal and anti-social behaviour. We support and facilitate public enjoyment and understanding of the

hills while working to ensure the special qualities of the area are not significantly harmed by those who wish to enjoy it.

7. What views do you have about the way National Park and AONB authorities affect people who live and work in their areas?

The Quantock Hills AONB Service is well known in and around the AONB and the work we carry out is appreciated by many - as shown through public responses and use/follower numbers of our social media and website. The nature of the relationship varies according to the people it is with and their main Quantock activity.

We have an increasingly strong and supportive role with farmers, foresters and land managers, as we have had for a long time with our large estate owners and commoners. We aim to be highly sensitive to the needs and issues of the local communities, particularly as the visitors that we are often credited/blamed for bringing to the AONB can outnumber the local community on a busy day. We work closely with many local stakeholder organisations and genuinely only function as a partnership with local support.

The extent to which we reach out to local communities and beyond for volunteer engagement is a significant part of our relationship. Volunteer numbers vary between 80 and 100 and each volunteer is genuinely engaged with the AONB Team delivering valuable initiatives across much of the work we do. These people come from local communities and help to closely embed our team and work in the social structure of the area. Beyond this we are running a Public Health funded Nature and Wellbeing project that has been delivering wellbeing-enhancing activities and events with a range of groups and vulnerable people for the last 3 years – this has taken some of our relationships into new areas and strengthened our bonds with local people.

The planning role of the partnership is of course potentially contentious within local communities, however it is broadly understood and accepted. It is surprisingly unusual that we receive complaints about AONB comments made on planning applications although occasionally village communities feel the AONB should have made stronger objections. We retain an objective landscape-beauty and character-based approach to planning issues and generally our work in this area is seen as significant and necessary.

8. What views do you have on the role National Park and AONB authorities play on housing and transport in their areas?

The Quantock Hills AONB is a tightly drawn protected area which was designed in the mid-1950s to leave out all the population areas it could, concentrating on the landscape of farms, forestry and upland heath. As such there are no towns in the AONB and comparatively few villages and hamlets, this means that our engagement with both housing and transport is limited. When we do engage in with these subject areas for example through influencing the wording and policies in a local plan we try to do so in a positive manner, while highlighting the importance of protecting of the character and special qualities of the AONB.

9. What views do you have on the way they are governed individually at the moment? Is it effective or does it need to change, if so, how?

The Quantock Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee feels that the current AONB governance structures are a good balance of local accountability and representation from stakeholders with a recognised statutory remit and detailed activity reporting. In the case of this AONB an Officers Working Group meets quarterly, as does the Joint Advisory Committee, the JAC meetings have a formal structure and are of course open to the public – alongside these core meetings occasional information and training events are held. The JAC sits within a wider consultative partnership of 60+ organisations who receive invitations and papers to all meetings. Working Groups are established on the basis of need and activity, such as the Land Management Group and the Landscape Enhancement Grants Panel.

There is capacity in this structure for further responsibility, in particular the administration of a Land Management Scheme specific to the AONB (or wider area) and statutory consultative status in respect of planning and development.

10. What views do you have on whether they work collectively at the moment, for instance to share goals, encourage interest and involvement by the public and other organisations?

The work of the Quantock Hills AONB Partnership and Service is almost entirely dependent on collective working from the nature of its governance, the collective development of the statutory Management Plan, the National Association and the joint and partnership nature of project work and even “business as usual” service delivery this approach is engrained in all we do.

We rely on the support and engagement of local people and spend significant time and resource ensuring that we are both led and supported by communities at the local level.

Our current development of a stage two HLF Landscape Partnership bid (this is the last time that particular fund will be distributed) has deepened our consultative and partner relationships with numerous stakeholders and individuals, developing new connections and our Nature and Wellbeing work with vulnerable people has brought together at a local level the previously separate worlds of environmental and public health professionals.

11. What views do you have on their efforts to involve people from all parts of society, to encourage volunteering and improve health and well-being?

We have a very strong profile in these areas - approximately 100 volunteers delivered well over 4000 Quantock volunteer hours in the last financial year, with extensive training and real responsibility taken by the volunteers. We host and share a joint Volunteer Coordinator with our nearest AONB neighbours – the Blackdown Hills and Mendip Hills AONBs. Our innovative Nature and Wellbeing work has been running for three years fully funded (other than project

development and management costs) by Public Health Somerset again delivering activities and training across the three main Somerset AONBs: Quantock Hills, Blackdown Hills and Mendip Hills AONBs. It is hosted by the Quantock Hills and delivers on-the-ground health and wellbeing activities targeted on vulnerable people, particularly those with age and mental health related vulnerabilities. We have also specifically engaged with hard to reach groups in deprived areas of local towns to get groups out into these inspiring landscapes.

This project has just received an extension of funding from Public Health for a further year and the three AONBs are working up a bid in partnership with the Somerset Wildlife Trust to the Big Lottery fund for an even more comprehensive follow-on project learning from the experiences of the current one.

12. What views do you have on the way they are funded and how this might change?

Core funding must be adequate and needs longer-term certainty from the public sector, in particular Local Authorities have found themselves in the invidious position in recent years of having to look in detail at the statutory elements of all their activities and limit funding accordingly. Only through the exceptionally strong relationships we have with our County and District Councils has the Quantock Hills AONB been able to maintain a viable level of core funding to set against the Defra contribution and this is always vulnerable.

We have explored other sources for core funding and currently receive small but very welcome contributions from a private Quantock Estate and from the Friends of Quantock society – but essentially core funding will always be dependent on public funds to deliver the public goods demanded of us. We are also highly innovative in respect of staffing arrangements with three core team members jointly funded and working with other AONBs and the Forestry Commission, some team members also receive funding from other organisations for work delivered that meets both our aims and theirs.

The level of “gearing” through project development in AONBs across the country is outstanding with the comparatively low levels of core funding allowing partnerships to successfully bid for £millions to deliver their core purposes. While this is a highly successful model it is completely reliant on the level and robustness of the core funding element, which can feel as fragile as a house of cards at times.

To secure this arrangement and make it more effective Defra funding needs to be aligned with the Management Plans by 5-year agreements, the ability and requirement of Local Authorities to fund AONBs needs to be more closely specified and resourced and additional duties placed on AONB Partnerships through this review must be fully resourced.

13. What views do you have on the process of designation - which means the way boundaries are defined and changed?

The current process for amending the boundaries of protected areas is clumsy, bureaucratic, unnecessarily time-consuming and resource hungry. The simplification and proper resourcing of this process is long overdue. It may be that there needs to be a two-level approach recognising the difference between a significant extension/enlarging of a protected area and a smaller-scale correcting of boundaries that in the current designations make no sense. These boundary “quirks” are common and should be easily rectified, in the case of the Quantock Hills we were the first AONB designated in England and clearly at that time there was a priority identified to exclude as many communities, towns and villages, as possible meaning that key Quantock communities are deliberately outside the boundary. Subject to local support it would be good to rectify this, but the demanding nature of the current process means that we have not yet explored the possibility.

14. What views do you have on whether areas should be given new designations? For instance, the creation of new National Parks or AONBs, or new types of designations for marine areas, urban landscapes or those near built-up areas

Proper resourcing of current protected landscapes should probably be established before new designated areas are considered. If the overall pot cannot be sufficiently expanded then resources need to be focussed on best practice in the existing prioritised areas.

15. Are there lessons that might be learnt from the way designated landscapes work in other parts of the United Kingdom, or abroad?

The South Downs National Park planning control model looks interesting, with planning powers maintained through Local Authorities as opposed to a more ‘traditional’ National Park approach, however it is not known how well this works in practice.

16. Do you think the terms currently used are the right ones? Would you suggest an alternative title for AONBs, for instance and if so what?

Retain the statutory designation of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but we support the rebranding of AONBs as ‘National Landscapes’.

17. The review has been asked to consider how designated landscapes work with other designations such as National Trails, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Special Protected Areas (SPAs). Do you have any thoughts on how these relationships work and whether they could be improved?

These relationships work well, however they could be closer. Designated landscapes can function very effectively as the “big tent” for the range of other

designations often found within or crossing their boundaries, this is to be encouraged.

18. Do you have any other points you would like to make that are not covered above?

A statutory advocate for landscape, championing the role of AONBs and National Parks across government would help further the integration and understanding of designations and working partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

5. The JAC notes the report

Chris Edwards

February 2019