

# Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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

on

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

At

**2.15pm  
Halsway Manor, Crowcombe**

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 Officer, Amanda Sampson on 07976 695913 or email [asampson@somerset.gov.uk](mailto: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.

<b>Agenda</b>	
1	<b>Apologies for absence</b>
2	<b>Declarations of interest</b> - an opportunity for members of the JAC to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any matter being considered at this meeting.
3	<b>Accuracy of the previous minutes</b> - Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 (copy appended) and to consider any matters arising.
4	<b>Public question time</b> - 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	<b>Paper A - Team and Partnership Report</b> (Chris Edwards)
6	<b>Paper B - Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Report</b> (Bill Jenman)
7	<b>Paper C - Planning Report</b> (Alex Meletiou)
8	<b>Paper D - Project Report</b> (Iain Porter)
9	<b>Paper E - Finance Highlight Report</b> (Iain Porter)
10	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Future JAC meetings (all start at 2.15pm)</b> (Venues TBC)</p> <p>Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021  Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022  Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022  Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022</p> <p><b>Future OWG meetings (all start at 10.00am)</b> (Virtual via Microsoft Teams)</p> <p>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021  Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022  Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022  Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022</p>
	<b>Note:</b> Further information about any of the reports for this meeting may be obtained from the report authors based at the Quantock Hills AONB Service office, Fyne Court, Broomfield, Bridgwater, TA5 2EQ. Telephone: 01823 451884 or Email: <a href="mailto:quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk">quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk</a>

## THE MEETING – GUIDANCE NOTES

<b>1.</b>	<b>Inspection of Papers</b>  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 Officer Amanda Sampson on 07976 695913 or email <a href="mailto:asampson@somerset.gov.uk">asampson@somerset.gov.uk</a>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Notes of the Meeting</b>  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 Officer Amanda Sampson on 07976 695913 or email <a href="mailto:asampson@somerset.gov.uk">asampson@somerset.gov.uk</a>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Public Question Time</b>  At the Chairman’s invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about <b>any matter on the Committee’s agenda</b> . You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee’s remit. <b>The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total.</b>  A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been signed. If you wish to speak, please tell Amanda Sampson, the committee administrator, <b>before the meeting</b> .  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.
	<b>Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, normally to two minutes only.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Substitutions</b>  Committee members can appoint substitutes if they are unable to attend the meeting.

## QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

Minutes of a meeting of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee held virtually via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday 20 April 2021 at 2.15pm**

### Present:

Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew, JAC Chair (ATB)	- Somerset West & Taunton Council
Cllr Mike Caswell, JAC Vice Chair (MC)	- Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Dixie Darch (DD)	- Somerset West & Taunton Council
Cllr Alan Bradford (AB)	- Sedgemoor District Council
Cllr Mandy Chilcott (MAC)	- Somerset County Council
Cllr Hugh Davies (HW)	- Somerset County Council
Chris Edwards (CE)	- Quantock Hills AONB Service
Iain Porter (IP)	- Quantock Hills AONB Service
Cllr Julian Taylor (JT)	- North Petherton Town Council
Philip Comer (PC)	- Friends of Quantock
Alicia Aras (AA)	- Somerset Local Access Forum
Hugh Warmington (HW)	- Countryside Landowners Association
Jo Chesworth (JC)	- Natural England
Kristina Luxton (KL)	- National Trust

### Also present:

Amanda Sampson (AS)	- Quantock Hills Comms & Support Officer
Verity Jones (VJ)	- Quantock Hills Volunteer Coordinator
Andy Stevenson (AST)	- Quantock Hills Ranger
Owen Jones (OJ)	- Quantock Hills Partnership Ranger
Bill Jenman (BJ)	- QLPS Manager
Joshua Schwieso (JS)	- Spaxton Parish Council
Malcolm Reid (MR)	- Nether Stowey Parish Council
David Stripp (DS)	- Kingston St Mary Parish Council
Edward Strachan (ES)	- Halswell Estate
Jon Doyle (JD)	- Somerset County Council
Ann Manders (AM)	- Halswell House Gardens Trust

Apologies were received from, Dr Martin Jones (West Bagborough Parish Council), John Ebsary (Forestry England), Laetitia Kelly (Friends of Quantock).

### 1. Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 ATB declared himself to be a member of Quantock Eco, Friends of Quantock, Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group, Quantock Stag Hounds, and a Quantock Hills Landowner, Crowcombe Park Gate carpark landowner with no financial benefit.

## **2. Accuracy and matters arising from the previous minutes**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

## **3. Public Question Time**

3.1 There were no public questions recorded.

## **4. Paper A – Quantock Hills Team and Partnership Report (Chris Edwards)**

4.1 The QH team have been adapting how we work with the easing of Covid restrictions and the withdrawal from lockdown. Key messages have been going out regularly via the QH social media pages, media contacts and information signs displayed at appropriate points across the hills in anticipation of high visitor numbers. The countryside code has been amended by Defra and was released on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, some valuable adjustments have been made and it is well worth a look.

4.2 As per agreement with the JAC the Honesty Box app trial has gone live with a very gentle launch and limited signage in the agreed areas across the hills, the awareness is not great at the moment, but hopes are this will increase over time.

4.3 Following the removal of the ash trees due to ash dieback disease replanting has gone ahead at Cothelstone Hill, with over 1,000 trees planted to refill the gaps. CE thanked BJ and the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme for funding this.

4.4 A report has been submitted to government and others about National Marine Parks for the UK - 10 proposals including one called the Severn Sea which would include the coast of the Quantocks. CE added that the report was produced by Natasha Bradshaw who was a JAC representative for Kingston St Mary during 2016/2017 and is a specialist in marine research.

4.5 Defra has officially advised that we will be getting a flat financial settlement - same grant amount as 2020/21. This settlement forms nearly 75% of the QHAONB core funding. Through the Agricultural Transition Plan Defra identified a new stream of funding for protected landscapes – Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL). Due to start in April 2021 we have yet to be notified on scope, amount or objectives of the funding.

4.6 CE added at the end of his report that he is planning to retire on his next birthday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

4.7 ATB - noticed that visitor numbers didn't seem to be up too much over Easter and in relation to the Glover report noting ethnic minorities groups not visiting rural England, ATB - noticed an increase in ethnic minorities visiting the Quantocks in the past year which is a move in the right direction.

4.8 ATB - dog poo seems to be an ongoing issue across the hills, far worse at the moment people seem to be leaving dog poo in bags which is worse.

BJ - some dog poo bags are being sold as biodegradable which may be contributing to this as some people may think it will break down naturally but this is clearly not the case. Raising awareness is still an ongoing issue. JT - are any dog bins being provided to help with this. CE - we do have one at Cothelstone Hill but generally if people are well out on the hills and don't have a means to take it with them the aim is to encourage 'stick and flick' to get it off the paths but generally the message is to bag it up and take it home with them. This is included in the Countryside Code. There is a substantial cost involved with having bins. JT - can laminate notices be installed around the area to raise awareness. AST - we have tried different ways to raise awareness about the issue all across the hills but the message is still for people to take it home with them. PC - the stick and flick message needs to be emphasised more where possible as far away as possible from the carparks and off the main tracks.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC noted the report

**5. Paper B – 2021/22 Budget Report (Iain Porter)**

5.1 Since 2015 the AONB Service has been delivering HPC Landscape & Visual Schemes (GQLDF & LIS). These have been delivered by the Development Officer, alongside other workstreams. To ensure completion of these schemes within timescale and budgets the Development Officer will be allocating 0.6FTE of their time for the next 12 months. This will have an impact on the other workstreams being delivered by IP.

5.2 With uncertainty to AONB funding the decision not to recruit a specific project officer to deliver the LVS was taken. This will be review on an annual basis.

5.3 MAC - the income amount of £32,300 for cost recovery, does any of this figure role into the next financial year or is it just for this year. IP – this is cost recovery associated with the Development Officer delivering the HPC S106 landscape schemes. The funding has been agreed for a maximum of 3 years but there is flexibility built in to allow faster delivery if required.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC noted the report

**6. Paper C – Rangers Report (Andy Stevenson & Owen Jones)**

6.1 There has been busy periods across the hills especially over weekends and bank holidays, some busier than expected and some quieter. Rangers and volunteers have been trying to have a presence across the hills as much as possible and reminding people of issues such as dog worrying, dog poo, BBQ's and fires. There has been a noticeable increase in people trying to camp on the hills recently and cars being abandoned.

6.2 Planting of 1,100 trees at Cothelstone Hill on areas felled due to Ash Dieback. Tree's purchased by QLPS. Lack of volunteer engagement due to Covid restrictions has been problematic in terms of general programme of works

especially swaling. Some of the commoners were able to get insurance to perform swaling under the supervision of the rangers and 6 burns were carried out.

- 6.3 Two areas of cut and collect, delivered through the LIS, were undertaken. These areas were close to highways and would have been problematic to burn. Cuttings from the cut and collect were mainly removed off-site by the contractor but some was utilised to block entrances/provide a seed bank for regenerating bare areas.
- 6.4 Over the Easter weekend it was noticeable how much litter needed to be picked up. Several of the parishes around the hills have organised spring clean litter picks. Fly tipping is less of an issue now that the waste & recycling centres are open but there are still some occasional problems. 13 fly tipping incidents recorded from October to the start of April. Local councils have been very quick to collect which has been appreciated.
- 6.5 During the winter the Rangers have replaced a number of the bird boxes used in the Pied Flycatcher monitoring programme. A donation for the cost of the timber was received from Friends of Quantock.
- 6.6 Lydeard Hill and Cothelstone hill car parks have had repairs to the surface undertaken.
- 6.7 The deer count this year had to be sub divided into smaller areas due to social distancing. The numbers are still fairly consistent with a steady increase in roe deer. The results will be going out soon.
- 6.8 DD - were there any incidents of feeding the ponies and dogs on leads on the Quantocks or was it a national campaign. AST - it was a local campaign with incidents of both across the Quantocks and also a national campaign. OJ - on the whole people have been receptive to being reminded.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC noted the report

**7. Paper D – Volunteering Report (Verity Jones)**

- 7.1 Due to Covid pandemic and national restrictions volunteering has been hard to undertake. The AONB Service has managed to get some groups out since May 2020. From 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 restrictions eased again and small group activity has been possible.
- 7.2 We have had a steady stream of volunteer interest over the past year with many people having more time on their hands one way or another and people's attention being focused on the importance of their local countryside. It has been difficult to utilise this interest. We hope that over the coming year alongside the LPS scheme and Somerset Nature Connections project, we will be able to provide opportunities for new volunteers to get involved with the AONB.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC noted the report

## **8. Paper E – Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (Bill Jenman)**

- 8.1 The recruitment process for the QLPS team was completed but a previous job application submitted by Simon Phelps, Natural Heritage Officer, was accepted by Natural England. The role with Natural England was full time and better suited to Simons interests and career plans, so he left us in December. The Natural Heritage Officer role has since been reviewed amended slightly and has been re advertised as a QLPS Wildlife Officer. The application process has started again with a closing date of the 22<sup>nd</sup> April.
- 8.2 Over the past three months BJ has been helping out with the vaccination roll-out in Wellington and Taunton part time while Jon the Community Engagement and Volunteering Officer has been running the Shepton Mallet test centre part time. These SCC/Government funded redeployments have also “recycled” about £8k back into the LPS budget to pay for extra staff time post-pandemic. Both of these redeployment positions ended by Easter as the LPS work is picking up.
- 8.3 The QLPS delivery has been affected badly by Covid so has got off to a slower start than anticipated. The budget has undergone several reviews, the staff budget has been adjusted to account for delayed recruitment, changes in hours, and redeployments but still on track. Our regular meetings with the National Lottery Heritage Fund continue to go well and they have been very supportive and flexible through this unusual year.
- 8.4 Over the course of the winter it became apparent that the proposed new car park at Crowcombe Park Gate was too small, Covid has generated a change in demand for access and parking that is unlikely to fall back to pre-pandemic levels and parking on the grass has become a more pressing issue.
- 8.5 After a lot of discussions the Partnership Board has agreed to apply for new consents for bigger car park. In parallel FoQ as a landowner of the land on the east side of the road will submit a s38 Commons application for a low bank or bollards to deter illegal off-road parking there.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC noted the report

## **9. Paper F – Financial Outrun 2020/2021 (Iain Porter)**

- 9.1 The budget has achieved a small surplus, this was due to the AONB Service being able to reclaim redeployment costs from SCC and increase contracts in the last quarter. AONB events this last year were not able to take place due to Covid restrictions so no income generated by events.
- 9.2 The project budget was overspent, specifically the Nature & Wellbeing project which ended at the end of August, this is being covered by additional income from the other project partners and the AONB reserves.
- 9.3 The Land Management budget has overspent this year which is due to the ash felling contract associated with ash dieback disease as reported previously. The



overspend will be clawed back in future years from income associated with agri-environment schemes.

9.4 2020/21 budget overrun is showing £19,300 surplus higher than anticipated.

9.5 CE - redeployment has now come to an end for QH staff and wanted to thank the team members who put themselves forward to help with this and thank JD for seeing through the reimbursement of staff costs.

**Recommendations:**

1) The JAC noted the report

**10. AOB**

10.1 ATB asked CE to assess whether next meeting will be held in person or virtually.

**Date of next meeting:**

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021, virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams.

**Meeting closed at 4.05pm**

## **Joint Advisory Committee Report 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

### **AONB Team and Partnership Report.**

#### **1. Team**

- 1.1 Home working continues with weekly 'Teams' team meetings and occasional visits to the office for essentials - volunteer groups are back on the ground where restrictions allow and site visits are going ahead where required. The Rangers are now working fairly normally including regular patrols of the hills giving advice and guidance to the public. With the further lifting of restrictions on July 19<sup>th</sup> I have been talking to the team about hybrid office/home working once we are fully allowed back to the office. The team has grown since we were first put under Covid restrictions, particularly with the QLSP team now in place, and at least until those staff move to the Nether Stowey office we will need a booking system with hot-desking at Fyne Court.
- 1.2 Jemma Gibson joined the team as the new Wildlife Officer for the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme last month, meaning that the QLPS sub-team is once again fully staffed. Jem recently finished her degree in Environmental Science at the University of Plymouth and is keen to hit the ground running, restrictions allowing.
- 1.3 Interviews will have taken place before this meeting for our new Landscape Project Officer. The successful candidate will manage our Farming in Protected Landscapes fund which has at last been funded and green lighted by Defra (see Projects Update), alongside the Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund that Iain has been managing with EDF funds. Interviews are scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> July and Iain will fill this role until we have the officer in post. The Quantock Farming in Protected Landscapes programme work will also have 12 hours a week Admin support and we are hoping to find this within the team.

#### **2. Partnership**

##### **2.1 JAC and OWG Meetings**

At the last meeting of the JAC the Chairman raised the question of whether the JAC came under local government legislation requiring post lockdown meetings to be face-to-face rather than virtual. Having checked with Somerset County Council's Democratic Services it appears that AONB management committees do carry this requirement. In the case of this JAC (20<sup>th</sup> July) we are in the long room at Halsway Manor which should allow enough space for social distancing, and we are not offering virtual attendance.

In respect of holding two face-to-face meetings (ideally spring and autumn) and two virtual meetings each year (which has been discussed as a way of still including those who can only attend the virtual meetings), there may still be a way of achieving this.

If the JAC adjusts their Constitution to mandate **2 formal JAC meetings a year** (rather than 4) **with interim informal meetings as required**, we could hold our own interim virtual meetings called something like *Partnership Update Meetings* which could of course make recommendations to the following JAC. We would be able to run them and provide papers like a JAC but they would have a different title and any recommendations would be "To advise the Joint Advisory Committee to..." Democratic Services have confirmed this would be acceptable under the 1972 Local Government legislation.

## 2.2 **Written Ministerial Statement on the Glover Review**

Statement made by

George Eustice  
Secretary of State  
Conservative  
Camborne and Redruth  
Commons

24<sup>th</sup> June 2021  
Statement

In May 2018, Defra commissioned Julian Glover and an independent panel to consider how we might improve the management of our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Their report, the Landscapes Review, was published in September 2019. It set out a series of recommendations, including that more should be done to support nature's recovery in these landscapes; that the status of AONBs should be strengthened; that there was a need to bring the family of protected landscapes closer together with more strategic oversight and greater opportunities for career progression; and that more funding should support public access to protected landscapes.

The government agrees that more funding should be directed towards making space for nature and supporting nature's recovery in our protected landscapes. Since the review was published, we have been supporting important projects in our protected landscapes through our Nature for Climate Fund and Green Recovery Challenge Fund. Our future Local Nature Recovery scheme, part of the future agriculture policy, will also support the objective of nature's recovery in our protected landscapes and beyond. I have also asked Natural England to prepare proposals for the possible designation of additional National Nature Reserves, where there is landowner support, and to consider how nature's recovery within such designations might be supported financially through our new Landscape Recovery scheme (also part of our future agriculture policy).

The government also agrees that we should do more to support public access to protected landscapes. Today, I am announcing the new Farming in Protected

Landscapes programme, which will provide additional investment to allow farmers and other land managers to work in partnership with our National Park Authorities and AONB teams to improve public access, and deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment, for people and for places.

Natural England also will be taking forward the government's commitment to designate additional protected landscapes and is currently considering the designation of four new areas.

- Yorkshire Wolds AONB
- Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB
- An extension to the Surrey Hills AONB
- An extension to the Chilterns AONB

This work will contribute to the government's commitment of protecting 30% of our land by 2030, and boosting biodiversity, while taking forward the review's recommendation to designate more areas of the country for their natural beauty.

Each of our protected landscapes has its own identity, and many of their functions require local accountability. However, we are also considering how their structures might be changed so that we can bring the family of protected landscapes closer together, and ensure there is more strategic direction nationally, while retaining their local functions. We will also be exploring opportunities to increase private investment, particularly by diversifying funding sources to include emerging markets in natural capital and other commercial opportunities. We are also considering options to strengthen the status and support given to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the recommendation to possibly change their name. The Government will be working closely with our partners over the coming months including local authorities and National Park Authorities, to address the review's recommendations in full and consult on draft proposals later this year.

### 2.3 Somerset Nature Connections

In his Project Report Iain is giving an update on the Somerset Nature Connections project (follow-on to our Nature and Wellbeing project). Please see Appendix 1 below for promotional material about the first Quantock course being run under Somerset Nature Connections.

**Chris Edwards**  
**Quantock Hills AONB Manager**  
**July 2021**



#### **Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC supports an amendment to their Constitution and ToR to mandate 2 formal JAC meetings a year (rather than 4) with interim informal meetings as required.
- 2) The JAC notes the report.

## Appendix 1



# FREE Nature and Wellbeing Courses

Learn new skills, be outside, meet new people and feel better!

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**During these inspiring six week courses we will explore the Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness, these are; Contact, Beauty, Emotion, Compassion and Meaning.**

You will learn self-care techniques including nature based mindfulness, sit-spots and gratitude. You will also get to try activities such as natural craft, outdoor cooking, bushcraft and learning to ID wildlife.

This course is for you if you are feeling socially isolated and/or are experiencing mild to moderate depression, low mood, anxiety or stress.

All activities have been fully covid risk assessed and group sizes will be limited.

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For more information and to book a space, please get in contact with Hermione.

-  The Woodland Play Centre, Crowcombe
-  The course starts on Tuesday the 20th of July and then runs each Tuesday for a total of 6 weeks.
-  Call Hermione on 07783 516611
-  Email [snc@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:snc@somersetwildlife.org)





*Reimagining the Manor*



## Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee

20th July 2021

### Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Report

#### 1. Team update

- 1.1 The team has gelled well together and even working mostly online has been collaborating on events and activities planning. We're looking forward to opening the new office in the Thomas Poole Community Library in Nether Stowey, probably in mid-August (depends on the time to finalise and sign a lease and any remaining Covid issues).
- 1.2 We interviewed 6 people for the Wildlife Officer post – we had a much better response this time than at our first attempt in February – and settled on Jem Gibson who started on 21<sup>st</sup> June. She replaces Simon Phelps (Natural Heritage Officer) who left at Christmas. Jem is a new graduate but spent her year's placement at the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and is settling in well.
- 1.3 The team has had training in Child Protection processes and procedures and also had a much more entertaining session on creative evaluation techniques from our Evaluation consultant, Kate Measures of Heritage Insider.

#### 2. Delivery

The programme is grouped into three themes, "Inspire", "Live", and "Learn".

##### 2.1 Inspire

The education programme has, at last, started delivering properly with successful school visits to the Hill, ranging from 60 primary children from Eastover in Bridgwater to a bespoke trip for 2 young people from the Pupil Referral Unit in Taunton.

The outreach programme has also been able to start properly. In conjunction with Youth Unlimited we held a week of activity sessions at Priorswood Youth Club over the Easter holidays. Jon later led a very successful site visit to Dead Woman's Ditch for Priorswood residents (one 11 year old remarked that he had only seen a pony in Minecraft before). This was the lead-in to a community mural painting project over

several weekends at Priorswood that was extremely well received. By popular request there will be a celebratory return visit in August.

Hamp estate seems to have risen up the agenda for several service providers recently and we're thinking about how we can best engage with residents there; it's a challenging location but adjacent to Stockmoor Country Park which offers more potential.

At the time of writing the £80k Young Rangers contract is out to tender with a view to starting in October. We hope that this will compliment and offer a follow-on to some of the engagement work we have been doing with young people over that last few months.

## 2.2 Live

We're moving rapidly towards submitting a fresh planning application for an enlarged new car park at Crowcombe Park Gate and the parallel FoQ s38 Commons application for a low ditch to deter illegal off-road parking on the east side of the road.

Tree survival in the areas we replanted at Broomfield and Cothelstone has been excellent (close to 100%) which is gratifying. Broomfield will need a little top-up planting this autumn which we will combine with enrichment planting in the coppiced areas at Cothelstone.

We have carried out a significant improvement to the bridleway at Watery Lane, Over Stowey (part of the Coleridge way) raising a very muddy stretch above the stream level and concealing an unsightly and unsuccessful previous attempt at a repair behind a new Quantock stone revetment wall.

Before:



After:



## 2.3 Learn

The LiDAR results have arrived and are extremely exciting – volunteers are already looking at the immense volume of data the project has generated. The data will have a wealth of other uses (we've already noticed that it has, incidentally, mapped the extent of gorse cover because it can't see through dense gorse like it can through trees) and both the processed data and, on request, the huge underlying point data set, will be in the public domain for anyone else to access.



LiDAR image of Dowsborough showing how the image “sees through” trees to map the ground beneath. The dots are charcoal burning platforms.



A close up of Wilmot's Pool (aka Withyman's Pool) . You can see the barrows, extensive evidence of medieval ploughing, even the stones placed in the pool itself to deter off- roaders.

The Cothelstone dig is running from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> July, with a prehistory day the weekend before (17<sup>th</sup>) with flint knapping demonstrations, re-enactors, etc at Bishop's Lydeard Village Green.

The village test pitting programme will start in late October at Bicknoller.

### **3. Budget**

We are on track with the revised (post Covid) budget. Our regular meetings with the National Lottery Heritage Fund continue to go well and they have been very supportive and flexible through this unusual year.

**Bill Jenman**

**Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager**

**July 2021**

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC notes the report.



**To:** Quantock Hills JAC

**Author:** Alex Meletiou, Quantock Hills AONB Landscape Planning Officer

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021

**Subject:** Planning Report

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## **Planning applications**

From 19<sup>th</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 the AONB received 70 planning applications for consideration which have been followed up from the published lists or by direct invitation to comment. At the moment this trend in rising application numbers continues year on year.

The distribution of applications between the two LPAs are listed below although two are SCC applications.

The distribution also shows the number of applications within each parish.

### **Sedgemoor**

Broomfield	- 7
Nether Stowey	- 2
North Petherton	- 5
Over Stowey	- 6
Spaxton	- <u>8</u>
	<b>28</b>

### **Somerset West & Taunton**

Bicknoller	- 4
Bishops Lydeard	- 3 (one is SCC)
Crowcombe	- 6
East Quantoxhead	- 1
Holford	- 4
Kilve	- 4 (one is SCC)
Kingston St Mary	- 3
Sampford Brett	- 1
Triscombe	- 1
West Bagborough	- 7
West Quantoxhead	- <u>8</u>
	<b>42</b>

**The applications are made up of the following categories:**

Access	- 2
Agricultural buildings	- 7
Agricultural/rural conversion to residential	- 5
Agricultural buildings to tourism	- 1
Agricultural workers dwelling	- 2
Agricultural to domestic use	- 3
Car park extension	- 2 (same site)
Conversion to holiday let	- 1
Domestic extensions	- 11
Domestic building to takeaway	- 1 (appeal)
Field shelter – equestrian	- 2
Holiday accommodation	- 8
Hotel to retreat	- 1
Minor works – residential	- 10
New residential dwellings	- 2 (including appeal)
Package treatment plant	- 1
Replacement dwellings	- 3
Replacement swimming pool and pool house	- 2 (same site)
Restaurant conversion to dwelling	- 1
Restaurant conversion to tourist accommodation	- 1
Solar panels – extension of lifespan	- 1
Telecommunications mast	- 3 (including appeal)

**70**

49 of these applications attracted a 'no comment' response. The remainder were either objected to or comments were made raising some concerns.

**Current issues**

At long last, the telecommunication mast at Broomfield which has been referred to in previous reports to the JAC, received approval on a site just outside the AONB boundary after many months of discussion between all parties. This site should have the least impact on the landscape compared to all the other sites that were explored. Frustratingly the chosen site was originally dismissed by EE's agents as not able to receive the required level of signal. However following the refusal of their Prior Approval application on their

initial choice of site and being 'pushed' by local opinion and the AONB Service to find an alternative, the site was 'revisited' and found to be acceptable.

Unfortunately this again shows that the lack of proper consultation and meaningful site investigations prior to presenting a Prior Approval application to the Local Planning Authority continues to put the protected landscape at risk and unnecessarily wastes resource time.

This lack of detail also occurred with the proposed mast at Merridge (same applicants, same agents) but this too has now been approved on a more acceptable site than that initially chosen.

There have been two significant appeals within the last 6 months. One for a new dwelling outside of settlement limits at Bicknoller, which raised many local objections, including the Parish Council and was refused by the LPA. The subsequent appeal was allowed.

The other appeal was against the refusal of permission for a takeaway outlet on West Bagborough Road. This too was allowed on the basis that the proposal was very limited in scale.

### **Upcoming news**

As part of the Government's planning reform, Permitted Development rights for telecommunication masts and equipment are being extended across the country and include Protected Landscapes known as Article 2(3) land.

Quoting from the NAAONB,

The proposed changes are:

- To enable deployment of radio equipment housing by permitting small equipment cabinets on Article 2(3) land (such as National Parks, Conservation Areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), and allowing greater flexibility for installing equipment cabinets in existing compounds.
- To enable the strengthening of existing masts by permitting limited increases in the width of existing ground-based masts without the need for prior approval, and greater increases subject to prior approval, on all land. Also allowing for limited increases to the height of existing ground-based masts without the need for prior approval outside of Article 2(3) land, with greater increases on all land, up to specified limits, subject to prior approval.
- To enable the deployment of building-based masts by permitting these in closer proximity to a highway subject to prior approval outside of Article 2(3) land. Also, whether to permit smaller masts to be installed without the need for prior approval outside of Article 2(3) land.
- To enable the deployment of new ground-based masts by permitting taller new masts, up to specified limits, on all land subject to prior approval, with greater permitted heights on land outside of Article 2(3) land. Also, whether to permit monopole masts of up to 15 metres to be deployed without the need for prior approval on land outside of Article 2(3) land.

Basically this will allow for more equipment, taller masts and less scrutiny!

Coincidentally, received today from the NAAONB,

*“The Government (DCMS) is changing the Permitted Development Rights for mobile infrastructure to allow larger items of equipment to be deployed without the need for ‘prior approval’ let alone full planning permission. The changes, with some very minor differences, will apply within AONBs and National Parks as well as the wider countryside. The department wants to reduce barriers to the roll out of better mobile connectivity (including of course 5G) to rural communities and to encourage operators to share sites. There is no evidence that the existing PD Rights in AONBs are a hindrance to this and there is very little in the proposals which recognise the importance and high sensitivity of AONB landscapes. Nonetheless the changes are set to happen”.*

What may assist however is a new Code of Practice for the mobile industry. The previous Code of Practice is essentially defunct and not fit for purpose, particularly in relation to designated landscapes. DCMS have established a working group to draft the new Code and the Association is represented on that. The status of the new code is a key issue. It will have government backing but not be adopted as formal planning guidance. We hope that this will be reconsidered.”

A not particularly hopeful sign...

**Alex Meletiou**  
**Quantock Hills AONB Landscape Planning Officer**  
**July 2021**



**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC notes the report.





**To:** Quantock Hills JAC  
**Status:** Quantock Hills AONB Service 2021/22 Q1 Summary Project Report


**Date:** 20/07/2021  
**Author:** Iain Porter



**Summary (year to date):**




Quarter 1 has involved starting up a number of projects, namely the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme and Levels Up as well as continuing multi-year projects such as the Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund. As Covid-19 restrictions have eased over the spring and summer it has allowed greater delivery, especially for the engagement type projects.

The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, which contains 23 projects, is not reported here as it has its own reporting mechanism.

Project	Progress	RAG
Somerset Nature Connections	<p>Following the success of the Somerset Nature &amp; Wellbeing Project the three Somerset AONBs joined with Somerset Wildlife Trust to develop and launch, in September, the Somerset Nature Connections Project. Funded by National Lottery Community Fund, HPC Community Fund, SCC Preventing Demand to Improve Lives Fund and the Discovery Fund the £500,000, 3-year project aims to support people to improve poor mental health, reduce demand on statutory mental health provision and to support community groups who support people at high risk of developing mental health problems, all through increasing confidence, knowledge and access to high quality natural environments.</p> <p>The project has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic with delays in recruitment of the project team and changing delivery models. The staff unit was fully recruited by March 2021 with project officers which cover the Quantock Hills now in post. Kristin Lambert, the Project Manager is currently on Maternity Leave and Kelly Bray, formerly of Avon Wildlife Trust, has taken on the role in the interim.</p> <p>Delivery has started with group work and the referral courses starting in June 2021. The running of these courses has been adapted to ensure they are Covid secure and this has meant that numbers of participants per course are lower than first planned. It is hoped that numbers of participants per course can increase or that the project can be extended to ensure the overall targets are hit.</p> <p>This project is supported by the Quantock Hills AONB Service, who secured funding from the HPC Community Fund and Somerset County Councils Preventing Demand to Improve Lives Fund.</p> <p>For more info: <a href="#">Somerset Nature Connections</a>   <a href="#">Somerset Wildlife Trust</a></p>	
Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL)	<p>As announced in the Agricultural Transition Plan in October 2020 the Government has released the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. This is a £52m fund over 3 years for all protected landscapes to support farmers and land managers through funding projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to engage with the landscape and cultural heritage or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.</p>	

	<p>Originally planned for an April launch date the Programme went live 24<sup>th</sup> June with the first application window open from 1<sup>st</sup> July. The turnaround from getting official notification to launched was two weeks which has meant a lot of work behind the scenes and the AONB Service is keen to rise to the challenge to allocate this funding to support farmers.</p> <p>For the Quantock Hills the 2021-22 allocation from Defra is £159,430 of which a maximum of £13,198 can be used for 'Admin' and £22,437 can be used for 'advice and guidance'. Due to the similarities between FiPL and the existing Landscape &amp; Visual Schemes the AONB will employ a specific Landscape Project Officer and provide some additional admin support to deliver both these programmes / schemes under the direction of the Development Officer.</p> <p>The application form and guidance is live on the AONB website and until the project officer is employed Iain is dealing with any expressions of interest.</p> <p>For more info: <a href="http://quantockhills.com">Quantock Grants &amp; Funding (quantockhills.com)</a></p>	
<p>Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund</p>	<p>In October 2014 the Quantock Hills AONB Service launched a number of schemes which aimed to deliver landscape enhancement across the affected area associated with the new Nuclear Power Station development, Hinkley Point C. These schemes are delivered on behalf of the partners, EDF Energy, Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset West &amp; Taunton Council and were funded through the S106 / DCO associated with the HPC development.</p> <p>The Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund (GQLDF) started in 2014 and provided grants to landowners, farmers, community groups and businesses to undertake small projects which will enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the Quantock Hills and area impacted by the development of Hinkley Point C, including its associated developments. Funding can be used to plant trees, plant hedgerows, create meadows, create or restore orchards. Metrics from the project:</p> <p>Enquiries / expression of interest: 192  Applications: 62 of which 49 have been approved.  Funding allocated: £150,512 with £1,591 left.  42 projects have completed.  Outputs:  2.7km of native hedgerow created. 3.9km of hedgerow managed. 222 orchard trees planted. 12Ha of unmanaged woodland brought back into management. 2,500m<sup>2</sup> ponds created. 2,000 native trees planted. 11Ha of meadow created.</p> <p>In March 2021 the AONB Service was notified that the fund had been accruing interest and that there was a further £16,000 in the budget. This along with project underspend means there is a further £20,000 to allocate. With the launch of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme and the similarities between the two funds it has been decided to run the 2 schemes / programmes side by side, meaning the GQLDF has an end date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.</p> <p>For more info: <a href="http://quantockhills.com">Quantock Grants &amp; Funding (quantockhills.com)</a></p>	

<p>Quantock Landscape Improvement Scheme</p>	<p>Another landscape scheme associated with the HPC development, the Landscape Improvement Scheme funds works on the Quantock Hills and aims to increase the resilience of existing priority habitats through creation of new priority habitats and linking existing areas of priority habitat. The main priority habitats that the project is focused on are heathlands, oak woodlands and acidic grasslands.</p> <p>The project has undertaken ground preparation works at St Audries and Ramscombe in partnership with Forestry England and is working with National Trust on their landholdings between the north and south areas of Quantock Common. To date 21Ha of previous conifer plantation have been cleared and is reverting to acidic grassland and heathland. In 2021 the scheme will be removing rhododendron and laurel from open habitat in Ramscombe and holly in the SAC woodland. The project is due to continue running until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.</p>	
<p>ELMS Test &amp; Trials</p>	<p>As the UK exits the European Union it will develop its own agricultural policy including the move to payments for public goods rather than area payments for agricultural land. One of the three pillars the UK Government is taking forward is the Environmental Land Management (ELM) system. ELM is due to come online in 2024 and Defra is keen to co-design the schemes under ELM with farmers and landowners. To inform this Defra has taken forward approximately 50 'Tests and Trials' which have been able to explore various elements of the new scheme such as the development of Landscape Spatial Framework, Land Management Plans or what the new Indicators of Success should look like.</p> <p>This Environmental Land Management systems (ELMs) trial for the Quantock Hills AONB is part of a National Association of AONBs (NAAONBs) collaboration – Farming for the Nation: AONB's as Test Beds for a new Environmental Land Management system, that includes a selection of AONB's from across England.</p> <p>The Quantock Test &amp; Trial aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) prepare Landscape Spatial Frameworks (LSF) for protected landscapes and their ecological setting that will map natural capital, landscape character, cultural capital, social capital and ecosystem services to inform and target the delivery of environmental outcomes</li> <li>b) develop and test Integrated Land Management Plans (LMP) at the landholding scale, determining whether spatial policy objectives can be translated/ interpreted to a practical management level.</li> <li>c) develop a series of indicator of success for schemes that have been developed with farmers that are, where appropriate, capable of self-assessment</li> </ul> <p>The project started in January 2020 and finishes in April 2021. The original timescale was due to be 2-years but due to delays with contract agreements with Defra it was reduced. The project has been heavily impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, especially as much of it was initially designed to be achieved through farmer workshops. While the number of farmers engaged has not been as high as first envisaged, FWAG-SW, contracted to facilitate the project, have worked very hard to seek input and feedback.</p> <p>The final project report is being delivered w/b 5<sup>th</sup> July and will be made available to OWG members when received.</p>	

Levels Up	<p>The Somerset AONB's were successful in applying to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The fund aims to deliver nature recovery projects supporting contractors and environmental NGO's in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Quantock Hills AONB is leading on 3 sub-projects which will enhance the priority habitats of the AONB. The projects are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Cothelstone Hill – selective felling of diseased ash trees and underplanting with native tree species to enhance resilience of the woodland</li> <li>2) SAC Woodland – thinning of holly in the 200Ha SAC woodlands to enhance the priority habitat</li> <li>3) Acidic Mires – volunteer training and practical works to enhance the 16Ha of acidic mires on Quantock Common.</li> </ol> <p>Originally intended as an 18 month project, due to delays by the NLHF the project is in practice a 12 month project with an end date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Tenders have gone out for the works with the practical works due to start in September. The volunteer training took place on 10<sup>th</sup> July with a total of 11 participants.</p>	
Land Management Skills Scheme	<p>Somerset West &amp; Taunton have asked the AONB Service to deliver a land management skills scheme aimed as NEETs and unemployed people. The scheme would be funded from the HPC S106 / DCO.</p> <p>The scheme aims to run 3 cycles of a 2-week course aimed at NEETS working with Somerset Works. The course will be a blend of introductory skill sessions (manual handling, H&amp;S, team building) and practical courses such as first aid and brushcutter. For unemployed participants there will be 3 cycles of a 1-week course which introducing basic skills (manual handling, tool safety etc) and opportunity to sign up to 3 practical courses such as chainsaw, brushcutter, pesticides etc.</p> <p>The AONB Service has submitted the scheme to SWT and is awaiting release of the agreement with the aim of running the first of the NEETs courses in late September.</p>	
Access	<p>A small project for access improvements where these would not be the responsibility of the Rights of Way department. These could be increased signage or small-scale surfacing works on permissive routes.</p>	

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC notes the report.





**To:** Quantock Hills JAC  
**Status:** Quantock Hills AONB Service 2021/22 Budget Highlight Report Quarter 1

**Date:** 20/07/2021.  
**Author:** Iain Porter

## Summary (year to date):

Expenditure and income across all budgets is in line with expected position at quarter 1. The budget has been adjusted to take account of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme as the AONB was informed of its allocation from Defra in June. Based on budget the expected surplus at year end will be approx. £25,000.

SUMMARY	Budget	Budget	Expenditure	Balance	Comment
	Core	£282,686	£75,677	£207,009	
	Projects	£133,650	£1,700	£131,950	SNC & Levels Up
	Landscape Ptn Scheme	£541,824	£51,811	£490,013	
	Projects [FiPL / LVS]	£244,430	£0	£244,430	FiPL and HPC Landscape Schemes – will operate zero balance budget
	Land Management	£2,000	£181	£1,819	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,204,590</b>	<b>£129,369</b>	<b>£1,075,221</b>	
	<i>RIA (b/f 2019/20)</i>	<i>£38,000</i>	<i>£0</i>	<i>£38,000</i>	
	<i>Earmarked Reserves</i>			<i>£19,000</i>	<i>To cover 50% of cost of whole team redundancy as agreed in the core funding partners Statement of Intent. Reduced in line with updated estimates from HR</i>
	<i>Reserves</i>			<i>£25,287</i>	<i>Expected reserves at year end</i>

	Measure	Budget	Performance (Q1)	Comments	RAG
CORE / REVENUE	<b>£ / % Budget line</b>	<b>£282,686</b>	<b>£75,667 / 27%</b>		
	£/% [salaries, NI, SA]	£231,556	£57,975 / 25%		😊
	£/% [training]	£1,500	£0 / 0%		😊
	£/% [rent, rates, electricity, water, premise insurance]	£12,150	£1,475 / 12%	Rent for AONB office & depot due out September & February 2022.	😊
	£/% [stationary, post, phones, printing]	£3,310	£254 / 8%		😊
	£/% [travel, vehicle costs]	£18,700	£2,487 / 13%	Vehicle leases due out July.	😊
	£/% [Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform]	£3,000	£735 / 25%		😊
	£/% [Literature, publications, publicity]	£200	£435 / 218%	Replacement of vandalised interpretation panels	😞
	£/% [Meeting costs, hospitality]	£500	£0 / 0%		😊
	£/% [Management fee, insurance]	£8,920	£8,860 / 99%	SCC management / hosting fee. Insurances include property, terrorism & computer / Employer Liability & Public Liability.	😊
	£/% [Memberships]	£2,750	£2,656 / 97%	Membership of National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) and Europarc Atlantic Isles.	😊
	£/% [Research & Development]	£0	£750 / 750%	NAAONB Climate adaptation research	😞
CORE / REVENUE INCOME	£ / % Grant – Defra	£166,239	£0 / 0%	Claimed in September (75%) and March (25%)	😊
	£ / % Contributions – Local Authorities	£45,288	£24,480 / 54%	Core contribution from SWT & SDC received. SCC contribution at FY end	😊
	£ / % Contributions – Friends of Quantock	£1,000	£1,220 / 122%	Core contribution and land management recharge	😊
	£ / % Cost Recovery - Contracts	£32,300	£0 / 0%	Increased cost recovery from contracts - HPC Landscape schemes / LMSS	😊
	£ / % Recharge – Contributions to staff posts	£35,688	£0 / 0%	Reclaimed October and March	😊
	£ / % Income – AONB led events	£500	£0 / 0%	Further income to be vied across from holding account	😊

	<b>Project (in-year budget / spend only)</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>RAG</b>
PROJECTS	£ / % [Somerset Nature Connections]	£43,300	£0 / 0%	Grants due in and out in September	😊
	£ / % spend to date [Levels Up]	£50,350	£0 / 0%	Contracts let, works due September to February.	😊
	£ / % spend to date [ELMS Test & Trials]	£1,800	£1,700 / 94%	Budget for final report. Project has completed end of June 2021.	😊
LPS	£ / % spend to date [Landscape Partnership]	£541,824	£51,811 / 9%		😊
LVS / FiPL	£ / % spend to date [HPC - GQLDF]	£20,000	£0 / 0%	Anticipated full allocation of fund by March 2021. Claims to be finalised by March 2022. Estimated budget from projects in pipeline and applications received to date	😊
	£ / % spend to date [HPC - LIS]	£65,000	£0 / 0%	Works starting in September due for completion by end of November	😊
	£ / % spend to date [FiPL]	£159,430	£0 / 0%	NEW – open for applications from 1 <sup>st</sup> July.	😊
Land Management	£ / % Contractors	£1,000	£0 / 0%	Works expected later in summer	😊
	£ / % Materials / equipment	£1,000	£181 / 18%		😊
	£ / % Income	£3,000	£0 / 0%	Expected income from BPS	😊
	£ / % Income (Agri-environment schemes)	£5,110	£0 / 0%	Expected income from HLS and CS schemes	😊

### Recommendations:

- 1) The JAC notes the report.