



**QUANTOCK HILLS JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams)**

on

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

at

**2.15pm**

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: telephone 01823 451884 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 Item No.</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 27 <sup>th</sup> October 2020 (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>Presentation - App for Quantock Trial Proposal</b> (Adam Lockyear)
7	<b>Paper B - Budget &amp; Work Priorities 2021/22</b> (Iain Porter)
8	<b>Paper C - Planning Report</b> (Alex Meletiou)
9	<b>Paper D - Project Report</b> (Iain Porter)
10	<b>Paper E – 2020/2021 Finance Update</b> (Iain Porter)
11	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Future JAC meetings (all start at 2.15pm)</b></p> <p>Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021  Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021</p> <p><b>Officer Working Group meetings (all start at 10.00am)</b></p> <p>Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021  Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021</p>
	<p><b>Note:</b> Further information about any of the reports for this meeting may be obtained from the report authors based at the Quantock Hills 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></p>

## 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: telephone 01823 451884 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: telephone 01823 451884 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 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020** at 2.15pm

### **Present:**

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

### **Also present:**

Amanda Sampson (AS) Quantock Hills Comms & Support Officer – JAC notetaker, Bill Jenman (BJ) Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager, Andy Stevenson (AST) Quantock Hills Ranger, Owen Jones (OJ) Quantock Hills & Forestry England Partnership Ranger, Jo Pearson (JP) Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council, Roger Craddock (RC) Quantock Orienteers, Colin Falla (CF) Netherstowey Parish Council, Joshua Schwieso (JS) Spaxton Parish Council, Tony McCallum (TM) and David Stripp (DS) Kingston St Mary Parish Council.

### **1. Apologies**

Laetitia Kelly (Friends of Quantock), Kristina Luxton (National Trust), Hattie Winter (Somerset West & Taunton Council), Jo Chesworth (Natural England), Dr Martin Jones (West Bagborough Parish Council), Stephen Campbell (Holford Parish Council) and Dixie Darch (Somerset West & Taunton Council).

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

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. No other declarations were given.

### **3. Accuracy and matters arising from the previous minutes (21<sup>st</sup> July 2020)**

The minutes from July were signed off as a true representation of the meeting.

## **4. Matters Arising**

CE - Recommendation 2, The JAC endorses the £6,000pa partner contribution to the Somerset Nature Connections Project – this money has now been found externally for this project which is coming from the Discovery Fund.

ATB – Very good news that Kristen has been appointment for the position of Somerset Nature Connections Manager.

ATB – Gatepost at Triscombe Stone, is meeting the Area Highways Manager this Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October to discuss this further.

## **5. Public Question Time**

No public questions

## **6. Paper A – Quantock Hills Team and Partnership Update (Chris Edwards)**

### **6.1 Team**

CE – BJ will be giving an update on the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme himself in Paper E.

Kristen Lambert has now left our employment and our highly effective Somerset AONB's Nature and Wellbeing project has come to an end. The great news is that on the 7<sup>th</sup> September, a week after finishing with us, Kristen started her new role as Project Manager of the new bigger, better version, Somerset Nature Connections (SNC).

This project has been in development with the project partners and Somerset Wildlife Trust for the last 12 months. Somerset Wildlife Trust are the host partner, so Kristen is now employed by them with us as equal partners as are Blackdown Hills and Mendip Hills AONBs.

The first Project Board meeting was held virtually a couple of weeks ago and agreed that recruitment of the three part-time Project Delivery Officers to be based in the AONBs should go ahead. While Covid-19 restrictions do impact delivery on the ground there is significant recruitment and training to be achieved first and with the unknown aspect of how long restrictions will last it is necessary to take the project forward delivering what can be delivered at this stage.

### **6.2 Partnership**

#### **6.2.1 Proposed Mobile Coffee Outlet. Tony McCallum (TM)**

Higher Ground Coffee is hoping to be able to sell at multiple locations across West Somerset, Taunton, Exmoor, the SW Coastal Path and the Quantocks Hills. The locations listed below which are within the AONB have been identified as possible locations if successful on gaining permissions from any of the landowners:

- Crowcombe Park Gate
- Triscombe Stone

- Ramscombe, Great Wood
- Cothelstone Hill
- Lydeard Hill
- Dead Woman's Ditch
- Staple Plain

Higher Ground Coffee - is considered as a 'roundsman' type of business or an 'itinerant trader' by Somerset West & Taunton and Sedgemoor councils. This type of operation does not have a permanent location and by its nature will continue to serve to a customer-base in a remote/mobile capacity. The business would operate daily on weekdays and weekends through establishing trade at various locations by agreement with the private landowners.

ATB, TM's idea wouldn't be using plastic but glass, the problem with glass is it can stay around for years and can cause problems, as can plastic. This is a landowner decision and not a JAC decision so is up to TM to get permissions from the landowners now.

AB considers this to be a very good idea and wishes Tony all the best.  
CE would be good to have some kind of agreement if this did go ahead.

ATB Requested TM to forward the proposal slide show to AS. JT Feels this project should be supported. ATB asked for anyone to make their apposing feelings known, MAC has concerns about the use of glass and would welcome an alternative to this.

TM would be very happy to pursue greener alternatives and will be looking into this. Loyalty card possibility for people returning waste to the van or a reusable cup in exchange for a coupon or stamp card for future use.

ATB paper cups would be a good possibility and recommended that TM makes contact with the Landowners about his proposal.

PC Friends of Quantock were not keen on this idea overall and would be out of character for the area and the potential for an increase in litter but would be happy to have a look at the presentation in more detail.

DS agreed with AB comments initially but does appreciate all comments that have been made.

CE thanked TM for his presentation.

### **6.2.2 Statement of Intent**

CE gave an update on the attached Statement of Intent which had been revised from comments received from JAC members.

### **6.2.3 Parish Council representatives**

CE updated the JAC on the new representation. Justin Robinson CEO of the Somerset Association of Local Councils has taken this forward for us having received 4 nominations and 4 slots to fill. Nominations are:

- Steven Campbell of Holford Parish Council
- Julian Taylor of North Petherton Town Council
- Dr Martin Jones of West Bagborough Parish Council
- Mark Philipson of West Quantoxhead Parish Council.

CE added that this was good cover from around the Quantock Hills from Parish Councils.

#### **6.2.4 Green Recovery Challenge Fund**

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid application has been submitted, working alongside several other AONB'S in the south west, still waiting for confirmation on the outcome for this but should hear something shortly.

#### **Paper A Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC considers the Mobile Coffee Outlet proposal - Considered**
- 2) The JAC adopts the Statement of Intent as shown in Appendix 1 - Adopted**
- 3) The JAC accepts and welcomes the 4 Parish Council representatives nominated - JAC accepted**
- 4) The JAC notes the report - Noted**

#### **7. Paper B – Business Plan Mid-Point Review** (Iain Porter)

IP gave an overview of the Business Plan Mid-Point Review paper. No questions or comments made.

#### **Paper B Recommendations:**

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

#### **8. Paper C – Finance Highlight Report** (Iain Porter)

IP gave an overview of the Finance Highlight report. Swaling was due to begin in the spring 2020 just as the Coronavirus restrictions began so this had to be put on hold. Hoping to catch up with other projects if the restrictions ease over the winter months.

Overspend in the Nature & Wellbeing project which was agreed with the partners and some funds are to be reclaimed from partners towards this.

Ash dieback overspend was due to the rapid increase in the disease at Cothelstone Hill. Works needed to be completed in one year instead of over 3 years.

AONB looking to reduce in-year expenditure and to increase income through existing contracts over next spring.

ATB - are there no reserves left for April 2021. IP anticipated a zero balance, which is 12 months earlier than anticipated.

MAC - having no reserves in a concern, a massive overspend on the Ash dieback, what happens if another problem arises that needs paying for. IP – where required the reserves earmarked for redundancy can be used and topped back up from income next year as long as the income is confirmed. MAC would like to see something done to put monies back into the reserves. IP the funding and income group will be started up and looking into this.

ATB - shares concerns but understands the Covid and ash dieback implications.

No other questions or comments were made.

## **Paper C Recommendations:**

### **1) The JAC notes the report. Noted.**

## **9. Paper D – Rangers Report (Andy Stevenson & Owen Jones)**

AST gave an update on the past 6 months since presenting to the JAC. The first few months of lockdown were very quiet and since easing of lockdown in May we have had increased number of visitors to the Quantock Hills as have other AONB's and National Parks. Issues include camping, an excess of cars parking outside of the designated car parks, increase in mountain bike trails created and 'wear and tear' in more remote area indicating that people are spreading out to places not generally visited before in an attempt to find their own little piece of the countryside.

A fire was started at Dead Womans Ditch which was believed to be deliberate due to no evidence of a BBQ or similar. Remarkably even though we had a very hot and sunny lockdown period this was very localised and just under an acre in size so incredibly lucky.

OJ - fly tipping has been an increasing problem during the lockdown and continues to be a problem. Hazardous Asbestos and chemical substances are sadly becoming more frequent.

Cothelstone Hill – area of bracken cutting has come back very well and the difference in the bluebells due to the lockdown and being so quiet this year has been amazing. Slow the flow work has been undertaken to tackle some of the issues with the hills shedding water rapidly. Cothelstone Hill roadside has been cleared due to Ash dieback to remove unnecessary risk.

AST updated on the Sycamore clearance and the replacement of the bender on Cothelstone Hill which is used for teaching youth clubs and schools etc. Coppicing has been carried out around the carpark whilst the road was closed.

Hawkridge Woods – Due to the presence of bark beetle the landowner at Hawkridge Woods has had to fell a number of compartments of the wood. This has had an impact on the circular walk, but the landowner will make good any damage to the route prior to opening.

Nightjar survey – Occurred during Covid-19 restrictions. With altered methodology able to complete survey of 10km<sup>2</sup>.

Pied flycatcher survey - Able to survey and monitor majority of bird boxes. Limited ringing able to take place due to Covid-19 restrictions.

AST - Since lockdown has been eased volunteer rangers have started back with limited, safe activities. The QCV volunteers which we share with the National Trust have started back for AONB Service doing various activities at Cothelstone Hill. Working Well group numbers have increased since the lockdown as the mental health impacts of the restrictions become more apparent.

OJ – AONB & FE events and shows have been cancelled in line with Covid restrictions, although small scale events can be held following current guidance. Social media – Video updates, newsletters and general updates are used to inform and educate people to use the hills sensibly.



ATB - Fires were a great risk and were far higher due to the nice sunny weather during the lockdown.

CE thanked the rangers for their hard work during the lockdown especially the engagement element of informing and educating people visiting the hills. There are a lot of new users to the countryside which is good if they act responsibly.

AB - The Covid situation has increased people's awareness of the outdoors and has increased usage.

There were no questions for the rangers.

**Paper D Recommendations:**

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

**10. Paper E – Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) Report**  
(Bill Jenman)

BJ gave an update on the QLPS. After a slow start due to Covid all QLPS staff, bar 1 have started, Vickie Sellick (Project Support Officer), Jon Barrett (Community Engagement Officer) and Simon Phelps (Natural Heritage Project Officer).

Finding new ways to work with current restrictions and hoping to start some online learning with schools through project with SPAEDA.

Crowcombe Park Gate car park Commons application had 1 objector, but no other comments and the planning inspectorate are currently making their decisions. QLPS will need to make a decision as to when to start the work.

ATB - have the QLPS team moved into the office at Nether Stowey? BJ - not yet as the logistics of having the team members in together under current Covid restrictions does not work so this has been put on hold.

AB - congratulated Bill on the outcome with the felling work at Broomfield.

There were no comments or questions.

**Paper E Recommendations:**

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

**11. Paper F – Nature Recover Plan Update** (Iain Porter)

IP gave an update on the Nature Recovery Plan. IP would like to hold virtual sessions to discuss priority habitats, visioning and species actions.

There were no questions or comments.

**Paper F Recommendations:**

**1) The JAC Notes the report - Noted**

## **2) The JAC support the setting up of specific virtual meetings for engagement in the development of the NRP - Agreed**

### **12. Paper G – Planning White Paper Consultation (Chris Edwards)**

CE gave an update on the Planning White Paper Consultation regarding reforming the current government planning system. One key elements includes zoning the country into 3 development zones.

DS - Kingston St Mary Parish Council have been doing some work on this and there are lots of mixed feelings and concerns about it. There is a lot of land that has been purchased primarily for future developed. There are lots of implications to this Act.

JT - North Petherton Town Council has expressed concerns about the removal of local democracy in planning decisions and the Green Belts being eroded and feels we need to be very cautious with how to respond to this document.

AB - 7 affordable houses built around Brent Knoll had 440 people apply, all with connections to Brent Knoll which is incredible.

JS - agrees with the other comments but feels the planning system is being blamed for the lack of houses.

HW - asked if there had been any movement with the Glover Report in terms of planning. CE on the Glover Review the government are going to respond to this in November, they haven't said how they are going to respond. More clarity on the position of the AONB's is needed as the protected landscapes will go into the protected zone but not enough information on this.

HW - the pressure on agriculture is going to be enormous, does the AONB have any plans to accommodate this pressure. CE there is so much change going on but couldn't see anything that focusses on this aspect.

ATB - the villages around the AONB need young people to thrive and this includes new housing in order to save the shops, pubs and schools in the villages. ATB urged people to please comment on this consultation by the deadline of 29<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Paper G Recommendations:**

#### **1) The JAC considers this paper and advises on further action to be taken**

### **13. Paper H – Ash Dieback Report (Iain Porter)**

IP gave a brief overview of Ash Dieback. On the Quantocks we have Ash very prevalent in the southern area and fringes, less so in the northern end. First found in UK in 2009 it has spread quickly. There is no cure and management advice from Forest Research is that, where safe, ash trees are left to allow any with a natural resistance to the disease to be used as a future seed source.

ATB - severe ash dieback makes trees very dangerous to cut down and needs to be addressed before it gets to that point where possible.

DS - is there any guidance for people about ash dieback. IP - report contains a number of links to further advice.

**Paper H Recommendations:**

**1) The JAC Notes the report - Noted**

**2) The JAC supports the local strategy with regard to management of Chalara ash dieback - Supported**

**14. AOB**

JP - Cheddon & West Monkton Parish Council would like to thank Bill, Iain, and Kristen for their support with the Climate Emergency fund application. Also, both West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Councils have submitted responses to the planning White Paper.

AB - Broomfield planning applications do the AONB get involved with these. CE our planning officer Alex Meletiou will be making comments on these.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 2.15pm, virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams.

**Meeting was closed at 4.08pm**

**Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee  
26th January 2021**

**AONB Team and Partnership Report.  
Online meeting under Covid 19 restrictions**

**1. Team**

Most of us continue to work from home with weekly Teams team meetings and occasional visits to the office for essentials. The Rangers are regularly patrolling the hills giving advice (from a distance) and acting as our eyes and ears on hill use and misuse. There have been no cases of COVID 19 within the team to date .

As advised in the April 2020 JAC papers, and supported in March by our core funders including Defra, a number of team members are on SCC's redeployment register for roles supporting their COVID 19 response. The National Lottery responded that they were prepared to allow members of our Landscape Partnership Team that they fund to be redeployed but they would not expect funding for this time to be claimed. While I was briefly redeployed last March to help get PPI out to key workers the need for Redeployment is now really kicking in to provide mass testing and mass vaccination across the county. SCC has agreed to pay the salary of Landscape Partnership staff for any periods of redeployment allowing us to offer considerably more staff time to this and currently 5 of our 10-strong team (many p/t) are being trained/working at test and vaccination sites in Taunton, Bridgwater and Wellington. Currently these redeployments are being notified on a day-by day basis, we have been clear that team members would not be available full-time as they need to maintain a basic level of their AONB roles.

Somerset Nature Connections, our nature and wellbeing project with the Somerset Wildlife Trust and the other two main Somerset AONBs has now recruited their delivery project officers. Project Manager Kristen and new Project Officer Olivia Dullaghan have joined us at different weekly team meetings to update us and keep communications strong as 'extended members' of the team.

**2. Partnership**

I have invited Adam Lockyer to give a short presentation to this meeting as Iain and I have been talking to him about a 'visitor payback' app he has started to develop, working with an IT specialist. Adam works for FWAG, but this is a private initiative of his not connected to his FWAG day-job, and we would like to work with him on a trial for this app on the Quantocks. The app, which is to be called Honesty Box, would be something people could upload to their phones that would give them an opportunity to give a small (or large!) contribution towards looking after the countryside site or area they visit, while they are at the location. There will be an opportunity for questions after Adam's presentation.

The Quantock Hills AONB Statement of Intent was confirmed by the JAC at their last meeting, I have given the final document to core funding partner officers for their records and signature & return.

We have received several complaints/concerns from residents, particularly Nether Stowey, about the number of people using and spoiling the hills during periods of restriction. This has been previously reported to the OWG/JAC and I have been responding along the following lines:

*While it is frustrating to see the amount of people, both local and from further afield, using and misusing the hills it is also unsurprising as there is so little else that people have been able to do. With the new national lockdown it is taking a little while for the meaning of the rules for those visiting the countryside to become clear, however the police are being advised to enforce the "do not leave your local area" message more strongly and this is starting to take effect around the country so I would expect numbers of non-local visitors to reduce this week.*

That message is a couple of weeks old by the date of this meeting and visitor numbers have reduced significantly. With input from AONBs around the country the National Association of AONBs have made the issues clear to Defra at ministerial level. In particular it has been made clear that when lockdown is eased if initially the countryside is virtually the only option for getting out of the house (as last time) this puts unmanageably severe pressure on countryside sites. Local police/PCSOs are actively checking on visitors to the hills at the moment and have been putting up "Do You Really Need to be Here" notices.

I attach the Agenda/Discussion Paper from the last LP Board Meeting on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> as Appendix A for info and Landscape Partnership Manager Bill Jenman has provided the following update for us:

*The LPS team have mostly been looking forward to next spring, especially since the new lockdown. The invitations to tender for the archaeological projects are going out now, while I am revising the budget and work programme (again) ready for our next meeting with the National Lottery Heritage Fund. I have also asked the Board to review plans for work at Crowcombe Park gate car park before we go ahead; there has been a very significant rise in visitor pressure in the last 12 months and we want to be sure that, whatever we do, any new car park is big enough to enable us to stop illegal parking on the grass.*

*Social media has been active with over 15,800 views of our Facebook Page and nearly 1500 responses to posts, and we'll continue to add new lockdown activity content.*

*Dan, Jon, and myself have been redeployed part time to help with the vaccine roll out and testing, although the need for our services has been quite irregular so far. Apart from being a good thing in itself, this also saves salary budget for later in the project when we can deliver more with our time.*

*Simon, the Natural Heritage Officer, left us just before Christmas to take up a role with Natural England that he applied for before the LPS, but which took a long time to come through. We wish him well and may see him again in his new role as NE Conservation Advisor soon... We're not going to rush to replace him until the dust settles a bit on the current Covid situation, but the sketch plan is to have someone new in post by the Spring half term. We are taking the opportunity to rejig the job description a bit to emphasise leading family and public events and activities, as HMRC regulations are making it*

*increasingly hard to hire in self-employed specialists on a day rate for this. We'll also be making the role full time.*

*The LPS will keep ticking over during the coming weeks, but meantime please do check out our website, [qlps.org](http://qlps.org), and boost its Google ratings.*

Finally, Fyne Court Office appears to be included in areas to receive improved broadband over the next four years under the new Connecting Devon and Somerset contract replacing the failed Gigaclear arrangement. With luck when we finally get back to the office, we will find the broadband issue is back on the agenda for upgrading. We are hoping that the system will work significantly faster on our return anyway in response to a major change in how and where our data is transmitted and stored by SCC, we transferred to this new system late last year.

**Chris Edwards**

**January 2021**

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**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC supports a Quantock trial of the developing app "Honesty Box" (recommendation to be deferred to after presentation to follow)**
- 2) The JAC notes the report**

## Appendix A

### Quantock Hills Landscape Partnership Scheme Partnership Board meeting

4<sup>th</sup> November 10.00 – 12.00 online

#### Agenda

- 1 Welcome and Introductions  
  
Vickie Sellick (PSO), Jon Barrett (CEVO), and Simon Phelps (NHO) will be joining us.
- 2 Apologies for Absence  
  
SWT Council has not yet appointed a new Officer representative to replace Joanne O'Hara.
- 3 SCC corona virus (CE)
- 4 SWHT update on working through corona virus (BC)
- 5 NT update on working through corona virus (NG)
- 6 Discussion/Information items:
  - a) 1.3 In the Footsteps; progress and programme for year 1
  - b) 1.4 Quantock Connections and 1.7 Events update
  - c) 2.1 Crowcombe Park Gate car park project update
  - d) 2.7 Community Woodlands
  - e) Recruitment – Update
  - f) LPS Comms update (VS) (verbal)
  - g) Budget revision in light of Covid
- 7 LPS Manager's Accounts and Report (BJ) – see spreadsheet
- 8 Risk Register (BJ) – The register will come to every Board meeting so members can keep abreast of any identified risks and have an opportunity to suggest any additional risks that might arise over the Scheme lifetime. There are a couple of minor updates from June.
- 9 AOB
- 10 Date of Next meeting

Item 6: Discussion/Information Items

a) 1.3 In the Footsteps; progress and programme for year 1

SPAEDA won the contract for education co-ordinator and have started work. The website with a variety of online resources and lesson plans is about to go live, and virtual schools meetings are lined up. The intended programme of outdoor events is being shifted online too, and QLPS staff and others will be supporting activities virtually.

b) 1.4 Quantock Connections and 1.7 Events update

As you would expect Covid has severely impacted the planned events programmes. We've been able to get some activities for young people at risk of offending going at Kilve Activity Centre in partnership with the relevant PCSOs, starting mid-October (at the time of writing the only first session has been delivered. It was very successful). Youth activities and therapeutic activities are exempt from the rule of 6 but most mainstream community groups and youth organisations are understandably playing it safe for now. However, once the new QPLS staff are in post an early priority will be to explore creative engagement activities, even if they have to be for smaller numbers.

c) 2.1 Crowcombe Park Gate car park project update

The application for consent under s38 of the Commons Act 2006 received one objection, from a Commoner who believes it will interfere with the pony round up and particularly should a pony need to be gathered in short notice. The objector has not responded further to my reply so the Planning Inspectorate is now determining the application on the merits of the arguments.

Xmas is now my best guess of the likely date for the PI decision – we will have to decide if we can go ahead with works this financial year once it has been received (assuming the application is successful of course). There is quite a lead in-time required for tendering etc and I think it wisest to avoid peak visitor times.

d) 2.7 Community Woodlands

The dead and dying ash trees along the roadside at Broomfield Common have been felled up to 10m either side of the road. This caused significant controversy locally; ash dieback has progressed at such a pace that a lot more trees had to be removed than local people were expecting, and where the ash was densest it has effectively been a clear fell. However the dangers posed by trees falling onto the road were illustrated during the works when one fell spontaneously in the middle of the night (the contractors very kindly came out in the dark to reopen the road and make it safe) and another fell down right next to where they were working one windless day, fortunately missing them. Virtually all the felled trees show signs of heart rot.

Communications between the LPS and within the Parish Council were not what they should have been, but as a result of the difficulties the original PC chair resigned, and the new leadership is keen to bring the PC together. Local views have moderated significantly as most people have come to understand why the work was needed, and there is now quite a lot enthusiasm for volunteering as we undertake the replanting works this winter.



At Cothelstone the AONB has been felling roadside ash for the same reasons, and we will be supporting replanting over the next couple of years there too.

e) Recruitment – Update

All staff have been appointed, with only Dan Broadbent, the Historic Heritage Officer, not yet in post. An early priority will be to review plans for work over the next 18 months or so in light of the impacts of the pandemic and reschedule practical works and review volunteering and the events programme to make them a flexible and responsive as possible given current uncertainties.

Thanks are due to Partners and other AONB staff who assisted with the interview process.

f) LPS Comms update (VS) (verbal)

g) Budget revision in light of Covid

The comparison of actual spend to budget in the attached Accounts and Report is based on the originally submitted budget. However, across most projects this has been overtaken by events far sooner and more radically than anyone could have foreseen. It is therefore already not a particularly helpful or informative basis for monitoring progress.

I have produced a revised year one working budget for NLHF and Defra which indicates a projected year one spend of some £85k, down from the £135k originally proposed. Where spend can be reallocated to a future year with confidence I have done so, but overall, there is around £60k currently unallocated in this very rough projection.

The situation is likely to remain fluid for many months to come, and no-one can say with confidence when “normality” will return. By January however the new team will have had a chance to bed in and we will have had some collective discussions about the future; and of course, we’ll be three months further down the line in terms of Covid response which may or may not bring greater clarity.

I therefore propose to bring a more comprehensive revised budget and work programme to the next meeting for a fuller discussion.

**To:** Quantock Hills JAC

**From:** Iain Porter, Development Officer

26/01/2021

## **Quantock Hills AONB – Budget & work priorities 2021-22**

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### **1. Introduction**

- a. The Quantock Hills AONB Partnership is required to submit its grant application to Defra by the end of January. This report sets out the budget and main work areas that will form the basis of the grant application.

### **2. 2021-22 Work Priorities**

- a. Work priorities and business planning is directed by the Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan and priorities of funders (Defra, local authorities). For 2021 / 22 these will include:
  - i. Maintaining 'on-the-ground' staff and volunteers for visitor management and land management.
  - ii. Provision of Nature & Wellbeing engagement through the Somerset Nature Connections Project.
  - iii. Provide opportunities for engagement through volunteering in a variety of roles.
  - iv. Development of a Nature Recovery Plan and embedding into statutory management plans and linking to national Local Nature Recovery initiatives.
  - v. Advocacy of agri-environment schemes including ensuring farmers / landowners are engaged with Environmental Land Management (ELM) through Defra's Farming in Protected Landscapes initiative.
  - vi. Nature recovery actions through externally funded projects
    1. Levels Up (NLHF funded). Woodland resilience, woodland improvement, mires enhancement.
    2. Landscape Improvement Scheme (EDF S106 funded) land management works to join priority habitats
    3. Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund (EDF S106 funded). Creation of new hedgerows, tree planting
  - vii. Support and administration of the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme delivering engagement, landscape improvements and historic heritage works
  - viii. Provision of training in land management skills for young people to support growth in economic activity in the Quantock Hills and surrounds.
- b. The business plan will take account of opportunities and threats that may be realised during the year. This could include further impacts from the covid-19 pandemic or in-year funding opportunities, such as this year's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

### 3. Assumptions made for budgeting purposes

- a. There is currently a lot of uncertainty over how the medium-term funding 'landscape' will look. The Landscape Review into National Parks and AONBs, the Agricultural Transition Plan and the local authority structure in Somerset all have the potential to change how the AONB is funded and operates.
- b. However, it is necessary to make assumptions, especially in terms of next year's budget. The following assumptions have been made:
  - i. Core staff unit remains at present level (in terms of number of staff and hours)
  - ii. Core expenditure is comparable to 2020/21 levels in terms of accommodation, vehicle and travel costs and partnership running costs.
  - iii. Inflationary increase of 2% is applied to salaries
  - iv. Local authority contributions remain have minor increase as detailed in the Statement of Intent and any change in local authority structure locally will not be in place within the next financial year.
  - v. National government (defra) contributions remain at current levels.

### 4. 2021-22 Budget

- a. The budget below reflects costs that are known or estimated for next year. It is important to note that the expenditure of the core budget exceeds the income. Over the last 3 years the deficit has been met from reserves. This is not a sustainable solution and the Funding & Income Working Group is looking at options, though we are aware that the outcomes of the Landscape Review could significantly impact on the way in which AONBs are managed, including their funding.
- b. In the short term the AONB Service is investigating reducing core expenditure through items such as vehicle purchasing instead of new leases, office costs and increasing cost recovery through projects.
- c. Table 1 shows the proposed summary budgets for the AONB along with the 2020/21 figures for comparison.

Table 1: Quantock Hills AONB budgets 2021-22

Core	2020/21	2021/22	Notes
Salaries, NI, SA	241,600	249,556	Includes pension deficit charge which is reimbursed by SCC if payable
Training	1,600	1,500	
Rent, rates, electricity, water	13,260	11,350	Insurance moved to different budget
stationary, post, phones, printing	3,000	3,310	
travel, vehicle costs	18,100	18,700	
Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform	3,500	3,000	
Literature, publications, publicity	0	200	
Meeting costs, hospitality	800	600	
Management Fee, Insurance	8,700	8,920	
Memberships	2,500	2,750	

Research & Development	2,300	0	
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>295,360</b>	<b>299,886</b>	
Income Defra	-166,239	-166,300	
Income Local Authorities	-44,400	-45,288	
Income Cost Recovery	-8,500	-18,800	
Income Friends of Quantock	-1,000	-1,000	
Recharge - staff posts	-34,174	-35,688	
Recharge - SCC Pen Def & AL	-18,800	-18,864	
Funds from reserves	-24,300		
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>-297,413</b>	<b>-285,940</b>	
<i>Balance (to nearest £10)</i>	<i>-2,040</i>	<i>13,946</i>	
<b>Projects</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	
Nature & Wellbeing	9,379	-	
Somerset Nature Connections	43,300	43,300	
Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund	25,000	20,000	
Quantock Landscape Improvement Scheme	20,000	65,000	
ELMS T&T	49,485	-	
ELM Advocacy	7,202	-	
Levels Up	-	50,350	
Mires Project	1,854	-	
Access	1,000	-	
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>157,220</b>	<b>178,650</b>	
Defra	-54,687	-	ELMS T&T, ELM Advocacy
HPC S106	-45,000	-85,000	
Somerset County Council (Prevent Demand Fund)	-13,300	-13,300	Somerset Nature Connections
Somerset Community Foundation	-30,000	-30,000	Somerset Nature Connections
National Association of AONBs	-2,000	-	ELM Advocacy
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	-50,350	Level's UP
Friends of Quantock	-1,854	-	
Fund from Reserves	-4,400	-	
AONBs contribution	-2,800	-	
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>-154,041</b>	<b>-178,650</b>	
<i>Balance</i>	<i>3,180</i>	<i>0</i>	
<b>Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	
Expenditure	250,000	643,270	Ring-fenced budget
Income	--250,000	-643,270	
<i>Balance</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	
<b>Land Management</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	
Expenditure	31,675	2,000	Income from 2021/22 used to cover deficit from 2020/21
Income	-22,810	-11,910	
<i>Balance</i>	<i>8,870</i>	<i>-9,910</i>	
<b>RIA</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	
Expenditure	38,500	0	
Income	-72,975	-24,991	b/f from previous year
<i>Balance</i>	<i>-34,480</i>	<i>-24,991</i>	
<i>Earmarked reserves (redundancy cover)</i>	<i>19,000</i>	<i>19,000</i>	
<b>SURPLUS / DEFICIT</b>	<b>5,990</b>	<b>1,955</b>	

## Recommendations:

### 1) The JAC notes the report

**To:** Quantock Hills JAC  
**Author:** Alex Meletiou Quantock Hills AONB Landscape Planning Officer  
**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021  
**Subject:** Planning Report

## **Planning applications**

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 to 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 the AONB received 62 planning applications for consideration which have been followed up from the published lists or by direct invitation to comment. This is almost a 50% increase for the same period last year and a 21% increase over the previous 6 months.

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

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

### **Sedgemoor**

Bridgwater	- 1
Broomfield	- 9
Over Stowey	- 12
Spaxton	- 6
	28

### **Somerset West and Taunton**

Bicknoller	- 6
Bishops Lydeard	- 2
Crowcombe	- 1
Crowcombe H'thfield	- 1
East Quantoxhead	- 1
Holford	- 6
Kilve	- 6
Kingston St Mary	- 1
West Bagborough	- 4
West Quantoxhead	- 5
West Monkton	- 1
	34

The applications are made up of the following categories:

Agricultural buildings	- 1
Agricultural/rural conversion to residential	- 7
Agricultural workers dwelling	- 2
Agricultural to equestrian	- 1
Caravans, tree-house, holiday let	- 5
Domestic extensions, annex, materials, access	- 23
Domestic buildings to residential	- 2
Domestic building to takeaway	- 1
Garden buildings, garages, office	- 6
Graveyard	- 1
Lawful Development Certificate	- 2
Major development	- 1
New residential	- 4

Solar panels – extension of lifespan	- 1
Solar panels – roof	- 1
Telecommunications mast	- 2
Tied residential to private dwelling	- 1
	62

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

### **Current issues**

The Committee will recall that an application for a telecommunications mast at Broomfield was withdrawn last year (see JAC Planning Report 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020). In November 2020 a new application was made based on the same location. Although a better presented application, little extra effort had been made to properly assess other sites and this was pointed out by the AONB in its objection. (The site is very prominent).

This application was subsequently refused by Sedgemoor DC. However this is on the back of continuing dialogue with EE's agents and at least two other sites are now being explored, one outside of the AONB boundary.

Unfortunately, in applications such as these, sites are generally chosen by applicants for their ease of access and landowner acquiescence, with only lip service given to the harm an installation might do to the protected landscape.

Another site in Merridge (see JAC Planning Report 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020) is also still under consideration and ongoing discussions continue.

The appeal over the agricultural building at Holford (Strawberry Fields) was concluded and the Local Planning Authority's refusal of planning permission was upheld.

### **Upcoming news**

A new Government consultation '**Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure**' has been launched. This is aimed at increasing the country's housing stock. The Government are looking to add a further permitted development right to convert any Class E use (Commercial, Business and Service – shops, bars, restaurants, offices, indoor sports facilities, health services, day nurseries etc, or principally being a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area). The right would allow for the change of use from any Class E use, or mix of uses, to residential. However this right would not apply to article 2(3) land, which includes AONBs but would apply to conservation areas, where Prior Approval would be required to assess the impact on the loss of the ground floor use to residential, recognising the conservation value that retail frontage can bring to conservation areas.

The consultation process closes on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **1) The JAC notes the report**



**To.** Quantock Hills JAC  
**Status:** Quantock Hills AONB Service 2020/21 Summary Project Report


**Date:** 26/01/2021  
**Author:** Iain Porter

**Summary (year to date):**

The project budget has been very dynamic during 2020/21. The covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have impacted project delivery on several projects as well as required the extension of the Nature & Well-being project due to the value this work. The majority of projects are multi-year projects and the delays due to the pandemic will be managed in future years.

The vast majority of AONB projects are externally funded, with only the access project being funded by the AONB itself.


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



Project	Progress	RAG
Nature & Wellbeing	<p>The Somerset Nature &amp; Wellbeing project finished in September 2020. It was primarily funded by Somerset Public Health working across the three main Somerset AONB's. Originally the project was due to run for two and a half years but ran for four years due to the value of the work. The projects aim was to increase access and breakdown barriers that prevented groups experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits that Somerset's AONBs can offer.</p> <p>The project exceeded all targets and was able to respond to emerging priorities for Somerset Public Health, such as engagement with young carers. It engaged a huge number of people with a significant number of groups continuing to access AONB's after the project has finished. Full project reports can be provided on request.</p> <p>The project was extended in 2020 due to the value of the project on people's health &amp; wellbeing, especially during the lockdown and access restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>This project was managed by the Quantock Hills AONB Service.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"></p>
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 style="text-align: center;"><b>J</b></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 has now been recruited with 3 of the 4 staff in place and the fourth due to join the team at the beginning of February. A first priority for the team is to adapt delivery mechanisms to ensure activities can still go forward in a Covid secure way.</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>	
ELMS Test & Trials	<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>	K



	<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 project report is due April 2021 which will include the Landscape Spatial Framework.</p>	
ELM Advocacy Project	<p>Defra is keen to ensure landowners / farmers are kept informed of the changes in agricultural policy. In December the Government published its Agricultural Transition Plan and Defra provided £7,000 funding to protected landscapes to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) fund activity to support the advocacy and communication of Countryside Stewardship and ELMs schemes to farmers and land managements</li> <li>2) to develop relationships between protected landscapes and farmers and land managers with a view to increasing engagement in ELM and Countryside Stewardship.</li> </ol> <p>The project needs to be completed by the end of March 2021. Due to the work being undertaken through the ELMS Test &amp; Trial project and the existing Farmer Facilitation group it has taken a few weeks to develop a project that will add value and achieve the aims rather than duplicate work already happening.</p> <p>The Quantock Hills AONB is working in collaboration with Exmoor National Park Authority in the provision of a number of online workshops during spring, which will include follow up conversations with land managers where required. The workshops will be targeted at areas where farmer facilitation groups or other networks do not exist including the areas between the two protected landscapes.</p>	😊
Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund	<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</p>	J

	<p>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>The project is due to finish in 2021/22 as the final tranche of projects complete.</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. The project is due to continue running for another 2-3 years.</p>	
<p>Level Up</p>	<p>A partnership project with the 3 Somerset AONBs, Somerset Wildlife Trust, South West Heritage Trust, Avon Wildlife Trust and Bristol Avon Rivers Trust, primarily funded through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund administered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project was awarded the funding in December 2020 and will completed by March 2022.</p> <p>The Level Up project contains 12 sub-projects and has a budget of £248,900. The Quantock Hills AONB Service is leading on three of the sub-projects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <u>Woodland Resilience</u>. The sub-project will underplant ash woodlands which are suffering from ash dieback. The underplanting will consist of a mix of native tree species designed to maintain woodland biodiversity as the ash tree's succumb to Ash dieback and increase the resilience of the woodland into the future.</li> </ol>	<p>J</p>

	<p>2) <u>SAC Woodland Improvements</u>. Centred on the oak woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at the northern Quantock Hills this project will undertake improvement works such as invasive species control and woodland improvement works.</p> <p>3) Quantock Common Mires. This project will provide training for volunteers to enable them to undertake surveys of the acidic mires on Quantock Common. In consultation with landowners, Quantock Commoners and working with NE there will be opportunity to undertake small scale capital works to improve the condition of the mires. Works could include scrub removal and / or small-scale fencing to restrict stock access at key times of the year.</p>	
Mires Project	<p>A project led by Friends of Quantock on their landholding at Over Stowey Custom Common. Ramscombe mire has suffered with poaching in summer months which led to a degradation of the floral interest in the acidic mire. Friends of Quantock wanted to trial fencing of the mire which would exclude commons stock during the summer months. The AONB led the contract for the fencing which took place in May – June. In the first summer the result were impressive in terms and Friends of Quantock will be monitoring the mire for the next five years to assess the impact of excluding stock grazing during summer months.</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 2020/21 Budget Highlight Report Quarter 3

**Date:** 26/01/2021.  
**Author:** Iain Porter

**Summary (year to date):** The Core budget is expected to be on target though income is reduced as the AONB Service has not been able to delivery contract due to the Covid-19 pandemic, though main items of expenditure (staff costs, vehicles, rents) still payable. The project budget is 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. The Land Management budget has overspent this year which is due to the ash felling contract associated with ash dieback disease. This had been planned to be undertaken over 3 years but due to the progress of the disease through the stand it had to be done in one year. The overspend will be 'clawed' back in future years from income associated with agri-environment schemes.

The Outturn prediction is for a small surplus. Much of the overspend is associated with the Land Management and income will be clawed back in future years.

SUMMARY	Budget	Original Budget	Projected Outturn	Variation	Comment
	Core Expenditure	£294,959	£295,400	-£441	Reduced income from contract delivery in first 2 quarters due to increase in qu4 e.g. swaling & HPC. Outturn based on in-year savings.
	Core Income	£294,917	£297,468	£2,551	
	Projects Expenditure	£96,282	£109,366	-£13,084	Overspend associated with Nature & Wellbeing Project.
	Project Income	£96,043	£105,787	£9,744	
	Landscape Ptn Scheme	£250,000	£250,000	£0	Budget figure revised down September 2020 as Covid-19 restrictions have impacted on scheme delivery. Likely to be further revised due to ongoing restrictions. Budget is ring-fenced and will not impact on AONB budgets or reserves.
	Projects [HPC]	£45,000	£45,000	£0	Income claimed retrospectively from SCC under S106 / DCO agreement
	Land Management Expenditure	£13,800	£31,675	-£17,875	£8,865 overspent. Overspend will be 'clawed back' from Agri-environment scheme incomes in 2021/22.
	Land Management Income	£16,995	£22,810	£5,815	
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£700,041</b>	<b>£731,441</b>	<b>-£24,654</b>	
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£702,955</b>	<b>£721,065</b>	<b>£11,713</b>	
<i>RIA (b/f 2019/20)</i>	<i>£34,475</i>	<i>£34,475</i>	<i>£0</i>		

	<i>Earmarked Reserves</i>	£24,000	£19,000	£0	<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>	£13,389	£5,100		<i>Budget is £5,100 (rounded) surplus</i>
	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Performance (75% of yr)</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>RAG</b>
<b>CORE / REVENUE</b>	<b>£ / % Core Budget</b>	<b>£294,959</b>	<b>£214,716 / 73%</b>		
	£/% [salaries, NI, SA]	£241,641	£172,189 / 71%	The budget includes a pension deficit amount and an apprentice levy. This is apportioned by SCC (host authority) and will be funded at year end. Pay award applied.	😊
	£/% [training]	£1,600	£585 / 37%		😊
	£/% [rent, rates, electricity, water, premise insurance]	£11,920	£10,145 / 85%	On track	😊
	£/% [stationary, post, phones, printing]	£2,150	£1,646 / 77%	On track	😊
	£/% [travel, vehicle costs]	£18,898	£14,725 / 78%	Appears high spend due to AONB Service vehicle lease. Other elements of fuel, maintenance on track	😊
	£/% [Equipment, maintenance, clothing, uniform]	£4,600	£2,279 / 50%	Savings made through reduced maintenance costs as plant not being used due to covid-19 restrictions.	😊
	£/% [Literature, publications, publicity]	£1,110	£892 / 80%	On track	😊
	£/% [Meeting costs, hospitality]	£1,200	£0 / 0%	No expenditure.	😊
	£/% [Management fee, insurance]	£9,040	£8,841 / 98%	SCC management / hosting fee. Insurances include property, terrorism & computer / Employer Liability & Public Liability. Expected expenditure has been applied.	😊

	£/% [Memberships]	£2,800	£3,256 / 116%	Membership of National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) and Europarc Atlantic Isles. Additional payment to NAAONB. No further expenditure	☹️
	£/% [Research & Development]	£0	£158 / 158%	Funding due out for Nature Recovery Plan development	☹️
CORE / REVENUE INCOME	£ /% Grant – Defra	£166,239	£124,769 / 75%	Interim claim received.	😊
	£ / % Contributions – Local Authorities	£42,900	£24,000 / 56%	SWT and SDC contributions received. SCC due end of financial year.	😊
	£ / % Contributions – Friends of Quantock	£1,000	£1,000 / 100%	On track	😊
	£ / % Contributions – Other	£1,000	£2,105 / 211%		😊
	£ / % Cost Recovery - Contracts	£5,000	£5,205 / 104%	Initial contract income down (swaling & HPC), looking to increase income during Q3 & 4	😊
	£ / % Recharge – Contributions to staff posts	£34,174	£0 / 0%	These are received in January	😊
	£ / % Recharge – SCC Pen Def & AL	£18,800	£0 / 0%	To be received at end of financial year.	😊
	£ / % Income – AONB led events	£1,000	£0 / 0%	Due to Covid-19 events currently not being run.	☹️
	£ / % Funds from reserves	£24,804	£24,800 / 100%		😊
PROJECTS	<b>Project (in-year budget / spend only)</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>RAG</b>
	£ / % [Nature & Wellbeing Project]	£3,943	£9,637 / 244%	Final year, project ended August 2020. Overspend associated with extension of project. Additional income from project partners & reserves	☹️
	£ / % spend to date [Access]	£1,000	£927 / 93%	On track	😊
	£ / % spend to date [ELMS T&T]	£49,485	£12,338 / 25%	On track, majority of work in Q3 and Q4.	😊

	£ / % spend to date [Mires (FoQ)]	£1,854	£1,854 / 100%	Project complete	😊
	£ / % spend to date [Somerset Nature Connections]	£40,000	£30,000 / 75%	Project hosted by Somerset Wildlife Trust. Funding from external sources as contribution to project.	😊
	£ / % spend to date [ELMS Advocacy]	£7,202	£0 / 0%	New project – Defra funded project given go ahead in December. To be delivered by end of March	😐
LPS	£ / % spend to date [Landscape Partnership]	£250,000	£94,650 / 38%	Project budget revised September as Covid-19 restrictions delayed project start up and activity during 2020 and likely to continue into 2021	😊
HPC	£ / % spend to date [HPC - GQLDF]	£30,000	£26,993 / 90%	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]	£15,000	£0 / 0%	One contract released for Ramscombe 1 work, one contract to be released. Expenditure now expected 2020/21	😊
£ / % spend to date [Land Management]		£13,800	£31,675 / 230%	Overspend associated with roadside tree felling on Cothelstone Hill. Overspend will be clawed back in future years through income from agri-environment schemes	😞

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The JAC notes the report