

Quantock Hills AONB Service

2011 / 12 Business Plan

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2011/12 Business Plan – Setting the Priorities**

Date: Jan 2011

1. Priority Setting:

- a. In light of reduced budgets the AONB Service and Partnership undertook a number of priority setting exercises (Appendix 1). Through this work the AONB Service has identified areas of work that it should prioritise when considering staffing structures and delivery. (Table 1.1)
- b. The table can be used as a rough guide to set priority. There are areas of consistency, such as volunteering, where all exercises agree on the priority and there are some areas where there is a divergence of priority. It can be seen that a number of areas of work that the Quantock Hills Partnership, through the AONB Service, has historically looked to deliver are currently a lower priority in this time of austerity. The priorities will inform the 2011/12 Action Plan and depending upon the level of cuts from partners will also influence the AONB Service staffing unit.

Table 1.1 Priority work for the AONB Service:

| Action | Partnership Priority | Mgt Plan Priority | G'ment Priority | Overall Priority | AONB Lead ³ |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| SDF | High | High | | High | Development Officer |
| Volunteer Development | High | High | High ¹ | High | Volunteer Coordinator |
| Volunteer Tasks | High | High | High ¹ | High | Volunteer Coordinator |
| Amenity Land – <i>if income received</i> | High | - | | High (with income) | Partnership Ranger |
| Visitor Mgt | High | Low | | Medium | Senior Ranger |
| Facilitating – Local communities | High | High | High ¹ | High | AONB Manager |
| Planning – Strategic development | High | High | | High | Landscape Planner |
| Event – Others | High | Low | | Medium | Partnership Ranger |
| Planning – Development Management | Medium | High | | Medium | Landscape Planner |
| Planning – Local / Regional Consultation | Medium | High | | Medium | Landscape Planner |
| Other Land Mgt – <i>if income received</i> | Medium | - | | Medium (with income) | Partnership Ranger |
| Wildlife - Monitoring | Medium | High | High ² | High | Partnership Ranger |
| Wildlife – Enhancement | Medium | High | High ² | High | Partnership Ranger |
| Event – AONB | Medium | Low | | Medium | Partnership Ranger |
| Education | Medium | High | | Medium | Development Officer |
| Information Provision | Medium | High | | Medium | Communications Officer |
| Consultation | Medium | High | | Medium | AONB Manager |
| Facilitating – Agriculture | Low | High | | Medium | Development Officer |
| Facilitating – Forestry | Low | High | | Medium | Development Officer |

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|----------------------------------|-----|-----|--|-----|---------------|
| Climate Change | Low | Low | | Low | AONB Manager |
| Rights of Way | Low | Low | | Low | Senior Ranger |
| Open Access | Low | Low | | Low | Senior Ranger |
| Coast & Geology | Low | Low | | Low | Senior Ranger |
| Heritage & Local Distinctiveness | Low | Low | | Low | Senior Ranger |
| Traffic & Country Lanes | Low | Low | | Low | Senior Ranger |

Note 1. In his letter to the NAAONB Richard Benyon, MP stated that AONBs ‘have a fundamental role in meeting our [Governments] environmental objectives and delivering big society.’

Note 2. The Lawton Review ‘Making space for Nature’ reported to SoS for Environment and DEFRA in September. Sc 6.3.2 makes specific recommendations on National Parks and AONBs stating that ‘...these [National Parks and AONBs] provide an excellent base for delivering a more effective ecological network, not least because their legal standing, governance and management plans provide a basis for coordinated action to integrate effective ecological networks with landscape and other uses...’

Note 3. Other duties are not covered under these headings such as budget and line management. Also does not show where other AONB staff support lead in delivery.

2. Funding Scenarios

- a. Using the **indicative** figures provided by the Local Authorities and the provisional offer received from DEFRA, 10 January, we are able to estimate 2011/12 budgets. DEFRA has set certain conditions upon it’s grant, indicated below. Other conditions, such as a completed MoU are not taken into consideration as they will not influence the amount of draw down of the grant into core. These scenarios are based on the core and SDF budget only to provide an indication of the likely shortfall. Core expenditure is based on the current AONB Service model (staffing, accommodation etc) to show likely shortfall in funding for 2011/12.

Table 2.1: 2011/12 Budget Scenarios.

| Scenario A: | |
|--|----------------|
| - 75% match funding is applied to DEFRA grant used for Core Funding only | |
| - Match funding for Core can come from other non-exchequer funding | |
| Core Income | |
| DEFRA (max 75% of eligible costs) | 161,800 |
| Local Authorities (fixed) | 56,225 |
| Other sources (recharge) | 30,357 |
| Core Income | 248,382 |
| SDF Income (DEFRA) | 25,000 |
| TOTAL | 273,382 |
| Expenditure | |
| Core | 257,581 |
| SDF | 25,000 |
| TOTAL | 282,581 |
| Balance | -9,199 |

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*The DEFRA grant has to be lowered to £161,800 in order to meet the 25% match funding criteria. This has a significant knock on effect to the overall budget and also shows the impact of further cutting of funding by local authority partners.

- b. The scenarios above show the stark reality with a predicted shortfall of £9,199 (best case) for 2011/12 if the local authority indicative funding does not reduce any further. These are significant savings that need to be made and table 2.2 shows that further savings will need to be made over the next 4 years in line with DEFRA's predicted cuts.

Table 2.2 Future indicative funding 2011 – 14

| | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|--|---------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Natural England / DEFRA | 197,545 | 186,800 | 176,000 | 165,500 | 155,100 |
| <i>Yearly Balance (or saving that have to be made)</i> | | <i>10,745</i> | <i>10,800</i> | <i>10,500</i> | <i>10,400</i> |
| <i>running Balance (year on year savings)</i> | | <i>10,745</i> | <i>21,545</i> | <i>32,045</i> | <i>42,445</i> |

- c. It is clear that the AONB Service needs to adapt now in order to deliver the Statutory Management Plan. This change will not be easy but by taking action now we will have an AONB Service that can react to the future funding challenges presented in Table 2.1 and 2.2 and will allow the Service and Partnership to evolve and develop other business models and funding streams.
- d. The need to develop funding streams from other sources or to ensure delivery through other organisations and mechanisms is a key priority. However this change will not happen in the 2 months to April 2011 and therefore there will need to be a transition phase of between 12-18 months.

3. Revised Delivery Mechanisms

- a. In light of reduced funding from all partners there is a requirement for the AONB Service to assess how to deliver the statutory Management Plan. While there is a need to look at delivery in light of the cuts there is also the opportunity to look for other sources of funding (non-exchequer) or a different model for delivery.
- b. Short-term delivery. Due to the timescale involved and the severity of the cuts the AONB Service has no option but to **reduce delivery**, section 3. This will also involve a **reduction in staffing levels** with delivery based on an imposed staffing model. The table (Table 3.1) below shows the existing team structure and the alternative structure:

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Table 3.1 Existing and Proposed AONB team structure.

| Existing AONB Team | FTE | Function | Proposed AONB Team | FTE | Function |
|-----------------------------|-----|---|----------------------------|-----|---|
| AONB Manager | 1 | Day to day management of the team, developing AONB policy, commenting on behalf of JAC on statutory consultations and ensuring good working practices with all partnerships | AONB Manager | | Secondment continues until 31 st March 2012. OWG will not allow back filling of post. Post effectively frozen |
| Development Officer | 1 | To develop projects and attract external project funding to deliver actions from Management Plan. To provide team lead for IT/GIS. Line manage support staff | Development Officer | 1 | Income generation, delivery model development, project development. The post will concentrate on developing delivery capacity with reduced reliance on exchequer funding. Also undertake line management and AONB Manager essential duties. |
| Landscape Planning Officer | 0.4 | This post develops guidance on planning and links with the local planning authorities to ensure that any development is sensitive to the needs of the AONB landscape. | Landscape Planning Officer | 0.4 | As existing. Prioritise strategic planning over development management or local consultation. |
| Senior Ranger | 1 | Key role is public access, rights of way and visitor management. Role also undertakes delivery on SCC amenity land and heritage projects. JD also includes line management, staff management and responsibilities for equipment and property. | | 1 | Main areas of future work have been assessed as low priority (see table 1.1). Areas of line management, budget management and responsibility for equipment and property undertaken by other JD's within the team. As such this posts main roles and duties will change to allow it to focus on more of the high priority areas of AONB work |
| Partnership Ranger (shared) | 0.5 | Key role includes habitat and biodiversity delivery, events management and delivery, management of H&S for team, Also undertakes delivery on SCC amenity land and visitor management | Partnership Ranger | 0.5 | As existing with removal of management of H&S and prioritisation of biodiversity. AONB led events to take lower priority or even responsibility to move to communication role or external organisation – Active Exmoor?. |
| Volunteer | 0.6 | To develop volunteering | Volunteer | 0.6 | To develop and deliver volunteer |

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|-----------------------|------------|---|-----------------------|------------|---|
| Coordinator (shared) | | opportunities, including enhancement of the existing joint Quantock volunteer group. | Coordinator | | opportunities within the Quantock Hills AONB. Expansion of existing opportunities to include young people and wider task delivery. This will be a joint post with Mendips (at 0.4 FTE) to ensure sharing of best practice. This will be an extension of the 1 year fixed term post based on the existing JD |
| Communication Officer | 0.4 | Role includes producing all literature, digital media, managing the AONB website and dealing with media enquiries | Communication Officer | 0.4 | As existing |
| Support Officer | 0.6 | Role includes administration, finance, secretariat to working groups | Support Officer | 0.6 | As existing |
| Total FTE | 5.5 | | Total FTE | 4.5 | |

- c. Medium-term delivery. 1-2 years. In the medium term there will be a requirement to build income streams including income for swaling and amenity land management. Without the income for these land management tasks the priority for the AONB team reduces and it is unlikely the AONB Service will be able to complete these tasks. During this timescale the AONB Team will need to develop alternative delivery models to deliver the statutory management plan. This is a real opportunity for the AONB Service and Partnership to develop a sustainable way of working into the future. We will be looking at how we deliver, including the opportunities for the creation of a separate delivery body, such as Community Interest Companies, Charitable Trusts etc, or working in closer partnership with existing deliverers under new agreements. By being innovative and looking at all options, such as shared services or centralised posts, new delivery organisations, closer working with the 3rd sector the AONB Service and the Partnership will be in a stronger position to conserve and enhance the Quantock Hills into the future.
- d. Long-term delivery. 3-5 years. In the longer term the emphasis will shift back to delivery through the new models and organisations. The AONB Service is likely to use local authority funding for delivery of the statutory duty under CRoW while also looking to build capacity to deliver implementation of the Management Plans, either through it own staff unit or through other mechanisms.

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4. Quantock Hills budget 2011/12

- a. Table 4.1 shows an indicative budget based on predications of funding cuts supplied by the AONB partners. The funding will not be confirmed until February 2011 by local authority funding partners. DEFRA, through Natural England has just confirmed their contribution, which is cut by 5.4% for 2011/12 with an expected overall cut of 21.5% over 4 years. A full budget can be found in Appendix 2.
- b. The budget concentrates on delivery through staffing and the development of volunteering. Project development will look to attract external funding for projects identified in the action plan (section 4). Further work will be undertaken to develop an alternative delivery model for the AONB Partnership and Team to reduce reliance on exchequer funding.
- c. The budget shows a slight underspend of £15 which will be accounted for in viaments form core nominal lines.
- d. The budget will deliver the Action Plan (Sc 5) which will work to the priorities identified in Sc 1. To this extent a SDF is included of £45,000 as well as continued funding for a Volunteer Coordinator post and funding for volunteer activities. Project funds are to deliver a joint bats project with Blackdown Hills AONB and contribution to the Working the Woods Project, being led by FWAG. These projects are further explained in the Action Plan (sc 5).
- e. The budget currently shows no income from Somerset County Council for management of their Amenity Land sites. The AONB Service has put a request in for a realistic contribution to allow us to continue the management of SCC amenity land. This is currently being considered, however the initial response was not positive. A very strong message came from the partnership priority setting exercise that this is only a high priority if it attracts funding. At this time the AONB Service is assuming the SCC position will not change and that as of 1st April amenity land management will be taken by back 'in-house' by SCC. This is reflected in the action plan.
- f. The budget shows no income against other land management. This is primarily the swaling which the AONB Service undertakes on Quantock Common SSSI. Swaling is a conservation management tool that is required to take place as part of the Quantock Commons Countryside Stewardship Scheme. A payment is made to the Quantock Commoners Association for this activity to occur (as part of their annual revenue payment). Historically the Quantock Commoners Association has not passed this payment onto the AONB Service, however they have contributed 100% of specialist equipment costs. We are currently in discussions with the Quantock Commoners Association about the continued swaling management.
- g. The Mendip Hills AONB recharge is for the Volunteer Coordinator post. This is a joint post with Quantock and Mendip Hills AONB. Quantock Hills will retain budget and line management with day to day supervision undertaken by the local AONB officer.

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Table 4.1: Quantock Hills AONB Service Budget 2011 - 12

| INCOME | | EXPENDITURE | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Core | £ | Core | £ |
| Natural England / DEFRA | 186,877 | AONB Manager | 0 |
| Somerset County Council | 21,500 | Deve'T Officer | 37,510 |
| Forestry Commission | 17,300 | Landscape Planning Off | 14,910 |
| Taunton Deane Borough Council | 12,000 | Senior Ranger | 36,730 |
| Sedgemoor District Council | 11,700 | Partnership Ranger | 30,985 |
| West Somerset Council | 11,025 | Volunteer Coordinator | 20,644 |
| Mendip Hills AONB (recharge) | 11,000 | Comms Officer | 9,589 |
| Events income | 1,000 | Support Assistant | 10,251 |
| Total | 272,402 | Accommodation | 13,945 |
| | | Travel & Training | 20,896 |
| Project | £ | Equip, Clothing, | 6,680 |
| Blackdown Hills AONB | 1,000 | Literature, Shows, R&D | 11,400 |
| Virrador Landfill Community Credit | 7,000 | Other costs | 3,130 |
| HFL | 14,000 | Management fee | 3,000 |
| Total | 22,000 | Total | 219,671 |
| Total Income | 294,402 | Project | £ |
| | | SDF | 45,000 |
| <i>Balance</i> | 16 | Joint Bats Project | 24,200 |
| | | Working the Woods | 5,515 |
| | | Total | 74,715 |
| | | Total Expenditure | 294,386 |

Post frozen

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5. Action Plan 2011/12

- a. The Action Plan below identifies delivery against NE core duties of an AONB (appendix 3), Management Plan Action Point Delivery and Core Duties delivery, such as line management. Against the delivery is an assessment of AONB resources required by post and number of days. With some delivery there will be more than one post associated with delivery, but the first post listed will be the lead on that item of work. Table 5.1 Identifies 3 headline areas of work the AONB Service will be undertaking during 2011/12. Table 5.2 is the full action plan.

Table 5.1: Our top 3 headline work areas

| Activity | Resource |
|--|--|
| Bats Project. A joint project with Blackdown Hills AONB looking to deliver at the landscape scale a monitoring programme which will lead to habitat improvement over a wide range of landscapes. The project aims to increase current knowledge of bat species on the Quantocks and Blackdown Hills including the interconnectivity of Taunton Vale, to maintain known existing maternity, swarming, hibernation and other roost sites as well expand the current geographical range of bat populations and to raise awareness with local communities of bats and their relationship with the landscapes. An outcome will be the better targeting of habitat improvements of farmland and woodland through existing and new funding streams e.g. Higher Level Stewardship or England Woodland Grant Scheme | AONB Service, Blackdown Hills AONB, Somerset Bat Group (possible), SERC (possible) |
| Production of an Integrated LCA and Environmental Report. Using new NCA development as a template the Quantock Hills will look to produce a integrated LCA and environmental report which will set the framework to the next Management Plan. This approach will explore individual themes (biodiversity, Historic Interest, farming) under the overriding landscape types and produce a more targeted set of objectives, policies and actions to conserve and enhance the Quantock Hills into the future | AONB Service, Natural England |
| Volunteering with Young People, Full Time Volunteer and Young Rangers. Delivered through the partnership post (Volunteer Coordinator) and taking best practice from Mendips the AONB Service will look to develop a ‘Young Rangers’ scheme with local secondary schools. Also expanding on the partnership with the National Trust the AONB Service will host a full time volunteer and look to enhance the relationship with other potential partners, such as Mendip Hills AONB or the Forestry Commission. | AONB Service, National Trust, Mendip Hills AONB, Forestry Commission (possible) |

Key:

| | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|----|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| AM | AONB Manager | DO | Development Officer | LP | Landscape Planner |
| SR | Senior Ranger | PR | Partnership Ranger | VC | Volunteer Coordinator |
| CO | Communications Officer | SA | Support Assistant | | |
| Other Resource includes other organisations that will be assisting with action. Highlighted resources are yet to confirm or contacted regarding involvement. | | | | | |

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Table 5.2 Quantock Hills AONB Service 2011/12 Action Plan

| NE duty | ACTION POINT | Action | Milestone / Target | AONB resource Post (days) | Partners |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|--|
| C H | FAP 2 | Collate monitoring information of uptake of CSS / ES / EWGS etc. Promote ES schemes through web-promotion & targeting of areas under represented if ES has funding. | ES data provided to AONB unit from NE. 75% of eligible AONB land area in ES. Evidence of appropriate targeting in Quantock ES schemes. | DO (1) | Natural England (Lead) |
| C | FWAP 4 | Comment on draft SAC Woodland Management Plan to ensure plan with bring greatest benefit to subsequent management | Comments received and actioned | DO (1) PR (1) | Natural England (lead) |
| C O | WAP 4 | Support continued monitoring of LBAP species (adder) to inform future management plans for Quantock Common and surrounding agricultural land | Adder population and hibernacula survey carried out on 3 sites in Quantock AONB | DO (1) PR (5) | SRAG (lead), Reaseheath College |
| C O | WAP 4 | Support monitoring of Pied Flycatchers on Quantock Hills and feed into regional project on effects of climate change on indicator species | 5 volunteers trained in bird monitoring. Monitoring of 30 boxes in key locations throughout AONB | PR (12) VC (10) | Exeter University (lead), BTO, NE |
| C | WAP2 | Implement or manage implementation by others of the Quantock Hills BAP. Specific actions | ?? % of LBAP Targets achieved – need to check delivery by others | PR (25), DO (1) | RAGS, SWT, SERC, SBG |
| O | WAP2 | Provide concise monitoring and reporting on LBAP actions | Produce a LBAP actions report | PR (5) | SERC |
| D C E O G | WAP 4 FAP 2 | Apply to external funders for project funding of joint Bats project. Run a joint Bats Project which will increase awareness of special landscapes importance for bats as well as increase knowledge of bat populations and allow targeting of land management to improve habitat of farmland and woodland. | Successful application to external funders. Project started with project officer in place and first season bat monitoring underway. | DO (15) PR (4) | Somerset Bat Group, Blackdown Hills AONB, SERC |
| A O | DAP 6 | Produce an integrated Landscape Character Assessment and environment report that will set the framework to the next Management Plan based on the latest guidance on NCA assessment from NE | Draft report produced ready for consideration by partnership | LP (32) SR (2) PR (1) DO (3) | |
| J | DAP 1 DAP 4 DAP 5 | Monitor planning applications in and around the AONB and identify any potential damaging developments. Comment on potentially damaging applications on behalf of the JAC | Planning Database up to date and reporting back against database possible through GIS. Comments sent to relevant planning authorities | LP (18) SA (10) | |
| J | DAP 2 | Engage with Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation | Relevant LDF consultation responses sent | LP (10) | |
| J | DAP 7 | Engage with and offer specialist advice on impacts of major infrastructure developments such as Hinkley Point C | Engagement with consultation process and comments received and acted upon | LP (12) | |
| E J | | Make AONB planning comments available on the website (or synopsis with link) to ensure partners and communities | All planning comments (1 st April 2011 – 31 st March 2012) to be | LP (5) SA (10) | |

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| | | can see AONB response to planning application | available on the website. | | |
| E | | VOLUNTEERS – Continued engagement with Quantock Countryside Volunteers ensuring tasks occurring through AONB area. | 3,000 volunteer hours completed. | VC (35) SR (20) | |
| E | ARAP 8 VAP 2 | VOLUNTEERS - Volunteer involvement in local events and other visitor management to raise AONB profile and provide information. | 30 volunteer work days spent at local events or engaged in visitor management activity | VC (10) SR (5) | |
| E | ARAP 8 VAP 2 | VOLUNTEERS - Development of Full-time volunteer post expanding the existing partnership with National Trust to include a 9 month placement for a second FTV which will be hosted by AONB. | FTV in 'post' and 9 months placement successfully completed. | VC (15) | National Trust |
| E | EAP 6 | VOLUNTEERS - Development of a 'Young Ranger' scheme based on successful Mendip AONB model | 12 'Young Rangers' enrolled on the Quantock Young Ranger Scheme | VC (50) SR (20) | National Trust |
| C D E | CAP 1 | Deliver Sustainable Development Fund to fund local projects which will deliver Management Plan objectives | Fully expenditure against SDF with project targets being fully met | DO (10) | SDF Panel |
| E F | CAP 6 | Host a Parish conference to engage with Parish Council and inform them of AONB work as well as discussing Parish Council involvement with the AONB and Partnership | 75% of parish representatives invited attending 1 parish conference | DO (3), CO (1), SA (2), LP (2) | |
| D | CAP 3 | Engagement with Western Somerset Local Action Group to ensure funding opportunities through this scheme are available for Quantock projects. | Quantock Hills AONB Service retains place on executive meeting and attends | DO (12) | |
| E | CAP 6 | Encourage and practically support parish initiatives such as parish plans in and around the AONB to help local communities protect the character of their villages and ensure local distinctiveness is integral to the local community | Development of Parish Plans or other relevant initiatives supported by AONB Service | SR (8) LP (4) | |
| C D F | FWAP 2 CAP 2 | Support of the Working the Woods Project which aims to work with woodland owners and workers to strengthen local supply chains and maximise biodiversity and business opportunities | Project running with project officer in post. Targets as project plan but include woodland Management Plans, creation of woodland associations etc. | DO (10) | FWAG (lead), Silvanus Trust |
| E H | WAP 1 | Provide secretariat and support for Quantock Commons Management Group (QCMG) and Quantock Police & Conservation Agencies Working Group (QPCAWG) | 2 meetings of each group. Meeting notes and progress on actions recorded | SA (4) PR (2) SR (2) | |
| C F O | WAP 4 | Provide on the ground support to the Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group (QDMCG) deer count | Deer Count undertaken and results fed back to QDMCG and JAC | PR (4) SR (1) | |
| B | VAP 2 | Provide 14 events open to the public, including specialist walks and events aimed at families. The theme for 2011 will be 'Discovery' | 300 people attending AONB events | PR (15), CO (12), VC (4) SR (12) | Other leaders (6) |

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| B | EAP 2 | Distribute AONB Visitor Guide through the LIPs distribution points | Restocking of LIPs distribution points x 4 | CO (7) | |
| B | EAP 2 | Publish and distribute e-newsletter. Hardcopy can be printed off for distribution through schools | At least 4 newsletters produced with distribution to 1,100 individuals | CO (16) | |
| B | EAP 3 | Regularly update the website to include blogs, news items, planning comments etc | New content to be added on at least a fortnightly basis | CO (22) | |
| B | | Produce media content (press release direct media contact) to include standard messages (lambing, ticks etc) as well as specific project successes | 12 press releases sent out with 50% picked up by local media | CO (15) | |
| N | | Produce and distribute a annual report to show progress against AONB Management Plan Targets | Annual Report produced and distributed by end of June 2011 | DO (3), CO (8) | |
| N | | OWG and JAC reports produced. These reports will provide monitoring against the action plan targets | 3 OWG reports and 3 JAC reports produced. | DO (6) | |
| D | | Develop new 'business delivery model' that can co-exist with the AONB Service but which will reduce reliance on exchequer funding while allowing continued or enhanced delivery of the Statutory Management Plan. This will be overseen by a Funding & Delivery Working Group made up of 2 JAC members, officers and 2 others. | Options paper produced and favoured option agreed by partnership | DO (120) | |
| D | | Write NE/DEFRA AONB bid with input from OWG and JAC partnership | NE / DEFRA bid accepted | DO (5) | |
| F | | Host 3 OWG and JAC meetings – July, November and February 2012 to allow informed and engaged ownership of partnership by JAC. | 3 meetings held. | DO (4) PR (2) SR (2) VC (1) LP (1) | |
| F | | Regular meetings of AONB Service team to review AONB Management activities and issues | 45 meetings held. | All team 2 days each | |
| I K L | | Membership and involvement in the NAAONB and SWPLF to ensure national and regional liaison and to ensure that the NAAONB represents the views of the Quantock Hills partnership in its new business model. – Includes Countryside Management Association | Attendance at Lead Officers meetings and other meetings where applicable | DO (15) PR (4) | |
| F | | Host 2 Partnership workshops on relevant issues which could include 'the role of volunteers' and Landscape scale biodiversity enhancement | 2 workshops held with 12 partnership members in attendance on each | DO (3) PR (2) VC (3) | |
| O | | Undertake fixed point photography monitoring on 12 sites to provide a visual record of landscape and change over time including views into and from the AONB | Take photographs from 12 sites twice during 2011/12. | SR (6) | |
| C | VAP 8 | Collect bi-annual data from 15 visitor counters installed through the Quantock Hills and disseminate information to partners | Information collected, processed and disseminated. Information in format to be used as evidence in funding bids | SR (5) | |

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| C | | Provide support to the 1SW off-road cycling project with officer time for the collection of local data and input into route description as a visitor management tool | Officer time allocated and routes data vetted and agreed by AONB | DO (5) | |
| C E | EAP 7 | Owls Schools Project delivery. A project which will raise the importance of the various Quantock habitats to owls and other raptors based on the recent monitoring of the Long Eared Owl. | 10 local school visits. 8 volunteers trained to assist delivery of education of project | PR (10) VC (2) | Hawk & Owl Trust (Lead) |
| G | VAP 1 | Engage with event organisers to ensure notification of events occurring on the hills. Offer advice to ensure minimal adverse impact from events to the landscape, tranquillity and natural environment of the Quantock Hills | Creation of events database. Event monitoring information available through website | PR (8) CO (6) | |
| C | VAP 2 | Ensure on the ground presence during busy periods to engage visitors and provide information. | 24 days patrol throughout year, with volunteer involvement | SR (25) PR (5) | |
| H | VAP 5 | Completion of flytipping database with hotspots provided to local authorities and negotiate a enhanced level of service to ensure waste is cleaned quickly | Database finalised and sent to local authorities. Agreement from local authorities to clear flytipping | SR (15) | |
| F | ARAP 4 | Limit vehicle damage to hilltop tracks through engagement with user groups. | Continued erosion monitoring project. Access agreement in place with main user groups | SR (25) | |
| | CORE DUTIES | | | | |
| | H&S | Annual risk assessment reviews, instigate new H&S procedures in line with best practice. Audits of promoted routes and carry out safety works (VAP 6) | | DO (1) PR (5) VC (5) SR (30) | |
| | Finance | Undertake finance monitoring and provide reports in various formats to partners, hosts and grant giving organisations | | DO (5) | |
| | Support Activities | Undertake a range of support activities such as answering enquiries, filing, procurement etc | | SA (110) | |
| | Line Mgt | 1-1 management meetings, annual PRaD meetings staff management | | DO (15) | |

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Table 5.3 AONB Service Resource Allocation

| Post | Work Days | Resource Required | Variance |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------|
| AONB Manager* | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Development Officer* | 222 | 241 | -19 |
| Landscape Planner | 86 | 86 | 0 |
| Partnership Ranger | 112 | 112 | 0 |
| Senior Ranger | 222 | 178 | 44 |
| Volunteer Coordinator | 137 | 137 | 0 |
| Communications Officer | 89 | 89 | 0 |
| Support Assistant | 137 | 138 | -1 |
| Total | 1,005 | 981 | +24# |

* Assuming AONB Manager remains on secondment until 31st March 2012

Further work to re-align Development Officer and Senior Ranger roles required – this to occur during March 2011.

Work Days Calculated: ((52 weeks x 5 days) x FTE) – (annual leave entitlement +Bank Holidays entitlement)

e.g.: ((52 weeks x 5 day [260]) x full time [1]) – (annual leave [29] + Bank holidays [9]) = 260 – 38 = 222.

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Appendix 1: Priority Setting Work –

1. Quantock Hills Partnership Prioritise. In November 2010 the Quantock Hills JAC undertook an exercise to prioritise the areas of work it felt the AONB Service should undertake in light of reduced resources (funding and staffing). The table below (A1.1) shows the prioritise.

Table: A1.1 Quantock Hills JAC Priority areas of work

| Action | Score | |
|--|-------|----------------------------------|
| SDF | 20 | NEED TO DO |
| Volunteer Development | 20 | |
| Volunteer Tasks | 20 | |
| Amenity Land – <i>if income received</i> | 18 | |
| Visitor Mgt | 18 | |
| Facilitating – Local communities | 18 | |
| Planning – Strategic development | 16 | |
| Event – Others | 16 | |
| Planning – Development Management | 14 | TRY TO DO |
| Planning – Local / Regional Consultation | 14 | |
| Other Land Mgt – <i>if income received</i> | 14 | |
| Wildlife - Monitoring | 14 | |
| Wildlife – Enhancement | 14 | |
| Event – AONB | 14 | |
| Education | 14 | |
| Information Provision | 14 | |
| Consultation | 12 | DROP UNLESS OPPORTUNITY COMES UP |
| Facilitating – Agriculture | 10 | |
| Facilitating – Forestry | 10 | |
| Climate Change | 8 | |
| Rights of Way | 8 | |
| Open Access | 6 | |
| Coast & Geology | 4 | |
| Heritage & Local Distinctiveness | 4 | |
| Traffic & Country Lanes | 4 | |

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2. Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-14 Assessment. During October and November 2010 Countryside Training Partnership with support from the Acting AONB Manager undertook an assessment of the actions from the statutory management plan to assess their priority. The priorities were sorted by the attractiveness to external funders and grouped into ‘superprojects’. Table A2.1 provides a summary of the Management Plan priorities.

Table A2.1: Management Plan Actions prioritise and attractiveness

| Quantocks Matrix | Unattractive | Attractive |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| <p>High Priority</p> | <p>From existing funding partners</p> <p>Influencing & Representation CAP3,4 Partnership working RDPE and LAG work ARAP 2 ROWIP GCAP1 Management agreements geological exposures GCAP3 Coastal areas TAP3 &4 Road layout and signage FAP1 &2 Quantock Hills Agri-environment schemes Farming Planning DAP1,2,3,4,5,6,7 &8 (Planning) Evidence base EAP 7 Education establishments monitoring and research CEAP4 Acid flushes baseline survey Education and Information EAP 1,2 &3 (outstanding areas following delivery through WfW, HotH and Inclusion and Diversity) VAP7 implementation of visitor attractions study</p> | <p>From existing and newly identified funding partners</p> <p>SUPERPROJECT - Woods for Wildlife FAP5 traditional Field Banks FWAP1&3 Woodland Management; (farm and bird initiative) FWAP 4&5 woodland grazing management WAP2 Quantock Biodiversity action plan WAP4 Monitoring species (species specific and community angle) EAP1, 2 &3 Education and Information SUPERPROJECT - History on the Heath HAP1 Protect archaeological and Historic features HAP3 Reinstate lost features (local community & vols angle) HAP6 Oral History EAP5 Cultural interpretation EAP1, 2 &3 Education and Information HAP 4 Assess Quantock parkland and associated heritage trees Sustainable Development Fund CAP1 Community Projects (securing additional funding) Inclusion and Diversity ARRAP6 &7 Access implementation with URG’s (Collaborative working with other partners leading eg Mencap) EAP1, 2 &3 Education and Information CEAP3 Ecosystems services research (some delivered under Woods for Wildlife and History on the Heath) TAP5 Traditional Road signs (local community angle)</p> |
| <p>Low Priority</p> | <p>Assessments & identification WAP1 Common management plan HAP2 Detailed fact base of historical environment (some HotH) HAP4 Assess Quantocks parkland and associated heritage trees HAP5 Identify traditional orchards CEAP1 Climate change assessment CEAP2 Carbon footprint GCAP2 Quarries assessment project</p> | <p>Reactive: (if opportunities arise) CAP2 Local Produce CAP5 Local Shop agreement FWAP 2 Woodland Products</p> |

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| Quantocks Matrix | Unattractive | Attractive |
|------------------|---|------------|
| | <p>WAP3 LNR designation</p> <p>Access ARAP1 Quantock access management group ARAP3,4 &5 Access implementation ARAP 8 Information provision TAP1 Sustainable transport TAP2 Dangerous roads</p> <p>Planning CAP6 delivering parish plans FAP3 &4 County farms and GM crops</p> <p>Visitor Management VAP1-6 volunteer opportunity</p> | |

3. National Government Priorities.

Text from a letter from Richard Benyon, MP 30th November.

The Funding and Sponsorship of AONBs

It was a pleasure to meet you, Peter Stevens and Richard Clarke at our meeting on 25 October, and I was interested to hear about the work of the Association and the issues it and the AONBs face.

The contribution that AONBs make to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is fully recognised by this Government. I believe AONBs are managed remarkably well by the AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards and provide good value for money.

Despite these difficult times, AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards have a fundamental role to play in meeting our environmental objectives and delivering Big Society for example, particularly with regards to the expression and delivery of local priorities. I see the AONB Management Plan as being an ideal framework by which delivery can be driven.

I am visiting as many AONBs as I can to learn more about the work they do, the issues they face, and to discuss how they might best cope with the challenges ahead. I am particularly interested in looking at how during these difficult economic times I can help AONBs deliver their objectives and whether the present system is the best way to fund and manage them now and in the future.

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As you know, in late July this year, I asked my officials to conduct an informal review of the current Natural England AONB sponsorship arrangements with a view to determining possible options for giving government a better line of sight on AONB management.

During July to September, they undertook an informal soundings exercise through bilateral discussions and correspondence with the following parties, in addition to the Association:

- the NAAONB's Funding Sub-group;
- Natural England;
- the Chilterns and Cotswolds Conservation Boards;
- the Protected Landscapes Regional Co-ordinators for the South West and the South East; and
- a small number of local authorities.

Further to our discussion on 25 October, I would like to confirm that following consideration of these soundings, I have agreed, in principle, that as from 1 April 2011 the resources and responsibility for funding and strategic oversight of the AONB Joint Advisory Committees, the two Conservation Boards and the NAAONB should transfer from Natural England to Defra, whilst also leaving Natural England with resources to continue to provide technical expert support and advice at the local level, and to deliver their statutory role with respect to AONBs. My intention is to achieve an effective tri-partite relationship which sees AONBs thrive and prosper with appropriate support from central Government and minimal interference.

I have asked my officials to work closely with Natural England and with you to achieve a smooth handover by means of a managed transition, which seeks to minimise disruption to AONB functioning. This would include retaining the multi-year funding settlement arrangements. I hope to be able to announce total funding for the AONBs before Christmas.

I am happy for you to share this letter with the AONBs and local authorities, and can assure you that the best interests of the AONBs are at the centre of my thoughts. I am committed to ensuring that these valuable areas are protected and enhanced.

RICHARD BENYON MP

Text from a letter from Helen Ghosh to AONBs re. funding of AONBs.

All English AONBs

21 December 2010

Dear Lead Officer / Chief Executive

Government grant to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

You may be aware that Richard Benyon MP, Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, wrote to the National Association for AONBs on 30 November 2010 setting out his aspirations for the AONBs and the importance he attaches to their ongoing success. The Minister also set out his plans to create an effective tri-partite relationship between Defra, Natural England and the NAAONB in which AONBs can thrive and prosper with appropriate leadership and support from central Government. As part of this initiative, some of the work which Natural England currently undertakes on AONB matters is passing to Defra from April 2011.

This work will be led in Defra from within the Landscape and Outdoor Recreation team which has a broad range of responsibilities, including sponsorship of the National Park Authorities. With some additional resource transferring from Natural England, we are confident we have the skills and expertise within the team with which to make these new arrangements a success. The new sponsor team look forward to meeting you and your members during 2011.

I am writing now to set out the amount of grant that Ministers have agreed should be made available to AONBs over the SR period. I understand from discussions with Natural England and the NAAONB that it will help your planning to have these figures as early as possible. Defra is writing similarly to all the members of its network.

You are aware of the difficult financial climate which requires public spending programmes to be constrained over the Spending Review period. This has produced a total Departmental Expenditure Limit for Defra which reduces by 23% in cash terms.

Against that background, Ministers have given very careful thought to the funding which can be afforded for individual Defra programmes. In the case of AONBs they have decided that total available funding will need to reduce by 5.4% in cash next year as part of a total reduction of 21.5% in cash terms over the four years. This is equivalent to the reductions of the National Park Authorities. The annex shows what this means in figures.

For years 2 - 4 (2012/13 - 2014/15) the figures are indicative allocations which are provided now in order to assist with long-term financial planning. This is because experience from previous spending reviews suggests that these allocations can, and in all likelihood, will need to change over the spending review period, especially given the current tight financial circumstances. So we

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and you need to proceed with caution when committing against these budgets and treat them as merely indicative for now. We will of course confirm them as soon as we can.

As a transitional measure, we are asking Natural England to negotiate funding agreements with each AONB for 2011/12 on our behalf. We have also asked them to draw up new Memorandums of Agreement with your funding partners to cover the four-year Spending Review period. Defra will then assume responsibility for AONB funding under those Memorandums from April 2011. Your Natural England contact will therefore be in touch with you as the next step in this process.

The Government grant (paid hitherto by Natural England and in future by Defra) is of course intended to meet only part of each AONB’s budget. Natural England will continue as per previous years to offer funding on Defra’s behalf up to a maximum of 75% of core funding (80% for Conservation Boards) which is conditional on the relevant local authorities providing the remainder and to their signing a Memorandum of Agreement before any payment is made

If you have any queries about the funding process or other “sponsorship” issues, then your existing Natural England contact should be your first port of call - though do please bear in mind that we are still working up the detail of the future arrangements with Natural England and NAAONB so some points may not be resolved until nearer the end of the financial year.

I am copying this letter to Howard Davies at the NAAONB and to Andrew Wood at Natural England and I am happy for it to be given whatever wider circulation recipients judge to be useful.

Yours sincerely

Helen Ghosh
Permanent Secretary

Annex £million

| 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 8.079* | 7.645 | 7.211 | 6.777 | 6.342 |

*NE’s budget of £9.478m for AONBs + £0.075m for NAAONB less the 2010/11 5% in-year reduction and less £1m funding for the South Downs Joint Committee which ends in March 2011

These figures include the funding for individual AONBs, for the NAAONB, and support to the two regional protected landscape forum coordinator posts

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Appendix 2: Quantock Hills AONB Service – detailed budget

| Source | Contribution 2011 12 | Comments |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| NE | £186,877 | DEFRA confirmed 5.4% cut |
| SCC | £21,500 | Exp £5k reduction |
| SDC | £11,700 | Exp £16,500 reduction |
| TDBC | £12,000 | Exp £4.5k reduction |
| WSC | £11,025 | Exp £4,975k reduction |
| TOTAL | £243,102 | |

| Expenditure | 2011 12 | Comments |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Salaries | 160,619 | NE – Staff costs |
| Training et al | 2,000 | NE – Staff costs |
| Electricity | 200 | NE – Accommodation |
| Rates | 900 | NE – Accommodation |
| Rent of Room | 8,645 | NE – Accommodation |
| Water Charges | 400 | NE – Accommodation |
| Car allowance | 4,300 | NE – Staff costs |
| Hired Transport | 0 | NE – Staff costs |
| Travel costs | 500 | NE – Staff costs |
| Vehicle costs - Fuel | 3,340 | NE – Staff costs |
| Vehicle costs - Insurance | 1,150 | NE – Staff costs |
| Vehicle costs - Maintenance | 1,820 | NE – Other costs |
| Vehicle costs - Lease | 7,786 | NE – Staff costs |
| Equipment et al | 6,530 | NE - Other costs |
| Literature & Pubs | 1,200 | NE – Partnership Budget |
| shows & Exhib | 3,200 | NE – Partnership Budget |
| Clothing & Uniform | 150 | NE – Other costs |
| R & D | 7,000 | NE – Partnership Budget |
| Advertising Staff Vac | 0 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Photocopying | 700 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Stationary | 1,500 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |

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| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Postage | 300 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Telephones | 1,300 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Subs allowance | 100 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Interview expenses | 0 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Hospitality | 700 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Subscriptions | 2,250 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Insurance | 80 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| Cross Service recharge | 3,000 | NE – Partnership Running Costs |
| TOTAL CORE | £219,671 | |
| Other income | | |
| SCC - Amenity Land | £0 | Recharge for mgt of amenity land |
| Mendip Hills AONB | £11,000 | Recharge for volunteer coord post |
| FC Contribution | £17,300 | Recharge for Ptn Ranger post |
| Events | £1,000 | |
| | £0 | |
| | £0 | |
| Other Core Income | 29,300 | |
| BALANCE | £52,731 | |
| SDF Expenditure | | |
| Projects | 45,000 | |
| TOTAL | 45,000 | |
| Project Expenditure | | |
| Various | 29,715 | |
| TOTAL | 29,715 | |
| Ext Project Income | | |
| Various | 22,000 | |
| TOTAL | 22,000 | |

SUMMARY

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| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| TOTAL INCOME | £294,402 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | £294,386 |
| Balance | £16 |

| |
|---|
| Natural England’s core functions of an AONB staff unit |
| Management Plan |
| a) Developing, preparing, publishing and reviewing the AONB vision and the AONB Management Plan. |
| b) Promoting the AONB Management Plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside. |
| c) Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan, including delivery by the AONB team. |
| d) Accessing resources for Management Plan activities. |
| e) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB. |
| f) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level. |
| g) Problem solving, with the unit acting as co-ordinator and facilitator. |
| Advisory/Advocacy |
| h) Advising Local Authorities and other partners on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to attain the highest possible standards in AONBs. |
| i) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, sharing advice and best practice nationally and regionally. |
| j) Providing landscape-related planning advice (to local authorities and in conjunction with NE as appropriate, in line with and underpinned by protocols). |
| k) Financial support for the NAAONB. |
| l) Contribution and support to regional activity between AONBs and protected landscapes, to strengthen status of the AONBs individually and collectively. |
| Reporting and Monitoring |
| m) Provision of top 3 annual best practice/ successes (including those by S85 bodies). |
| n) Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets (output monitoring) |
| o) Monitoring AONB landscape condition (environmental outcome monitoring) in conjunction with information and analysis provided centrally by Natural England. |