

## Financial Statement

<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>
Defra	153,133	Staff costs	196,220
Somerset County Council	21,500	Training	1,890
Sedgemoor District Council	11,500	Travel / Subsistence	21,093
Taunton Deane Borough Council	10,000	Accommodation	19,999
West Somerset Council	9,957	Partnership Budget	2,828
Forestry Commission	20,480*	Partnership Running Costs	7,760
Mendip Hills AONB	9,095	<b>Core Expenditure</b>	<b>249,791</b>
Charges	3,082	AONB Projects	15,994
Miscellaneous	2,245	HPC Sc106 Projects	453
Natural England (Project)	12,785		
Somerset Wildlife Trust (Project)	1,000	<b>Cash Expenditure</b>	<b>266,238</b>
English Heritage (Project)	378	<i>Earmarked reserve</i>	<i>26,054</i>
Heritage Lottery Fund (Project)	5,400		
Somerset County Council (Project)	21,404		
Carry Forward (13/14)	55,114	<i>Carry forward (15/16)</i>	<i>70,835</i>
		<u><i>Committed carry forward</i></u>	
		<i>Earmarked Reserves</i>	<i>28,040</i>
		<i>Forestry Commission overpayment</i>	<i>6,832</i>
		<i>Health &amp; Wellbeing Project</i>	<i>21,404</i>
		<i>Cothelstone Hill Heritage Project</i>	<i>8,160</i>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>337,073</b>		

\* Forestry Commission duplicate payment paid. £6,832 to be repaid

## Looking forward into 2015/2016

- **HPC Landscape Project:** Delivery of 2 schemes to improve landscape features, and to improve habitat linkages
- **Natural Beauty, Natural Wellbeing:** A 3 year public health funded project working with health professionals to increase participation, reduce obesity and improve happiness and mental health.
- **Cothelstone Hill Heritage Project:** Archaeological investigation at Cothelstone Hill, in partnership with Bridgwater College and local schools.

Funded by:



**Annual Report 2014-2015**



## Highlights

- **2450 volunteer** hours completed
- **550** volunteer hours spent at local events or visitor management
- **50ha** of control on invasive species to prevent or control Phytophthora diseases in the AONB
- **Plant disease awareness** workshops
- **25ha swaled**, for heathland management
- **49 Scheduled Monuments** monitored each 6 month period in new AONB-wide survey
- **Annual wildlife surveys** completed for adder, bat, butterfly, dormouse and deer
- Supported regional **Pied Flycatcher** monitoring programme, surveying 150 boxes in AONB
- **Stogumber First School Story-walk Project**, Ranger participation on 8 walks
- **Pilot research project** to better understand landscape importance of hedgerows and linear features.
- 31 days **Ranger patrol**, to ensure on the ground presence, engage visitors and provide information
- **Access Agreement** put in place with main user groups to limit vehicle damage to hilltop tracks
- **49kms** of promoted routes audited and required works actioned
- On the ground support provided to Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group for **Annual Deer Count**
- **13 public events** held with 205 people attending
- Stands at **4 local shows**, at least 1 in each district
- Workshop held to raise understanding of **Atlantic Oak Woods** for lower plant species
- **21 detailed planning comments** submitted
- **£100k Landscape Development Fund launched**, a grant for land-owners and farmers to increase the quality of landscape features



**Quantock Hills AONB Service Annual Report 2014 / 2015**

Here are some examples of the work carried about by the AONB Service with partners, from April 2014 to March 2015.

**Case Studies**



**Heritage Monuments survey**

This 6 monthly survey aims to monitor the condition of archaeological features in the AONB to check for signs of erosion or potentially damaging vegetation growth.

51 scheduled monuments (made up of over 70 individual features) have been surveyed, with 45 having now been surveyed three times. The surveys are carried out by volunteers and the information allows us (alongside landowners, Historic England and other organisations) to make informed decisions about the management of key sites.



**Hedgerows research**

The AONB Service in partnership with the University of Bristol successfully applied for funding to undertake a pilot community hedgerow study in Bicknoller.

The purpose of the study was to test a methodology for community led hedgerow surveys. During summer 2014 24 hedgerows were surveyed and 7 local community members trained in survey techniques. It is hope the finding will inform a larger AONB wide project.



**Landscapes for Life Award**

Not strictly speaking a 'case study' but congratulations to Tim Russell who won a national award for his work in the Quantock Hills where he was a Warden and Ranger with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Team for over 25 years.

Tim will receive his Landscapes for Life Award at the Annual Conference of the National Association of AONBs at Winchester this July. This is richly deserved recognition for Tim who put in so many dedicated and enthusiastic years and has helped AONBs grow from first finding their feet in the late 1980s to the professional organisations they now are.

**Quantock Hills AONB Service Annual Report 2014 / 2015**

**Case Studies**

**Volunteers**

Following a recruitment drive in the autumn we now have 19 Volunteer Rangers who are regularly out and about on the hills; talking to visitors, offering advice and local knowledge, representing the AONB at shows and reporting back if they find anything that needs remedial action.

Other volunteers, of which there are 50 have been hard at work with practical conservation tasks, surveying scheduled monuments, carrying out wildlife surveys (bats, birds, butterflies and dormice) and assisting with our public events programme.



**Bat Monitoring**

In 2014 the AONB Service, in partnership with the National Trust, ran a bat monitoring programme at Fyne Court and Cothelstone Hill. The results of the monitoring for 2014, showed good numbers of both species of pipistrelle bats, serotine and also the rare barbastelle bat.

The survey revealed good variation at each transect location. 12 volunteers were specially trained for the monitoring programme and worked a collective 103 hours. The success of the monitoring programme and the value of the data collected means that it will continue in future years.



**Invasive species control**

As part of a 5-year project rhododendron over an area of 45Ha was removed and treated in Cock-ercombe, adjacent to the Quantock Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Rhodo-dendron is a species of plant which is known to host destructive parasitic fungi called Phy-to-phthora ramorum, which has caused extensive damage to important trees (Japanese larch) and native plants such as Bilberry.

Phytohthora – the name is derived from Greek and means 'plant destroyer' from phyto (plant) and phthora (destroyer).

