



# Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## Annual Report 2019 – 2020



Funded by:







# Highlights

- ♦ £1.8m NLHF grant award for Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- ♦ Over 150Ha of habitat conserved or enhanced for biodiversity.
- ♦ 52 Scheduled monuments monitored.
- ♦ 13 AONB led events with a further 12 run by partners.
- ♦ 352 people engaged in activities linked to Health & Wellbeing.
- ♦ 243 young people directly engaged.
- ♦ £27,000 value of volunteer engagement.
- ♦ Wildlife Surveys for Bats, Butterflies, Deer, Dormice, Nightjars, Pied Flycatchers.
- ♦ 7 Quantock Facilitation Fund Events.
- ♦ 102 planning applications appraised.
- ♦ Detailed consultation on 32 of planning applications.
- ♦ HM Government Landscapes Review report launched.
- ♦ Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment workshop run by Somerset AONB's for local authority planners, all relevant Planning Authorities attended.
- ♦ New Environmental Land Management Scheme Test & Trial Project with 34 members.



# Delivering for Land Management

The Quantock Hills AONB Service has a significant history of not only developing projects for land management but also directly delivering land management where appropriate. During 2019/20 the AONB Service undertook direct land management associated with woodlands, heathland and extensive grassland, all to improve and enhance the habitats of the Quantock Hills.

As well as direct delivery during 2019 / 20 the AONB Service also led on projects that aim to improve land management for biodiversity. The first is the ELMs Test & Trials, which is funded by Defra. This is trialling a new approach to agri-environment schemes, currently called ELMs (England Land Management system) the scheme aims to more comprehensively replace the current basic payment and Countryside Stewardship Schemes after the UK leaves the EU.

The ELMs Test & Trials project started in December 2019 and aims to run until March 2021. Initial progress was encouraging but during February and March 2020, when much of the farmer / landowner engagement was due to take place, the Covid-19 pandemic occurred in the UK delaying much work associated with the project.

The AONB Service runs a grant scheme called the Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund, which is funded by the S106 associated with the HPC development. During 2019/20 this funded projects delivering on habitat and biodiversity enhancements.





# Delivering for Wellbeing

The main Somerset AONBs (Blackdowns, Mendips and Quantocks) have been working with Somerset Public Health (Somerset County Council) since April 2016 on a joint project which aimed to encourage non-traditional users to access the protected landscape for health and wellbeing benefits.

During 2019/20 Public Health extended the funding in acknowledgement of the high achievement of the project. During this period the project worked with existing groups to ensure their engagement was sustainable, created a web-based 'map' allowing groups and communities to have better information on accessing the natural environment.

A main output for 2019/20 was the formation of the Somerset Nature & Wellbeing network. The first meeting, in September 2019 was attended by over 40 people from 30 organisations and the membership has grown since then. The network brings together healthcare, social care and land management organisations to pool knowledge and enhance collaboration across the sector.

All project partners are keen to see a further project which builds on the lessons learnt. In partnership with Somerset Wildlife Trust, which has also been delivering a similar Nature and Wellbeing project, a new project titled Somerset Nature Connections has been developed. Applications to National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) , SCC and HPC Community Fund have been submitted and the outcomes should be known in summer 2020.



## Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme

*Reimagining the Manor*

In 2017 the AONB's bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme (QLPS) grant got a stage 1 pass, which is to say that the Lottery liked the proposal and would fund the development of a full bid. Bill Jenman started work as Development Officer at the beginning of April 2018, working with all the partners involved to put together the application.

The stage 2 bid for £1.8m of lottery funding was submitted at the end of August 2019. In January 2020 the NLHF announced that the Quantock LPS was successful along with 7 other schemes nationally. The scheme will start on 1st April 2020 though recruitment for the Scheme Manager started in February to ensure the postholder was in place by April 2020.

The Quantock Hills are known not only for their lovely landscape, but also for their remarkable story of human interaction with nature reaching back many thousands of years. Now the Hills are under increasing pressure, from changing agriculture, increasing recreational use, and climate change. At the same time the health and wellbeing benefits of the outdoors aren't accessible to some of the most disadvantaged communities in the nearby towns. The QLPS will help to address these issues, as well as giving more people more opportunities to participate and building the capacity and skills of local volunteers.



# Staff Changes



Our Communications and Support Officer Katy Coate left us in June 2019 for a career change to work as a 'Postie' for Royal Mail. The role was operating on a job-share arrangement and Amanda Sampson has increased her hours to cover the whole role.

Hannah Worthington, our Quantock and Blackdown Volunteer Coordinator left in September 2019 taking up a new role in Devon.

We wish Katy and Hannah all the best for the future.



## *Welcome Verity!*



Verity Jones joined the team in January taking up the post of Volunteer Coordinator for the Quantock and Blackdown Hills AONBs. The role is split jointly between the two protected landscapes. The role will support and maintain the existing volunteer groups as well as look at development opportunities to allow more people to volunteer in a greater variety of roles.

If you're interested in volunteering, looking for volunteers or would like to learn more contact Verity at:

**[v.jones@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:v.jones@somerset.gov.uk) or [aonbvolunteer@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:aonbvolunteer@somerset.gov.uk)**



# Quantock Partnership



## **Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee (JAC): Membership as at 31st March 2020:**

Anthony Trollope-Bellew	(Chair) Somerset West & Taunton Council
Mike Caswell	(Vice Chair) Sedgemoor District Council
Nick Salter	Forestry Commission
Hugh Warmington	CLA
Alice Roberts	DEFRA
Alan Hughes	Friends of Quantock
Sharon Farnham	Kingston St Mary Parish Council
Matthew Uren	National Farmers Union - Somerset County Advisor
Simon Larkins	National Trust
Jo Chesworth	Natural England
Julian Taylor	Parish Rep
Stuart Parkman	Parish Rep
Debbie Salvidge	Quantock Commoners Association
Mandy Chilcott	Somerset County Council
Alan Bradford	Sedgemoor District Council
Vacant	SLAF
Ian Dyer	Somerset and Wiltshire Federation of Small Businesses
Hugh Davies	Somerset County Council
Gwil Wren	Somerset West & Taunton Council

## **Quantock Hills AONB Service Team: As at 31st March 2020:**

Chris Edwards	Quantock Hills AONB Manager
Iain Porter	Quantock Hills AONB Development Officer
Andy Stevenson	Quantock Hills AONB Ranger
Owen Jones	Quantock Hills AONB & Forestry England Partnership Ranger
Amanda Sampson	Quantock Hills AONB Communications & Support Officer
Kristen Lambert	Somerset's 3 AONB's Nature & Wellbeing Officer
Alex Meletiou	Quantock Hills AONB Planning Officer
Verity Jones	Quantock & Blackdown Hills AONB's Volunteer Coordinator
Bill Jenman	Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Development Officer

# Looking Forward 2020 - 2021



- ♦ Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme to launch on 1st April 2020.  
While the scheme will launch as planned, activities and recruitment of the staff team will be adapted to take account of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.
- ♦ Government response to the Landscape Review due autumn 2020. The Landscape Review had 27 proposals, from a night under the stars for every child, to ranger services in all protected landscape and enhanced planning protection. The Government's response on the Landscape Review could have a significant impact on the way the Quantock Hills AONB goes forward.



- ♦ Development of Nature Recovery Plan to embed in AONB Management Plan. Part of the Colchester Declaration of July 2019 the Quantock Hills AONB, along with other AONBs nationally, pledged to produce a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB. This is the first pledge which will lead to enhanced action in the delivery of other pledges such as at least 200,000Ha of SSSI within AONBs will be in favourable condition and at least 36,000Ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs by 2030.



# Financial Summary 2019 - 2020



## Core Income

Defra	£163,944
Somerset County Council	£20,400
Sedgemoor District Council	£11,500
Somerset West & Taunton	£11,000
Friends of Quantock	£1,585
Cost Recovery / Charges	£30,864
Blackdown Hills AONB (recharge)	£6,802
Forestry Commission (recharge)	£20,303
Events income	£48
<b>Total Core Income</b>	<b>£266,447</b>

## Core Expenditure

Salaries NI, pension	£204,046
Training	£1,963
Accommodation	£12,196
Stationary / post / phones	£2,648
Travel & vehicles	£22,592
Equipment, materials	£5,602
Literature & publications	£3,228
Meeting costs / hospitality	£1,567
Hosting cost / Insurances	£9,024
Memberships	£2,709
Research & Development	£2,970

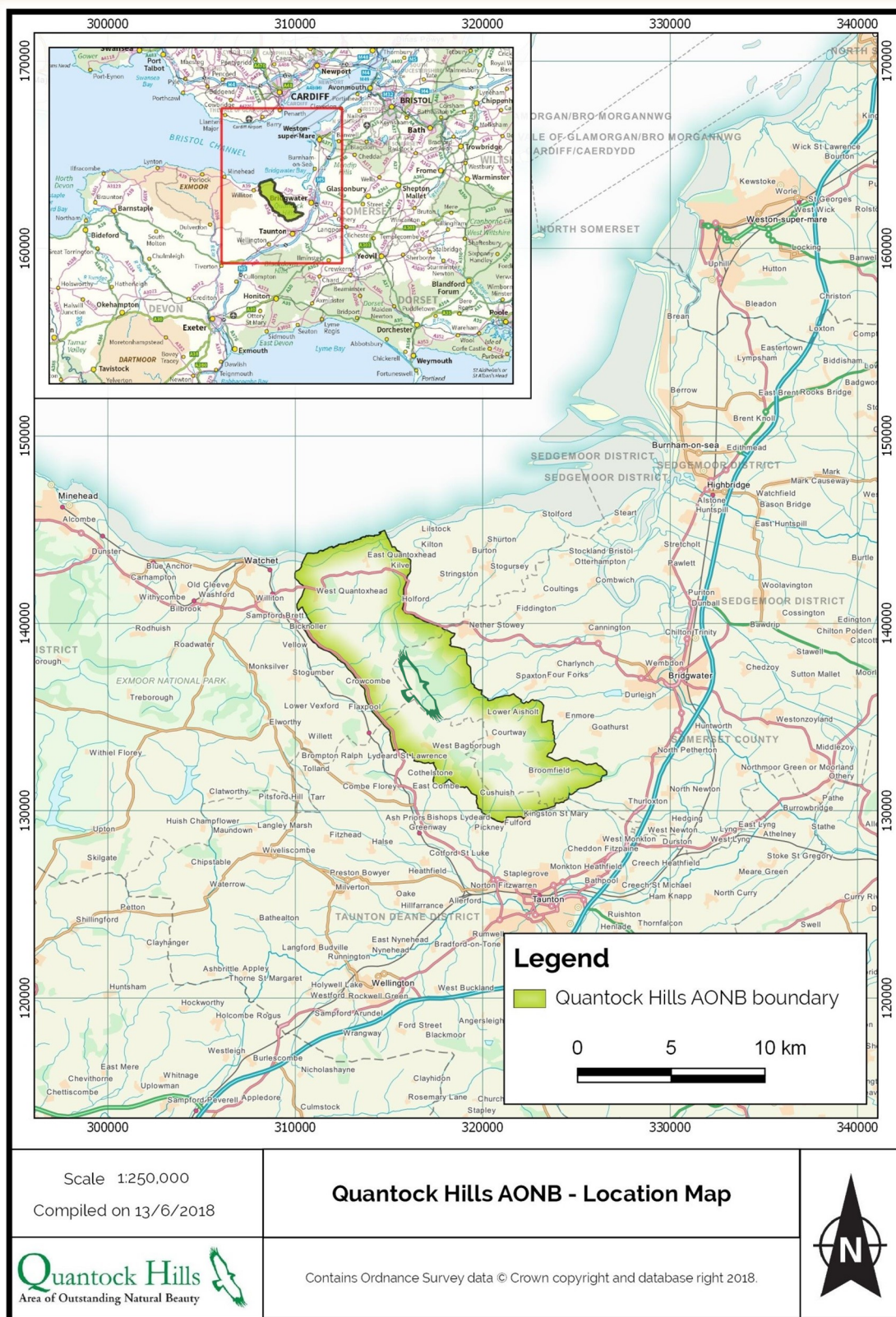
**Total Core Expenditure      £268,545**

## Budget

Budget	Expenditure	Income	Balance
Core	£268,545	£266,447	-£2,098
Project	£25,094	£29,831	£4,737
Landscape Partnership Scheme	£53,103	£45,650	-£7,453
Projects HPC S106	£28,855	£25,455	-£3,400
Amenity Land	£3,938	£13,171	£9,233

## Summary

RIA (b/f from 2018/19)	£71,957
Total Expenditure	£379,353
Total Income	£380,553
Carry forward 2020/21	£72,975
<i>Earmarked reserves</i>	<i>£24,000</i>
<i>Allocated budget</i>	<i>£38,500</i>
<b>Surplus</b>	<b>£10,475</b>



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