






Financial Statement			
Current Income	£	Expenditure	£
Defra	153,133	Staff costs	206,924
Somerset County Council	21,500	Training	1,759
Sedgemoor District Council	11,500	Travel / Subsistence	14,268
Taunton Deane Borough Council	10,000	Accommodation	16,184
West Somerset Council	5,000	Partnership Budget	1,065
Forestry Commission	11,035	Partnership Running Costs	10,769
Mendip Hills AONB	9,360	Core Expenditure	250,969
Charges	12,338	AONB Projects	21,155
Miscellaneous	2,165	HPC Sc106 Projects	38,201
Natural England (Project)	14,150		
Somerset County Council (Deficit Payment)	10,289	Cash Expenditure	310,325
Somerset County Council (HPC Project)	27,817	<i>Earmarked reserve</i>	<i>26,054</i>
Somerset County Council (Project)	21,404		
Brought Forward (14/15)	58,724	<i>Carry forward (16/17)</i>	<i>58,090</i>
Total Income	368,415	<i>Committed carry forward</i>	
		<i>Earmarked Reserves</i>	<i>14,020</i>
		<i>Health & Wellbeing Project</i>	<i>39,054</i>
Looking forward into 2016/2017			
This coming year we will be:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing phase II of the Landscape Improvement Scheme, including reverting intensive grassland to semi-natural oak woodland and heathland Delivering climate change resilient planning workshops for farmers and foresters Developing stage 2 of the Landscape Partnership Heritage Lottery Bid 			
Funded by:			
    			

Quantock Hills AONB: Nationally protected; naturally beautiful	
Annual Report 2015-2016	
	
Highlights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund bid submitted Cothelstone Hill Heritage Project completed with support from SW Heritage Trust New Nature and Wellbeing Officer started 3 year project 2338 Volunteer hours completed Successful 'Go Wild Stay Well' mental health project, with MIND and volunteers Photographic landscape monitoring on 12 sites 6 new interpretation panels designed and installed 30Ha of invasive species control to prevent spread of Phytophthora Delivery of landscape scale restoration project started to improve habitat linkages Swaling programme completed with 30.2ha swaled Adder population and hibernacula survey carried out at 2 sites Monitoring of 150 Pied Flycatcher boxes in AONB Bat identification and monitoring undertaken at 3 sites Butterfly transects undertaken at 2 sites Dormouse monitoring at 2 sites All 52 Scheduled Monuments surveyed twice 142 Planning applications monitored in the AONB and 31 comments made 24 days patrol throughout the year with police and volunteer involvement Annual Deer Count supported 12 public events held with 500 people attending 	
  	

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Here are some examples of the work carried about by the AONB Service with partners from April 2015 to March 2016.

Case Studies



Cothelstone Hill Project

The South West Heritage Trust took ownership of Cothelstone Hill this year, and a new project to better understand the hilltop was undertaken. An archaeological dig took place, led by SWHT which included successful public events attended by over 300 people.

Seven Sisters replacement clump of trees were planted in December, with a range of invited speakers and ceremonial tree planters. 24 trees were planted in total: 8 beech standards, 8 beech whips and 8 scots pine, sourced locally from Triscombe Nurseries.



Nature and Wellbeing Officer

A new post, covering all 3 Somerset AONBs has been created, to tackle some of the barriers that prevent particular groups experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits that AONBs bring. The project will target communities who are currently not accessing the Hills, but for whom access to the natural environment may be of great benefit. The reasons for the current lack of engagement from these groups, may be mediated by social-economic status, ethnicity, age, disability and mental health. Projects will provide supported visits, volunteering opportunities, monitoring and evaluation.



Volunteering

Volunteers continue to be the crucial element to achieving many AONB targets. This year 2,338 hours were freely given. There are currently 7 different volunteer groups, including: The Estates Team, 2 core individuals working on weekly tasks, Volunteer Rangers (team of 19 with monthly meet ups), QCV volunteers working jointly with National Trust, Wildlife Volunteers who carry out wildlife monitoring tasks, Heritage Volunteers (bi-annual surveys 52 monuments), a Work Experience volunteer, Jack James-Powell and also our Office Volunteer Sandra Heard has been helping with administrative tasks in the AONB office.

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Case Studies

Bat Monitoring

This year, bat monitoring had been taking place at Fyne Court, Ramscombe and Cothelstone Hill. There were good number of passing bats including Barbastelle and Horseshoe with potential roosts identified.

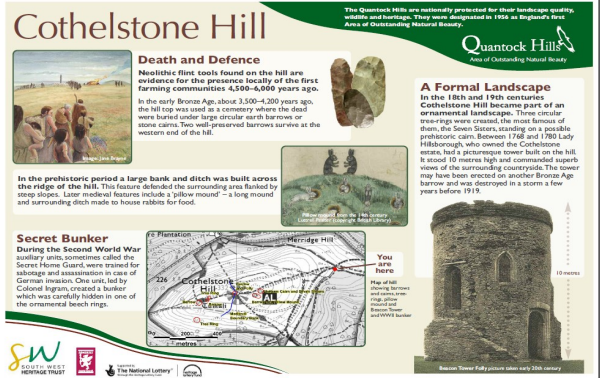
Cothelstone Hill showed variable densities with hotspots and high numbers of Myotis species. In Fyne Court 155 individual passes were heard, at Cothelstone Hill there were 218 individual passes and Ramscombe had 132 passes. All sites had at least 6 different species present.



New Interpretation Panels

6 new interpretations were installed this year; two at Cothelstone Hill, Crowcombe car park, Kilve, Hawkridge Reservoir and Dead Woman's Ditch. The panels aim to provide clear, engaging information and stories about the area.

The panels also continue the visual branding and identity of other interpretation panels in the area without intruding on our wilder landscapes.



Orchard Workshops

To counter the loss of orchards the AONB Service secured funding for delivery of the Land Management and Skills Scheme. This includes running workshops open to landowners and managers to increase knowledge of appropriate management which will improve the condition of traditional orchards in the area.

1 workshop took place in Spring 2016, with further workshops planned over the next couple of years. Participants learnt how to plan, plant and manage an orchard, including the art of pruning.

