**Management Plan Priorities to deliver through Farming in Protected Landscapes –**

***Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty***

**FiPL projects should contribute to or deliver against at least one, preferably more, of the objectives of the Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Each of these objectives has a set of associated Management Policies. The table on page 3 of this document, lists these policies, and provides example projects that would be relevant to them.**

**Landscape Character and Quality:**

*To encourage and deliver understanding, conservation and enhancement of the character and quality of the AONB landscape through land use, development and management that supports its special qualities.*

**Land management: Farming, Forestry and Catchment:**

*To support sustainable land management to improve and extend the special wildlife, landscape and ecosystem services of Quantock Commons and farmland.*

**Biodiversity: Wildlife and Habitats:**

*(i): To maintain and enrich the biodiversity and ecosystems of the Quantocks at the landscape scale.*

*(ii): To increase knowledge and understanding of the biodiversity and ecosystems of the Quantocks and their linkages to the surrounding area.*

**Historic Environment and Cultural Influences:**

*To ensure the historic and culturally significant landscape and features of the AONB and protected, conserved and understood in detail.*

**Geology and Climate:**

*(ii) To identify and reinforce adaptation strategies and resilience to climate change in respect of the special qualities of the AONB.*

**The Quantock Hills AONB is lucky to have many partners locally who are delivering programmes for wellbeing, access and community engagement. These activities are certainly eligible for FiPL funding, however projects primarily targeting the priorities listed below are of a lower priority than those delivering for climate change and nature recovery.**

**The management plan areas relevant to these activities are:**

**Development, Planning & Infrastructure**: *To ensure development and infrastructure conserves and enhances the AONB; that it is compatible with its distinctive character described by the LCA, not compromising the special qualities of the AONB outlined in the Statement of Significance*

**Local Economy & Visitors:** *To support tourism and economic activity across the AONB where it is environmentally sustainable and benefits businesses in local communities.*

**Access, Recreation and Wellbeing:** *To provide high quality public access in appropriate areas of the Quantocks, promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of recreation in the AONB while minimising adverse environmental impacts.*

**Community and Volunteering:** *To support and promote active communities and volunteer involvement in the AONB.*

**Public Understanding and Interpretation:** *To continually update and improve the relevance, quality and accessibility of Quantock information and interpretation for AONB visitors and local communities, within available resources.*

If you have any questions about how your project interacts with the Quantocks Hills AONB Management Plan Priorities, don’t hesitate to get in touch with our Landscape Project Officer, Katie Read. Email: czread@somerset.gov.uk Tel: 07977 412 249

The table below shows a breakdown of the relevant Quantock Hills AONB Management Policies, alongside some indicative examples of projects or activities that could qualify for each Management plan priority.

Some of the QHAONB Management Policies below have been reworded to highlight their relevance to potential FiPL projects. This does not reflect a change of wording to the Management Objectives and Management Policies of the statutory AONB Management Plan.

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| Management Policy | Indicative Projects |
| Landscape Character & Quality |
| LP1: To protect, understand and enhance the landscape and character of the AONB. | * A farmer restores a section of hedgebank in a visually prominent location. They restore the earth bank, replace the stone facing and lay the hedge on top of it, preserving large standard beech trees in the line
* A farmer reinstates a traditionally managed cider orchard on a site that historic maps show to have previously been an orchard
* An area of improved upland pasture is restored to species-rich acid grassland and heath, drainage systems are reversed, and the farmer adopts an extensive grazing programme
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| LP2: To promote the highest standards of landscape management in respect of landscape beauty, natural capital and ecosystem services for all land uses. | * An estate provides succession planning for in-field trees to ultimately replace significant trees in the landscape
* A landowner creates permissive paths for disabled visitors to enjoy a site of natural or historic interest
* A group of landowners coordinate to restore and enhance a network of wildlife ponds
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| LP3: To encourage public understanding and support for landscape conservation and enhancement. | * A local farmer hosts a series of educational walks aimed at increasing public knowledge of food production and farmed landscapes
* A farmer applies for support to purchase tools and provide transport for volunteers to take part in traditional land management activities like hedge laying, coppice management and stone-faced banking
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| Land management: Farming, Forestry and Catchment |
| LMP1: To protect, maintain and where appropriate extend the dry acid grassland, acid flushes/mires, open moorland and upland oakwoods with their important bird assemblage. | * A collaborative farmer cluster requests funding for a pony handling system to manage traditional livestock species on common land
* Fencing to protect sensitive acid mires from damage due to visitor pressure and livestock
* Installation of nestboxes for Pied Flycatchers in upland Oakwoods
* Creation of exclosure plots to promote structural diversity in woodlands
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| LMP2: To encourage and support the positive management of Quantock farmland, woodland and water catchment.  | * An arable farmer implements natural flood management techniques to reduce run-off and erosion, including planting hedgerows and buffer strips, and relocating gateways
* A sheep farmer fences a wide buffer along a stream to prevent water pollution by livestock, and installs new troughs and water pipes in their fields
* Landowners across a stream catchment collaborate to monitor and reduce phosphate levels
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| LMP3: To support the understanding, conservation and proper management of Quantock hedges and associated banks. | * Repair stone-faced banks topped by beech trees using local stone
* Appropriately fell, pollard, coppice, and lay stretches of hedge to maintain integrity of boundary and habitats
* Fencing of hedges and banks to protect from grazing livestock and deer
* A landowner uses his stretch of hedgebank to trial different management techniques of Quantock beech hedgebanks, sharing the results with a range of local stakeholders
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| LMP4: To support the sensitive management of woodland and plantations to enhance and extend the distinctive character, landscape and wildlife of the Quantocks. | * A farmer replants a diverse mix of native broadleaf species in a woodland affected by ash dieback
* A landowner plants several small areas of woodland to connect isolated woodland habitats and create wildlife corridors
* Selective thinning is carried out in a woodland to create glades and rides
* Exclosure plots and tree planting are used in a woodland to improve species and structural diversity
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| LMP5: To encourage and support the creation and positive management of privately owned woodlands and orchards, bringing more into management to increase the wide range of ecosystem services provided. | * A farmer restores an unmanaged orchard by carrying out restorative pruning and replacing tree guards. They have their apple varieties professionally identified, and plant new trees to replace dead ones.
* A group delivers a project that encourages local people to learn and upskill in orchard management, using the fruits of local orchards in community apple/cider events and production
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| Biodiversity: Wildlife and Habitats |
| BWHP2: To monitor biodiversity through regular surveys of key species across the AONB.\* | * A landowner surveys Nightjars on their holding and develops a management plan to provide them with nesting opportunities
* A cluster of farmers survey their grasslands for waxcap fungi species, to inform the targeting of grassland restoration activities
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| BWHP3: To monitor and manage harmful invasive species and diseases across the AONB.\* | * Removal of invasive Holly and Rhododendron from SAC woodlands
* A volunteer group undertakes to control Himalayan balsam across multiple holdings on behalf of the landowners
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| BWHP5: Support projects that maintain or restore robust populations of key Quantock species and their ecological networks.” | * A cluster of farmers coordinate to repair fragmented habitat along commuting routes for Lesser horseshoe bats
* A farmer surveys for Adders, and creates artificial hibernacula and a scrub management plan for their benefit
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| \*NB: A project where monitoring is the primary focus will not normally be appropriate for FiPL funding. However, monitoring to inform or assess a land management activity is strongly encouraged and suitable for FiPL funding. |
| BWHP4: To support the managed conversion of plantations (wholly or in part) to heathland or semi-natural woodland where this strengthens the existing networks of habitats. | * A landowner selectively thins conifer trees from their site and replants with native broadleaf species. Permissive access is created and some of the felled timber is used to create picnic benches
* A brush harvester is purchased to collect seed from heathland on the Quantock Hills, which is then used to revert felled areas of conifer plantation to heathland
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| Historic Environment and Cultural Influences |
| HEP1: Support the protection, conservation and reinstatement of historic and culturally significant Quantock landscapes and features, particularly assets on the Heritage at Risk Register. | * An historic mill pond and water wheel system is restored and reconnected
* A farmer creates and implements a scrub management plan to protect bowl barrows with Scheduled Monument designation on their holding
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| HEP2: Promote public understanding of the significance of the Quantock historic and cultural landscape through community engagement and appropriate interpretation. | * A landowner restores an historic lime kiln adjacent to a public footpath by clearing trees, repairing the walls, and installing an interpretation panel and bench
* A farmer hosts a series of educational visits for school groups to explain the traditional use of coppice materials and demonstrate coppice crafts like hurdle making
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| HEP3: To further investigation and recording of historic and culturally significant Quantock landscape and features.\* | * A landowner engages a local community group in archaeological study of a charcoal burning platform to interpret the historical significance and share the findings with the wider public
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| \*NB: A project where monitoring is the primary focus will not normally be appropriate for FiPL funding. However, monitoring to inform or assess a land management activity is strongly encouraged and suitable for FiPL funding. |
| Geology and Climate |
| GCP2: To protect the high quality of Quantock coastal landform and their distinctive contribution from inappropriate development and activities. | * An arable farmer on the coastal cliffs takes action to reduce soil erosion, including cover cropping, direct drilling, and establishing hedgerows and grass strips parallel to the cliffs
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| GCP3: Support the creation, restoration and maintenance of habitats in the AONB to maximise Quantock wildlife and landscape resilience to the impacts of climate change.  | * An area of land along an upland watercourse is managed to reduce flood risk, through leaky dams, fish-scale bunding and the creation of riparian woodland
* A farmer wishing to adopt regenerative agriculture practices applies for funding to support a pasture cropping trial
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| GCP4: To support land managers implementing strategies identified in the Natural England Climate Change Adaptation Manual (NE546). | * Increasing the species diversity in a woodland, to mitigate against the spread of pests and diseases
* A landowner restores a stream’s natural morphology by removing weirs
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