



Friends of the QUANTOCKS

Trustees and Officers 31st December 2023

<i>President:</i>	Lady Gass DCVO
<i>Vice President:</i>	Mr Hugh Warmington
<i>Vice President:</i>	Mrs Jane Warmington
<i>Chairman:</i>	Mr John Andrews
<i>Vice Chairman:</i>	Mr Tim Whittingham
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Mr Robin Stamp
<i>Secretary:</i>	Mrs Trudi Mansfield
<i>Membership secretary</i>	Mrs Mary ter Braak

Trustees:

Mr John Andrews
Mr Robin Stamp
Mr Tim Whittingham
Mr David Lloyd
Mr Alan Hughes
Mrs Trudi Mansfield
Mr Jeremy Scott-Bolton

Committee:

The Trustees
Rev Stephen Campbell
Mr Ben Bartlett (Quantock Commoners)
Mr Iain Porter (QHNL service)
Mrs Zoe Hicks
Mr Nigel Philips
Mr Vernon Hughes

Bankers:

HSBC 17 North Street, Taunton
Somerset, TA1 1NA

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR 2023

During the year we lost two long-standing trustees, Ian Kett and my predecessor as Chairman Philip Comer and three new members were elected to the Committee. They were Zoe Hicks and Nigel Phillips, both from Nether Stowey, and Vernon Hughes from Spaxton. All bring considerable energy and experience of value to us as we expand our ambitions and activities.

Tim Whittingham has become our Vice-Chairman and represents us on the Joint Advisory Committee to the AONB and the Board of the Quantocks Landscape Partnership Scheme. Ian Kett's retirement meant that we lost our Observer Co-ordinator and one of the existing Observers, Peter Gotto has taken on that role.

Our Vice-President Hugh Warmington was elected to Chair the AONB's Joint Advisory Committee in succession to Anthony Trollope-Bellow who died in a tragic accident on his estate in the preceding year.

Our Trustees meet quarterly to deal with policy and finance. In this they are advised and aided by Iain Porter who heads the AONB team and Ben Bartlett from the Quantock Commoners. In 2022 we created a management team of the officers plus our one staff member to better co-ordinate ongoing activity and this has worked well, normally meeting bi-monthly, while email communication is almost daily on a wide variety of matters.

In the summer Zoe Hicks, our part-time Project Officer, resigned her post for family reasons though she kindly continued to provide some cover while we looked for a successor. In this we were fortunate; we had a strong field of applications and appointed Tracey Roberts whose background is in managing arts and cultural charities and delivering consultancy across the voluntary and public sectors. Until 2016 she managed ARTlife, West Somerset's arts development service, working to increase the range of cultural activity in the area. She was part of the team that instigated and launched The Coleridge Way walking route. She took up her post with us in January 2024.

Our audited financial position is reported separately. At the time of writing, our available reserves are somewhat in excess of £100,000. We are spending appreciably more on our core purposes than hitherto and we judge it wise to hold our reserves at around this level in case we are faced with a legal battle, for instance, or the AONB's funding is cut and we wish to increase our support. Accordingly, during the year we made the decision to increase the membership fee and move from payment by standing order to direct debit. The new rates are £25 for whole family membership and £50 for businesses; we now also offer Business Champion and Champion Plus with additional promotional benefits.

During the year we appointed a local firm of planning consultants, Stuart Todd Associates, to advise us on responses to applications that affect the Quantocks landscape and the views from the hills such as the Washford Solar Farm, refused at Committee, and proposals for more caravan parks for Hinkley workers. Three of our members check the planning registers, an onerous task, and we liaise with the AONB's planning adviser over cases of particular concern.

In 2022 our attention was drawn to the removal of a hedge on farmland in Spaxton in apparent contravention of the Hedgerow Regulations which require prior consent from the local authority, then Sedgemoor District now Somerset Council. Finding it reluctant to act, we took specialist legal advice but to no avail and, thanks to a Spaxton resident Vernon Hughes, who has steered the whole process, we continue to press for action, with a formal complaint in final draft at the end of the

year and, if necessary, referral to the Ombudsman.

We also continued to press for repair to the road across the hills between Nether Stowey and Crowcombe but against the background of widespread neglect of rural roads across the County and budgetary constraints this may prove to be a long battle.

In the summer we engaged a professional botanist, Dr James McGill, to survey all the 29 mires within the Quantocks SSSI and assess them against Natural England criteria. He found that of the 29 only one, our own fenced Ramscombe mire, is in good condition, 15 are acceptable though they have some problems and 13 are in bad condition for a variety of reasons. We hope to progress measures to restore them in the coming year or two.

The *iNaturalist* project Quantocks Wildlife Watch, run for us by our Treasurer Robin Stamp and with the AONB and QLPS, has received over 10,000 observations of more than 2000 species and involves a growing number of observers. Amongst other things we are using it to map rhododendron, for future removal.

Nigel Philips has continued to work on his book on Quantocks wildlife which he is generously writing at no cost to us and which we hope to publish later in 2024.

Our own landholdings are overall in reasonable condition though bracken and scrub both present problems for commoners despite their efforts as well as for the wildlife of the moorland. There has been localised damage due to offroad "do-nutters" notably at Dead Woman's Ditch where a rave also caused damage to the sward; we hope to prevent recurrences by deploying rocks kindly provided from a disused quarry by the Crowcombe Estate.


Through the year we continued to run a varied programme of events for our members and produced three emailed and website-posted editions of the newsletter as well as the printed spring edition produced for us by Mary Ter-Braak.

Our open Facebook Group now has more than 7000 members and presents a memorably high quality of images of the landscape, livestock and wildlife of the hills.

We have sought to develop further our liaison with others. Close working contact is maintained with the AONB service and the QLPS, the Quantocks Deer Management and Conservation Group and with the Commoners. With the future of farm support in protected landscape still unclear and cuts in funding for DEFRA, to say nothing of Somerset Council's financial plight, we have many serious issues to understand and attempt to influence.

We were founded in 1949 so 2024 is our 75th anniversary as it is for the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 which among other good things provided for the creation of AONBs of which the Quantocks was the first in 1957. With guidance from an Aisholt resident, Ben Hoare, who has much relevant experience we will be celebrating with a programme of events, indoor and out, from May onwards and we look forward to seeing friends old and new.

Signed by **John Andrews, Chairman** 13/4/24



Financial Reserve Policy Background

Over the years the charity has built up an income stream from membership subscriptions sufficient to cover the ongoing standard running costs and obligations for the charity plus a surplus which has generally amounted to around £4,000 p/a. Subscription prices were increased from December 2023 from £18 to £25 for family membership and from £35 to £50 for business members, this increase should start to show in accounts from 2024.

Financial Reserve Policy

The trustees and committee treat very seriously the responsibilities they have to manage the charity resources for the longer term in line with the charities objective as set out in its governing document. In short, those objectives are as follows:

To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation **protection** and **improvement** of the landscape and natural environment of the Quantock Hills.

The charity will use its income **and reserves** to promote its aims within the wider Quantock Hills National Landscape area and to seek further funding from grant giving authorities and to encourage individuals and local businesses to work with it to fulfil its aims. **This policy is expected to see our expenditure exceed income and reserves fall over the current and coming years.**

The charity has a policy of holding reserves of funds to:

- Cover its short-term liabilities
- Maintain sufficient capital to allow a minimum of 3 years continuity to its services and employment obligations
- Provide capital for it to carry out land management and other projects on its land and across the wider QHNL area
- To maintain a capital fund to allow it to fight planning applications or proposals that are considered potentially harmful to the Quantock Hills
- Provide grants to individuals or organisations whose aims are in line with that of the charity-in particular where such grants are not generally available through other grant giving organisations or authorities and to provide **sponsorship funding for events planned and run by the QHNL (was AONB) and/or English Nature.**
- To build up a capital fund to allow it to pursue the purchase of further land within the QHNL
 - Income that is surplus to the charity's short term needs will be accumulated in this fund, annually where no other specific needs has been identified.



FRIENDS OF QUANTOCK

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF FRIENDS OF QUANTOCK

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Friends of Quantock charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2023 which are set out on pages 3 and 4.

Responsibilities of trustees and examiner and basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

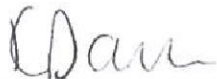
My examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and the seeking of explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

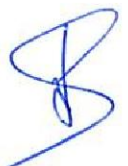
- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Kelly Davies ACCA
Thomas Westcott
7 Castle Street
Bridgwater
TA6 3DT

Date 09-04-2024



Income and expenditure account for year ending 31/12/23

Receipts:	2023	2022
Annual Subscriptions	£5,012	£4,188
5 yr subscriptions	£375	£750
Business subscriptions	£780	£975
sub-total	£6,167	£5,913
Donations	£162	£162
Sales	£0	£1,600
Gift Aid reclaim	£1,370	£1,370
interest	£2,834	£867
	£10,533	£9,912
Investment growth/loss	£2,368	£12,939
Total Receipts	£12,901	£3,027
 Payments:		
AONB contribution	£1,000	£1,000
Project Officer	£6,204	£5,503
Administrator travel	£74	£67
Audit costs	£240	£240
Clerical expenses	£800	£400
Print, post, stationery & sundry expenses	£1,747	£1,828
Bank Charges	£519	£110
Insurances	£184	£182
Events*3	£95	£666
book	£1,000	£0
Projects*1	£14,689	£6,472
legal and planning fees*2	£4,308	£0
Grants and Sponsorships	£250	£500
Total expenditure:	£31,110	£16,968
 Deficit/Surplus for the year:	£18,209	£19,995

Notes on 2023 payments

Projects*1:

QHNL (was AONB) track repair £5,000, QLPS Hedge-bank £5,000, mire survey £4,621, Butterfly transect £67

Legal and planning*2:

Legal re Hedge protection £3,444, Planning £864

Events*3:

This figure is the net cost after the adding back of income received for events

Financial report to 31/12/2023

Current Monetary Funds:

HSBC Community Account:	11,592
Paypal: Trading account	34

Total instant access 11,626

Cambridge & Counties Bank:	45 day notice:	4.05%	53,819
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Cambridge & Counties Bank:	120 day notice	4.50%	22,342
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United Trust bank:	120 day notice	5.25%	26,636
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Total cash Funds: £114,423

Investment funds

Fidelity (£65,000 invested 20/08/21, £12,500 withdrawn 30/6/23)	42,333
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Total Funds including investments: £156,756

Financial obligations:

		Date needed
Landscape Partnership car park	20,000	2024/25
Crowcombe Park Gate c/p maintenance	10,000	10 year
Book - at completion of layout	7,660	
Book - at delivery	7,660	
Book-ancillary costs	1,000	

Total £46,320

Reserves £110,436

The charity reserves have been allocated to the following agreed priorities

Internal Projects fund including-	20,000	2024/25
Rebranding-web update (£5,000)		
Tree & Scrub clearance (£3,000)		
Archives (£1,000)		
External grants and sponsorship fund	20,000	2024/25
Employment continuity fund (Three years base salaries)	36,000	2024/26
Legal fighting fund/land purchase fund	34,436	long term
Total	£110,436	