



Friends of the QUANTOCKS

2024 TRUSTEES' REPORT & ANNUAL REVIEW

The Charity was founded in 1949 and thus 2024 has been our 75th anniversary year, celebrated with a range of special public events, including talks by wildlife authors Stephen Moss, Charles Foster and Nigel Philips, a guided coastal walk with Nigel Philips and visits to Fairfield House and Stowey farm.

During the year we have also increased our landholdings with the transfer of Bicknoller Quarry to us by Somerset Council and also launched a major and ambitious Elm and Hairstreak butterfly Project, planting disease resistant Elm trees and blackthorn for rare at-risk White-letter and Brown Hairstreak butterflies.

Our land holding now totals just fractionally short of 400 acres and includes Halsway and Thorncombe Hill, Over Stowey Customs Common and now Bicknoller Quarry, all of which form part of the Quantock Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Our Over Stowey Customs Common site includes Dead Woman's Ditch and Sandy Beds car parks. As common land, the "Commoners" have the right to graze sheep, horses and cattle, and the responsibility to carry out ongoing management of the land including a program of bracken and scrub clearance.

We continue to work closely on various projects with the National Landscape team (formerly AONB) and the Lottery-funded Quantocks Landscape Partnership Scheme as well as the commoners, Deer management and conservation group and a raft of local landowners plus organisations such as Natural England, CPRE and Butterfly Conservation.

Our major partnership with the Quantocks landscape Partnership Scheme saw us contributing £20,000 this year towards major car park renovations on the hill and taking over responsibility for their adder survey scheme as the partnership closes in 2025. Over the past 5 years we have now contributed to £40,000 of projects including funding a specialist low level tractor which has already been put to great use on the various projects around the hill.

Other projects continued include our Quantock Wildlife Watch Citizen Science data collection Project, our campaign to protect hedges, and sponsorship of the annual hedge laying training and competition. As reported last year, local wildlife author and photographer Nigel Philips has been working hard to write a new book for us on the "Nature of the Quantocks" and we are excited to report the book is now complete and due for publication in March 2025.

This year we also completed a major upgrade to our website and the process of moving members over to fee collection by direct debit is almost completed. We are so grateful to our membership secretary, Mary ter Braak for undertaking this huge task.

Our financial position is reported separately but in brief the charity has continued over the past year to fund a range of significant projects out of capital thus reducing our reserves to just under £125,000 at year end. This figure is likely to fall to around £100,000 in the near future with the cost of publishing our new book falling due in the coming month or two, plus fencing at Bicknoller quarry and our contribution to the

production of a comprehensive deer management plan. However, with expected book income and payment of a grant towards our Elm and Hairstreak project adding to our receipts, this still leaves us in a strong position and able to fund further projects.

Our Objectives, Trustees, officers & committee

Our Objectives are *“To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation protection and improvement of the landscape and natural environment of the Quantock Hills”*. We define The Quantock Hills to include all of the Quantock Hills National Landscape (formerly AONB) as well as the surrounding countryside and hinterland.

The charity is managed on a day-to-day basis by the officers with the active input and support of the trustees (T) and wider committee, who meet quarterly. The team in full includes the Chairman (Robin Stamp T), Treasurer (Richard Bott), Planning Officer (Vernon Hughes), Secretary (Trudi Mansfield T), Vice-chair (Tim Whittingham T), Project officer (Tracey Roberts (SE) and Membership Secretary (Mary ter Braak).

Other committee members include past chairs John Andrews (T) and Alan Hughes (T), plus Nigel Philips, Jeremy Scott-Bolton (T), David Lloyd (T), Stephen Campbell plus representatives from the Quantock Hills National Landscape team (Iain Porter) and the Commoners Association (Ben Bartlett). Lady Gass remains as our president but is sadly currently unable to carry out her duties due to her poor health. The charity has no employees; however, our Project officer Tracey Roberts works for us part time on a self-employed basis.

Tracey Roberts joined us in January 2024 to take on responsibilities for events and our ongoing regular communications with members via email, our website and Facebook page (which now has over 11,000 followers). During the year, our former chairman, John Andrews, resigned his chairman's role but continues as a trustee and active member of the committee. He also continues as our representative on the Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group. Our Vice Chair, Tim Whittingham continues as our representative on the Joint Advisory Committee to the QHNL and the Board of the Quantocks Landscape Partnership Scheme. Following John's retirement, Robin Stamp, our former treasurer was elected as chairman, whilst Richard Bott has joined the committee as Treasurer. He will also be standing for election as a Trustee at the 2025 AGM.

We thank all our members for your support over the past year we couldn't have done all this without you. Special thanks to all the committee, our volunteer observers and butterfly transect walkers plus so many that helped with our events, John for all his excellent work during his chairmanship and Tracey for all her work on this our anniversary year. We look forward to a full and exciting year to come.

Robin Stamp

Chairman

5 April 2024

Trustees and Officers
31st December 2024

President: Lady Gass DCVO

Vice President: Mr Hugh Warmington

Vice President: Mrs Jane Warmington

Chairman: Mr Robin Stamp

Vice Chairman: Mr Tim Whittingham

Treasurer: Mr Richard Bott

Secretary: Mrs Trudi Mansfield

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)

Mr Nigel Philips

Mr Vernon Hughes

Other personnel (not committee members)

Ms Tracey Roberts, Project Officer

Mrs Mary ter Braak, Membership Secretary

Bankers: HSBC, 17 North Street, Taunton
Somerset, TA1 1NA

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.

Notwithstanding, as noted below, the charity intends to utilise some of its reserves over the next few years on a series of projects and initiatives.

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 charity's objectives 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, 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 continue to 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.
- 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 and/or English Nature.
- Build up reserves to allow it to pursue the purchase of further land within the QHNL.

Receipts and Payments account for year ending 31/12/24

	2024 £	2023 £
Receipts (all unrestricted):		
Annual Subscriptions	6,213	5,012
5 yr subscriptions	0	375
Business subscriptions	325	780
Sub-total	6,538	6,167
Donations	12	162
Events	988	0
Gift Aid reclaim	1,094	1,370
Other	25	0
Interest	5,334	2,834
Total receipts, excluding investment assets	13,991	10,533
Investment assets: growth	<u>2,471</u>	<u>2,368</u>
Total receipts	16,462	12,901
Payments:		
National Landscape/AONB contribution	1,000	1,000
Project Officer	10,243	6,204
Administrator expenses	479	74
Audit costs	240	240
Clerical expenses	945	800
Print, post, stationery & sundry expenses	1,550	1,747
Bank and finance charges	1,279	519
Insurances	685	184
Events	1,234	95
Book	0	1,000
Projects*1	27,437	14,689
legal and planning fees*2	1,405	4,308
Software	950	0
Sundry	634	0
Grants and Sponsorships	<u>250</u>	<u>250</u>
Total payments:	<u>48,331</u>	<u>31,110</u>
Deficit/Surplus for the year:	£31,869	£18,209

Notes on 2024 and 2023 payments

Projects*1:

2024: Butterfly Training (£636), Elm Project (£6,228), Landscape Partnership (£20,000), Land Maintenance (£300), Mire Survey (£273). 2023: QHNL (was AONB) track repair £5,000, QLPS Hedge-bank £5,000, mire survey £4,621, Butterfly transect £67.

Legal and planning*2:

2024: Quarry purchase expenses £1,021, Planning £384.

2023: Legal re Hedge protection £3,444, Planning £864.

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed Assets			
Land owned by the charity	1	0	0
Cash Funds – Instant access:			
HSBC Community Account		11,757	11,592
Paypal: Trading account		<u>0</u>	<u>34</u>
Total instant access		11,757	11,626
Cash Funds: Notice accounts			
Cambridge and Counties 31 Day notice		36,207	0
Cambridge and Counties 45 Day notice		0	53,819
Cambridge and Counties 95 Day notice		23,457	0
Cambridge and Counties 120 Day notice		0	22,342
Unity Trust 120 day notice		<u>53,466</u>	<u>26,636</u>
Total notice accounts		113,130	102,797
Total cash funds		124,887	114,423
Investment Assets: Fidelity International		<u>0</u>	<u>42,333</u>
Total Assets		<u>124,887</u>	<u>156,756</u>
Represented by:			
Unrestricted reserves	2	<u>124,887</u>	<u>156,756</u>

Notes:

- 1 The charity owns three parcels of land which were, in essence, gifted to it for negligible consideration. These parcels of land comprise Over Stowey Customs Common, Halsway Hill and Bicknoller Quarry.
- 2 Whilst the Trustees do not formally designate their funds, there are a number of initiatives that will be undertaken going forward for which retained funds will be utilised. These projects, which are for improvement of the landscape and natural environment, include:
 - Elm and Hairstreak project - residual costs of £4,200
 - Deer management plan - £3,900
 - Book: Promotion of the Quantock Hills - £16,320
 - Bicknoller Quarry fencing costs - £1,030