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| NEWS RELEASE **For Immediate Release…** |
| **DATE - Thursday 24th June 2021**    *Begins*  **New Grants for Farmers in the Quantock Hills**  A major new fund to help farmers and land managers in the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has been announced, it will be open to applications from the 1st of July and forms part of the new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme announced by Defra on the 24th July. In the Quantock Hills, we will be awarding £130,000 between now and the end of March 2022, with further funding rounds in 2022 and 2023.  Through the programme, farmers and land managers can be supported to carry out projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and cultural heritage, and support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses. This is a programme of funding for one-off projects covering these areas of work, not an agri-environment scheme.  Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Chair of the Quantock Hills AONB Partnership and a Somerset West and Taunton councillor was pleased to comment: “This funding will allow local decision making for how farmers and landowners are supported in the management of this treasured landscape.”  A similar fund will be available to help farmers in all our 'Protected Landscapes' - National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These unique and special places are living, working landscapes that also support a huge range of habitats and species, and they are enjoyed by millions of people every year. By supporting the farmers, land managers and people who live and work in these areas, we can help protect these exceptional places and support local communities..'     The programme is part of Defra’s Agricultural Transition Plan. It has been developed by Defra with the support of a group of AONB and National Park staff from across the country. The Quantock Hills AONB Unit will be appointing a Landscape/Farm Engagement Officer to help farmers apply and a Local Assessment Panel to ensure awards are independently decided. For more information on the Quantock fund visit [Quantock Grants & Funding (quantockhills.com)](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.quantockhills.com%2Fquantock-grants-and-funding&data=04%7C01%7CASampson%40somerset.gov.uk%7C4a1de00c1b654af676c008d9363bc9cf%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C637600452680759857%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=ekRwrYY5LIe6S9Q3pyod%2B6EcV41p0IXIQ%2F5liLQ6qJs%3D&reserved=0)  *Ends*  Notes to editors:  **Contacts:**  Quantock Hills AONB Service, Fyne Court, Broomfield, TA5 2EQ  Amanda Sampson (Communications & Support Officer) [asampson@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:asampson@somerset.gov.uk)  07976 695913 (Monday/Thursday) **About Quantock Hills AONB Service:** The Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was the first to be designated in England in 1956. *An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is exactly what it says it is: a precious landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them.*  The following statements form the Quantock Hills Vision; they describe the AONB we would like to see in twenty years’ time.   * The distinctive and beautiful character, geology and diversity of the AONB landscape is conserved, encompassing Quantock heaths, woods, farmland, parkland, coast and villages. * Biodiversity is protected and enhanced through positive management and increased connectivity between key wildlife habitats across the whole Quantock landscape and beyond. * The Quantock historic environment is protected and understood in detail and distinctive man-made elements are retained and conserved both the ordinary and the exceptional. * Design takes account of the Quantock landscape and respects and reinforces local character and scale in both redevelopment and new development affecting the AONB. * High-quality access is available across the AONB through a well maintained network of paths and open access areas. * Productive farming and forestry businesses that support and enhance the intimate scale, historic character and biodiversity of the Quantock Hills. * Sustainable levels of Quantock tourism and recreation maintain public enjoyment of the AONB and contribute to the local economy without harming landscape, historic environment, biodiversity or tranquillity. * Quantock communities and pride of place are strong and involvement of local people and volunteers is extensive in managing change and protecting the area.   There are 38 AONBs in England and Wales (33 wholly in England, 4 wholly in Wales and 1 which straddles the border). Created by the legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, AONBs represent 18% of the Finest Countryside in England and Wales. Their care has been entrusted to the local authorities, organisations, community groups and the individuals who live and work within them or who value them.  The Quantock Hills AONB Service is supported and funded by Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and Defra. |