### NEWS RELEASE

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**Essential repair works to popular Quantock beauty spot.**

A popular car park on the Quantock Hills will shortly be closed for a week to allow essential repair works to be undertaken. Withyman’s Pool car park, also known as Wilmot’s Pool, on Quantock Common has suffered slumping of the existing car park surface, causing ruts and potholes.

The car park is in the heart of Quantock Common and is surrounded by lowland heathland, designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of the special plants and animals that are found here. As with many of the informal car parks on the Quantock Hills Withyman’s Pool was not constructed but has been formed from many years of informal use. This makes these car parks more susceptible to issues such as slumping and pot-holing, which can occur suddenly following bad weather.

With the slumping of the car park surface users have started driving onto the sensitive habitats causing damage. The repair works will scrape the existing car park surface level and fill pot-holes allowing users to use the car park safely as well as allowing more vehicle to be able to park within the car park.

AONB Manager, Iain Porter, said, “We are pleased to be repairing the car park, working with all partners to ensure visitors can continue to use the car park when they visit Quantock Common. This essential repair work is the first phase of a longer project that aims to improve the car park for both users and to protect the adjacent heathland.

The Quantock Hills AONB Service in partnership with the landowner will be undertaking the work starting Monday 6th March and last 5 days. During this time the car park will be closed to ensure the safety of users and contractors.

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**Notes to editors:**

**Countryside Code:**

The Countryside Code offers advice and guidance for visitors and users of countryside space.

[The Countryside Code: advice for countryside visitors - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors)

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### **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 through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 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 Defra, Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council.