

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FRIENDS OF QUANTOCK
HELD AT CROWCOMBE VILLAGE HALL ON 23 MARCH 2016**

Present: Lady Gass (President), Mr A Hughes (Chairman), Mrs L Kelly (Vice-Chairman), Mr C Paul (Treasurer), Mrs M ter Braak (Secretary), Mr I Kett, Mr D Lloyd, Mrs S Samuelson, Mrs B Shaw, Mrs Liz Shirley-Smith, Mr T Whittingham and 65 Members

The Chairman welcomed Lady Gass and the large group of members present. He also congratulated the AONB on 60 years of protecting the hills. FoQ have been there for 67 years and work with the AONB Service very much as a team. There will be a special event at Halsway Manor to celebrate the anniversary and details have been circulated to members.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** were received from Major D & Mrs White, Major & Mrs A Mitford-Slade, Mr D Kenyon, Mrs P Stokes, Mrs G Richardson, Mrs M Greswell, Mr & Mrs D Freemantle, Mrs J Greenwood, Mr & Mrs M Gambier, Mrs C Waterman-Smith, Mrs W Hofmaier, Mrs J Swash, Rev. S. Campbell, Mrs P Thatcher, Mr & Mrs M Taylor-Young, Ms E Lampkin and Mr J White.
- 2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2015:** The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.
- 3. ANNUAL REPORT:** *(a full copy of the 2015 Trustees' Report and Annual Review can be found in the Spring 2016 newsletter).* Funding of the AONB is an ongoing issue – the government is at last taking protected landscaped seriously and has announced that the funding of National Parks will be protected in real terms during the life of this parliament and this seems to apply to AONBs as well. However, AONBs differ from National Parks in that the lead funding comes from local councils and this is then 3x match funded by DEFRA. West Somerset Council is experiencing severe financial problems meaning that the funding of the AONB Service has been cut this year, which is part of the reason why FoQ has made a contribution of £1,000 to the Service and we shall be working to try and ensure that proper funding can be restored next year.

Our sister society, the Exmoor Society, is holding a Spring Conference on '*Exmoor's Future Landscapes*' to look at changes that might happen to the upland landscape. There will be discussion about reversing land drainage in the bogs to assist water retention, the re-wilding of some areas, the needs of modern farming and the problems and pressures caused by increasing tourism. Not all these problems affect the Quantocks, but most of them do and the Chairman will be attending the conference to see what might be relevant to our hills.

One of our issues is the future of the great hedge banks along the main ridge that are such a feature of the Quantocks. If we do nothing they will disappear as the old trees fall. Should we re-plant and how should we do this? This is the sort of problem that we need to be addressing and a long term view is essential. The ever increasing number of visitors is also one of our challenges and we need to be looking ahead to ensure that all those who come to enjoy the Quantocks do not end up by spoiling what we all love.

Unlike the National Parks, AONBs are not Planning Authorities, and we are very dependent on the planners of local councils to give the protection of the landscape within the AONB the weight that was intended by government. This is a problem in many AONBs and the National Trust has recently started a campaign to understand and improve the protection that they give. We fully support this and are working with the AONB service to try to ensure that it happens within the QHAONB.

So FoQ works at two levels; we deal with problems, issues and projects as they arise, but we also need to be looking ahead and thinking about the future. To do this, we need to have people to think ahead and make proposals as well as people to help with current matters. Finding people with both the experience and the time to do these things is our challenge and the Chairman appealed to the FoQ membership to help find these people and bring them forward to join the committee.

- 4. STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AND BALANCE SHEET:** the main event during the past year had been the increase in subscriptions which had proceeded smoothly and was now almost complete. The Treasurer also explained the projects listed under Allocation of Funds and stated that the amounts involved should be treated as estimates only.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Linda Lloyd, seconded by Ian Kett and carried nem. con.

- 5. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES:** The Chairman explained that of the nine Trustees, three would retire by rotation each year. This year Mr Chris Paul, Mrs Mary ter Braak and Mr John Fawcett were due to retire and had offered themselves for re-election. This re-election was proposed by Alan Hughes, seconded by Sandra Samuelson and carried nem. con.
- 6. MEMBERS' RESOLUTIONS:** There were no members' resolutions.
- 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** None.