

NELMS target statement for NCA 144 Quantock Hills

Your application is scored and a decision made on the points awarded. Both top priorities and lower priorities score points but you should select at least one top priority.

Scoring is carried out by...

Comment [m1]: Text to be confirmed: dependent upon development with scoring system – but this section will be standard text, not critical for local authoring process.

Choosing priorities

To apply you should choose at least one of the top priorities, and you can choose lower priorities - this may help with your application.

Top priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Biodiversity	Priority habitats
	Priority species
Water	Water quality
	Flood and coastal risk management
Historic environment	Designated historic and archaeological features
	Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance
Woodland priorities	Woodland management
	Woodland planting
Landscape	
Climate Change	
Multiple environmental benefits	

Lower priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Lower priorities	Water quality

	Archaeological and historic features
	Woodland

Biodiversity - top priorities

Priority habitats

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that maintains, restores and creates priority habitats.

Maintain priority habitat such as:

- upland heath
- lowland dry acid grassland
- lowland heathland
- traditional orchard
- wood pasture and parkland

Restore priority habitats (especially proposals which make existing sites bigger or help join up habitat networks) such as:

- upland heath
- lowland dry acid grassland
- lowland heathland
- traditional orchard
- wood pasture and parkland

Create priority habitats – to extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation. Defra is looking for proposals to create priority habitat that will also contribute significantly to improvements in:

- water quality
- air quality
- flood and coastal risk management

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Proposals to maintain or restore Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs including SACs) with eligible features are a priority, and both on-site and off-site options (such as to reduce diffuse water and air pollution impacts on SSSIs) are relevant.

Priority species

For the majority of priority species found on the priority habitats listed above, their ecological requirements can be met through good generic habitat management. Managing for those essential elements associated with priority habitats - in particular bare ground, areas of scrub, varying sward structures will allow these species to thrive.

A number of priority species associated with the area require specific and tailored management and advice. You should carry out land management practices and capital works that meet the specific needs of the following priority species:

- **Brown hairstreak butterfly**
- **Lesser horseshoe bat**

Further guidance on the priority species in this area that require more tailored targeted management and advice, as listed, can be found:

- [Links to guidance on those bespoke species' needs found in this **area**]

Comment [m2]: Standard links to be provided.

Parts of this area are targeted for their woodland bird assemblage, i.e. they contain area(s) assessed as being nationally significant for four or more species (of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Pipit, Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, Marsh Tit, Lesser Redpoll and Hawfinch). Where your land includes such areas, you should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- maintain/enhance conditions for woodland birds

This area has also been identified as a hotspot for wild pollinators, farmland birds and other wildlife associated with the wider countryside – through the Wild Pollinator and farm Wildlife package implement these options to make sure these species thrive all year around:

- **option 1**
- **option 2**

Comment [WI(3)]: Standard text to be provided

Water - top priorities

Water quality

The area has particular issues with:

- **phosphates, nitrates and faecal indicator organisms in the West Somerset Streams catchment**

- phosphates, nitrates, faecal indicator organisms and pesticides in the Tone catchment
- phosphates, nitrates, faecal indicator organisms, pesticides and eutrophication and algae in the Parrett catchment

This includes:

- drinking water sources close to the Ashford and Durleigh Reservoirs

You should consider options and capital works that address these issues. These are detailed in X guidance document. These options help to improve water quality by controlling the source or the movement of potential pollutants. For this area, this includes:

- nutrients from fertilisers and manures
- faecal bacteria from both manures and livestock
- pesticides from their use and disposal

Flood Risk Management

The North West Parrett Catchment drains to the lower Parrett downstream of Bridgwater. Any land management practices and capital works carried out in this area such as best practice farming and land management might benefit especially water run off management would be beneficial for the area and for communities downstream such as Cannington.

The remainder of the Quantocks Hills drains to the Doniford Stream and could potentially benefit communities such as Williton.

In the upper catchments you should carry out land management and capital works that intercept and retain water, reduce run off and erosion and maximise the benefits obtainable from natural flood management actions throughout the catchments.

Applications that select options to address flood risk issues within the area will also be welcomed, primarily within the flood risk priority areas of **West Somerset Streams and tributaries of the Upper Parrett River.**

You should consider options that:

- Reduce the amount and rate of surface water.
- Reduce soil erosion

These are detailed in X guidance document.

Historic environment - top priorities

Active management is important for the long term survival of historic environment remains and to protect them against damage and decay brought about through cultivation, scrub growth, burrowing animals or poor maintenance. These features cannot be recreated once they have been lost.

In this area there are a number of designated heritage features and other historic environment features reflecting a rare moorland landscape containing prehistoric monuments from the Neolithic Period and especially the Bronze Age; including numerous cairns and bowl barrows and extensive crop mark evidence for settlement; and from the Iron age, large-scale hill forts and smaller defended enclosures as well as extant field boundaries. The Medieval period is evident in manorial settlements and emparkments, farmsteads, field systems and hollow ways. Features of woodland management and exploitation of the rich natural resources such as stone quarries survive from all periods, with post medieval enclosures, designed landscapes and later military practice areas and installations. Characteristic farm buildings are combination barns, with local red sandstone the dominant building material. The 2014 Heritage at Risk 2014 survey has identified [xx%] of designated features as being 'at risk', particularly from bracken and scrub growth; both unmanaged woodland and commercial forestry practice; soil erosion caused by stock, and erosion and damage caused by visitors and by unauthorised vehicular access and mountain bikes. Metal detecting is also an increasing risk factor. The following historic environment features are a high priority for active management in this area:

Comment [WI(4): Data to be added

- Designated Features - archaeological features of national significance, Scheduled Monuments (SM) and Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG)
- Designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings and non-domestic historic buildings on holdings
- Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance which are part of the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE)

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- revert archaeological sites under cultivation to permanent grass
- reduce damaging cultivation and harvesting practices through minimum tillage or direct drilling where this offers a suitable level of protection
- remove scrub and bracken from archaeological or historic features
- maintain below-ground archaeology under permanent uncultivated vegetation or actively manage earthworks, standing stones and structures as visible 'above ground' features
- maintain and restore historic water management systems, including those associated with water meadows and designed water bodies
- restore historic buildings that are assessed as a priority in the area.
- deal with specific issues that are causing damage or decay to archaeological and historic features, but which are not covered by standard options.

Woodland - top priorities

Woodland management

Management of all woodland to improve structure and species mix is important for biodiversity and to make them more robust in relation to future threats such as climate change, pests and diseases.

Certain types of woodland are a high priority for bringing into management, including:

- protected woodland – those designated for their national biodiversity value
- priority woodland habitat – other unmanaged broadleaved woodland
- priority species – all woodland within current red squirrel range, or within areas important for woodland butterfly and woodland bird species
- Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) restoration – conversion of conifer plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites to broadleaf woodland where they are in close proximity to existing broadleaf woodland
- United Kingdom Forestry Standard – unmanaged conifer woodland within catchments subject to eutrophication and acidification, both to reduce pressures on the water environment and improve biodiversity

Woodlands not included in the categories above are a lower priority for management.

All management should comply with the United Kingdom Forestry Standard and other relevant guidance such as 'Managing Ancient and Native Woodland in England'.

Woodland planting

High priority areas for the planting of new woodlands include:

- biodiversity – planting to buffer and link existing woodlands and other semi natural open habitats within priority woodland habitat networks
- water quality – planting designed to reduce and intercept diffuse pollution from agriculture
- flood risk – planting designed to increase infiltration of heavy rain into the ground, reduce erosion, or slow the flow of floodwaters on floodplains

In order to provide the required biodiversity and/or water benefits, new woodland planting needs to be in the right part of the landscape and to the right design.

Landscape – top priorities

High priorities are the management, restoration or re-creation of landscape features that contribute significantly to the local character by reinforcing the overall pattern and scale of the landscape, together with other important features that give an area its unique and distinctive sense of place.

Top priority in **Quantock Hills** is the restoration of these features:

- Management of hedges particularly on the eastern slopes
- Hedgerow trees
- Earth banks or stone-faced earth banks often topped with mature beech trees around the edges of the plateau

Climate Change

Climate change will pose variable threats and opportunities in different landscapes. Priority should be given to targeted features and issues that are particularly vulnerable to or affected by climate change.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that help to:

- make existing priority habitat sites bigger
- extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation
- reduce the impacts of climate change on local communities, for example by targeted planting of woodland to reduce flood risk
- reduce loss of carbon and emissions of other greenhouse gases
- increase carbon uptake, for example by tree planting
- increase carbon storage, for example by converting arable land to permanent grassland
- provide shade for wildlife and livestock

Multiple environmental benefits

Opportunities for multi-objective agreements

You should look to provide for multiple priorities by selecting options that achieve multiple environmental benefits.

In the **Quantock Hills** you have the greatest opportunity to achieve multiple objectives with:

- maintain and restore priority habitats where they're likely to improve water quality in the reservoirs, reduce run-off rates into watercourses, add to biodiversity and landscape character and protect historical features
- restore hedgerows to manage water flow, decrease soil erosion, create wildlife habitats and corridors, and strengthen the local landscape

- select options such as the use of rural sustainable drainage systems, buffer strips and erosion control in the north west Parrett and West Somerset Stream catchments to improve both water quality and support flood risk management
- maintain woodland and expand where appropriate and in keeping with the landscape character, to support woodland plants, birds, bats and butterflies etc. increasing connectivity of the woodland itself for species movement but also connectivity with the wider landscape through linking with hedgerows, parkland, orchards and grassland providing benefits for biodiversity, reducing water flow (particularly in the upper catchments), improving water quality and regulating climate change

Lower priorities

You should select one of the top priorities. However, you can also select lower priorities as well as this will attract points used to score your application.

You should consider the following other priorities that are of specific interest in this area.

Historic environment - lower priorities

The Historic environment features set out below are a lower priority.

- Maintain designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings.
- Undesignated SHINE features of medium and low Significance
- Priority Undesignated Historic Parklands

Woodland – lower priorities

Woodland Management

Woodlands not included in the top priority categories listed above are a lower priority for management but may still be supported.

Woodland Planting

Areas are prioritised for new planting based on their potential to create biodiversity and water benefits. Woodland planting schemes are scored depending on where the proposed scheme is in relation to the opportunity maps for woodland planting in England and how well the planting design will benefit biodiversity and water.

Lower priorities for appropriately designed biodiversity schemes exist across the whole of England.
Opportunities for new woodland planting for water only exist in certain parts of England.

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