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County Hall
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NP15 1GA

26th October 2020

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 2nd November, 2020 at 2.00pm
Remote Microsoft Teams Meeting

Joint Advisory Committee Members and officers are requested to join the Microsoft Teams Meeting at 1.45pm to test functions: sight / sound, voting & requesting to speak

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair.	
2.	Appointment of Vice-Chair.	
3.	Apologies for Absence.	
4.	Declarations of Interest.	
5.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	1 - 8
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6.	Public Question Time.	
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8.	AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 Post Consultation Draft, SEA & HRA Screening and State of the AONB Report.	37 - 40
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13.	NAAONB update.	53 - 56
14.	AONB / Partner Progress.	57 - 62
15.	Proposed dates of meetings for 2021: To be held at 2.00pm on Monday: 1 st March 2021 5 th July 2021 1 st November 2021 The venue to be confirmed.	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Local Authority Members with Voting Powers

Gloucestershire:

T. Hale
P. Molyneux

Herefordshire:

B. Durkin
J. Hardwick
P. Symonds
Y. Watson

Monmouthshire:

L. Jones
D. Dovey
M. Lane
A.E. Webb

Forest of Dean:

D. Wheeler
C. McFarling

Town / Parish Community Councils with Voting Powers

C. Evers – Gloucestershire Association of Parish / Town Councils
R. Gething – Herefordshire Association Local Councils
Councillor G. Powell – One Voice Wales

Co-opted Members with Voting Powers

Dr. G. Peterken – Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire
B. Nash - Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire
A. Thomas - Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire
H. Dale – Country Land and Business Association
M. Price – National Farmers Union

Co-opted Members without Voting Powers

L. Taylor – The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
C. Barron – Wye Valley Society
R. Hesketh – River Wye Preservation Trust
A. Lee – Recreation Sector
K. Ballard – Local Tourism Sector
A. Nixon – Local Wildlife Trusts
D. Price – National Farmers Union Wales

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Outcomes we are working towards

Nobody Is Left Behind

- Older people are able to live their good life
- People have access to appropriate and affordable housing
- People have good access and mobility

People Are Confident, Capable and Involved

- People's lives are not affected by alcohol and drug misuse
- Families are supported
- People feel safe

Our County Thrives

- Business and enterprise
- People have access to practical and flexible learning
- People protect and enhance the environment

Our priorities

- Schools
- Protection of vulnerable people
- Supporting Business and Job Creation
- Maintaining locally accessible services

Our Values

- **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.
- **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 2nd March, 2020 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor A. Webb (Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: D. Dovey and M. Lane

Herefordshire Council

Councillor P. Symonds

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillor S. Phelps

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC - Mr. C. Evers

One Voice Wales - Councillor G. Powell

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Nation Farmers Union - Mr. M. Price

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society - Mr. C. Barron

Local Tourism Sector - Ms. K. Ballard

River Wye Preservation Trust - Mr. R. Hesketh

National Farmers Union Wales - Mr. D. Price

Technical Advice Officers

Wye Valley AONB Manager - Mr. A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council - Mr. M. Lewis

Gloucestershire County Council - Mr. R. Niblett

Monmouthshire County Council - Mr. R. Williams

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 2nd March, 2020 at 2.00 pm

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: L. Jones, B. Durkin, J. Hardwick, Y. Watson, D. Wheeler, C. McFarling.

Dr. G. Peterken, Mr. B. Nash, Ms. H. McDowell and Mr. R. Gething.

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 4th November 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

In doing so, the AONB Manager informed the Joint Advisory Committee that:

- A representative from the Environment Agency had been invited to today's meeting. However, due to the recent unprecedented flooding events that had occurred across the Country, the representative had been unable to attend. It was hoped that a representative from the Environment Agency would be able to attend the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting in July 2020.
- A report regarding transport collaboration will be presented to a future meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee. It was noted that some local authorities within the Wye Valley AONB are currently updating their transport policies. The Wye Valley AONB Unit will be included as part of the consultation process.

3. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present.

4. AONB Unit 2020/21 Work Programme

We received a report regarding the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- During the year it is anticipated that the AONB Unit will consolidate at just under eight Full time equivalent (FTE) staff which builds on the reduced capacity in the previous / current year.
- Priorities include the publishing of the revised AONB Management Plan 2020-2025, delivering the fourth Wye Valley River Festival; the Gilpin2020 celebrations; the Restoring Our Amazing River project (on the England side of the AONB); ongoing Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management projects (predominantly in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB); and the Welsh Government 'Sustainable

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Landscapes Sustainable Places' funding, while continuing a range of existing activities and projects and retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.

- The capacity of the AONB Unit is stretched but the budgets in the Work Programme have been approved by the AONB Steering Group and submitted to DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- The AONB Unit budget is £270,750 and additional funding programmes, grants and match funding is anticipated to exceed £1million levered into the AONB during the year.
- This is the final year of a three year funding agreement with NRW and will be the start of a new core funding settlement with DEFRA, the details of which are yet to be confirmed.
- Welsh Government is working on the new one year Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) capital funding programme and is proposing to increase the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for the year, the details of which are dependent on confirmation of the Welsh Government budget settlement.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question raised regarding the control of deer and wild boar it was noted that the AONB Unit is not directly involved in this matter. This is managed and monitored by woodland owners Forestry England or Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and woodland managers, and culling takes place when appropriate determined by local priorities.
- The AONB Manager will be attending a meeting in the Forest of Dean in due course in which these issues will be discussed. He will report back to the Joint Advisory Committee regarding this matter.
- In response to a question raised requesting that the AONB Work Programme be refined to increase flood management resilience, it was noted that some of the new capital funding being received via Welsh Government will be targeted at improving recreational infrastructure and Natural Flood Management, which will address some of the damage that has occurred recently due to the unprecedented flooding events.
- A request was made for officer time to be identified when implementing the projects outlined in the report.

We resolved to endorse the AONB Unit Work Programme for 2020/2021.

5. Review of Designated Landscapes in England and Wales

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Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 2nd March, 2020 at 2.00 pm

We received a report regarding progress following the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in Wales and England.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Welsh AONB lead officers continue to meet with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, the National Association for AONBs and the Welsh National Parks to progress the 'Valued and Resilient' statement.
- Welsh Government officials are currently finalising proposals for capital funding schemes for the Designated Landscapes, including a Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places scheme and augmented funding for the Sustainable Development Fund.
- The 'Landscapes Review' of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England, chaired by Julian Glover, was published in September 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- The Conservative manifesto stated "We welcome the Glover Review" and it is anticipated that a formal response to it will be made by the Government later in the year.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Unit has had a 1.4% increase in its settlement from Defra, a modest but welcome increase in the AONB budget for 2020/21.

We noted the report.

6. Sustainable Development Fund & HCF AONB Fund update

We received a report regarding the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The SDF Assessment Panel has fully allocated the £55,000 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in Wales in 2019/20.
- The Welsh Government has informally advised that the SDF allocation for 2020/21 will be increased to be in the region of £100,000, subject to confirmation of budget.
- The Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has been fully established with £10,000 for immediate funding alongside an Endowment Fund, currently of £50,000.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation has established the facility for people to donate £5 to the AONB Fund by texting 'WVAONB' to 70085.

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Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Promotion of the endowment fund is still in its early stages but it is intended to address this matter, going forward.

We resolved:

- i) to welcome Welsh Government's proposed enhancement to the Sustainable Development Fund.
- ii) to welcome the establishment of the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

7. AONB Management Plan Review

We received a report regarding on-going progress with the AONB Management Plan review.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- A total of 24 organisations and individuals submitted comments on the Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan 2020-25, amounting to approximately 200 specific comments.
- The assimilation of the consultation responses into the final draft of the AONB Management Plan is underway.
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment for the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the Plan is now underway which needs to be completed before the Plan can be formally adopted by the local authorities and government agencies.
- It is intended that the finalised version of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 will be presented for adoption at the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting on 6th July 2020.

We noted the report.

8. Ash Die Back update

We received a report regarding the most recent assessment of the Ash Die Back disease and effects on the Wye Valley.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Ash trees are the UK's third most common tree and an important tree in woodlands and hedgerows in the Wye Valley.

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- The future of Ash is threatened by Ash Die back; a disease caused by a fungus which is fatal in about 85% of Ash trees.
- 2019 was the first year when Ash Die Back was observed significantly widespread throughout the Wye Valley.
- It is the most significant tree disease to hit the UK since Dutch Elm disease in the 1970s.
- Ash Die Back will have a substantial impact on the landscape and wildlife, exacerbated by the current climate and ecological emergencies.
- Landowners need to evaluate the social, economic and environmental risks of dead or dying Ash trees, particularly along roadside and publicly accessible places.
- The impact of the disease is likely to become more obvious in 2020, both through the prevalence of dead or diseased trees in the landscape and the visibility of the removal of high risk trees in well-frequented places.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In the summer of 2019, there had been a rapid spread of Ash Die Back at the Old Station, Tintern. Significant felling works are being undertaken this week on safety grounds. The contract will take about three to four weeks to complete.
- Further inspections will be undertaken in the coming months and other infected sites are likely to be identified. Private landowners with infected trees along Highways and high risk areas may be served notice.
- There are estimated to be half a million Ash trees in Herefordshire that are affected by Ash Die Back.

We noted the report.

9. Wye Valley River Festival 2020 update

We received a report regarding the provisional programme for the Wye Valley River Festival 2020.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Funding for the Wye Valley River Festival 2020 has been secured from Arts Council England, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Visit Wales, Arts Council of Wales, and many other sources.
- The programme of events for the Wye Valley River Festival is being finalised for the main festival fortnight between 2nd & 17th May 2020 based on the theme of 'Time'.

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- A range of school and community workshops are planned for the run up to the Festival to create props and build engagement.
- AONB Volunteers and the AONB Youth Rangers have been working in the woods making walking staves for the Festival.
- The Wye Valley AONB Unit recently won a South East Wales Tourism Innovation Award for the Wye Valley River Festival.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The progression of the Coronavirus is being closely monitored as to whether it might affect proceedings, going forward.
- The River Festival will host two significant conferences:
 - 'Art in Landscape' on Wednesday 12th -13th May 2020; with the NAAONB and fellow AONBs coming together for a day of knowledge transfer and networking to consider future national & local collaboration.
 - 'Creative Landscapes' on Thursday 14th May 2020; with land stewards and creatives from across England and Wales sharing ideas and experiences in co-creating transformational and inclusive arts experiences, with a particular focus on diversity, access, sustainability and climate change.
- The River Festival and Gilpin2020 are separate events but complement each other. It is hoped to obtain national media coverage for the River Festival. National media coverage has already been established for Gilpin 2020.
- The AONB Unit is working closely with Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism and Visit Monmouthshire. A marketing strategy is being established to market the Festival regionally and nationally.

We noted the report.

10. National Association for AONBs

We received a report regarding activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The AONB Manager attended the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairman's Conference and AGM on 28th November 2019 which focused on taking the Glover Review forward.

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- The 'Taking the Lead' programme of professional training for staff has concluded which both the AONB Development Officer and AONB Community Links Officer participated in.
- The AONB Manager attended the AONB Lead Officers' meeting in Birmingham on 10th & 11th February 2020.
- A consortium of 11 AONBs are participating in DEFRA 'Tests & Trials' for the new post Brexit agri-environment Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS).
- NAAONB staff facilitated a joint training day for the Wye Valley & Shropshire Hills AONB teams.
- The annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference will take place in Exeter on 7th - 9th July 2020.

We noted the report.

11. **Partner and AONB Unit progress reports and updates**

We received a report of the activity of the AONB Unit and various partners relating to:

- Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management & Green Infrastructure Project.
- Gilpin2020.
- Water Environment Grant Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) & Catchment Advisors.
- Offa's Dyke Collaboratory.

We noted the report.

12. **Dates of future meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee for 2020/21:**

To be held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford on the following dates:

Monday 6th July 2020.

Monday 2nd November 2020.

Monday 1st March 2021 (to be confirmed).

The meeting ended at 3.10pm.

**WYE VALLEY AONB
Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)
'For Information' Updates
in lieu of cancelled JAC Meeting, scheduled for
2pm Monday 6th July 2020 at Coleford**

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1. Welcome

We hope this finds you keeping safe and well. Welcome to this selection of updates in lieu of the cancelled Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meeting. Below are a number of articles in what is a cross between JAC 'For Information' reports and news updates. On behalf of the JAC Chairperson, Cllr Ann Webb; Wye Valley AONB Manager, Andrew Blake; Chairperson of the AONB Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP), Matthew Lewis; and the JAC Clerk, we hope you find this information below of use and of interest. As always, please do not hesitate to contact the AONB Manager if you have any queries or concerns on aonb.officer@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk or 01600 713977.

2. Introduction

The decision to cancel the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was taken by the AONB Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP) along with the JAC Chairperson, Cllr Ann Webb and the JAC Clerk. In the context of the on-going coronavirus pandemic a number of options were considered of how to hold the JAC on 6th July. The options were:

- a) convene a normal JAC meeting in the Forest of Dean District Council chamber,
- b) postpone the JAC to November, including the AGM, with format to be confirmed
- c) host a formal meeting on-line (using MS Teams or WebEx or Zoom?)
- d) host an on-line 'informal' meeting with 'For Information' reports only (via one of the above)
- e) circulate 'For Information' papers only but not convene any meeting.

It was decided the most pragmatic option at this stage was to go with (b)&(e). Various organisations are making progress with on-line meetings using MS Teams, WebEx or Zoom. However each digital platform has its own challenges and while these may be ironed out within an organisation, the JAC is made up of 27 representatives & nominees from 17 different organisations, from the public, private & voluntary sectors. Each organisation and individual will have their own IT protocols and constraints. TOWP felt that it might be a challenge too far to ensure the smooth delivery of a JAC meeting at this

stage. It is hoped that by the Autumn, should an on-line JAC meeting be considered appropriate, that the experience and capacity of officers to resolve these compatibility and connectivity issues may be more easily overcome. The next JAC is scheduled for Monday 2nd November 2020.

It is also possible that the AONB Partnership Study Tour, scheduled for Friday 25th September 2020, will have to be cancelled. But the revised Wye Valley River Festival (see item 7 below) will now be taking place on and around that date, so there may be other opportunities.

3. JAC minutes 2nd March 2020 (see Appendix 1)

The draft minutes of the March JAC are appended for information. These will be signed off at the next full JAC meeting.

Please see the next item below for clarification around one of the outstanding issues that the JAC had been anticipating an update on – Water Quality issues in the Wye.

4. Algal blooms in the Wye and river water quality

There has been much local and national media coverage over the last few weeks about the extent and cause of algal blooms in the River Wye. In July 2019 the JAC had noted that the River Wye had turned brown for a period and we resolved to get someone from the Environment Agency (EA) to give a presentation on the issue. Unfortunately, the arranged speaker had to pull out for personal reasons just before the November JAC.

Rearrangements for the March JAC were scuppered by the record breaking flooding in February diverting EA staff to emergency response work.

The unseasonably prolonged dry weather in April & May led to the emergence of an extensive green algal bloom in the River Wye. The Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) produced a statement in early June 2020 which noted:

“There is considerable and understandable dismay that the normally clear waters of the Wye have once again turned a putrid green due to another severe algal bloom. The Usk has also suffered a bloom, albeit less severe, as have other rivers across Wales.

Those with long associations with the Wye will know that the river has always suffered mild algal blooms. However, their severity has increased significantly in the past three or four years.

They are also starting earlier in the year and lasting longer. While they used to be one-off events with the algae dying off or being flushed out with a rise in water levels, we are now experiencing multiple blooms throughout spring and summer. The river has a sickly appearance with its water resembling pea and at other times, French onion soup....

Algal blooms are caused by a combination of factors, including levels of light and flow. However, a large increase in the amount of phosphate, which acts as a fertilizer, entering the Wye’s headwaters is thought to be the principal reason for the recent increase in the blooms’ severity.

According to the latest modelling, the proportion of the phosphate in the lower Wye coming from agriculture has doubled in the past six years. The river is now failing its permitted levels of phosphate under the EU Habitats Directive....

The upper river in Wales is now a significant source following a large expansion of the poultry industry over the last decade....

Before 2010, the Wye’s algal bloom used to start becoming noticeable around the confluence with the Lugg (although the first signs were usually a few miles further upstream at Bredwardine). This year’s bloom was noticeable at Llanbister on the Ithon, around 90 miles upstream of the Wye/Lugg confluence....

Three of the four factors generating algal blooms are to do with climate... The Foundation has been working with Herefordshire farmers with some success to reduce the amount of sediment and accompanying phosphate washing into the rivers there....”

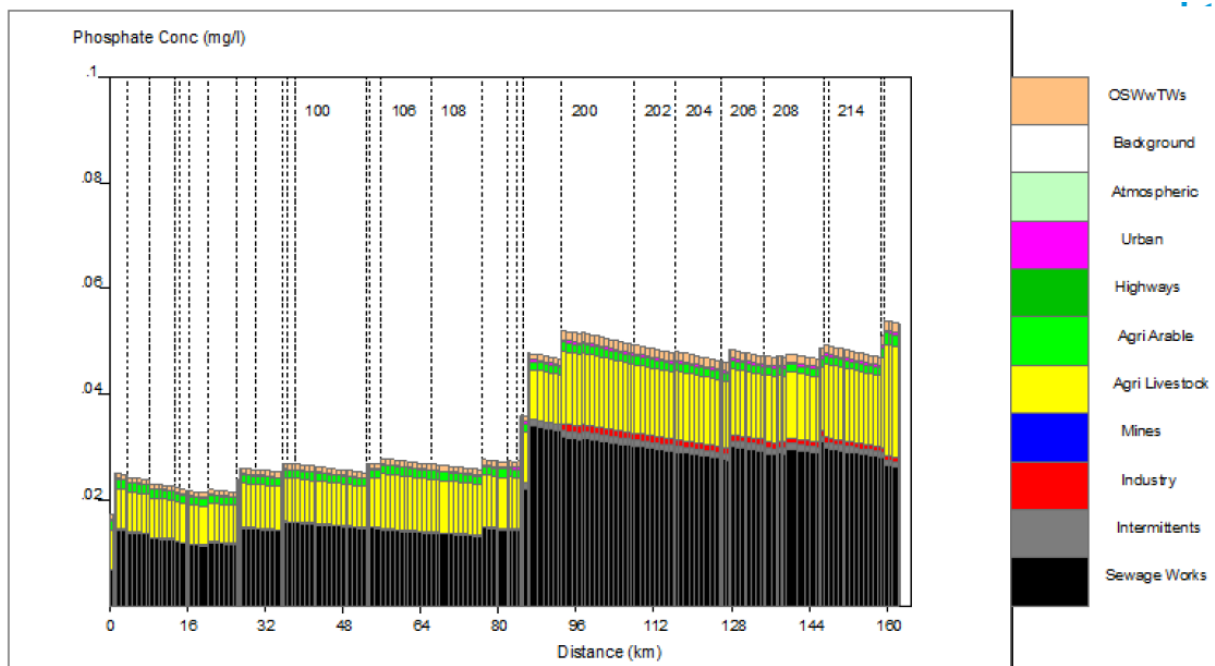
For the full article see <https://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/news/nations-favourite-river-facing-ecological-disaster>

Unfortunately the national media picked up on the impact of the “expansion of the poultry industry” without addressing the wider or more nuanced impacts and issues.

The Wye Nutrient Management Plan, published by the Environment Agency & Natural England in 2014, stated “In the context of this study, it is thought that point source discharges, such as industrial and wastewater treatment works (WwTW) discharges are responsible for a large portion of the phosphate loading to the rivers. The main diffuse source of phosphate is thought to be from agricultural sources via land run off.” (page 27)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/361793/River_Wye_NMP_final_report_v3_14052014.pdf

There is a useful graph, presented below, from Wye Nutrient Management Plan (page 47: Figure 7-4 & page 50 Figure 7-6) which shows the River Wye and the total phosphate concentration (y-axis) along the length of the river (x-axis) by distance from its confluence with the River Irfon until its discharge into the Severn Estuary. The relative contributions of phosphate from individual sources is represented by the different colours, with the largest contributor being from sewage works (black) followed by agricultural livestock (yellow). The height of each coloured section indicates the concentration of phosphate arising from that source. The ‘step change’ in the middle of the graph, at about 85km, is Hereford city (Eign and Rotherwas sewage treatment works) more than doubling of the phosphates from the sewage. The next ‘step change’ is at about 92km with the confluence of the River Lugg



joining the Wye, significantly increasing the phosphates from agricultural livestock. This marks the northern extent of the Wye Valley AONB on the Wye. The final ‘step change’ at the right hand end of the graph (160km) of input from agricultural livestock is probably from the Angidy catchment.

The report states (page 49) “The source apportionment for the River Wye (Figure 7-6) suggests the inputs from sewage treatment works typically represent the most significant source of phosphate (>60%) although inputs from livestock are also significant (>20%).”

The report also notes (page 24) that “the phosphate levels overall are also gradually falling within both the upper River Wye sub-catchment and the Lugg sub-catchment..., it could in part be due to a combination of improvements in water company treatment processes as well as improvements in land management practices, for example relating to agriculture and action over the years with NVZs, catchment sensitive farming, and AONB advisory projects.”

Since 2014 the Wye Catchment Partnership, led by the Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) and Natural Resources Wales, has been co-ordinating targeted and collaborative work to address and further reduce the phosphate loading in the Wye & Lugg (see <http://wyecatchment.org/>). As part of this work Dwr Cymru Welsh Water has made improvements to Waste water treatment works on the Wye at Rhayader, Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells and Hereford as well as Presteigne & Leominster on the Lugg. Meanwhile Catchment Advisors have been giving advice to farmers & landowners throughout the area. There are also initiatives with the supermarkets and suppliers to improve agricultural production and processes.

In recent years the Wye has mostly stayed within the permitted levels of phosphate under the EU Habitats Directive. However the Lugg has been heavily and continuously over the permitted phosphate levels. Consequently Herefordshire Council has been advised that in the Lugg sub-catchment there is limited scope for the approval of planning applications that might give rise to additional damaging effects on the River Wye SAC, such as increased phosphate loading from sewage. This is potentially holding up the development of hundreds of dwellings and the viability of the Council’s Core Strategy. The Council released a Position Statement on ‘Development in the River Lugg Catchment’ in March 2020 https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/19059/current_development_in_the_river_lugg_catchment_area_position_statement.pdf

The crux of the problem comes because of the following. The concentration of pollutants, including phosphates, in the Wye and Lugg is exacerbated by any reduction in the volume of water. So any prolonged dry periods will produce low flows in the river with potentially higher levels of pollutants – reducing water quantity leading to reduced water quality. Similarly prolonged periods of hot and sunny weather will increase the temperature of the water in the river, and less water will heat up more quickly. Algae thrive in the warmer water fed by the sunlight and the phosphates, which act as a fertilizer. A recognised impact of Climate Change in England and Wales is more prolonged summer heatwaves. Without reducing either the sunlight or the phosphates, there will be more algae blooms on the Wye. This is an example of the ‘perfect storm’ of the implications of both the Climate and an Ecological Emergency. The natural beauty of the area will suffer as a consequence.

The Wye Valley AONB covers the lower reaches of the Wye, downstream from the confluence with the Lugg. So most of the ingredients and contributing conditions for the algal blooms originate upstream of the AONB. Unfortunately we just receive the mess downstream.

Wye Valley AONB staff have been active members of the Wye Catchment Partnership and there are several AONB projects that attempt to address some of those contributing factors, such as reducing soil erosion and agricultural run-off into the river:

- The Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) project in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB, focused predominantly on the Angidy catchment has had a dedicated Project Officer, supported by the WUF Catchment Advisors,

working with 11 farmers and giving advice and grants for land management NFM & GI improvements. The AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour visited some of the project's work last September. We are currently negotiating with the Environment Agency about the possibility of a similar project on the Gloucestershire side of the AONB.

- Two WUF Catchment Advisors are seconded to the Wye Valley AONB Unit as part of the Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) project with WUF, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Herefordshire Rural Hub, covering Herefordshire. They are focusing very much on advising farmers and preparing Farm Plans to help secure other grants to improve land management practices. Unfortunately both Advisors were furloughed but they are starting to get back to work.

We will continue to collaborate with those involved with the river and those that can influence the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area, for the benefit of the people and the wildlife of the Wye Valley.

5. Covid-19 impacts on the AONB

The AONB Unit Work Plan was reviewed and updated in the light of the pandemic restrictions. All AONB staff were able to continue with a range of tasks identified to be safe and compliant with government guidance. Like everyone else, AONB staff have predominantly been working from home during lock-down. Apart from the seconded Catchment Advisors, no staff were furloughed and no staff were requisitioned or redeployed by the constituent local authorities.

A range of projects and initiatives have been postponed or cancelled due to Covid-19, including:

- AONB Farming Awards (cancelled for 2020)
- AONB Volunteers & AONB Youth Rangers conservation activities (postponed until further notice)
- Attendance at Shows and events (postponed until further notice)
- AONB Partnership events & annual Study Tour (postponed until further notice)
- Gilpin2020 events (postponed until 2021)
- Wye Valley River Festival (provisionally postponed until late September 2020 – see item 7 below)

However, many projects have continued to operate, including mindSCAPE which has successfully moved on-line (see item 9 below).

In terms of impacts on the landscape, these appear to have been much the same as the rest of the countryside. Many residents, where and when they could, were able to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the outstanding landscape. As lockdown eased and weather continued to hold fair, lots of people headed for the nearest water to paddle and have a picnic or barbeque. This often entailed people trespassing off riverside footpaths into pasture or to gain access to the river, and then leaving litter. The excess littering and haphazard regard for private property seemed to be national phenomena.

The AONB phone-lines have been receiving calls from people asking if our “Park” was “open” and where they could bring their family for a picnic. With the AONB straddling the England Wales border, and with different lock-down measures and timetables in each country, the answer has invariably been more complicated than the enquirer might have hoped. But it is interesting that obvious ‘newcomers’ to the area have been searching out the Wye Valley... or stumbling across the green blob on GoogleMaps.

Meanwhile the AONB is involved in a Birmingham University Business School research programme around supporting regenerative economies in AONBs and how AONB Management Plans can support the rebuilding of the rural economy. The research will focus on two main industry sectors in AONBs: rural tourism (ie. re-sustainability, farm-stays and ecological approaches towards tourism visits) and agriculture (ie. sourcing of local food, food-tourism, shorter supply chains, food-to-fork). This work will complement a wider study between Birmingham University and Liverpool John Moores University to learn about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, which is aimed at informing policy and practice going forward.

Documenting Now

As lock-down consolidated, and the unprecedented use of unprecedented became the norm, an opportunity arose to commission Monmouth-based photographer and film maker Emma Drabble to document the impact of Covid-19 on rural lives and local businesses. 'Documenting Now' captures people's feelings, fears and hopes as they live through the pandemic in the AONB. We are very grateful to all the participants who have allowed Emma to their lives and shared their stories. You can see most of the audio portraits on the AONB website <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-work/our-projects/documenting-now-life-in-the-aonb-during-the-pandemic/> and the full range is available on the AONB Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/wyevalley.aonb/> and on Wye Valley AONB YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnSKF3l8yvje2Cb1gyY1trQ>. We know how lucky we are to live and work in an area of outstanding natural beauty, with nature all around and green space on our doorstep. These show just how much this is valued and how it has helped boost people's mental and physical well-being during lockdown.

6. Annual Report 2019/20 (see Appendix 2)

The Annual Work Programme Report for the AONB Unit for 2019/20 is in Appendix 2. It lists the achievements of the AONB Unit and has been presented to DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as part of the annual grant claims to the two national government funding partners. The financial summary is at the end of the tabulated achievements. The overall turnover of the AONB Unit was £502,773. The leverage of the AONB Partnership in 2019/20 means that for every £1 of local authority contribution, the AONB Unit has brought in over £10.

7. Wye Valley River Festival 2020, 21st - 27th September

Plans for the postponed Festival are coming together. The unique creative partnership between the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the Festival Team, the Artistic Directors; Desperate Men and Festival Director; Phillippa Haynes and Production Manager; Claire Teasdale, have been developing a revised programme. The team are working to deliver the Festival in a format that is true to its ethos, while ensuring the safety of the audience and compliance with all government guidance. The Wye Valley River Festival will inspire audiences to engage positively with the landscape. The artistic programme will promote change, creating a compelling call to action for citizens to conserve and enhance the Wye Valley landscape for future generations. To that end the Wye Valley River Festival will deliver thought provoking, site specific, and high quality inspiring art in the outdoors, growing empathy, emotional engagement and better understanding of the landscape of the Wye Valley AONB. Through celebratory and insightful Festival experiences the Festival will foster a strong connection between the Festival audience and the Wye Valley landscape. How we do this will be revealed in due course.

8. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) & HCF AONB Fund

Don't forget these funding streams are available for community projects. For more details see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/>. If you have or know of any project ideas, please contact Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, on community@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk.

9. mindSCAPE & CPRE Gloucestershire Award

Led by ArtSpace Cinderford, the mindSCAPE project continues to provide people with dementia and their carers creative opportunities to reconnect to the landscape through art inspired by the natural environment. The project has successfully continued during lock-down and has moved on-line. ArtSpace ring all of the participants weekly for a catch up and there is a flourishing Facebook group. There are three groups who are all conversing with each other on-line which is brilliant, because they have never met. Participants are having a runner bean contest, having been sent the seeds, and are sending pictures of their gardens back to ArtSpace and sharing on Facebook. ArtSpace have also been putting up videos and creative challenges for participants who then post pictures of their creations, including, for example some origami butterflies (some better than others!).

ArtSpace were also able to commission one of the artists to make videos and run on-line workshops during lock-down which have been uploaded for all to use; see <https://www.forestersforest.uk/projects/6/mindscape> and http://artspacecinderford.org/?page_id=2503.

Finally, we are pleased that the mindSCAPE project has won a CPRE Gloucestershire Award. CPRE Gloucestershire described the project as “splendid but rather different to anything they have considered for an award before”. The CPRE Gloucestershire Awards recognise and celebrate projects which are exemplars of good practice and are really outstanding in their contribution to the environment or to the local community. We are very proud that mindSCAPE should be so specially recognised.

Appendix 1 Draft JAC Minutes 2nd March

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 2nd March, 2020 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor A. Webb (Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: D. Dovey and M. Lane

Herefordshire Council

Councillor P. Symonds

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillor S. Phelps

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC - Mr. C. Evers

One Voice Wales - Councillor G. Powell

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Nation Farmers Union - Mr. M. Price

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society - Mr. C. Barron

Local Tourism Sector - Ms. K. Ballard

River Wye Preservation Trust - Mr. R. Hesketh

National Farmers Union Wales - Mr. D. Price

Technical Advice Officers

Wye Valley AONB Manager - Mr. A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council - Mr. M. Lewis

Gloucestershire County Council - Mr. R. Niblett

Monmouthshire County Council - Mr. R. Williams

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: L. Jones, B. Durkin, J. Hardwick, Y. Watson, D. Wheeler, C. McFarling.

Dr. G. Peterken, Mr. B. Nash, Ms. H. McDowell and Mr. R. Gething.

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 4th November 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

In doing so, the AONB Manager informed the Joint Advisory Committee that:

- A representative from the Environment Agency had been invited to today's meeting. However, due to the recent unprecedented flooding events that had occurred across the Country, the representative had been unable to attend. It was hoped that a representative from the Environment Agency would be able to attend the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting in July 2020.
- A report regarding transport collaboration will be presented to a future meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee. It was noted that some local authorities within the Wye Valley AONB are currently updating their transport policies. The Wye Valley AONB Unit will be included as part of the consultation process.

3. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present.

4. AONB Unit 2020/21 Work Programme

We received a report regarding the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- During the year it is anticipated that the AONB Unit will consolidate at just under eight Full time equivalent (FTE) staff which builds on the reduced capacity in the previous / current year.
- Priorities include the publishing of the revised AONB Management Plan 2020-2025, delivering the fourth Wye Valley River Festival; the Gilpin2020 celebrations; the Restoring Our Amazing River project (on the England side of the AONB); ongoing Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management projects (predominantly in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB); and the Welsh

Government 'Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places' funding, while continuing a range of existing activities and projects and retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.

- The capacity of the AONB Unit is stretched but the budgets in the Work Programme have been approved by the AONB Steering Group and submitted to DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- The AONB Unit budget is £270,750 and additional funding programmes, grants and match funding is anticipated to exceed £1million levered into the AONB during the year.
- This is the final year of a three year funding agreement with NRW and will be the start of a new core funding settlement with DEFRA, the details of which are yet to be confirmed.
- Welsh Government is working on the new one year Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) capital funding programme and is proposing to increase the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for the year, the details of which are dependent on confirmation of the Welsh Government budget settlement.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question raised regarding the control of deer and wild boar it was noted that the AONB Unit is not directly involved in this matter. This is managed and monitored by woodland owners Forestry England or Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and woodland managers, and culling takes place when appropriate determined by local priorities.
- The AONB Manager will be attending a meeting in the Forest of Dean in due course in which these issues will be discussed. He will report back to the Joint Advisory Committee regarding this matter.
- In response to a question raised requesting that the AONB Work Programme be refined to increase flood management resilience, it was noted that some of the new capital funding being received via Welsh Government will be targeted at improving recreational infrastructure and Natural Flood Management, which will address some of the damage that has occurred recently due to the unprecedented flooding events.
- A request was made for officer time to be identified when implementing the projects outlined in the report.

We resolved to endorse the AONB Unit Work Programme for 2020/2021.

5. Review of Designated Landscapes in England and Wales

We received a report regarding progress following the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in Wales and England.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Welsh AONB lead officers continue to meet with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, the National Association for AONBs and the Welsh National Parks to progress the 'Valued and Resilient' statement.
- Welsh Government officials are currently finalising proposals for capital funding schemes for the Designated Landscapes, including a Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places scheme and augmented funding for the Sustainable Development Fund.
- The 'Landscapes Review' of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England, chaired by Julian Glover, was published in September 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- The Conservative manifesto stated "We welcome the Glover Review" and it is anticipated that a formal response to it will be made by the Government later in the year.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Unit has had a 1.4% increase in its settlement from Defra, a modest but welcome increase in the AONB budget for 2020/21.

We noted the report.

6. Sustainable Development Fund & HCF AONB Fund update

We received a report regarding the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The SDF Assessment Panel has fully allocated the £55,000 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in Wales in 2019/20.
- The Welsh Government has informally advised that the SDF allocation for 2020/21 will be increased to be in the region of £100,000, subject to confirmation of budget.
- The Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has been fully established with £10,000 for immediate funding alongside an Endowment Fund, currently of £50,000.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation has established the facility for people to donate £5 to the AONB Fund by texting 'WVAONB' to 70085.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Promotion of the endowment fund is still in its early stages but it is intended to address this matter, going forward.

We resolved:

- i) to welcome Welsh Government's proposed enhancement to the Sustainable Development Fund.
- ii) to welcome the establishment of the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

7. AONB Management Plan Review

We received a report regarding on-going progress with the AONB Management Plan review.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- A total of 24 organisations and individuals submitted comments on the Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan 2020-25, amounting to approximately 200 specific comments.
- The assimilation of the consultation responses into the final draft of the AONB Management Plan is underway.
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment for the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the Plan is now underway which needs to be completed before the Plan can be formally adopted by the local authorities and government agencies.
- It is intended that the finalised version of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 will be presented for adoption at the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting on 6th July 2020.

We noted the report.

8. Ash Die Back update

We received a report regarding the most recent assessment of the Ash Die Back disease and effects on the Wye Valley.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Ash trees are the UK's third most common tree and an important tree in woodlands and hedgerows in the Wye Valley.
- The future of Ash is threatened by Ash Die back; a disease caused by a fungus which is fatal in about 85% of Ash trees.
- 2019 was the first year when Ash Die Back was observed significantly widespread throughout the Wye Valley.
- It is the most significant tree disease to hit the UK since Dutch Elm disease in the 1970s.
- Ash Die Back will have a substantial impact on the landscape and wildlife, exacerbated by the current climate and ecological emergencies.

- Landowners need to evaluate the social, economic and environmental risks of dead or dying Ash trees, particularly along roadside and publicly accessible places.
- The impact of the disease is likely to become more obvious in 2020, both through the prevalence of dead or diseased trees in the landscape and the visibility of the removal of high risk trees in well-frequented places.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In the summer of 2019, there had been a rapid spread of Ash Die Back at the Old Station, Tintern. Significant felling works are being undertaken this week on safety grounds. The contract will take about three to four weeks to complete.
- Further inspections will be undertaken in the coming months and other infected sites are likely to be identified. Private landowners with infected trees along Highways and high risk areas may be served notice.
- There are estimated to be half a million Ash trees in Herefordshire that are affected by Ash Die Back.

We noted the report.

9. Wye Valley River Festival 2020 update

We received a report regarding the provisional programme for the Wye Valley River Festival 2020.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Funding for the Wye Valley River Festival 2020 has been secured from Arts Council England, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Visit Wales, Arts Council of Wales, and many other sources.
- The programme of events for the Wye Valley River Festival is being finalised for the main festival fortnight between 2nd & 17th May 2020 based on the theme of 'Time'.
- A range of school and community workshops are planned for the run up to the Festival to create props and build engagement.
- AONB Volunteers and the AONB Youth Rangers have been working in the woods making walking staves for the Festival.
- The Wye Valley AONB Unit recently won a South East Wales Tourism Innovation Award for the Wye Valley River Festival.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The progression of the Coronavirus is being closely monitored as to whether it might affect proceedings, going forward.

- The River Festival will host two significant conferences:
 - 'Art in Landscape' on Wednesday 12th -13th May 2020; with the NAAONB and fellow AONBs coming together for a day of knowledge transfer and networking to consider future national & local collaboration.
 - 'Creative Landscapes' on Thursday 14th May 2020; with land stewards and creatives from across England and Wales sharing ideas and experiences in co-creating transformational and inclusive arts experiences, with a particular focus on diversity, access, sustainability and climate change.
- The River Festival and Gilpin2020 are separate events but complement each other. It is hoped to obtain national media coverage for the River Festival. National media coverage has already been established for Gilpin 2020.
- The AONB Unit is working closely with Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism and Visit Monmouthshire. A marketing strategy is being established to market the Festival regionally and nationally.

We noted the report.

10. National Association for AONBs

We received a report regarding activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The AONB Manager attended the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairman's Conference and AGM on 28th November 2019 which focused on taking the Glover Review forward.
- The 'Taking the Lead' programme of professional training for staff has concluded which both the AONB Development Officer and AONB Community Links Officer participated in.
- The AONB Manager attended the AONB Lead Officers' meeting in Birmingham on 10th & 11th February 2020.
- A consortium of 11 AONBs are participating in DEFRA 'Tests & Trials' for the new post Brexit agri-environment Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS).
- NAAONB staff facilitated a joint training day for the Wye Valley & Shropshire Hills AONB teams.
- The annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference will take place in Exeter on 7th - 9th July 2020.

We noted the report.

11. Partner and AONB Unit progress reports and updates

We received a report of the activity of the AONB Unit and various partners relating to:

- Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management & Green Infrastructure Project.
- Gilpin2020.
- Water Environment Grant Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) & Catchment Advisors.
- Offa's Dyke Collaboratory.

We noted the report.

12. Dates of future meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee for 2020/21:

To be held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford on the following dates:

Monday 6th July 2020.

Monday 2nd November 2020.

Monday 1st March 2021 (to be confirmed).

The meeting ended at 3.10pm.



Annual report 2019 – 2020
including financial summary

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AONB Unit Work Programme AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives		Outcomes 2019-2020
AONB Management Plan <i>WV-L1</i> <i>WV-P3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise and distribute Wye Valley AONB Management Plan • Monitor use of Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries etc • Undertake Plan Review process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete State of AONB Report ○ Initial consultations, SEA & HRA Scoping ○ 1st Draft of 2020-2025 Plan ○ Public consultation of Draft ○ SEA Environment Report • Finalise Plan for JAC & LA adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 available on AONB website https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/ • AONB Management Plan referred to in planning application responses and reports. • Pre-consultation draft Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-25 was presented to the AONB Joint Advisory Committee in July 2019. • The Public Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan 2020-25 was published and a 12 week consultation period closed in January 2020. • A total of 28 organisations and individuals submitted comments on the Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan, amounting to approximately 250 specific comments. • There were also two public ‘drop-in’ sessions to discuss the Plan with AONB staff on Monday 2nd December 2019 at The Mackenzie Hall, Brockweir, and Wednesday 11th December at the Larruperz Centre, Ross-on-Wye, with 15 members of the public attending both events. • The assimilation of the consultation responses into the final draft of the AONB Management Plan was commenced. • A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment for the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the Plan was commenced • A Future Generations Evaluation was also conducted and presented

AONB Unit Work Programme <i>AONB Management Plan 2015-2020</i> <i>Strategic Objectives</i>		Outcomes 2019-2020
		to Monmouthshire County Council Scrutiny Committee.
AONB Partnership events WV-P1 WV-P6 WV-P7	For JAC members, AONB Ward members, representatives from partner organisations and local Town/Parish/Community Councils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run AONB Partnership Seminar on key issue Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues Promote & disseminate JAC contacts & processes for other organisations & individuals to feed into JAC & AONB Partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Unit Annual Report presented to JAC in July. 28 attendees on the AONB Partnership Tour on 20th September 2019, visited the southern part of the AONB and sites primarily associated with the Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) Project.
Planning, Development Control and Strategic Policy WV-D1 WV-D2 WV-D3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew annual contract for AONB Strategy & Development Advisor to support AONB Unit with planning advice. Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB Engage in debate and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract renewed with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Planning Department, shared with Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. AONBM provided comments on 6 significant planning applications in Monmouthshire part of the AONB, 1 application & 1 Appeal in Herefordshire and 2 in Gloucestershire and has provided comments on 3 Neighbourhood Development Plans. AONBM responded to the Forest of Dean Local Plan 2021 – 2041 Issues and Options Consultation, with comments submitted jointly with Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. AONBM & FAO monitor and review development trends that affect the AONB. AONBM jointly with Malvern Hills AONBM gave CPD training to Herefordshire Council Planning officers on AONBs.
AONB Farming Awards WV-L5 WV-F1 WV-F5 WV-C2 WV-E2	Promote & publicise 12th Awards for farmers, landowners and land managers that make an outstanding contribution to conserving &/or enhancing the features, special qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Awards and handle entries Site visits of all farm entries for short-listing Judging Present the prizes at the Monmouthshire Show 6th July 2019 Involve winner in Open Farm Sunday event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 farms were shortlisted for 2019 AONB Farming Awards. Award won by Monmouthshire Meadows Group. Award presented at the Monmouthshire Show. The judging panel consisted of Andrew Blake (AONB Manager), David Price (NFW Wales & JAC), Mike Williams (Wye & Usk Foundation) and Martin Rowberry (Coppett Hill Common Trust & 2017 winners)
Habitat Conservation WV-L2 WV-L4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise monthly volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves Continue Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management & 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One outing per month of AONB volunteers, average attendance 8. Varied tasks, drystone walling, scything, work in Highbury Wood NNR, collaboration with Gwent Wildlife Trust volunteers and Monmouthshire

AONB Unit Work Programme <i>AONB Management Plan 2015-2020</i> Strategic Objectives		Outcomes 2019-2020
<i>WV-F4</i>	<p>Green Infrastructure Project working with farmers and local landowners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue opportunities to continue Phase 1 and priority BAP habitat surveys to complete coverage of the AONB • Liaise over national roadside verge initiatives with local authorities and Highways Agency • Continue work with Ross Town Council in co-ordinating management of Ross Riverside. • Implementation of Water Environment Grant (WEG) programme – if successful. 	<p>Meadows volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 volunteer activities run through Lower Wye Catchments NFM & GI project, including Himalayan Balsam and surface water management on footpaths. Including work in partnership with NRW on Public Forest Estate. • Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed control included in Lower Wye Valley NFM & GI project. • NFM & GI project grant aided farmers & landowners to deliver 1km+ of riparian fencing, 100m new cross contour hedgerow, 125m fencing to reduce field size and encourage rotational grazing, 15ac maize undersowing, leaky dams in Angidy and Whitebrook rivers through which 9.9km of watercourses now flow. • Floodplain Meadow Restoration work undertaken in partnership with Ross-on-Wye Town Council, Herefordshire Meadows Group and Ashfield Park Primary School. 100 children from Ashfield Park Primary school helped spread locally sourced floodplain meadow seed on site. • 2 farm advisors employed by the Wye and Usk Foundation (WUF) and hosted by the AONB to work on WEG project, following success of WUF application for Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) WEG project funding.
<p>Landscape scale conservation <i>WV-L1</i> <i>WV-L2</i> <i>WV-B3</i> <i>WV-P3</i> <i>WV-P4</i></p>	<p>Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB. Potential target area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate possible HLF bid for northern part of AONB around Woolhope and Sellack area • National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & others • Work with partners in Monmouthshire on Long Forest and Usk to Wye initiatives • Continue work with Herefordshire Meadows. • Continue &/or expand Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management & Green Infrastructure Project working with farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO sits on newly created Gloucestershire LNP Naturally Healthy and Nature Recovery subgroups. 3 Naturally healthy group meeting attended. • Lower Wye Catchment NFM & GI project: 11 Farm Plans prepared in collaboration with Wye & Usk Foundation. • Farming Connect collaborative event. • Water Environment Grant (WEG) successful for English part of Wye Catchment with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Wye & Usk Foundation. Recruitment of Catchment Advisors for AONB and adjacent Garron & Gamber sub-catchment. • Collaborated on the Wentwood to Wyre Endangered Landscapes Programme application (ultimately unsuccessful). • Herefordshire Meadows Group membership continues to grow, now at

AONB Unit Work Programme <i>AONB Management Plan 2015-2020</i> Strategic Objectives		Outcomes 2019-2020
	and local landowners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Water Environment Grant (WEG) programme – if successful. If not review projects with orchards, veteran & riverine trees. 	61 members, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO attended B-Lines Herefordshire project development meeting.
Deer Management <i>WV-B2</i> <i>WV-B4</i> <i>WV-W4</i> <i>WV-W3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement as appropriate the recommendations of the venison marketing feasibility study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event organised in partnership with the Deer Initiative to promote best practice stalking with 20+ attendees. Deer Initiative had stand at Monmouthshire Show.
Monitoring <i>WV-L4</i> <i>WV-B5</i> <i>WV-H2</i> <i>WV-S3</i> <i>WV-P8</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS and State of the AONB data, including habitats and species, heritage, tourism and recreation etc. Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Fixed Point photography monitoring of 41 sites, photographed annually NAAONB KPI Metrics collated and submitted. Data collation for AONB Management Plan & State of the AONB Report ongoing
Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) <i>WV-L1</i> <i>WV-B3</i> <i>WV-C1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate SDF project applications for the SDF Assessment Panel Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating funds Complete establishment of AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation Training for SDF Assessment Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 projects supported with full allocation in Wales of £55,000 Grants promoted via social media, website and at Monmouthshire Show Leverage of £114,432 cash & £7,100 in-kind, meaning every £1 of SDF was matched by £2.20 New members recruited to Assessment Panel & introduction of updated WG guidance WG officers visited and toured projects Herefordshire Community Foundation Wye Valley AONB Fund agreement signed and AONB Fund established.
Wye Valley River Festival <i>WV-A1</i> <i>WV-W5</i> <i>WV-C2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop 'Time' theme for Festival with campaign & outreach throughout year. Pursue funding from SDF, England & Wales Arts Council, Cadw, Foresters' Forest, Environment Agency, Monmouthshire County Council and other contributors & sponsors. Complete all claims and evaluations Complete evaluation of future prospects & governance for Festival. Prepare for subsequent Festival governance model (if appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and development on Time theme progressed through Creative Labs and workshop events with artists and key local participants. Funding targets met Claims and evaluation completed to date Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions halted activity in March 2020 with

AONB Unit Work Programme AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives		Outcomes 2019-2020
		decision to postpone 2020 Festival.
MindSCAPE – Foresters’ Forest HLF funding 2018 - 2022 WV-W5 WV-C2 WV-P9	Initiative enabling people living with dementia to reconnect with the landscape, through arts and creative environmental activities, both in Care homes & established activity group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage project and submit reports & claims to Foresters’ Forest LPS for HLF • Supervise contractor, ArtSpace Cinderford, organising regular creative sessions, workshops and social activities for participants. • Develop opportunities to expand project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortnightly activities continue to run through Arts Council England Funding with project now lead by ArtSpace Cinderford and AONB Unit a project partner. • 20 mindSCAPE sessions delivered in Care Homes through Foresters’ Forest Landscape Scheme. • Community and Care Home Resource Guide produced and distributed. • Annual mindSCAPE report published and project evaluation commissioned and produced. • On line video tutorials being developed by ArtSpace practitioners.
Youth Rangers – Foresters’ Forest WV-F4 WV-C2 WV-P6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue structured programme of activity for 4th Cohort of young people (14-16 year olds) that will increase their skill set in landscape and heritage conservation and management. • Develop the next phase of the scheme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 outings carried out including on navigation and outdoor skill, bushcraft, wild swimming, canoeing, caving, tree & hedge planting, wildlife surveying skills and outdoor First Aid. • 2 promotional events in school • Social media promotion plus 1 radio interview and 1 press release • 4 volunteers support this activity plus CLO & numerous partners
Website and social media WV-C2 WV-A1	Upgrade and manage websites and social networking sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk (including www.overlookingthewye.org.uk) • www.wyevalleywalk.org • www.wyevalleyriverfestival.org.uk • Facebook and Twitter. • Investigate re-establishing ‘Picturesque’ as a regular on-line AONB newsletter, to provide information and interpretation to increase awareness and appreciation of the AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google rating of ‘Wye Valley AONB’ remains at 4.7 (out of 5) from over 5,000 reviews. • Website refurbishment completed and new version live.
Public Relations & Outreach WV-C2 WV-E4 WV-A1	Promote the AONB through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stands at the Monmouthshire Show and other relevant shows. • Local exhibitions and other local appropriate / prestigious events. • Promote & lead guided walks, events, children’s activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB • Give talks/presentations to local groups • Regular press releases and magazine articles / advertorial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONBM gave talks to 3 community groups. • CLO led 3 guided walks & gave 3 talks to variety of groups • AONB stand at Monmouthshire Show and Herefordshire Meadows Annual Forum • Wye Valley AONB Map & Guide reprinted and distributed regionally through ‘Pear Communications’ • Lower Wye Catchments GI & NFM Project Officer gave talk to Gwent

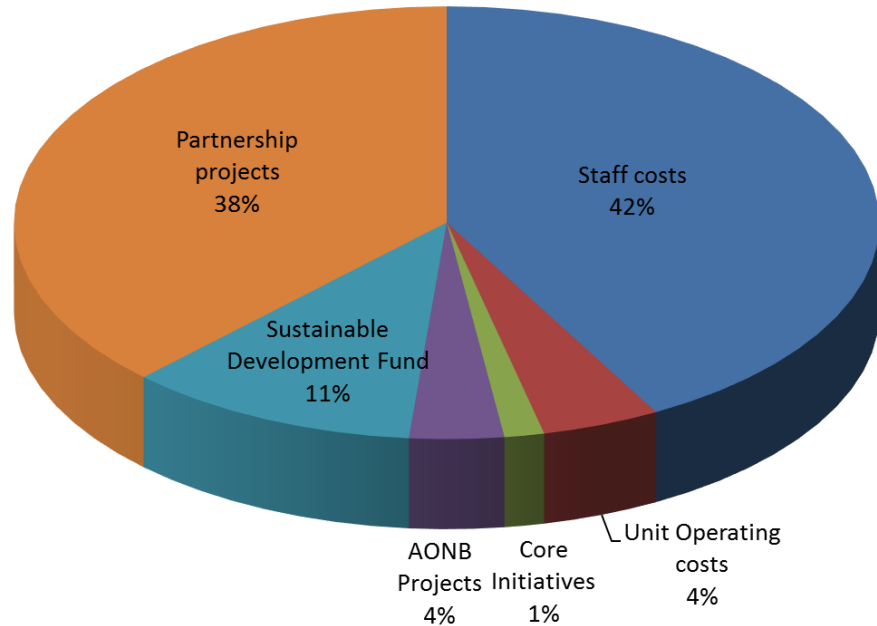
AONB Unit Work Programme AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives		Outcomes 2019-2020
		<p>Wildlife Trust Local Wildlife Sites events day about the project and Natural Flood Management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO and GI&NFM PO ran guided walk as part of Chepstow Walking Festival, looking at and discussing NFM work. NFM seminar held, attended by 40 people.
Undergrounding WV-U2 WV-P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working with Western Power to identify power-lines within the AONB suitable for undergrounding, via Western Power South Wales Protected Landscape Undergrounding group and the West Midlands Undergrounding group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Officer has attended 3 Powerline undergrounding meetings (1 Wales, 2 England). 3 schemes approved for undergrounding by steering groups. Further 3 schemes in development.
Wye Valley Walk WV-S1 WV-S2 WV-R1 WV-P5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership Monitor counters along Walk Manage route promotion, website and Passport scheme Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge, Redbrook Bridge and Tintern Wireworks Bridge Progress Monmouth riverbank erosion solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requests for WVW information & issuing of Passports continued. Feedback showed concerns about physical infrastructure (waymarking etc, passport stamping locations vandalized/ broken/ nonexistent and route direction) but overall people love the walk. Concerns about path maintenance forwarded to respective local authority. Work commenced on revising http://www.wyevalleywalk.org/
Offa's Dyke Collaboratory WV-H1 WV-H3 WV-P5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for future cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological projects and investigation into landscape significance of the 8th century monument Participate in autumn Collaboratory conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONBM contributed to and provided technical assistance at 2 Offa's Dyke Collaboratory events (Knighton & 2nd symposium in Cardiff)
Overlooking the Wye legacy WV-H1 WV-H3 WV-P5	<p>Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tintern iBeacon project <i>Interpretation of landscape influence of Tintern Abbey (with Cadw & Monmouthshire LEADER)</i> Reprint of Walks leaflets <i>with sponsorship</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinated development of the Gilpin2020 programme with wide range of stakeholders. HRH Prince of Wales officially launched Gilpin2020 on visit to Ross-on-Wye on 5th November 2019. Published Gilpin2020 events programme (rescheduled in March to 2020+1 due to Covid-19).
Partnerships (local / regional) WV-R2	<p>Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Destination Management Partnership Visit Herefordshire Leisure and Recreation Forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO sits on Herefordshire Meadows Network steering group, helping to direct the work of this Facilitation Fund group. 2 meetings attended, 2 events also attended. DO attended 2 Wye Catchment Partnership meetings

AONB Unit Work Programme <i>AONB Management Plan 2015-2020</i> Strategic Objectives		Outcomes 2019-2020
<i>WV-P3</i> <i>WV-P5</i> <i>WV-P6</i> <i>WV-P7</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wye Catchment Partnership Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Herefordshire Wildlife Link AONB Wye Valley Woodland Projects group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONBM attended WyeNAC and contributed to task group AONBM attended 3 Lower Wye Internal Drainage District Advisory Group meetings AONBM & IO liaison with Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism, including over Wye Valley River Festival and representation on JAC.
Collaboration (Designated Landscapes) <i>WV-P5</i> <i>WV-P9</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and Europarc seminars & events NAAONB Taking the Lead programme & Action/Working Groups Work with Welsh Government and Wales Designated Landscapes in taking Future Landscapes Wales Programme forward Work with DEFRA and Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONBM contributed to NAAONB Senior Leaders Group on Future Landscapes - Taking the Lead and Sustainability & Governance Review DO & CLO both contributed to 4 Taking the Lead workshops AONBM & CLO, and DO attended & spoke at NAAONB Landscapes for Life Conference at Colchester. AONBM also contributed to AGM & Chairpersons' Conference and attended AONB Lead Officers' meeting. DO attended West Midland Tree Health Ash Dieback workshop AONBM attended NAAONB meeting with Julian Glover The Designated Landscapes in Wales collectively published the Scenic Wales calendar 2020.
Governance <i>WV-P1</i> <i>WV-P2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group Prepare grant bids and claims for Natural Resources Wales and Defra, and other funding bodies as required. Continue implementation of recommendations from AONB Good Governance Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 full JAC meetings held, 1st July & 4th November 2019 & 2nd March 2020, preceded by TOWP meetings on 5th June & 4th Oct 2019 & 5th Feb 2020, Relevant JAC agenda items prepared by Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) and AONB Manager and distributed by Monmouthshire County Council as JAC Clerk AONB Steering Group held on 2nd Oct 2019 & 5th Feb 2020, with AONB Unit budgets and spend profile presented and scrutinised. All bids and claims submitted on time.
Funding and resources <i>WV-P1</i> <i>WV-P2</i> <i>WV-P3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue investigating funding and development opportunities. Investigation into external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects Commence fundraising campaign when Herefordshire Community Foundation Wye Valley AONB Fund established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONBM & DO prepared funding proposals for continuation of Lower Wye Valley NFM & GI project, in both Monmouthshire & Gloucestershire. Collaborated on the Wentwood to Wyre Endangered Landscapes Programme application (ultimately unsuccessful). Collaborated with Welsh Government, Welsh AONBs & National

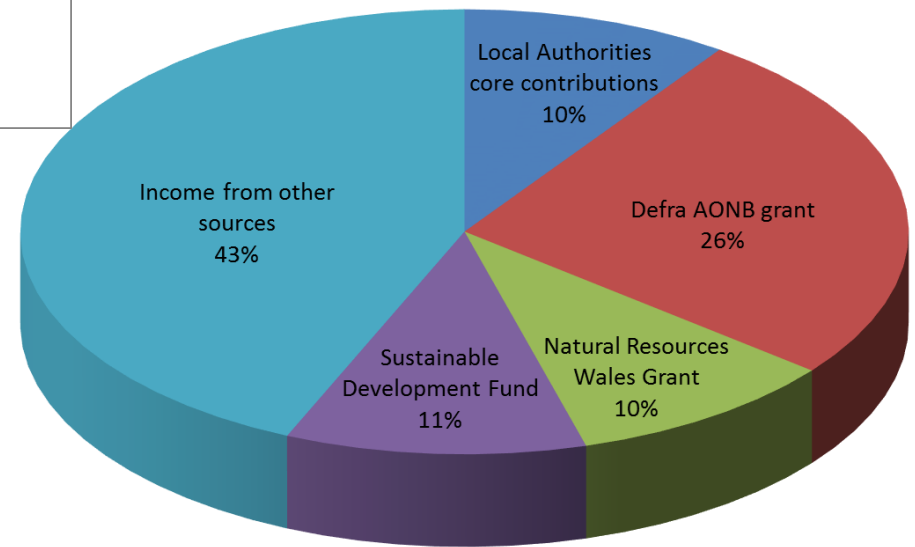
AONB Unit Work Programme <i>AONB Management Plan 2015-2020</i> <i>Strategic Objectives</i>		Outcomes 2019-2020
		Parks on development of the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places capital funding programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully bid for Welsh Government additional capital for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)
Work placements <i>WV-P5</i> <i>WV-P9</i>	Support the needs of student placements/group projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided information for a number of graduate requests. • Further developed under-graduate proposals with University of South Wales Drama & Performance Department, Faculty of Creative Industries about incorporating Wye Valley River Festival into course.

Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts 2019/2020		
		£
Expenditure		
	Staff costs	211,010
	Unit Operating costs	22,202
	Core Initiatives	7,465
	AONB Projects	17,733
	Sustainable Development Fund	55,000
	Partnership projects	189,363
	TOTAL	502,773
Income		
	Local Authorities' core contributions	49,002
	Defra AONB grant	130,614
	Natural Resources Wales grant	49,600
	Sustainable Development Fund	55,000
	Income from other sources	218,557
	TOTAL	502,773

Expenditure Chart



Income Chart



The Wye Valley AONB Unit is the lead delivery agent for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The AONB Partnership is led by the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) with the key funding partners, being DEFRA, Natural Resources Wales, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council, making up the AONB Steering Group. The Host Authority responsible for the AONB Unit's finances is Herefordshire Council. The AONB Steering Group annually review and agree the budgets for the AONB Unit, endorsed by the JAC. The audited accounts of the Host Authority are available from: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/2076/council_accounts_201920

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd November 2020

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' CONTRIBUTIONS AND AONB MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING 2021 - 2024

Purpose

To request contributions from the four constituent local authorities to the budget for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and note progress with finalising the AONB Memorandum of Understanding between the four local authorities for 2021 - 2024.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. request from the constituent local authorities the financial contributions for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership for 2021/22.
- B. encourage the constituent local authorities to finalise and agree the AONB Memorandum of Understanding for 2021 - 2024

Key Issues

- The AONB Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the AONB Partnership.
- The current MoU ends in March 2021 and a revised three year edition, until March 2024, is being finalised between the four local authorities.
- The MoU includes the minimum contribution expected from the local authorities which form the foundation of the budget managed by the AONB Unit.
- DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are not signatories to the MoU however their anticipated AONB grant funding offer letters, when received, will be appended to the MoU.
- The local authorities' financial contributions to the Wye Valley AONB Partnership are requested with a 1% increase on the current year,
- For every £1 of Local Authority contribution in 2019/20 the AONB Unit has levered in over £10.

Reasons

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) provides a framework for the delivery of duties and obligations in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) arising from Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 including the operation and management of the AONB Partnership and the AONB Unit. The MoU is intended to give medium term security to the AONB Partnership and sets out a shared vision for, and commitment to, AONB management by the funding local authority partners. The MoU

outlines the functions of the AONB Unit and the expectations on all parties to achieve the shared vision, which includes the understanding that:

- AONB management structures should be strongly supported by partners and relevant authorities.
- the statutory requirement to produce a Management Plan provides an important opportunity to strengthen partnerships and achieve better outcomes.
- security of funding and flexibility of funding for the AONB will deliver better outcomes.
- there should be a “can do” culture which is not risk-averse but where lessons from novel approaches are encouraged and learnt from, in both success and failure.
- monitoring of environmental outcomes is essential and needs to be undertaken to develop a sound, spatially-relevant evidence base.
- opportunities should be taken to maximise the synergies between the outcomes of the Management Plan with the plans of other Parties, and of the wider network of nationally designated Protected Landscapes.

The MoU complements the JAC Agreement, which constitutes the JAC, signed between the four local authorities. The current DEFRA Grant Funding Agreement references the MoU and this is likely to be the template for the new DEFRA Grant Funding Agreement.

Implications

The following Local Authority partner contributions are requested for 2021/22. They are based on an established historical formula aligned with the land area in the AONB. The MoU states that the local authorities retain the discretion to index link contributions, if or when appropriate. Gloucestershire County Council have confirmed their AONB funding for the forthcoming three years. The other local authorities are requested to make a 1% increase on the current year.

Funding Partner	2020/21	2021/22
Herefordshire Council	£23,860	£24,099
Monmouthshire County Council	£15,716	£15,873
Forest of Dean District Council	£5,826	£5,884
Gloucestershire County Council	£3,600	£3,780
Total LA contributions	£49,002	£49,636

The proposed base budget for the AONB Unit for 2021/22 is £346,330. The local authority contributions traditionally receive up to 75% match-funding for core AONB initiatives from DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), on behalf of Welsh Government. The anticipated grant funding in both England and Wales may be increased in response to the Reviews of National Parks and AONBs in England and Wales. However, confirmation of grant funding is not expected until after the Comprehensive Spending Review in late November or December.

For the start of the current year DEFRA negotiated revised grant terms and conditions with Herefordshire Council, as treasurers for the AONB Partnership, in anticipation of a new funding offer following the publication of the ‘Glover’ Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England. These new ‘terms and conditions’ reference and recognise the Wye Valley AONB Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as the framework for medium term security and commitment to the AONB Partnership.

The remainder of the core Wye Valley AONB budget is made up from income from other sources, estimated at £18,500 for 2021/22. The AONB Unit will also be managing externally funded partnership projects with a value in excess of £150,000. These projects include the Wye Valley Walk Partnership, the Lower Wye Catchments Project, the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places capital funding from Welsh Government, AONB Youth Rangers programme and mindSCAPES. These externally funded projects extend the work of the AONB Unit and allow project investment as well as some elements of cost recovery. The leverage of the AONB Partnership in 2019/20 meant that for every £1 of local authority contribution, the AONB Unit brought in over £10.

The AONB Unit is constantly reviewing the structure and delivery of services in the AONB alongside income streams. The AONB Steering Group, made up from officers of the 4 local authorities and Natural England, on behalf of DEFRA, and NRW on behalf of Welsh Government, ensures that staff and resources are maximised and operational structures are fit for the future in the face of the budgetary uncertainties.

Background

Each Local Authority has a statutory Duty of Regard towards the purposes of AONBs under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. A considerable amount of the AONB Unit's core and project work (planning / promotion / advice / preparation & delivery of the Management Plan etc.) goes towards supporting each Local Authority in fulfilling its Duty of Regard. Through project delivery the AONB Unit also supports the Local Authorities' Statutory Duty for biodiversity under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006.

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AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN POST-CONSULTATION VERSION

Purpose

To seek members' endorsement of the Post Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 and to recommend the Plan for adoption, subject to the Habitats Regulation Assessment modified screening and realigning the Plan period.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Approves the Post Consultation Draft version of the AONB Management Plan and recommends the Plan for adoption by the local authorities and government agencies, subject to the Habitats Regulation Assessment modified screening.
- B. Endorses the realignment of the 5 year period of the AONB Management Plan to cover 2021-2026.

Key Issues

- The Post Consultation Draft of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 has been prepared. The Post Consultation Draft (amended) and the version showing the amendments to the Consultation Draft Plan are available on the AONB website:- <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/2020-2025-consultation/>.
- The following documents are also on AONB website:
 - the table of comments received from the public consultation with the formal responses and proposed modifications to the Plan
 - The draft State of the AONB Report
 - The Screening Reports for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)
- The SEA Screening conclusion that the Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects is supported by Cadw, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales.
- The HRA Screening was partially supported by Natural Resources Wales. Natural England have requested some modifications to the HRA screening which is now underway and needs to be completed before the Plan can be formally adopted by the local authorities and government agencies.
- The finalised Plan is anticipated before the end of the year with adoption likely early in 2021. Therefore it would be appropriate to re-define the 5-year Plan period as 2021-2026.

Reasons

The AONB Management Plan has been through a light-touch review and a public consultation process, concluding in January 2020. This produced 231 specific comments received from 18 organisations and individuals. The table of these comments along with the

response and recommended amendments to the Plan is available on the AONB website: https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/AONB-MP-consultation-draft-Comments-and-Responses-Sept-2020.pdf.

The preparation of the Post-Consultation draft AONB Management Plan has been delayed primarily due to the impacts and pressures caused by the Coronavirus Pandemic. The Post-Consultation draft is now published with versions showing the amendments as Tracked Changes and an amended version with all responses incorporated. These are available on the AONB website: <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/2020-2025-consultation/>.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/ EC) and Regulations apply to AONB Management Plans. Similarly the requirement for a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is outlined in Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and relates to the effects of the Plan on the internationally important habitats (Natura 2000 sites) and protected species for which the area is classified. Separate Screening Reports for the SEA and HRA of the Consultation Draft Management Plan were carried out. These are available on the AONB website (at the bottom of the webpage link above). These focused on the modifications from the previous Plan. The purpose of the SEA and HRA Directives is to ensure that plans and programmes that are likely to have significant effects on the environment are subjected to a strategic level (high and overarching) assessment during their preparation, to inform decision-makers and stakeholders of their likely effects, including for the HRA any in-combination effects with other plans.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, Sections 89 and 90, require local authorities to publish AONB Management Plans at not more than five year intervals. The current Plan is dated 2015-2020, the Consultation Draft Management Plan (September 2019) was dated 2020-2025. However, as a consequence of the slippage in the finalising of the reviewed Plan, primarily due to the impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic, it would be appropriate to redefine the period of the new five year AONB Management Plan to commence in the New Year. Therefore it is proposed that the new AONB Management Plan will be for the period 2021-2026.

The State of the AONB Report (SoAR) establishes a foundation for measuring change, beneficial or adverse, in the state or condition of the AONB. Reporting on the State of the AONB provides a baseline for understanding the Special Qualities and the trends and pressures on the AONB. The draft SoAR is available on the AONB website: https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/State-of-the-AONB-Report-2020-v5.pdf.

Implications

The SEA Screening Report was submitted for statutory consultation and responses were received from Cadw, Natural England (NE) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The conclusion of the submitted screening report is that “the Strategic Environmental Assessment will not be required for the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. This is because the plan is unlikely to display significant environmental effects”. This conclusion was supported by Cadw, NE and NRW.

The HRA Screening Report was assessed by NE & NRW. The Assessment undertaken considered the effects of the proposed changes to the Management Plan between the 2015-20 Plan and the Consultation Draft Plan 2020-2025. In considering the changes proposed to the

Management Plan, the conclusion was that there were no likely significant effects. NRW supported this conclusion but emphasised the need to be clear that the Screening is only considering the effects of the modifications to the Plan. However, NE was of the view that they could not concur with the conclusion. But, with a few amendments, they considered that agreement could be provided if the Screening assessment only addresses the policies that have changes or additions. The amendments to the HRA Screening Report are being made. It is anticipated that the conclusions can be supported and the Plan finalised for adoption fairly swiftly.

Therefore it is proposed that the JAC can recommend the Post Consultation Draft version of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 for adoption by the local authorities and government agencies, subject to the HRA being satisfactorily completed. It then seems appropriate to realign the 5 year period of the AONB Management Plan from 2020-2025 to cover the period 2021-2026, as it is unlikely to be fully adopted before the end of 2020.

The State of the AONB Report (SoAR) is still a draft, working document. The challenge for the use of any statistics for the AONB is the correlation of the data with the AONB boundary and between England and Wales, where the data is often gathered to differing methodologies. The collation of data is progressing, with the SoAR being updated as new data is assimilated.

Background

The current AONB Management Plans 2015-2020 is available on the AONB website <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/>.

General guidance on AONBs in England and responsibilities on their designation and management is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management#local-authority-responsibilities>

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd November 2020

WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL 2020 RE-IMAGINED: INITIAL EVALUATION

Purpose

To inform members of the achievements and the initial evaluation of the fourth Wye Valley River Festival, re-imagined due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the successful accomplishments of the Wye Valley River Festival 2020

Key Issues

- The fourth Wye Valley River Festival had to be completely re-imagined because of the Coronavirus Pandemic, and postponed from an outdoor art & environment festival on 2nd - 17th May to an on-line festival on 21st - 27th September 2020.
- The theme of 'Time' was retained, celebrating nature, culture, landscape and life along the Wye Valley; past, present and future.
- As with previous Wye Valley River Festivals, this fourth Festival was organised by the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the professional Festival Management team with an overall budget of £200,000 working in collaboration with arts professionals, conservationists and local communities.
- The re-imagined Festival evolved to an on-line, web-based series of live and pre-recorded creations and events that proved both challenging and rewarding for many artists and participants.
- The Festival presented over 90 hours of content, involving 188 paid artists and contributors and 121 new products and commissions.
- Funding for the Festival primarily came from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Arts Council England, Visit Wales, Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Government, Forestry Commission, Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership, Environment Agency, Ross Town Council and in-kind support from the AONB Unit.
- A full evaluation of the Festival is being undertaken to appraise lessons learned as well as a review of the on-line data analytics.
- Once the evaluation is complete future prospects for any further Wye Valley River Festivals will need to be determined.
- The (pre-Covid) Business Plan aimed to establish an autonomous body to adopt the Festival and there is on-going interest in pursuing this.

Reasons

In normal times the Wye Valley River Festival is a biennial outdoor arts and environment festival which takes place over 2 weeks in early May. Due to Covid-19 it was decided to

postponed the Festival and move it predominantly online focused in one week; 21st -27th September. The theme of 'Time' remained pertinent, if not more so, alongside the core objective of inspiring people to engage positively with the landscape of the Wye Valley. The creative partnership between the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the Festival Team, the Artistic Directors; Desperate Men and Festival Director; Phillippa Haynes and production team worked over the summer to re-imagine and develop the revised programme.

Implications

The Wye Valley River Festival website www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk was the main platform for the Festival, hosting a broad range of shows, performances, talks, podcasts, music and workshops for all ages. In total 5416.5 minutes or 90.3hours of content was created, commissioned, produced or coordinated, including by 188 paid artists and contributors, giving 813.5 days of employment, as well as a range of local community volunteers. A diversity of artists and environmental & scientific experts prepared and presented material inspiring us to change the way we think about the Wye Valley and Time in all its many facets. As much of the programme as possible was made accessible with British Sign Language, captions and audio descriptions. The website remains live for a couple more weeks so do explore and enjoy. A few highlights that may be of specific interest include:

- <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/cuckoo-time/> Cuckoo Time: the episodic Ensemble performance of a Game Show 1000 years in the future with 5 contestants sent back to the Wye Valley in 2020 to fight for their survival to win their return to 3020.
- <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/nature-recovery-in-the-wye-valley/> Nature recovery and species re-introductions: with The Beavers of Lydbrook film followed by discussion between; Andrew Blake, Wye Valley AONB Manager; Gemma Bode, Head of Conservation at Gwent Wildlife Trust; Andrew Nixon, Senior Conservation Manager at Herefordshire Wildlife Trust; and Kevin Stannard, Deputy Surveyor for the Forest of Dean and Forestry England Director of the West England Forest District.
- <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/dallas-2/> Distorted Waves: three short films of aerial cinematic explorations of the Wye and Severn tidal region by Simon Presto.
- <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/tributary-to-the-wye/> Tribut(ary)e to the River Wye: a tribute to the river Wye, Monnow and their tributaries – part poem, part performance, part lecture with music by bilingual poet Rhys Trimble.
- <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/creative-landscapes-future-generations/> discussion between; Rosie Strang, Co-Director of Articulture; Phil George, Chair of Arts Council of Wales; and Clare Pillman, Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales about cross sector collaborations between culture and environment in Wales.
- <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/free-country-a-bardic-tale/> Intrepid-ation: join Ruth Pitter as she recounts her intrepid journey into the Wye Valley from Bristol.
- Plus music <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/podcasts/music/> by Lydbrook Band, Mike Simmons, Justin Nichols, and a host of short films by locals extolling their particular passion <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/films-of-the-forest-and-valley/> for the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean.

Generally the consensus and anecdotal feedback is that the Festival was a success, given the challenges everybody faced. It managed to spread an inspiring and entertaining message about the importance and complexity of Time and the Wye Valley landscape. With the majority of the material viewable on a screen there were still innovative and creative opportunities to experience the landscape through art outdoors, not least chasing a couple of wolves around the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean <https://www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk/wolves/> .

The overall budget was about £212,000 which accommodates the complete switch from an almost ready outdoor Festival planned for early May, inevitably pulled following lockdown in late March, to the on-line Festival presented in late September. This necessitated cancelling several performances, although most artists were able to re-imagine their output, not hiring site facilities such as marquees, concessions, toilets & security, and instead tendering and commissioning for digital platform hosting and livestreaming, camera crews for filming in August and a lot of learning new skills (or dusting off rusty ones). The Festival website www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk was central to this although there were issues with it on a number of occasions. SimpliWifi, from Kington, provided the digital platform and brought a vast amount knowledge and expertise. Working Word, from Cardiff, helped Ruth Waycott, AONB Information Officer, co-ordinate the marketing and social media promotion.

The rescheduling of the Festival has had an impact on the work programme of some of the AONB Unit, who had originally anticipated having wrapped up the Festival by about late June or early July. Instead that is still on-going. However, there have also been many other distractions and divergences over the past 6 months. Delivering the Festival at all has been a significant achievement under the circumstances.

A full evaluation of the Wye Valley River Festival 2020 is underway. This will be presented to the JAC at the next meeting in March 2021. The report will also consider the options and opportunities for the Wye Valley River Festival in the future against the original objectives of the (pre-Covid) 3-Festival Business Plan 2019-2024.

Background

Wye Valley River Festival is a Wye Valley AONB Partnership project, led by the Wye Valley AONB Unit, Desperate Men and Phillippa Haynes in a unique and creative collaboration between arts and environment professionals, who develop, produce and deliver the Festival with stakeholders and the communities in and around the Wye Valley AONB.

The Festival is supported and funded by the Wye Valley AONB Partnership, Arts Council England, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) from Welsh Government, Arts Council of Wales, Visit Wales, Forestry England, Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency & Ross Town Council with in-kind support from numerous volunteers & local communities.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd November 2020

UNDERGROUNDING OF OVERHEAD POWERLINES

Purpose

To update members on the undergrounding work of overhead powerlines and seek their approval for a further proposed scheme.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the proposed undergrounding of overhead powerlines across Offa's Dyke Path National Trail on The Kymin.

Key Issues

- Western Power Distribution (WPD) works in collaboration with the AONB Unit on identifying a programme of undergrounding of low voltage electricity power-lines in the AONB.
- WPD require the JAC to approve new undergrounding schemes prior to further investigation and evaluation work taking place.
- The new proposed scheme is for power lines across Offa's Dyke Path National Trail on the back of The Kymin (see maps below).
- A further scheme at Kerne Bridge is with the Gloucestershire WPD team who are progressing the necessary permissions.

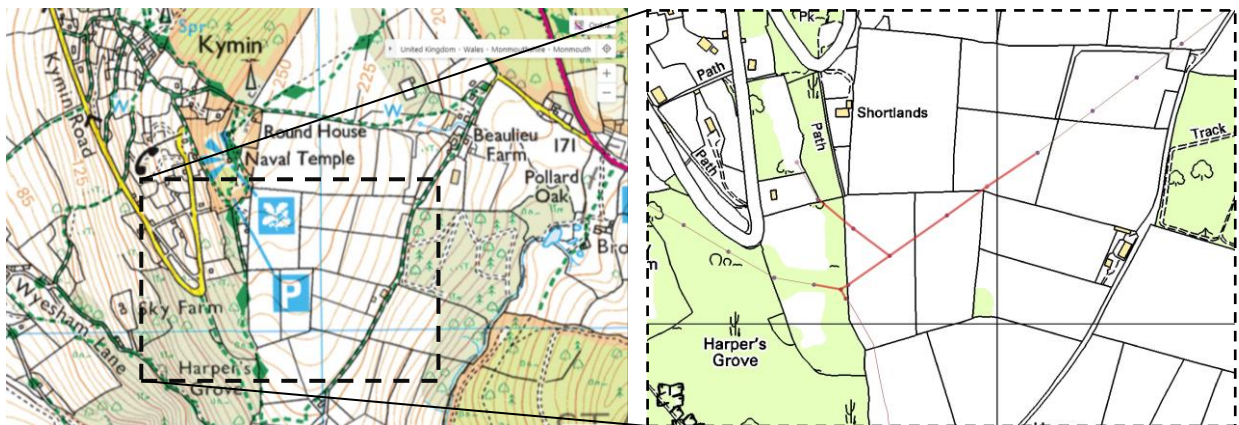
Reasons

Western Power Distribution (WPD) have a budget of £8million for undergrounding across all their regions (South Wales, the South West of England and the Midlands) in the current funding round to 2023. The AONB Development Officer continues to work in partnership with WPD to identify potential undergrounding schemes throughout the AONB. The Wye Valley AONB is covered by both the WPD South Wales and Midland Regions. Decisions on which schemes should proceed, within the corresponding Regional budget available, are taken by an area focus group attended by the respective protected landscapes in the Region.

WPD require that proposed undergrounding schemes are endorsed by the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee prior to allocation of their budget for evaluation and, if viable, implementation.

Implications

There is one new undergrounding scheme of that is proposed to Western Power Distribution for inclusion in the current budget period to ensure full budget spend in South Wales. The scheme at the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail near The Kymin with the proposal to place underground 460m of 11kv cable and remove 7 wooden poles. Undergrounding has previously taken place removing overhead wires and poles running alongside the Offa's Dyke Path between Redbrook and The Kymin. However, that work was unable to remove some pole and wires close to The Kymin. This proposal is to extend the existing underground network to remove poles and cables from the view of walkers on the National Trail. Whilst a large portion has been removed, the remaining poles and wires, coloured red on the right hand map below, are a prominent feature in the landscape.



The scheme is currently with the South Wales WPD team who are undertaking landowner negotiations and considering the most appropriate underground route.

Background

As part of its Section 85 'Duty of Regard to the AONB' OFGEM, the official regulator for gas and electricity industry, provided a framework for allowing power distribution companies the discretionary option to underground overhead power lines.

Western Power Distribution (WPD) works with AONB and National Park partners across South Wales, the South West of England and the Midlands on undergrounding schemes that affect 'iconic sites' and manage a separate working group for AONB's across the region.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd November 2020

REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Purpose

To advise members of progress with the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes England and Wales.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was published a year ago with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- Proposal 24 states that "AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes."
- The formal response from Government has yet to be produced but is anticipated over the Winter. Meanwhile Natural England, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) and National Parks England have published a Joint Statement.
- The NAAONB and AONB lead officers are collaborating with DEFRA on the provision of information, statistics and case studies in support of implementing the Glover Review.
- In September Welsh AONB lead officers met (on-line) with Deputy Welsh Government Minister Hannah Blythyn and officials to discuss the on-going implementation of 'Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs & National Parks'.
- The Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) capital funding from Welsh Government has been awarded including a decarbonisation scheme for the AONB Office.
- Welsh Government responsibility for AONBs and National Parks has subsequently moved back to the Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs.

Reasons

The Glover Review in England was broadly welcomed when published a year ago, in September 2019. The Government has inevitably been distracted with other priorities, but it is believed a formal response may be forthcoming once the Spending Review is concluded. Meanwhile DEFRA officials continue to work with stakeholders, including the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) on progressing preparations for the implementation of the Review.

Welsh Government Minister, Hannah Blythyn and her officials have been working with AONB lead officers, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the NAAONB on addressing the lack of parity and inequality of status, profile and resourcing between National Parks and AONBs. Welsh Government launched the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) scheme to provide additional capital funding within AONBs and National Parks.

Implications

The NAAONB and AONB lead officers have been responding to a range of requests from DEFRA officials in support of implementing the Glover Review and preparations for the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. This has included the delivery of a Prospectus on AONBs outlining requirements, the provision of case studies on engagement with farmers on the development of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) and information and statistics about AONB resourcing and achievements.

Proposals in the Glover Review for a National Landscapes Service and the renaming of AONBs as 'National Landscapes' have been discussed further in various circles. The NAAONB have set up a Task Group on the rebranding. Meanwhile Natural England, the Government's advisor on AONBs & National Parks, The National Association for AONBs, along with National Parks England have published a joint statement to mark the first anniversary of the publication of the Glover Review, demonstrating how AONBs, National Parks and Natural England are working together to deliver for nature and people across the UK. The full statement is available: <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2020/09/23/working-together-for-our-national-parks-and-areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty/>

Natural England's recent response to the Glover Review included a section 'Achieving greater parity between National Parks and AONBs' which stated: "AONBs have equal status to National Parks in terms of their natural beauty. Natural England strongly supports the Review's conclusions that AONBs should have the recreation related purpose of National Parks; a strengthened role in the development planning system; and equity in the application of grant in aid for statutory purposes and delivery of government priorities, if they are to be able to deliver the Reviews aspirations."

It is unlikely the Government will make any formal response to the Glover Review until the Spending Review is concluded.

Welsh AONB lead officers and NAAONB Wales Development Manager recently met (on-line) with Deputy Welsh Government Minister for Housing and Local Government, Hannah Blythyn, together with officials from Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Welsh National Parks to discuss the on-going implementation of 'Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs & National Parks'. This includes the work on gaining greater parity between National Parks and AONBs in Wales. Welsh Government responsibility for AONBs and National Parks has subsequently moved back to the Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs.

Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) is a capital funding scheme from Welsh Government to assist with short term resources for AONBs and National Parks. The focus of the funding programme is contributing to key Welsh Government objectives around decarbonisation, resilient rural economies and sustainable tourism. The main scheme for the Wye Valley AONB this year is improving the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of the AONB Office. This will include replacing the Porta-cabin meeting room with a more efficient building and use of space and the purchase of an electric van to replace the diesel van currently used. Consequently there may be some disruption to operations at the AONB Office over the winter. However, as most AONB staff are working from home on account of the Coronavirus Pandemic, contingencies and logistics may not need to be as complex as originally anticipated.

Background

For more information on the Review of Designated Landscapes in England visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

Welsh Government's statement on Priorities for AONBs & National Parks 'Valued & Resilient' (published in July 2018) is available here: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/areas-outstanding-natural-beauty-national-parks-2018-report%20.pdf>

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd November 2020

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND AND HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION WYE VALLEY AONB FUND

Purpose

To update members on the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £42,056 allocated from the £100,000 offered by Welsh Government for 2020/21, meaning there remains £57,944 available for applications and projects.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has produced the latest accounts for the Wye Valley AONB Fund which was established with £10,000 for immediate funding alongside an Endowment Fund of £50,000. Current balances are £6,776.51 and £52,045.26 respectively.
- Applications are welcome for both sets of funding.

Reasons

Welsh Government offered £100,000 of SDF in 2020/21. The SDF continues to provide an exceptional opportunity for organisations, individuals and community groups to apply for grant aid for innovative, sustainable, environmental projects, which benefit the Welsh part of the AONB.

The Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) was established with a £10,000 Immediate Impact fund and a £50,000 Endowment Fund. The Endowment Fund is able to receive donations and legacies and it is hoped that the AONB Fund will grow over time.

Implications

The SDF supports living and working more sustainably in association with enhancing natural beauty, wildlife, culture, landscape, land use and community within the context of the sustainable development goals and principles in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The SDF Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on each application over £3,000. Smaller applications are determined by the AONB Manager supported by the NRW Senior

People & Places Officer, South East Wales. The list of approved grants totalling £42,056 is in the table below.

The Wye Valley AONB Fund with the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has a £6,776.51 Immediate Impact fund for grants for environmental, community and cultural projects. There is also a £52,045.26 Endowment Fund from which the income generated each year can be used to award grants once the Immediate Impact fund is exhausted. The Endowment Fund is able to receive donations and legacies so it is intended that the AONB Fund will grow over time, including donations via text messages by texting 'WVAONB' to 70085 to donate £5. The SDF Assessment Panel recommends applications to the HCF for funding. Two grants have so far been issued by HCF, endorsed by the SDF Assessment Panel: £1,666 to Herefordshire Wildlife Trust - Recovering Herefordshire's Pine Martens project £1,675 to Dynamis Adventures - Wye Valley Year 7 Adventure Project.

2020/21 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants approved

<u>2019/20</u> Code	Applicant	Project Title	years		Total Cost	SDF Grant	%
			This	Total			
WV00 YR20W	Wye Valley AONB Unit	10% Admin	1	1		£10,000	
WV01 YR20W	Wye Valley AONB Partnership	Wye Valley River Festival	2	2	£106,300	£25,000	23.5
WV02 YR20W	Friends of our Lady of Tintern	Words and Landscape - Poetry workshop walk	1	1	£5,857	£1,056	18
WV03 YR20W	Wye Valley AONB Unit	Documenting Now	1	1	£4,700	£3,000	63.8
WV04 YR20W	Jon Dunkleman	Drystone walling	1	1	£7,660	£3,000	39
			TOTALS (to date)		£124,517	£42,056	Av36%
					<i>Remaining from £100,000</i>	<i>£57,944</i>	

For more details on grants and the application process see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/>. For further advice or to discuss any project ideas, please contact Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, on community@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk.

Background

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has been available in the Wye Valley AONB for 20 years in Wales. It is administered by the Wye Valley AONB Unit and is a delegated fund from Welsh Government. The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) host and manage the Wye Valley AONB Fund as a legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme and on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd November 2020

NAAONB UPDATE

Purpose

To advise members of activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The national AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference scheduled for early July was cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- The Colchester Declaration – a 'declaration for nature' - has been progressed through a series of on-line meetings and AONB partnerships refining proposals for their Nature Recovery Plans. A National Landscapes Nature Recovery Coordinator has been employed part time to take the initiative forward.
- The NAAONB submitted a £4.5M application to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in September, which unfortunately was not successful.
- Landscapes for Life Week (formerly Outstanding Week) was 19th – 27^h September, coinciding conveniently with the Wye Valley River Festival.
- The NAAONB has been granted some resources from DEFRA to run a National Landscapes advocacy project on the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme.
- Art in the Landscape - A National Strategy, was commissioned by the NAAONB and launched in July with further training on-line this Autumn, including contributions from the Wye Valley AONB and Wye Valley River Festival team.
- The AGM for the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) is on 19th November and will be on-line, as will the Chairperson's Conference early in the new year.

Colchester Declaration and AONB Nature Recovery Plans

In July 2019 the Colchester Declaration was produced by the NAAONB and supported by AONB partnerships. The Declaration demonstrates the readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change. The ambition was pledged for every AONB to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan and deliver Species Action Plans to reverse the decline of threatened species identified on the IUCN Red List, see: https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/7815/6326/2583/The_Colchester_Declaration.pdf. The AONB Unit has been collaborating with key contacts at the Malvern Hills AONB, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts on devising a Nature Recovery Plan. Nick Critchley, Wye Valley AONB Development Officer and Sarah Sawyer, Wye Valley AONB

Community Links Officer recently convened a meeting of local ecologists to define the appropriate species for the Wye Valley to prepare and deliver Species Action Plans for. The intention is to take a landscape and ecological network-based approach, not a single species approach, and focus on what is actionable within the AONB. The NAAONB have also recently recruited a National Landscapes Nature Recovery Coordinator to help co-ordinate this work nationally.

Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid: ‘Recovering Nature and Connecting People in AONBs’

The Expression of Interest application for the Green Recovery Challenge Fund was submitted by the NAAONB in September. The bid ‘Recovering Nature and Connecting People in AONBs’ was for £4.5M covering all 36 AONBs in England and included a Nature Recovery Officer for each AONB and an associated capital fund for local ‘shovel-ready’ projects, many with local Wildlife Trusts and other eNGOs. Unfortunately the bid did not pass the Expression of Interest phase. But the collaborative effort in developing the application and identifying many of the schemes and projects will most likely not be wasted. The majority of projects remain ‘shovel-ready’ should the opportunity and resources become available.

ELM National Landscapes advocacy project

DEFRA are supporting the NAAONB to run a National Landscapes advocacy project on the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. Working collaboratively across AONBs and National Parks, the project aims to:

- build on National Landscapes’ existing networks to increase farmer/land manager engagement in ELM, and in Countryside Stewardship as a route into ELM.
- create an evidence base for roles National Landscapes could have in ELM when it is rolled out which will support any future funding submissions.

Specific elements of the project include training for National Landscapes staff, online events for farmers and land managers, ‘farmer to farmer’ video content and electronic updates. It is intended to help raise farmers’ awareness and understanding of ELM planning in National Landscapes and create a conduit to disseminate information beyond the end of the project. This will in turn support future funding bids, farm clusters and the enhancement of nature at a landscape scale. The NAAONB are currently working in collaboration with DEFRA to ensure a timely flow of information and with AONB staff who have responsibility for developing relationships with farmers, growers and land managers of all kinds.

Art in the Landscape - A National Strategy

The ‘Art in the Landscape’ Strategy was prepared by consultants Activate Performing Arts as part of an Arts Council England funded project with the NAAONB. The strategy is available here:

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2116/0318/0964/Art_in_the_Landscape_-_Final_Report.pdf. It builds on the experience of AONB staff and wider organisations

working with art in the landscape, including the Wye Valley River Festival. Sarah Sawyer, Wye Valley AONB Community Links Officer, is on the Steering Group for the project.

Initially a national training event was incorporated into the Wye Valley River Festival in May

2020, in the Monmouth. This inevitably had to be cancelled and on-line training will now be carried in November. The purpose of the training is to enable staff to build their confidence, skills and networks to enable them to create and manage art projects. Sarah Sawyer and Phillippa Haynes, Wye Valley River Festival Director will be contributing to the training, sharing their experience of running Wye Valley River Festival.

Background

The NAAONB is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's AONBs. Its objectives are to promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs, advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs, and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other Protected Areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued. It takes a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with its membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals. For more information see: www.landscapesforlife.org.uk

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2nd November 2020

AONB UNIT & PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit and various partners.

FOR INFORMATION

Below are brief update reports on the following AONB Unit and partners' initiatives: -

- a. Covid-19 impacts - on AONB and AONB Unit
- b. AONB 50th Anniversary 2021 & Gilpin2020+1
- c. Lower Wye Catchments projects - Natural Flood Management and INNS in Monmouthshire & Valley Brook, Gloucestershire
- d. Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Water Environment Grant (WEG) project
- e. Riparian Trees project with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
- f. Youth Rangers

a. Covid-19 impacts - on AONB and AONB Unit

Through the summer and early autumn the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean have continued to be popular destinations for visitors. As the national lockdown eased people took full advantage of the outdoor activities the area has to offer. The recreational use of many countryside and riverside sites has been fairly high. The Environment Agency sample survey of canoeing on the Wye in August showed that numbers of vessels on the water were not significantly different to previous years. However there was a noticeable increase in the use of paddleboards. In the woodlands there has been an increase in mountain bike use including the building of unauthorised tracks and trails. Through liaison with local authority colleagues and fellow AONB & National Park staff and other stakeholders, it seems that in general terms impacts on the Wye Valley landscape are similar to elsewhere in England and Wales. Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of locally accessible greenspace and the value of our National Landscapes as special places for local food production, recreation, and in supporting the nation's health and wellbeing.

AONB staff have continued to predominantly work from home. All AONB staff have been able to progress with a range of projects and tasks identified and risk assessed to be safe and compliant with government guidance. The AONB Office continues to receive enquiries from people seeking advice about visiting the Wye Valley for the first time. However with the AONB straddling the England Wales border, and with different Coronavirus guidance and restrictions in each country, the provision of advice can get complicated.

b. AONB 50th Anniversary 2021 & Gilpin2020+1

The development of a programme of activities and celebrations for the Wye Valley AONB's 50th Anniversary has been confounded by the on-going movement and escalation of the Coronavirus Pandemic in England and Wales. The appropriateness of activities is constantly being evaluated. However this makes it very difficult to plan a suitable and definitive programme. But there are a number of initiatives in the pipeline.

Similarly the postponement of the Gilpin2020 programme remains in abeyance. There is still local and national interest in the story of Rev William Gilpin's trip down the Wye 250 year ago. It is just not clear how to promote and celebrate this anniversary most effectively in the Wye Valley.

c. Lower Wye Catchments projects - Natural Flood Management and INNS in Monmouthshire & Valley Brook, Gloucestershire

The Environment Agency have provided resources to roll out of the initiative in the Valley Brook catchment – the tributary flowing through Coleford and Newland to Redbrook. This follows the format developed last year in Angidy catchment. The Wye & Usk Foundation Catchment Advisor, Rebecca (Bex) Meredith, seconded to the AONB Unit, is leading on providing 6 farms in the Valley Brook catchment with tailored advice and bespoke Farm Plans. Each farm visit and subsequent Farm Plan identifies opportunities to improve soil and water management and Natural Flood Management (NFM) interventions. There is also some modest grant to match-fund appropriate capital work. Funding is currently on for this financial year, so there is a tight window to ensure landowners and land managers take part and install measures promptly.

Work continues, building on last year's project, to evaluate some small-scale remedial work on of selected sections of degraded green lanes / Unclassified County Roads (UCRs) around Tintern and Whitebrook. It is hoped some pilot work can be progressed this winter.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

This year, with funding secured from both Welsh Government and Environment Agency, INNS control work has been increased and scaled-up: for Japanese Knotweed; from 60 sites last year to 120, and for American Skunk Cabbage; from 1 site to 14 sites. This work covered 15 communities across 4 sub-catchments in the Lower Wye Valley, including the Valley Brook in Gloucestershire. The spaying treatment is carried out by the Wye & Usk Foundation, whose team have been working on the eradication of Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed throughout the Wye Catchment for many years. INNS control work in the Lower Wye Catchments was preceded at the start of September by a social media campaign, letters through doors and email updates, which has been very well received. There has been close liaison with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), who both undertake some INNS control on their own landholding. NRW have currently granted consent for the AONB Unit to work with contractors and volunteers on INNS control in the public forest estate up until the end of September 2021.

Planned events around this project have been put on hold, namely a 'thank-you event' for Angidy farmers involved in the project last year. This would have been hugely beneficial in helping raise awareness of the project and inviting other local landowners from the wider

area. Proposals are being investigated on how best to engage with the farming community under Covid-19 restrictions, to build relations and making new contacts, to promote the value and ease of installing small-scale NFM interventions and highlight appropriate funding sources.

Other Green Infrastructure (GI) work also continues where possible. The Wordsworth Walk route has been surveyed and quotes are being pursued for a range of access enhancements at the Cleddon Falls and other features along the route. Quotes are also being obtained for a topographic survey of the 600m riverbank section of the Wye Valley Walk at Wyesham, between the Monmouthshire Showground and Beaufort Bridge. This will enable ground modelling and visualisations to be produced that will then inform the path and bank revetment work required.

d. Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Water Environment Grant (WEG) project

The farm advice work, led by the Wye & Usk Foundation, working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Wye Valley AONB Unit and Herefordshire Rural Hub, has continued now the Catchment Advisors have returned from being furloughed. Ben Nott and Rebecca (Bex) Meredith cover the English part of the Wye Valley AONB and the adjacent Garren & Gamber catchment, and operate from the AONB Office in Monmouth while being integrated with the WUF Catchment Advisor team.

e. Riparian Trees project with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

The Wye Valley AONB Unit, in partnership with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, was successful in securing some modest funding for this financial year to support some Riparian tree management and advice work. The funding totals £19,500 and is targeted at the Wye Valley AONB in Herefordshire and lower Lugg.

The objectives of the project are:

- Undertake landowner engagement in the Wye Valley AONB with the production of five farm reports and recommendations for Riparian Tree Management measures.
- Deliver selected Riparian Tree Management measures in the Wye Valley AONB and along the River Lugg Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This will include work identified during farm visits and on three key sites along the Lugg SAC.
- Deliver an information sharing event in the Lugg / Wye Valley AONB area where best practice and Riparian Tree Management measures can be shared and promoted more widely.

Farm advice will be undertaken by the existing Wye and Usk Foundation (WUF) Catchment Advisors. The funding is only short-lived but the farm engagement and sharing good practice may lead to the development of further work in the future. That work may be funded by the landowner or through any subsequent funding scheme.

Riparian tree management capital work on farm will be part funded by the landowner. The rate of intervention will vary depending on the work to be carried out. Works are likely to include pollarding and coppicing along selected stretches of river bank. Riparian habitat management work may also be included, with interventions such as pleaching, bankside fencing and planting to stabilise riverbanks. Cumulatively, a minimum of 1km of riverbank

will be enhanced. Nature Recovery considerations may include retaining deadwood where possible for bats, invertebrates and otter holts.

Work on Herefordshire Wildlife Trust Reserves along the Lugg (outside the AONB) will be delivered by a known and trusted contractor, and will be used to deliver the best practice demonstration event for riparian owners. This will highlight the best way to manage riparian trees, as well as things to be aware of and look out for when considering management work. Any event will be delivered within Covid-19 restriction and guidelines at the time of delivery.

f. Youth Rangers

The Youth Rangers programme was suspended in March 2020 due to lockdown. In June activity was re-started on line, after discussion with the Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership that now predominantly fund the programme. The Youth Rangers were set a series of nature tasks and navigation challenges to encourage them to explore the local countryside with their families. To facilitate this each Youth Ranger was provided with a set of nature survey equipment (see picture).



They were invited to engage with each other on WhatsApp and share pictures, comments etc. Some challenges proved more popular than others, and some Youth Rangers involved their whole family in the tasks. A total of 9 Youth Ranger, out of 15, regularly participated in the activities.

Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer and leader of the Youth Rangers programme made a video to kick start each new activity and to assist in the navigation challenge. This was time consuming but ultimately rewarding and inspired action.

Youth Ranger Summer challenge 2020

Week Commencing

July 6th: Build a survival shelter, film/ photograph and share on WhatsApp

July 13th: Find and identify at least 6 wild flowers new to you. Share on WhatsApp

July 20th: Identify 6 new birds &/or bird song. Demonstrate what you did on WhatsApp
July 27th: Navigation challenge to mystery location (Fancy view & Shaden Tuft oak)
August 3rd: Hang a hammock. Creatively demonstrate what you did on WhatsApp
August 10th: Navigation challenge to find The Beavers of Lydbrook
August 17th: Pond dipping and kick sampling for invertebrates
August 24th: Identify at least 6 butterflies new to you to. Put up a hammock again. Share.
Final Challenge: Navigate to The Giant's Cave, Piercefield.

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