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County Hall
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NP15 1GA

Monday 28th June 2021

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 5th July, 2021 at 2.00 pm
Remote Meeting

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair.	
2.	Appointment of Vice-Chair.	
3.	Apologies for absence, introductions and new members.	
4.	Declarations of Interest.	
5.	Public Question Time.	
6.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	1 - 10
7.	Water quality presentations.	11 - 12
8.	Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company.	13 - 16
8.1.	AONB CIC Working Agreement.	17 - 18
9.	Glover Review & Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.	19 - 24
9.1.	NAAONB Response to Ministerial Statement.	25 - 26
9.2.	NAAONB Response to Natural England.	27 - 28
9.3.	Expectations for Local Assessment Panel.	29 - 32
10.	AONB Funding bids.	33 - 34
11.	AONB Partnership Study Tour - 17th September 2021.	35 - 36

12.	Annual Report 2020/21.	37 - 38
13.	Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) & HCF AONB Fund.	39 - 40
14.	NAAONB update.	41 - 42
14.1.	Strategic Plan.	43 - 50
15.	AONB updates.	51 - 52
16.	Dates of next meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2pm Monday 1st November 2021 (Subject to Covid-19 restrictions the meeting will be held at Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford). • 2pm Monday 7th March 2022 (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:

C. Edwards
M. Feakins
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 R. Edwards – 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

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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 Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor: A Webb (Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: L. Jones and M. Lane

Herefordshire Council

Councillors: J. Hardwick, P. Symonds and Y. Watson

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillors: C. McFarling and S. Phelps

Gloucestershire County Council

Councillor P. Molyneux

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC – Mr. C. Evers

R. Gething – Herefordshire Association Local Councils

Councillor R. Edwards – One Voice Wales

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire – Mr. B. Nash

National Farmers Union - Mr. M. Price

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron

Local Wildlife Trusts – Mr. A Nixon

Gwent Wildlife Trust – Mr. A. Taylor

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 Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

APOLOGIES:

Councillor B. Durkin, Ms. A. Newey, Ms. H. McDowell, Ms. H. Stace, Ms. D. Griffiths, Ms. L. Duberley and Mr. G. Parry.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. County Councillor David Dovey

Before commencing proceedings the Chair, on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee, paid tribute to the late County Councillor David Dovey who had recently passed away. As a mark of respect, the Committee held a minute's silence.

3. Welcome

The Chair welcomed Councillor Rita Edwards to the meeting who is representing one Voice Wales. Councillor Edwards has replaced Councillor Malcolm Powell.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 2nd November 2020 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

5. Public Question Time

No questions received.

6. Wye Water Quality

We received the report regarding the current situation with water quality in the River Wye, pending a presentation at the next meeting.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The water quality of the Wye, particularly in relation to phosphate levels, remains a critical issue in the Wye Catchment.
- The concentration of pollutants, particularly phosphates, in the Wye catchment, exacerbated by warm weather and any reduction in water quantity, can lead to algae blooms on the Wye.
- In 2019 Natural England advised that plans or projects that result in potentially damaging nutrient loading to the Wye, among other catchments in England, would require an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- Natural Resources Wales completed a review in December 2020 which confirmed that more than 60% of the Welsh Wye is now failing limits for phosphate.
- The Wye Nutrient Management Board, hosted by Herefordshire Council, is the lead body coordinating collaborative effort on the issue.
- The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales have agreed to give a presentation on water quality issues at the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting on 5th July 2021.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question raised regarding parts of the River Wye having bathing water classification, it was noted that this was an initiative that has been promoted across the Country. This would be a matter for the Environment Agency and the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee to consider.
- This matter will be discussed at Herefordshire Full Council meeting on 5th March 2021.
- The Joint Advisory Committee is only able to advise on this matter.
- It would be useful to notify all Council's located within the AONB regarding the Joint Advisory Committee's concerns in respect of the pollution on the river Wye.
- The Senedd had recently held a meeting regarding nitrate vulnerable zones. The Wales Government is aware of the issues regarding pollution on the rivers Usk and Wye. It was noted that the whole of Wales has been designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.
- It was agreed that for the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee, an invitation be extended to Councillor Swinglehurst from Herefordshire Council to join this meeting, as she is the Chair of the Nutrient Management Board.

We resolved to:

- (i) note the current situation and activities of partner organisations in relation to water quality issues in the River Wye and its tributaries.
- (ii) welcome the offer of the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales for a presentation at the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting on 5th July 2021.

7. AONB Unit 2021/22 Work Programme

We received a report regarding the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year, which is subject to new funding agreements with DEFRA and NRW.

In doing so the following information was noted:

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- The table in the report sets out the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit in the form of the Work Programme 2021/2022, including the AONB's 50th Anniversary during 2021.
- Activities are assessed for impacts of any potential on-going implications from Covid-19.
- During the year it is expected that the AONB Unit will remain with about eight full time equivalent (FTE) posts although some staff and roles will change and capacity of the AONB Unit continues to be stretched.
- Priorities include the development of the AONB Nature Recovery Network Plan, the anticipated implementation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (in England); the delivery of a second year of projects funded through the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme, the culmination of the Restoring Our Amazing River project (on the England side of the AONB); ongoing Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management projects; and the promotion and administration of grants through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation AONB Fund, responding to requirements and impacts from easing of Covid-19 restrictions, while continuing a range of existing activities and projects and retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.
- The core budgets in the Work Programme have yet to be confirmed as new funding agreements are awaited with NRW and DEFRA.
- The AONB Unit budget, as presented to the AONB Steering Group, is £271,350 and additional funding programmes, grants and match funding is anticipated to exceed £780,000 levered into the AONB during the year.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- A request was made that a dark skies project be considered to combat rising light pollution in the AONB. A visit to the Brecon Beacons National Park could be considered, going forward, as the National Park has experience in this matter.
- CPRE nationally has recently finished conducting a dark skies observation (6th to 15th February). This report will be available later in the year. This might be useful in aiding a dark skies project within the AONB.
- It was noted that there is increasing light pollution across the Wye Valley on both sides of the border. This is having a detrimental effect on bat foraging behaviour. Planning conditions therefore, need to be enforced to provide adequate protection for bats.
- The AONB Manager informed the Committee that the talk that he gave at the Wye Valley AONB 50th Anniversary meeting is available to view on the AONB YouTube channel. This will be circulated to the Joint Advisory Committee.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- The AONB Manager stated that several of the Welsh AONBs and National Parks, as well as those across England have undertaken work on developing dark skies projects. Discussion has been undertaken with these organisations with a view to preparing a way forward for the Wye Valley AONB to address light pollution in the region.
- The AONB Manager stated that he would be reviewing the format of the AONB business plan, as discussed at a previous Joint Advisory Committee meeting.

We resolved to endorse the AONB Unit Work Programme for 2021/2022.

8. Art in the Landscape and Wye Valley River Festival update

We received a report regarding the 'Art in the Landscape' National Arts Strategy with the National Association for AONBs and an update on progress with the future of the Wye Valley River Festival.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Joint Advisory Committee had previously acknowledged the Art in the Landscape - A National Strategy, launched by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) in July 2020.
- The Wye Valley AONB Unit has been closely involved in the preparation and promotion of the Strategy, along with the Wye Valley River Festival team.
- The NAAONB are encouraging all AONB Partnerships to formally endorse and adopt the Art in the Landscape Strategy - connecting people to nature through arts and culture.
- The evaluation, accounts and grant claims for the fourth Wye Valley River Festival 2020 Re-imagined are in the final stages of completion.
- The Joint Advisory Committee had previously endorsed the Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024 and the five tests identified to secure the future of the Festival through the establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).
- Currently, proposals are being investigated to establish a Community Interest Company (CIC) as a more appropriate and flexible autonomous body to adopt the Festival.

We resolved to:

- (i) formally endorse the 'Art in the Landscape' National Arts Strategy with the National Association for AONBs;

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- (ii) welcome and support the progress with establishing a possible Community Interest Company (CIC) to take forward the Wye Valley River Festival, taking account of the five tests previously endorsed in the Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024.

9. Glover Review & Farming in Protected Landscapes

We received a report regarding progress with the implementation of the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England and announcement of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was published in 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- Proposal 5 states: "A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes".
- The formal response from Government has yet to be produced but is anticipated sometime this year. The delay of the Environment Bill may be related to the timing of the response.
- 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.
- Recent collation of figures for DEFRA identified that in 2019/20 the DEFRA core funding for the 34 AONBs in England totalled £2.05million against which the AONBs levered in an additional £9.24million.
- 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' was published in the Agricultural Transition Plan in November 2020 for establishment from April 2021. Details and clarification on implementation are awaited from DEFRA.
- The NAAONB secured funding from DEFRA for each AONB and National Park to deliver advocacy work with farmers in relation to Countryside Stewardship and the forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme.

We noted the report.

10. Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales

We received a report regarding progress with the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales, with additional Welsh Government funding and the establishment of the National Designated Landscapes Partnership.

In doing so the following information was noted:

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- In December 2020 the inaugural Wales National Designated Landscapes Partnership meeting was held with officers from Welsh AONBs and National Parks, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and the National Association for AONBs.
- Welsh Government has confirmed a second year of Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding with some slightly revised criteria for projects.
- Welsh Government has allocated revenue funding for 2021/22 that enables the retention of one AONB post and the creation of one new post.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question regarding how the designated landscapes integrates with the nature recovery network plans, it was noted that it had been agreed at the 2019 national AONB conference that each AONB would produce its own nature recovery plan. Every AONB is working on this. In the Wye Valley, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has undertaken a nature recovery mapping exercise. It has been agreed with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and part funded by Natural England to roll this out into Herefordshire. Most of the Monmouthshire area of the AONB will be covered also as this exercise includes a three kilometre buffer zone around it. Talks are being held in Wales for a similar initiative to include National Parks and AONBs to undertake nature recovery mapping.
- Gwent Wildlife Trust is working with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to develop the nature recovery network. The strategy will commence in April 2021 and will be a nine year strategy. The Strategy will include natural solutions to alleviate climate change, such as peatland restoration and tree planting with a view to making the landscape more resilient for the flora and fauna in the region.

We noted the report.

11. 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 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £69,552 allocated from the £100,000 offered by Welsh Government for 2020/21, with £30,448 remaining.
- Four potential applications are anticipated shortly which if approved would account for full allocation.
- Welsh Government has confirmed an allocation of £100,000 of SDF in 2021/22.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) hosts the Wye Valley AONB Fund which was established with £10,000 for immediate funding alongside an Endowment

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

Fund of £50,000. The 2020/21 Quarter Three balances were £6,779.27 and £54,578.05 respectively. Subsequently, grants totalling £1,500 have been awarded.

- Applications are welcome for both sets of funding for 2021/22.

We noted the report.

12. National Association for AONBs

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

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The NAAONB 2019/20 Annual report is published and available on line.
- The national AONB's Chairperson's Conference is to be held in March 2021 jointly with National Parks to focus on the Farming in Protected Landscape programme.
- The national 'Landscapes for Life' Conference 2021 is scheduled for early July 2021 and will be on-line but 'hosted' by the five Devon AONBs.
- The NAAONB are involved in the national Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership, led by Natural England.
- The Chief Executive of the NAAONB, Howard Davies, is stepping down later this year and recruitment has commenced for his replacement.
- The AGM for the NAAONB was held on-line in November 2020 with the AONB Manager representing the Wye Valley AONB.

We noted the report.

13. Partner reports

We received a report regarding activity of various partners in the Wye Valley AONB, namely:

- Forestry England update.
- National Forest Wales.
- Gloucestershire County Council – Wireworks Bridge Tintern.

Having received the report the following points were noted:

- Repairs and maintenance are being carried out to Biblins Bridge, necessitating its closure from 8th February 2021 for 3 – 4 weeks. This work includes replacing the timber 'U' frames along the bridge, as well as resurfacing the bridge with new anti-slip boards. The bridge will be re-opening in due course.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- The footpath on the English side of the border downstream from Biblins has seen two landslips on the river bank.
- Currently, there are significant diversions in place for the Wye Valley Walk.
- The Wye Valley Greenway Cycleway Initiative will be opening in April 2021.
- Currently, there are a number of road closures down the valley to undertake ongoing maintenance of areas where landslips have occurred south of Redbrook and south of Tintern. It was noted that the subsidence works at Redbrook is anticipated to be finished by the 31st March 2021.

We noted the report.

14. **AONB Unit progress reports and updates**

We received a report regarding activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit relating to:

- AONB 50th Anniversary programme.
- AONB Nature Recovery Plan & Priority Species.
- Water Environment Grant ROAR & Catchment Advisors (England only).
- Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Riparian Tree project work.
- Wye Valley Villages Transport Plan update.
- Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) work (Monmouthshire).
- Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) AONB Office refurbishment.
- Undergrounding.

In response to questions raised regarding the Wye Valley Transport Plan, the AONB Manager informed the Committee that this initiative arose following the concerns of some villages regarding the speed of traffic through the villages with a view to developing a more holistic approach to address the traffic issues. Welsh Government funding has been received which would have an impact on where this funding could be spent. However, this process will be undertaken as strategically as possible to address cross border issues.

We noted the report.

15. **Dates of meetings for 2021**

To be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Remote Meeting on Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm**

Monday 5th July 2021

Monday 1st November 2021

Subject to Covid-19 restrictions, the meetings will be held either remotely via Microsoft Teams or at the Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm.

WATER QUALITY PRESENTATION

Purpose

To receive a presentation on the water quality of River Wye.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales will provide a presentation updating on the situation with water quality in the River Wye.
- At the previous meeting and in July 2020 the JAC received updates on the water quality and quantity issues following the extensive algal blooms on the Wye in both Spring 2020 and Summer 2019.
- Algal blooms are caused by a combination of sunlight, low flows and elevated levels of phosphate in the water.
- The Environment Agency and Natural Resources are working with Welsh Water, the Wye & Usk Foundation, the agricultural sector and other stakeholders to reduce phosphate levels across the Wye catchment.
- Each local planning authority in the catchment is having to consider the impact of proposed development on the potential to increase phosphate input into the Wye.
- the new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme may help farmers and land managers in the AONB address some of the issues and contribute to better outcomes for the environment, for people and for the place.

Reasons

A combination of sunlight, low flows and elevated levels of phosphate cause algal blooms in the river. The majority of the phosphates come from sewerage and agricultural sources.

Implications

Visibility in the water can drop less than 15cm creating significant ecological impact by shading important aquatic plants that provide habitat for fish and invertebrates. This is also damaging for the local economy, affecting both tourism and angling.

Background

The Wye and Lugg Monitoring Dashboard contains a range of data and analysis of the situation, primarily to provide an overview for members of the Nutrient Management Board: <https://environment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=1dc5b2adc99e48b095950055f2785d7a> .

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WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

Purpose

To seek members' endorsement of the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company (CIC) and the relationship with the AONB Partnership going forward.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Formally welcomes the establishment of the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company (CIC) to take forward the Wye Valley River Festival, and
- B. Endorses the Working Agreement between the CIC and the JAC, with an AONB staff member taking a non-executive and advisory role with the CIC, on behalf of the JAC and AONB Partnership.

Key Issues

- The JAC had previously supported the proposal to progress with establishing a possible Community Interest Company (CIC) as an autonomous body to secure the future of the Wye Valley River Festival.
- The Wye Valley River Festival CIC has now been established with 3 Directors, all hitherto involved and integral to the previous Festivals.
- A Working Agreement is proposed between the JAC and the CIC with a lead AONB staff member invited to have a non-executive role on the WVRF CIC Advisory Board (see appended document).
- The CIC is now commencing plans for the next Festival and is submitting grant applications to secure appropriate funding.

Reasons

The JAC has previously recognised that the continuation of the Wye Valley River Festival is dependent on the establishment of a new governance, management and delivery body to take the Festival forward. The Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024 set out Five Tests that were endorsed by the JAC (see Appendix 1) for the proposed establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). However it was subsequently determined that a Community Interest Company (CIC) would be a more appropriate and flexible autonomous body for the Festival.

Implications

The Wye Valley River Festival CIC has been established with 3 Directors: Phillippa Haynes - Festival Director of all 4 Festivals to date, Jon Beedell - Artistic co-Director of all 4 Festivals, and Rachel Adams – co-founder & Director of Wyldwood Arts CIC and creator & director of performances at 2 Festivals.

The appended Working Agreement proposes that a lead AONB staff member is invited to have a non-executive role on the WVRF CIC and sit on an Advisory Board. This would enable the professional skills developed by the Wye Valley AONB Unit in the co-creation and delivery of 4 Wye Valley River Festivals, not to be lost but formally shared with the new CIC and its Advisory Board. However the AONB staff would not have any executive role, functions or responsibilities. But they would be able to continue to engage with a broad range of partners in helping to guide and advise on the development of future Festivals organised and led by the CIC. Advice is being sought from the staff employing authorities to ensure that no employee Code of Conduct or Declaration of Interest would be breached by such a non-executive advisory role.

Appendix 1 outlines the Five Tests that were endorsed by the JAC for the proposed establishment of an independent entity for the governance and management of the Festival. Four of the Five Tests (2-5) are now largely considered achievable. Test 1 is no longer considered viable; the establishment of an initial Reserve for the new organisation. This is largely thwarted by the change in the last Festival due to the pandemic from including a more commercial ticketed installation as part of the largely free outdoor Festival to only on-line material. It is now considered more prudent and time efficient to progress with the CIC, who can now bid for grants and funds, rather than wait to build up reserves. Otherwise this would necessitate the AONB Unit leading on another Festival when their priorities now have to be focused elsewhere, such as on the delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

There is every intention that the new CIC will continue the ethos of the Wye Valley River Festival, while potentially expanding on a wider programme of events outside of the fixed Festival dates.

Background

Wye Valley River Festivals in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 have been Wye Valley AONB Partnership projects, led by the Wye Valley AONB Unit, Desperate Men and Phillippa Haynes in a unique and creative collaboration between arts and environment professionals, who developed, produced and delivered the Festival with stakeholders and the communities in and around the Wye Valley AONB.

Five Tests

Five key tests are identified in the Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024 as necessary before progress can be made towards a new CIO as an independent entity for the governance and management of the Festival.

The Five tests are as follows:

1) To build up a reserve of funds before setting up a CIO. This needs to be in the region of £50,000 to enable the recruitment and training of a leadership board, recruitment and employment of a part-time employee, administration and office costs and all legal fees.

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2023. This will be reviewed as the Business Plan is updated after the next Festival in June 2020.

2) Select and nurture a leadership team to become part of a future Board to run a Wye Valley River Festival CIO.

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2022.

3) Formalise key partnerships with key organisations, community supporters & artists around the vision, mission, values and aims of Wye Valley River Festival set out in this Business Plan.

Time frame: aiming to have partnership agreements with those partners that have become long term supporters to achieve this by December 2019.

4) Legal requirements are confirmed by host authorities Monmouthshire County Council, Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Forest of Dean District Council enabling the transition of Wye Valley River Festival from a Wye Valley AONB Partnership Project to an independent entity: CIO.

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2020.

5) Satisfy the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), as the Festival leadership body, that all the above tests have been met.

Time frame: aiming to achieve at the latest by December 2024, can be earlier if all other transition tests are met.

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Wye Valley River Festival AONB working agreement and partnership wording

Working agreement

Invited by the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company (WVRF CIC) Directors:

An AONB staff member (Sarah Sawyer &/or Andrew Blake) will take on a non- executive role as an 'enhanced' member of the WVRF CIC Advisory board.

This role will be recognised and elaborated upon in the new WVRF business plan 2021 – 2026 and will be endorsed by the AONB's governance body, the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).

Initially, this role will be for a term of three years to cover the next iteration of the business plan which will run to 2024. Covering the 2022 and 2024 festivals, and associated year round work planning.

This continued close affiliation between VW AONB unit and the new WVRF CIC will ensure continuity of vision, partnerships, relationships, and combined missions, whilst allowing the new organisation to create and shape its identity.

The Wye Valley AONB Unit will continue to be a conduit between WVRF CIC and the wider AONB Partnership, other national AONB cultural opportunities and environmental partners and stakeholders, both in England and Wales. It will include advising with permissions, consents, new funding opportunities and any other cross sector possibilities that support the delivery of the festival and its activities.

The Wye Valley AONB Unit will support the Wye Valley River Festival CIC as an applicant to the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), offering advice and assistance, advising on the shaping of the festival as an event, to ensure conditions are fulfilled and as staff capacity dictates.

The AONB Unit will be engaged with the Wye Valley River Festival organisation as a local operator and collaborator, co-working on specific environmental / non-arts elements, taking part in strategy and development and sharing knowledge on locations, practicalities, and being present at festival events.

[Further opportunity to extend this agreement includes](#) an AONB JAC member being invited by CIC Directors to become a Non-executive Director, providing a formal link between the AONB Partnership and the WVRF CIC, reporting to JAC and AONB Unit.

Partnership wording

The Wye Valley River Festival is a highly successful collaborative initiative created and developed in partnership by Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit and Arts Professionals Desperate Men and Phillippa Haynes.

The first festival was delivered in 2014. In 2021, the partnership established the Wye Valley River Festival CIC as a stand-alone organisation. Building on the past eight efficacious years of delivery, this biennial festival, inspired by the landscape and led by arts and environmental professionals, continues to collaborate with local communities who live and work in the area.

As a stand-alone organisation, WVRF CIC embarks upon a new chapter of development to include a year-round programme of co-created cultural activity with our constituencies.

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GLOVER REVIEW AND FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Purpose

To advise members of the Ministerial Statement on the Government's response to the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England and the launch of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Welcomes the Ministerial Statement of 24th June outlining the forthcoming response to the Glover Review and the launching of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- B. Notes the accompanying announcement by Natural England and the respective responses by the National Association for AONBs to the Ministerial Statement and Natural England announcement.
- C. Endorses the establishment of a Local Assessment Panel for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, with at least one JAC member, and the recruitment of a Farm Advisor to assist applicants in the Wye Valley AONB.

Key Issues

- The 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was published in 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- The Written Ministerial Statement published on 24th June provides the Government's initial response to the Landscapes Review (see appendix 1 below &/or <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-06-24/hcws119>)
- The Minister also launched the DEFRA funded 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme, originally announced in the Agricultural Transition Plan.
- Natural England have also announced proposals for new protected areas across England (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-england-announces-landmark-new-programme-for-protected-landscapes>)
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) continues to working close with DEFRA and Natural England and has responded formally to both (see Appendix 2 & 3 below).
- Each AONB and National Park in England has an allocation from DEFRA to administer the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme for farmers and land managers to provide benefits for nature, climate, people and places (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>).

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme requires and enables the AONB Unit to establish a Local Assessment Panel and recruit a Farm Advisor to assist farmers and land managers applying to the programme.
- It is proposed that the Local Assessment Panel is adopted as a JAC sub-committee with at least one JAC member, augmented by other sector representatives as outlined by DEFRA 'Expectation' (see Appendix 4 below).

Reasons

The Glover Review in England was broadly welcomed when published in September 2019. The Government has now made an initial response, including launching the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. This was originally outlined in the 'Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024' published in November 2020 (see pages 44-5 in <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024>). Natural England have also announced plans that will take forward some of the Glover Review Proposals.

Implications

The Ministerial Statement outlining the Government's initial response to the Landscapes Review mentions a number of aspects that are likely to require significant consideration. Over the coming months the Government will work closely with partners, including local authorities and National Park Authorities, to address the Review's recommendations in full and consult on draft proposals later this year.

The Written Ministerial Statement is in Appendix 1 below (and is available on-line here <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-06-24/hcws119>). Key items mentioned and suggested for further consultation are summarised as follow:

- that more funding be directed towards making space for nature and supporting nature recovery in our Protected Landscapes
- the role of the future Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery schemes in supporting nature recovery in Protected Landscapes
- Natural England to prepare proposals for the possible designation of additional National Nature Reserves
- Increased support for public access to Protected Landscapes.
- Natural England to consider the designation of:-
 - a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB
 - a new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB
 - an extension to the Surrey Hills AONB
 - an extension to the Chilterns AONB
- To map and take forward recommendations to designate more areas of the country for their natural beauty.
- Consideration of how structures might be changed to bring the family of Protected Landscape closer together
- Ensure there is more strategic direction for Protected Landscape nationally, while retaining their local functions.

- To explore opportunities to diversify funding sources including natural capital investments and other commercial opportunities.
- To consider options to strengthen the status and support given to AONBs
- To possibly change the name of AONBs.

The NAAONB and National Parks England will be working together, along with other environmental NGOs and stakeholders to address these considerations.

The detail of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is now published by DEFRA here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes> . The local 'Guidance for Applicants in Wye Valley AONB' is available on the AONB website: <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/farming-in-protected-landscapes/> . The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme allows farmers and other land managers to liaise with the AONB Unit and apply for funding to improve public access, and deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment, for people and for places. Applications will need to demonstrate that proposed projects a) deliver against at least one, of the following items under the four key themes and b) help deliver the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

Climate

- More carbon is stored and/or sequestered
- Flood risk has been reduced
- Better understanding among farmers, land managers and the public as to what different habitats and land uses can deliver for carbon storage and reduced carbon emissions
- The landscape is more resilient to climate change

Nature

- There is a greater area of wildlife rich habitat
- There is greater connectivity between habitats
- Existing habitat is better managed for biodiversity
- There is an increase in biodiversity

People

- There are more opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape
- There are more opportunities for more diverse audiences to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape
- There is greater public engagement in land management, for example through volunteering

Place

- The quality and character of the landscape is reinforced or enhanced
- Historic structures and features are conserved, enhanced or interpreted more effectively
- There is an increase in the resilience of nature friendly sustainable farm businesses, which in turn contributes to a more thriving local economy

Up to £170,000 is available in this financial year for grants and, it is understood, a slightly reduced amount for the following two years. Resources allow for the administration of the

scheme and the recruitment of a Farm Advisor to support the AONB Unit with delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. They will lead on engagement with farmers and land managers on the ground and support applicants to establish high quality applications.

A Local Assessment Panel will be established, which will determine application over £5,000 up to a maximum of £85,000. Applications under £5,000 are delegated to the AONB Manager for decision. The DEFRA guidance on 'Expectations for Local Assessment Panels' is attached (Appendix 4). The Agreement constituting the JAC states in paragraph 10. "The Committee may appoint sub-committees which shall be constituted in such manner and to which may be delegated such functions of the Committee under this Agreement as may be agreed by the Committee". It is proposed that the Local Assessment Panel is adopted as a JAC sub-committee with at least one JAC member. The statutory and other sector representatives will be selected as required.

For information

Lord Benyon has been appointed as a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DEFRA, replacing Lord Gardiner, who has become Senior Deputy Speaker in the House of Lords. Previously as MP for Newbury, including parts of the North Wessex Downs AONB, Richard Benyon was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Natural Environment, Water and Rural Affairs from May 2010 to October 2013.

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>

Appendix 1.

Government response to the Landscapes Review

Statement by Environment Secretary George Eustice

made on 24 June 2021 (Statement UIN HCWS119)

In May 2018, Defra commissioned Julian Glover and an independent panel to consider how we might improve the management of our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Their report, the Landscapes Review, was published in September 2019. It set out a series of recommendations, including that more should be done to support nature's recovery in these landscapes; that the status of AONBs should be strengthened; that there was a need to bring the family of protected landscapes closer together with more strategic oversight and greater opportunities for career progression; and that more funding should support public access to protected landscapes.

The government agrees that more funding should be directed towards making space for nature and supporting nature's recovery in our protected landscapes. Since the review was published, we have been supporting important projects in our protected landscapes through our Nature for Climate Fund and Green Recovery Challenge Fund. Our future Local Nature Recovery scheme, part of the future agriculture policy, will also support the objective of nature's recovery in our protected landscapes and beyond. I have also asked Natural England to prepare proposals for the possible designation of additional National Nature Reserves, where there is landowner support, and to consider how nature's recovery within such designations might be supported financially through our new Landscape Recovery scheme (also part of our future agriculture policy).

The government also agrees that we should do more to support public access to protected landscapes. Today, I am announcing the new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which will provide additional investment to allow farmers and other land managers to work in partnership with our National Park Authorities and AONB teams to improve public access, and deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment, for people and for places.

Natural England also will be taking forward the government's commitment to designate additional protected landscapes and is currently considering the designation of four new areas.

- Yorkshire Wolds AONB
- Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB
- An extension to the Surrey Hills AONB

- An extension to the Chilterns AONB

This work will contribute to the government's commitment of protecting 30% of our land by 2030, and boosting biodiversity, while taking forward the review's recommendation to designate more areas of the country for their natural beauty.

Each of our protected landscapes has its own identity, and many of their functions require local accountability. However, we are also considering how their structures might be changed so that we can bring the family of protected landscapes closer together, and ensure there is more strategic direction nationally, while retaining their local functions. We will also be exploring opportunities to increase private investment, particularly by diversifying funding sources to include emerging markets in natural capital and other commercial opportunities. We are also considering options to strengthen the status and support given to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the recommendation to possibly change their name. The Government will be working closely with our partners over the coming months including local authorities and National Park Authorities, to address the review's recommendations in full and consult on draft proposals later this year.



The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty welcomes this morning's Written Ministerial Statement.

The Statement represents a commitment at the highest possible level, through which we can take forward the ambitious recommendations of the 2019 Landscapes Review.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan set a bold ambition for this generation to be the first in history to leave the environment in a better state than it found it, and the Landscapes Review undertaken in support of the Plan called on England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks to be at the forefront of delivering on these ambitions.

The Minister's commitment to strengthening the status of AONBs, and the funding to support nature's recovery and public access to these precious spaces is both needed and welcome.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more people than ever seeking solace and recreation in their local countryside, much of which is found within AONBs – some 66% of England's population lives within half an hour's travel time of an AONB. The announcement of increased support for farmers and landowners to improve and maintain public access will help the increased numbers of visitors to enjoy these spaces.

The Minister's commitment to funding the protection of 30% of England's space for nature by 2030 in keeping with the United Nations Leaders' Pledge for Nature is, of course, hugely welcome. Teams from all 34 of England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty work in their landscapes day in and day out and are all too aware of the need to do more for nature, and they have the expertise, the skills and the local knowledge to be able to deliver.

AONB teams have been working at full capacity towards the aims of the Colchester Declaration since July 2019. The Declaration made by all of England's AONBs commits that by 2030: at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition; 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals; 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place; and that at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the threatened list.

AONB teams are skilled collaborators. Operating in true partnership across the network of protected landscapes and locally with stakeholders, they are committed to bringing this ambition to life. With the right resources and strengthened powers this commitment will become reality.

The twin issues of climate crisis and nature depletion affect every single person, and now government, arm's length bodies, eNGOs, National Parks, AONBs and others must step up to the plate, working together to ensure the ambition and intent behind the Landscapes Review recommendations are given life.

24/06/2021

**The National Association for
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty welcomes the Defra Written Ministerial Statement published earlier today in response to the Landscapes Review 2019, and is delighted that both Defra and Natural England have recognised the unique offer available to the nation through the designation of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Natural England's announcement that it is considering the designation of two new AONBs: Yorkshire Wolds AONB and Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB, and to extend two existing AONBs: Surrey Hills AONB and Chilterns AONB, is welcome and we look forward to hearing the outcome of their considerations in due course.

Designating more land for nature could play a crucial role in delivering on the UN Leaders' Pledge for Nature signed by Boris Johnson along with 87 other world leaders in September 2020. This commits these nations to protected 30% of their land for nature by 2030. Defra's Written Ministerial Statement commits to funding supporting nature's recovery and AONBs look forward to developing the Nature Recovery Network alongside Natural England to reverse the declines we have seen in the past decades and create bigger, better and more connected resilient habitats.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty teams already have strong relationships with their local farmers and landowners. The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme announced today will enable them to work ever more closely, supporting the people who make these living, working landscapes places for nature regeneration, recreation and spiritual revitalisation as well as healthy, local food production.

"The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme marks a welcome affirmation of the positive relationship between farming and landscape management. Not only will this programme provide important support for farmers in AONBs and National Parks, but it will help further align the ambition of protected landscape staff with the businesses and people whose existence is written into the cultural landscape."

Philip Hygate, Chair, National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The NAAONB is committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure AONBs deliver for the nation in the way the members of the Landscapes Review panel intended.

24/06/2021

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Appendix 4.

Expectations for Local Assessment Panels

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Purpose of the Panel

To consider and decide on applications for projects (above £5,000) submitted to the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, according to the agreed criteria for the programme as published in the information for applicants and in accordance with the scoring system provided. Protected Landscapes are responsible for appointing the panel.

Role of Local Assessment Panel (LAP)

The panel shall:

- Refer all enquiries for the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant to the Protected Landscapes Farming in Protected Landscapes officer without prejudicing their decision making
- Receive a report and recommendation on all valid applications from the Farming in Protected Landscapes officer and should consider all applications along with the Farming in Protected Landscapes officer report and recommendations
- Assess applications, giving regard to the Farming in Protected Landscapes National Framework and other guiding documents, and marking applications to achieve the desired outcomes of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
- Assess applications using the scoring system provided
- Award, partially award, request more information or refuse applications
- Give precise reasons for decisions - these reasons should refer to the guidance documents and scheme criteria.
- Treat decisions as confidential until notice has been issued by the Protected Landscape to the applicant.
- Review and make recommendations for alterations the Panel's Terms of Reference; these recommendations will be considered by the Chief Officer or their nominee and the Chair of the panel
- Champion the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme with farmers, land managers and other relevant organisations
- Have regard to the [Nolan Principles](#) in all its affairs

Membership of the LAP

- Panels will be appointed rather than subject to recruitment processes.
- Panels should be made up of a good geographical and thematic spread across the PL
- Panels should have a mind to equality and diversity. The panel should as far as practical represent the diversity of the people who live, work and spend time in the Protected Landscape.

- Interests across both the environment and access and engagement related causes should be represented on the panel
- Panel members should also have excellent specialist knowledge in their field, good knowledge of the local area and the respect and support of their peers.
- Panels may be made up of one or more Protected Landscape bodies. These shared Local Assessment Panels will assess applications for the PLs present. This approach is to allow participating Protected Landscape bodies to benefit from a greater sharing of collective knowledge and experience.
- Panels should have at least 5 panel members
- For shared local assessment panels there should be a maximum of 18 panel members (excluding the Chair)
- The quorum of the panel should be 50% (at least 3) + 1 of the agreed panel size
- The panel must consist of representatives of:
 - the Protected Landscape Team;
 - Natural England
 - the farming and land management community (several members);
- Protected Landscape teams are strongly encouraged to include the RPA in the representation of the panels and also to consider including further representatives from the Defra network (Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, and Historic England) as appropriate. It may be that PLs bring in FC/EA/HE guidance and expertise for 'one off' advice when necessary. The FC, EA and HE are all committed to this approach and it is up to their discretion as to whether they attend the panel. They will not be required to attend the full duration of a panel. Please see Annex S for more information on how the FC, EA, HE, NE and RPA can support panels and relevant contact information to arrange attendance at panels.
- The panel should consider representatives from organisations with a focus on nature recovery, rural development, public access/engagement and existing agri-environment support and provision.
- The panel may keep its membership under review and may, at the discretion of the Chair and the Director of the Protected Landscape or their nominee, invite additional members or remove members.
- The Panel should appoint a chair from among its membership at the first meeting.
- The secretariat should be provided by the Protected Landscape. For shared Local Assessment Panels this decision should be made locally.
- The Panel membership should be available to the public, if requested

Organisation of LAP meetings

- Panels will meet on a regular basis to consider applications with an expectation that this will be every 8 weeks. The schedule of meetings will be determined by the PL. Additional meetings can be called at a minimum of 5 working days' notice.
- Meetings should be considered quorate where at least 50% +1 of the membership is present.
- All members of the panel should have equal voting powers and decisions should be taken by a majority of those present. In the event of no clear conclusion the Chair should have a second and casting vote.
- Where it is considered (by officer or panel member) that a member has a conflict of interest in a matter under discussion, that member must be excluded from that part of the meeting

(they will have to leave the meeting or disconnect from a video link), they will have no vote on such applications and the conflict of interest noted in the minutes. Panel members will have a responsibility to declare an interest in any application under discussion.

- All applications and matters discussed at grants panel meetings should be treated in the strictest confidence, though it should also be noted that all communication in relation to the fund is on the public record and subject to Freedom of Information legislation.

Administration

- All meetings should be scheduled where possible to suit the majority of members, meetings can be called at a minimum of 5 working days' notice.
- The agenda, supporting papers and report should be issued at least one (1) week before the date of a meeting, by email.
- Panels can choose to meet virtually and also decide by correspondence by local agreement.
- All administration of the panel including minute taking will be the responsibility of the Protected Landscape. This includes reasons for decisions made at the meeting.
- Decisions of the panel including the reasons for those decisions should be issued in writing to applicants within 1 week of the date at which it was agreed.
- Minutes of the panel meeting should be circulated to members within two (2) weeks of a meeting. They shall include:
 - Attendance
 - Matters arising from previous meetings (e.g. progress on deferred applications)
 - A decision record for each application
 - Financial information (committed and spent funds)
- On receipt of timesheets, farmer and land manager representatives to the panel and those from organisations with charitable status attendees can be reimbursed expenses for preparation for and attendance at panel meetings at the discretion of the lead Protected Landscape. This spending would come out of Protected Landscape's admin budgets and should be a shared expense across the groups of Protected Landscapes if the panel is a shared panel.

Conflicts of interest

All members of the Local Assessment Panels will be required to adhere to the Nolan Principles of conduct in public office¹. Panel members will be expected to declare any pecuniary interest or other conflict of interest in projects being assessed. Where there is such a conflict of interest, the panel member must withdraw from the meeting while the rest of the panel deliberate on those matters.

Panel members may apply to the fund but, will not be involved in assessing their own applications nor may they lobby other panel members for support. Where it is considered (by officer or panel member) that a member has a potentially compromising interest in a matter under discussion, that member should be excluded from that part of the meeting, must abstain from voting on the application, and the conflict of interest noted in the minutes. This includes the Farming in Protected Landscapes officer or members of the Protected Landscape if there is an application from the Protected Landscape to the programme.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

Appeals

Appeals on decisions made on applications should be made to the Protected Landscape body in which the applicant is based (regardless of whether the decision was made at a shared Local Assessment Panel).

Applicants can only query a funding decision if they think that the Local Assessment Panel has:

- made a mistake with the application
- made a processing error
- got the law wrong

Applicants must set out to their relevant Protected Landscape body the reason for their appeal under one (or more) of these 3 criteria. Information on how to appeal should be included in the written decision from the panel as a matter of course.

Applicants should be provided with the following advice for making an appeal:

- An appeal must be made within 10 working days of receiving your application decision
- The PL will aim to communicate with you about your appeal within 15 working days from when you submitted your appeal.

Appeals should be dealt with locally in the first instance by the relevant Protected Landscape body. Where necessary, Protected Landscapes bodies (and, for AONB Partnerships, their host authorities) can escalate the appeal to Defra for advice and further management of the appeal.

Complaints

Complaints (separate to appeals on applications) should be directed to the Protected Landscape body relevant to the application or project. Protected Landscape bodies should all have complaints procedures in place and there will be some local variation.

Applicants should be provided with the following advice for making a complaint:

- The PL will aim to communicate with you about your complaint within 15 working days from when you submitted your complaint, although if the matter is complex this may need to be extended, within a reasonable period, after explaining to why.

Protected Landscape bodies should address the complaint in the first instance. Should an applicant think their complaint is not being dealt with adequately, the Protected Landscape body can refer the complaint to Defra for further investigation.

All Protected Landscapes will have formal complaint and compliment procedures in place and fall under the jurisdiction of the independent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman which is the final stage for complaints about the local authorities (i.e. protected landscapes).

Reviews

Defra will undertake an annual review of these expectations.

AONB FUNDING BIDS

Purpose

To update members on various funding allocation secured by the AONB Unit and seek endorsement on behalf of the AONB Partnership.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the various funding allocations secured by the AONB Unit on behalf of the AONB Partnership.
- B. Endorses the Lower Wye Nature Networks application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Nature Networks Fund in partnership with Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Unit has successfully secured the following funding for projects:
 - Severn Trent Boost for Biodiversity - Brockweir Riverside Invasive Non-Native Species Treatment (BRINNST)
 - NRW Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience Funding (BERF)
 - Environment Agency Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Riparian Tree projects
- The AONB Unit is leading on a partnership bid to the Nature Networks Fund (NNF) through National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) with Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Reasons

The Wye Valley AONB Unit develops collaborative landscape-scale projects to help deliver the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. Wherever possible these are cross-border initiatives that aim to manage the Wye Valley as a holistic landscape. However, the national boundary and administrative complexity of the Wye Valley means that invariably funding sources are only available on one side of the border or in one county. The AONB Unit works to stitch these various opportunities together to deliver coherent projects and initiatives to conserve and enhance the Wye Valley AONB irrespective of any other constraints.

Implications

The Severn Trent Boost for Biodiversity - Brockweir Riverside Invasive Non-Native Species Treatment (BRINNST)

The AONB Unit has been awarded a grant of £7,250 to carry out work under Severn Trent's Boost for Biodiversity 2021 Scheme. The spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), particularly Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed is a major issue throughout the Lower Wye Valley. The AONB Unit have been successful in securing funding to control INNS between Bigsweir and Brockwier on the Gloucestershire side. Along this stretch Himalayan Balsam is a dominant species on the banks of the River Wye SSSI & SAC. There are also a number of large stands of Japanese Knotweed on the river bank. Himalayan Balsam in particular, but also Knotweed in places, is spreading into both nearby farmland and woodland, including The Hudnalls NNR & SSSI, part of the Wye Valley Woodlands SAC. American Skunk Cabbage is also present on nearby tributaries. This project will use both contractors and volunteers to carry out INNS control over 18 months and will work at creating a legacy where landowners, contractors and the community are better placed to deal with follow up work required to keep on top of INNS on this section of the River Wye. This work will complement existing initiatives and funding for INNS work on the Welsh side around Llandogo and Tintern.

NRW Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience Fund (BERF)

The AONB Unit is liaising with Natural Resources Wales over delivery of £40,000 from the Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience Fund (BERF), to support the conservation of protected sites and species, such as the River Wye SAC, Wye Valley Woodlands SAC and the Bat Roost SAC.

Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Riparian Tree project work

The Environment Agency has offered £40,000 to continue funding the Natural Flood Management (NFM) project work in the Gloucestershire part of the AONB and Riparian Tree work in collaboration with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust.

Nature Networks Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid

The AONB Unit is leading on a bid to the Nature Networks Fund (NNF) through National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The application, for Wales only, is for £260,000 until March 2023. The Lower Wye Nature Network project is in partnership with Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust, and in collaboration with Monmouthshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales. The Fund aims to strengthen the resilience of Wales' network of protected sites (SSSIs, SACs etc), supporting a green recovery for nature and communities. The Lower Wye Nature Networks project is concentrating on the conservation and enhancement of a number of the grassland and woodland SSSIs and the management and connectivity between and around them in the Wye Valley AONB. The submission deadline was 30th June and if successful the project would run from October 2021 until March 2023. A Partnership Agreement will be prepared between the 3 lead partner organisations.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th July 2021

AONB PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL STUDY TOUR

Purpose

To endorse the proposal to hold an Annual AONB Partnership Study Tour, if Covid restrictions allow.

Recommendations

That members determine whether to host the Annual Study Tour on the proposed date of Friday 17th September 2021, subject to clarification of any restrictions and logistics nearer the time.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour was cancelled last year due to the Pandemic.
- It is proposed that, subject to restrictions allowing, the AONB Partnership Tour be held on Friday 17th September.
- The programme will be finalised nearer the time but will focus on using individuals' private vehicles to reach sites and may only be for half a day instead of a full day, depending on logistics.

Reasons

The Annual Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour is hosted by the JAC and has had a good reputation for networking through attendance from the wider AONB Partnership. The invitation to join the Tour is extended to all members of the Joint Advisory Committee, to Senior Officers and County and District Councillors whose wards fall within the Wye Valley AONB and all Town/Parish/Community Councils that lie within the AONB. It is thus a key tool in the transfer of information to the wider partners and interested parties in the AONB. However last year's Annual Study Tour was cancelled due to the Pandemic.

Implications

The date of 17th September has been chosen for the 2021 Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour because there appear to be no conflicting council meetings of the four constituent local authorities. It is hoped that Covid restrictions will ease sufficiently to allow the Study Tour to take place. In recent years the Tour has comprised of 2 or 3 mini-buses, driven by AONB staff, visiting a number of sites throughout the day with lunch at a suitable hostelry.

However this year it is proposed that individuals use their own vehicles to reach programmed sites. This will reduce undue crowding in mini-buses. But it also severely constrains the logistics as sites will have to be chosen based on close proximity to suitable parking. Consequently it may be determined that a viable programme can only be created for half a day rather than a full day.

Officer will prepare a programme and send out invitations in due course.

Background

Until 2020 the JAC had hosted an Annual Study Tour each year.

The 2019 tour visited a range of sites primarily associated with the Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) Project predominantly in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB. Sites included Chapel Lane, Tintern, with flooding & erosion of the Unclassified County Road associated with the Lime Kiln Brook; the A466 Road stabilisation works; Natural Flood Management (NFM) works at Penterry Farm and Lower Meend Farm; and a photo-opportunity at Bigsweir Bridge in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

The 2018 AONB Partnership Tour focused on a selection of land management projects and issues in the Herefordshire part of the AONB north of Ross-on-Wye. The Tour visited Hurstans' Coronation Meadow, Sollers Hope; the Canwood Gallery & Sculpture Park, Checkley; Haugh Wood; Ballingham Court Farm - AONB Farming Award winners in 2008, 2012 & 2018; Tresseck Campsite, Hoarwithy and the Harewood Park Estate.

The 2017 Tour visited sites between Ross-on-Wye and Lydbrook. The Tour visited the riverside at Ross, Goodrich Castle, Coppett Hill Common, Brelston Green and Lydbrook Bridge.

ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To present the annual report figures for 2020/21 and note the delay in the completion of the tabulated achievements for the Wye Valley AONB Unit.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the Annual Report figures and awaits the finalised Annual Report on AONB achievements for 2020/21.

Key Issues

- The 2020/21 Annual Report figures are outlined below.
- There is a delay in finalising the full report tabulating the achievements of the year against the annual Work Programme. This will be presented to the next JAC.
- The AONB Unit has levered in over £12 for every £1 of local authority contribution during 2020/21.

Reasons

The Annual Work Programme Report for the AONB Unit is usually presented to the July JAC. However the Report is not yet complete due to other work commitments. The Work Programme Report will be finalised and presented to DEFRA, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the JAC at next meeting in November.

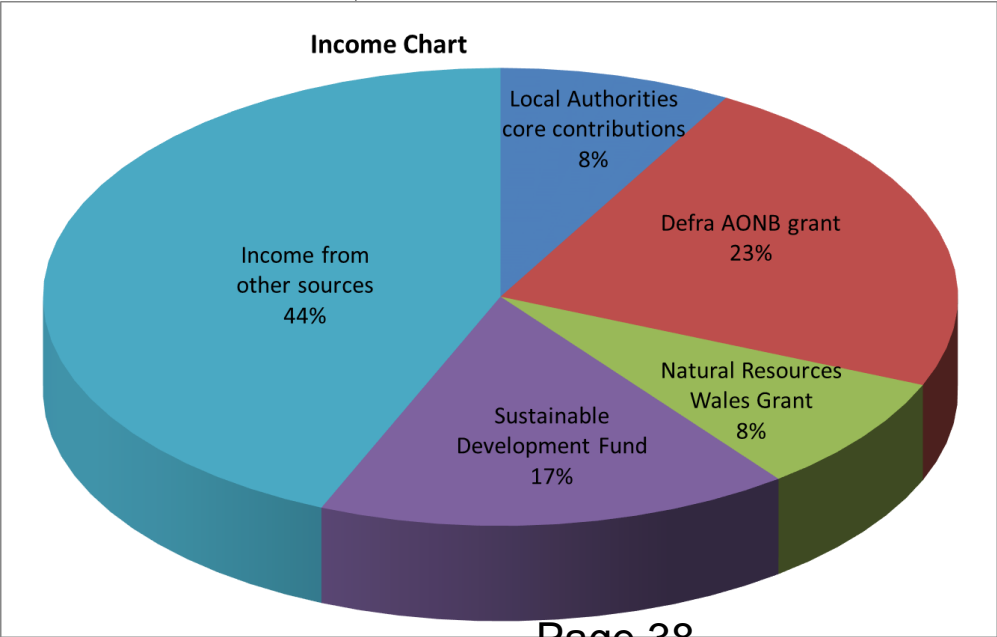
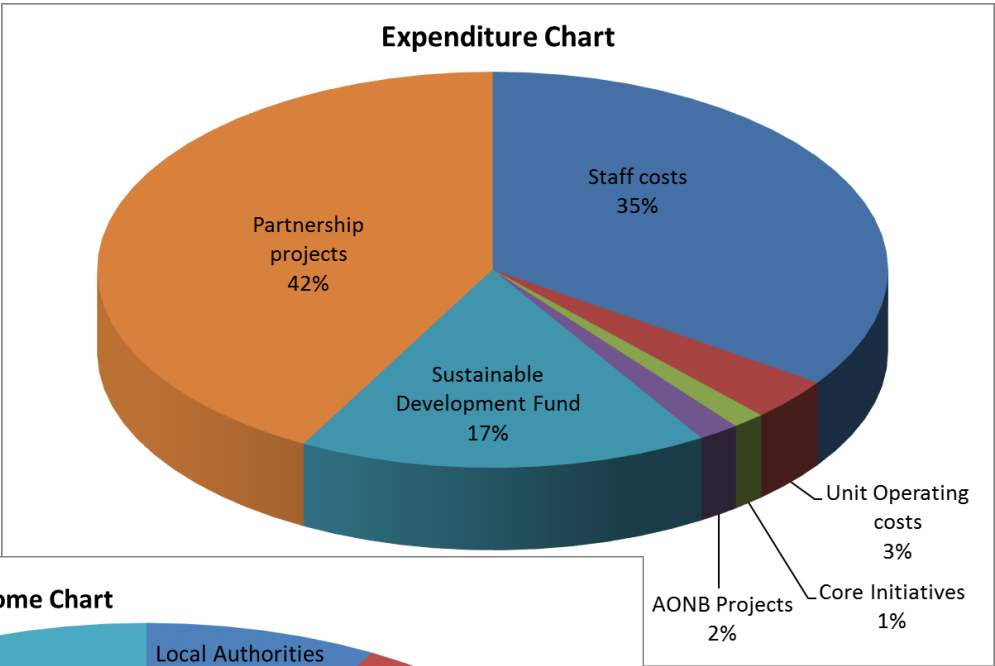
Implications

There have been a number of highlights in the 2020/21 that will be outlined in the Annual Report for the AONB Unit Work Programme. These were achieved despite the obvious disruption caused by the Covid lockdowns and restrictions, although these were captured through the Documenting Now project. The Wye Valley River Festival 2020 was successfully Re-Imagined and moved on-line; the Lower Wye Project Officer was recruited and co-ordinated Japanese Knotweed control and along with the seconded Catchment Advisor delivered farm plans and Natural Flood Management (NFM) works on a number of landholdings. The AONB volunteers and Youth Rangers continued to meet whenever possible, and creative on-line activities were made available for Youth Rangers and mindSCAPES participants during lockdowns. The mindSCAPE project also won a CPRE Gloucestershire Award. The Monmouthshire Wye Valley AONB Villages study got underway with Arup. The AONB Management Plan 2021-26 was completed. Several funders gave extensions including Welsh Government for Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places projects. The AONB 50th Anniversary programme was commenced. A number of funding bids and collaborations were developed that will bear fruit during 2021/21.

The overall turnover of the AONB Unit increased in 2020/21 from 2019/20, although this was mostly accounted for by the income and expenditure of the Wye Valley River Festival 2020.

The leverage of the AONB Partnership in 2020/21 means that for every £1 of local authority contribution, the AONB Unit has brought in over £12.

Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts		2019/20	2020/21
Expenditure			
	Staff costs	211,010	206,732
	Unit Operating costs	22,202	20,623
	Core Initiatives	7,465	8,005
	AONB Projects	17,733	10,050
	Sustainable Development Fund	55,000	100,000
	Partnership projects	189,363	250,862
	TOTAL	502,773	596,272
Income			
	Local Authorities core contributions	49,002	49,002
	Defra AONB grant	130,614	137,645
	Natural Resources Wales Grant	49,600	49,600
	Sustainable Development Fund	55,000	100,000
	Income from other sources	218,557	260,024
	TOTAL	502,773	596,272



TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th July 2021

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 £43,823.25 allocated from the £100,000 offered by Welsh Government for 202/22, with £ 56,176.75 remaining.
- This is the 21st year of the SDF and Welsh Government may make some minor modifications to the SDF Grant Guidance. These will be reported on in due course.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) host the Wye Valley AONB Fund for which the 2020/21 Quarter Four balances were £2,916.19 for immediate funding and £54,531.59 in the Endowment Fund.
- Applications are welcome for both sets of funding for 2021/22.

Reasons

Welsh Government have allocated £100,000 of SDF again in 2021/22. This is the 21st year of the SDF which 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 currently growing at a modest rate and is open to receive donations and legacies. Opportunities will be sought to grow the AONB Fund further over time.

Implications

The SDF Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on each application over £3,000. Welsh Government are considering making some minor modification to the SDF Grant Guidance. Application under £3,000 are determined by the AONB Manager supported by the

NRW Senior People & Places Officer, South East Wales. The list of approved grants totalling £43,823.25 is in the table below.

The Wye Valley AONB Fund with the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has a £2,916.19 Immediate Impact fund for grants for environmental, community and cultural projects. There is also a £54,531.59 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.

2021/22 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants approved

Code	Applicant	Project Title	years		SDF
			This	Total	Grant
WV00 YR21W	Wye Valley AONB Unit	Admin 10%			10,000.00
WV01 YR21W	Monmouth Climate Futures Festival	Climate Futures Festival	2	2	£6,968.00
WV02 YR21W	Wye Valley AONB & partners	Wordsworth Walk Improvements	2	2	£25,000.00
WV03 YR21W	Gwent Wildlife Trust	Pine Marten monitoring & survey training	2	2	£1,355.25
WV04 YR21W	Trellech Community Council	The Narth and District Footpath Project	1	1	£500
TOTALS (to date)					£43,823.25
<i>Remaining from £100,000</i>					<i>£57,176.75</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) supports living and working more sustainably in association with enhancing natural beauty, wildlife, culture, landscape, land use and community within the context of the Wales sustainable development goals and principles in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Wye Valley AONB Unit administer the fund on behalf of Welsh Government. The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) host and manage the Wye Valley AONB Fund on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th July 2021

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 'Landscapes for Life' Conference 2021 is on-line on 7th & 8th July, 'hosted' virtually by the five Devon AONBs with the theme of 'A Climate for Change - Climate Change and Nature Recovery in National Landscapes'
- The NAAONB have signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding with Natural England and National Parks England.
- The new Chief Executive of the NAAONB will be John Watkins, formerly Head of Landscapes and Outdoor Recreation at Welsh Government.
- The NAAONB Strategic Plan for 2021-2023 is published and appended.

Landscapes for Life Conference 2021

The 2020 conference was cancelled because of the pandemic. The NAAONB will be hosting its first ever online annual conference this year. It will be hosted virtually by the 5 Devon AONBs. The theme of the conference is 'A Climate for Change - Climate Change and Nature Recovery in National Landscapes' which will look at the essential role the landscape approach plays in tackling climate change and nature recovery, essentially two sides of the same coin. The programme and tickets are available through the NAAONB website here: <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/events/landscapes-life-conference/programme>

The representatives from the Wye Valley AONB Unit attending the conference are Andrew Blake, AONB Manager, Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer and Nickie Moore, Lower Wye Projects Officer.

Memorandum of Understanding with Natural England and National Parks England

The NAAONB has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Natural England and National Parks England to strengthen the commitment to working collaboratively to

conserve and enhance the nation's finest landscapes to bring more benefits for people and nature.

The joint statement signed by Philip Hygate, NAAONB Chair, Mike McKinley, NPE Chair and Tony Juniper, NE Chair, stating "We want to transform and strengthen the way that our three organisations work, ensuring a step change in the way that we deliver multiple and integrated benefits for people, nature and climate through our network of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. So, we have signed a Joint Agreement with the aim of working more collaboratively together to make these special areas richer in nature, accessible for all to connect with for their well-being and deliver a green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic."

The full text is available here <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2021/06/05/collaboration-is-key-to-delivering-more-for-nature-and-people-through-our-national-parks-and-areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty/>

Chief Executive recruitment

The NAAONB Board have announced that John Watkins has been appointed as its new Chief Executive. John has a long career in the landscape and environment sector, starting as a Countryside Ranger with Denbighshire Countryside Service and the (then) Clwydian Range AONB. He joins the National Association in July from the Welsh Government where he is currently Head of Policy for Future Economy. Previously he was Head of Landscape and Outdoor Recreation at the Welsh Government, with responsibilities for AONBs & National Parks. He established the Future Landscapes Wales collaborative programme as part of the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales to develop shared learning and consensus on how to safeguard the nation's most beautiful landscapes. This culminated in Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks (2018).

Strategic Plan 2021-2023

The NAAONB has produced its next Strategic Plan for 2021-2023 which is appended. The Charity's mission is to support and develop a network of ambitious AONB partnerships that have a strong collective voice and a positive impact on the places for which they care.

Background

The NAAONB is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's AONBs. It works on behalf of its membership, fostering collaboration and collective action between the 300 staff of the AONB Family, the 700 elected members that support the AONB partnerships and the many partners with whom the NAAONB does business at the local and national levels. For more information see: www.landscapesforlife.org.uk

Strategy 2021-2023



Page 43

Agenda Item 14a

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Strategy 2021 – 2023

Chairman's Foreword

The period covered by our last strategy saw a renewal of ambition in a number of areas by the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Under the leadership of their National Association, AONB teams have committed to delivering significant and stretching targets around nature recovery, climate change, and engagement and diversity in AONBs. Additionally, the Charity and its members are working to support the establishment of more nature-friendly farming payment systems in AONBs as we move away from support mechanisms driven by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. These subject areas remain the clear focus of this strategy.

The ongoing nature of the Coronavirus pandemic has altered how we all work, and has created significant opportunities and challenges for AONB teams. Raised awareness of the great wellbeing benefits of landscape and nature also means a higher number of visitors to AONBs, often by many that are experiencing these landscapes for the first time. This is wholeheartedly welcomed, but requires investment to ensure that the effective management of visitors is successful. The commitment by UK Government to create a National Landscape Service is also of significant interest to the National Association and we will continue to work closely with all stakeholders to help create the best outcomes for AONBs.

Our clear vision and mission, dedicated staff and trustees, and an active and engaged membership, are a recipe for real delivery. This strategy sets out how the Charity will continue to help people collaborate in order to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It is a pleasure to help lead the Charity through this important period of development.

Philip Hygate FRSA
Chairman

**The National Association for
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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Contents

Chairman’s Foreword	2
Charitable Status	4
Membership	5
Responding to the External Environment	5
Vision	6
Mission	6
The NAAONB Strategic Objectives	7
Implementing the Strategy.....	7
Key actions.....	7
In Conclusion	8

Introduction

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) has achieved a great deal since it was established in 1998. This 2021– 2023 strategy builds on the success of the last 23 years and sets out an ambitious direction for the Charity’s work over the next three years and provides a framework within which the Charity can continue to modernise, diversify its income streams, and position itself effectively in the rapidly evolving political environment.

The Charity helps people to collaborate in order to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Charitable Status

The Association is a Charitable Company limited by guarantee. This gives it a structure that allows it to respond better and more quickly to the needs of the membership. The Charity has three objects:

- a. to promote the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment in and around Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other Protected Areas, and those areas for which such designation might be pursued,
- b. to advance the education, understanding and appreciation of the public in relation to the conservation and enhancement natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), other Protected Areas and those areas for which such designation might be pursued, and
- c. to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those organisations promoting or representing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other Protected Areas and those areas for which such designation might be pursued.

Membership

Charity members are involved in the planning and management of 8,000 square miles of outstanding and cherished landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Membership includes most of the AONB partnerships¹, as well as some of those Local Authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, together with a number of voluntary bodies, businesses, and individuals with an interest in the future of these iconic landscapes.

The membership, in particular the dedicated AONB units, have proved to be an effective means of achieving the purpose of the AONB designation and contributing to broader policy priorities. The units, whether hosted by local authority structures or based within Conservation Boards, have given AONB Partnerships long term credibility and local expertise. AONB units are, even in times of financial constraint, renowned for ‘punching well above their weight’.

The Charity works on behalf of its membership, fostering collaboration and collective action between the 300 staff of the AONB Family, the 700 elected members that support the AONB partnerships¹ and the many partners with whom we do business at the local and national levels. This strategy sets out, at a high level, how we intend to do this.

Page 47

Responding to the External Environment

Effective delivery of the Charity’s objects requires engagement with the broader external environment of governments, other national and international agencies, and with the wider environmental, social, and economic agendas. The three-year period to 2023 therefore offers continuing challenges and opportunities for the Charity and our membership.

- **Nature Recovery and Climate Change**

- Optimising opportunities for AONB partnerships¹ to help support nature recovery, mitigate climate change impact, and support effective adaptation.

¹ AONB partnership in this instance includes any management Partnership, Conservation Board, Joint Advisory Committee or Joint Committee.

- **Agriculture**
Working with governments, representative bodies, and partners to support the establishment of more nature-friendly and climate-aware farming payment systems.
- **Engagement**
Exploring new ways of sharing natural beauty with a wider and more diverse audience to improve equity of opportunity, both in terms of access to the goods and services provided by AONBs and engagement in their management. Specifically the NAAONB will support AONB partnerships¹ in their work with artists as a means of engaging and inspiring people.
- **Public Sector Reform**
Positioning the organisation to support AONB teams and partnerships¹ in the context of implementing the recommendations of the reviews of National Parks and AONBs, including the relationship with a National Landscape Service in England. In Wales, continuing support for the AONBs as part of the new National Designated Landscapes Partnership.

Structure of this Strategy

The vision, mission, strategic objectives, and key action areas provide a coherent and consistent framework from within which the Charity operates. The vision sets out the high-level purpose, the mission sets out how the vision will be achieved and the high-level strategic objectives and key actions underneath them set out how the mission will be delivered.

Vision

The vision of the Charity is that *the natural beauty of AONBs is valued and secure*.

Mission

The Charity's mission is support and develop a network of ambitious AONB partnerships¹ that have a strong collective voice and a positive impact on the places for which they care.

The NAAONB Strategic Objectives

- Support policies for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs,
- Maintain an understanding of AONBs and the issues they face,
- Advocate for AONB partnerships¹ and their teams,
- Sustain a collaborative culture across the AONB Family.

Implementing the Strategy

Key actions

1. Work with partners to support thinking on protected landscape management,

The Charity will actively seek partners with which it can collaborate to achieve its vision. It will promote a forward-thinking mindset and embody transparency, integrity, and trust in its relationship building. It will place great weight on evidence and systems thinking. It will deploy the collective knowledge and understanding of the AONB Family to help achieve shared goals.

2. Take action to achieve nature recovery and minimise climate change,

The Charity will lead on the delivery of the full suite of pledges set out in the Colchester Declaration, inspiring teamwork and commitment to delivery across the AONB Family. It will champion the important role AONBs can play in helping nature recover and reducing the negative impacts of climate change.

3. Create opportunities for people to connect with landscape,

The Charity will promote inclusivity and seek to better understand and address the challenges around diversity and inclusion for AONBs. It will actively promote the relationship between landscape and art and optimise our engagement with artists and producers in order to ensure AONBs are more accessible and more widely understood and appreciated by everyone.

4. Support AONB teams to promote sustainable agriculture,

The Charity will support the AONB Family and partners in the design and delivery of agricultural support mechanisms in AONBs. It will facilitate the high-level collaboration required to ensure support for farmers and landowners in AONBs and actively promote the potential for agricultural practices to improve the environment.

5. Build tools and opportunities to support collaboration.

The Charity will further develop its programme of collaboration, improving opportunities and skills that capture the knowledge, energy, and skillset of the AONB Family and drive collective performance. It will continue to support collective action and co-operation within our membership and work to ensure that innovative solutions are shared for maximum positive effect.

6. Develop the organisation.

The Charity will further develop its digital platform to improve collaborative opportunities, diversify its funding base and revenue streams, improve its online events, training, and development offer, and review the way it curates shared learning and understanding around protected landscape management.

In Conclusion

The potential for partnership working between non-governmental organisations, business, and government, both local and national has arguably never been greater. The challenges faced by all sectors can only be tackled effectively in collaboration with others; we need integrated solutions to deal with complex problems. The AONB designation helps facilitate this at the local level.

The Charity, in its position of oversight, provides strategic leadership, encourages collaboration, shares learning, and supports a progressive approach to delivery such that the natural beauty of AONBs is better valued and more secure at the UK level. It does this by supporting and developing a network of ambitious and impactful AONB partnerships and Conservation Boards and acting as a strong collective voice for the AONB Family.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th July 2021

AONB UNIT REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit.

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a) AONB Volunteers & Youth Rangers
- b) Appointment of Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer
- c) Wye Valley Villages Transport Plan update
- d) Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) work (Monmouthshire)
- e) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) AONB Office refurbishment

a) AONB Volunteers & Youth Rangers

Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, has been ensuring whenever possible that the AONB Volunteers and AONB Youth Ranger are out on site undertaking conservation tasks and training activities. All events are carefully risk assessed to ensure Covid restrictions are adhered in England and Wales, as criteria has varied between counties.

b) Appointment of Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer

A successful recruitment process has led to the appointment of the new Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer, funded through Welsh Government. The post holder will start in mid July. They will assist the AONB Unit in delivering activities in the Lower Wye Valley focusing on

- Habitat restoration through Nature Recovery projects, Green Infrastructure & the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR)
- Working with farmers, landowners, tourism enterprises, local communities and volunteers in and around the AONB
- Collaboration with partners including Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Monmouthshire County Council & Gwent Wildlife Trust
- Validation & promotion of a Nature Recovery Network map
- Promotion & facilitation of the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

c) Wye Valley Villages Transport Plan update

Arup have completed Phase 2 of the study which identifies and develops six key themes as the pillars of the vision for the main villages in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB.

These are:

- place-making,
- governance,
- tourism,
- landscape,
- transport and movement
- local economy.

This Stage 2 report is currently being presented to the project stakeholders, led by Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and representatives from the Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United, along with local county councillors and officers from MCC and the Wye Valley AONB. Following any modification, the Study report will then be available for public consultation. The project is an essential precursor to determining and developing capital projects to further conserve and enhance the Wye Valley AONB. The Wye Valley Villages Plan is funded by Welsh Government's AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding and by Monmouthshire County Council.

d) Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) work (Monmouthshire)

The Lower Wye Projects Officer is progressing with the various access enhancement initiatives, particularly:

- enhancements to the Wordsworth Walk around Llandogo and Cleddon Falls.
- specifying a solution to maintain the Wye Valley Walk between the Duke of Beaufort Bridge and the Monmouthshire Show Ground where there is river bank erosion.
- Monitoring the Natural Flood Management (NFM) interventions on Chapel Hill Lane at the southern end of Tintern. This pilot NFM scheme on the Unclassified County Road (UCR) was completed in April and aims to improve the lane's drainage and halt the prolonged hydraulic erosion and degradation of its fragile surface. The pilot Chapel Hill Lane scheme is funded by the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) grant.

e) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) AONB Office refurbishment

The decarbonisation and refurbishment of the AONB Office at Hadnock Road, Monmouth is progressing to First Fix stage. The AONB Office was very poorly insulated and thermally inefficient. The works will make a significant reduction to the carbon footprint of the AONB Unit. This will be measured and assessed later in the year under a separate initiative for National Parks and AONB in Wales. Both projects are supported through the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding. It is hoped that the AONB staff will be able to return to the refurbished office, Covid restrictions allowing, in September.