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27th June 2022

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 4th July, 2022 at 2.00 pm
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High
Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair.	
2.	Appointment of Vice-Chair.	
3.	Introduction and New Members.	
4.	Apologies for Absence.	
5.	Declarations of Interest.	
6.	Public Question Time.	
7.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting dated 7th March 2022.	1 - 12
7.1.	Matters arising from minutes: (i) AONB Perceptions Survey.	
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15.	Wye Valley River Festival 2022 update.	57 - 58
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16.	AONB & Partner progress reports and updates.	63 - 66
17.	Dates of next meetings: To be held at 2pm – the venue / format of the meetings to be confirmed. Monday 7th November 2022. Monday 6th March 2023 (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
G. Morgan

Herefordshire:

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

Monmouthshire:

E. Bryn
S. Garratt
D. Rooke
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

Public Information

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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.
- **Kindness:** We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 7th March, 2022 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor: A Webb (Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: C. Edwards, M. Feakins and M. Lane

Herefordshire Council

Councillors: B. Durkin, P. Symonds and Y. Watson

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillors: C. McFarling and D. Wheeler

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC – Mr. C. Evers

Herefordshire Association Local Councils – Mr. R. Gething

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

Technical Advice Officers:

Wye Valley AONB Manager – Mr. A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams

Herefordshire Council – Mr. J. Bisset

Herefordshire Council – Ms. E. Duberley

Also in attendance:

Elizabeth O'Sullivan

Bridget Vine

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 7th March, 2022 at 2.00 pm

APOLOGIES:

Councillor J. Hardwick, Councillor T. Hale, Dr. G. Peterken, Mr. R. Hesketh, Mr. R. Niblett, Ms. C. Grimstead, Mr. G. Parry and Mr. A. Taylor

1. Declarations of Interest

None received.

2. Chairperson's announcements

The Chair informed the Joint Advisory Committee that:

- Liz O'Sullivan had joined the meeting by invitation of the Chair.
- Sue Middleton had been elected to the role of verderer to the Forest of Dean on 1st March 2022. She is the first woman to be elected to this role. The Chair asked that the AONB Manager writes a letter of congratulations to Sue Middleton on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee.

3. Public Question Time

No questions received.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 1st November 2021 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

5. AONB Unit 2022/23 Work Programme

We received a report regarding the proposed outline work plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year, subject to confirmation of funding with DEFRA, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Welsh Government.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The proposed Work Programme for the AONB Unit for 2022/2023 was presented in draft form as budgets for the AONB have yet to be confirmed. The Programme is ambitious but dependent on adequate funding and resources being available.
- New AONB core funding agreements are awaited from both DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Welsh Government also has yet to confirm allocations for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. Meanwhile, various project funding bids are being prepared.

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- Dependant on funding, the AONB Unit may be able to expand slightly beyond eight full time equivalent (FTE) posts. However, currently two of those posts are vacant and in recruitment meaning capacity in the AONB Unit continues to be stretched.
- Consequently, only a draft Work Programme could be presented.
- Priorities included the potential expansion of the planning support role, shared jointly with the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership; the successful recruitment of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer to take over the running of the grant programme (in England) ; the successful recruitment of a new Community Links Officer to lead on the promotion and administration of grants through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation AONB Fund, and reinvigorate the AONB Volunteers and Youth Rangers; the development of nature recovery in the AONB and delivery of the Lower Wye Nature Networks project; the delivery of a further year of projects funded through the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme; ongoing Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management projects, particularly those linked to improving water quality in the Wye; and continuing a range of existing activities and projects; while retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.
- The draft AONB Unit core budget as presented to the AONB Steering Group is £275,860 and additional funding programmes, grants and match funding is anticipated to exceed £650,000 levered into the AONB during the year.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- With regard to the health of the River Wye, the AONB office will be working with partners throughout the Wye Catchment regarding this matter within the resources and remit of the AONB.
- It is hoped that there will be enough resources to employ a part time Planning Officer. This would allow for fuller monitoring of planning applications within the AONB.
- The AONB office recently promoted the first Wales Dark Skies Week and has been promoting the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) star count.
- The AONB Manager informed the Joint Advisory Committee that he does not know the extent of the AONB Office's resources yet for 2022/23. It is hoped that there will be sufficient uplift to employ at least a further part time post. A Farming and Protected Landscapes Officer is currently being recruited.

We resolved to endorse the draft AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023.

6. Glover Review & Government Response

We received a report regarding the Government's response to the Landscapes Review.

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Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 7th March, 2022 at 2.00 pm

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England, led by Julian Glover, was published in 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- A Written Ministerial Statement published on 24th June 2021 provided the Government's initial response to the Landscapes Review.
- In January 2022 the Government released the formal response to the Landscapes Review, indicating the Government's preferred direction for England's AONBs.
- A 12 week public consultation period on the Government's response is open until 9th April 2022 with 25 questions.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has been co-ordinating discussion and debate and collaborating with key stakeholders in preparation of a considered response to the consultation.
- The NAAONB and other environmental Non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) have noted that the Government's Response falls short of the ambitious, transformational change that Glover envisaged, which AONB teams are keen to see implemented, and which the pressures on these nationally designated landscapes demand.
- There are potential knock-on implications for AONBs in Wales and consequently the Welsh part of the AONB and the integrity of the Wye Valley AONB.
- The AONB Manager will prepare a response drawing on NAAONB commentary and other sources as directed by members.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Forest of Dean District Council has its response to the Government's response to be approved by Cabinet shortly. This information will be sent to the AONB Manager in due course.
- Some parish and town councils consider that the consultation has fallen short in its role as a consultation paper.
- Concerns were raised regarding the re-naming of AONBs as National Landscapes. It was noted that opinion is divided on this matter throughout other AONBs.
- It is understood that the Government's proposal is for the National Landscape name to be a trading name, rather than a legal name. Therefore, AONBs will remain areas of outstanding natural beauty in law but will be referred to as National Landscapes, to put them on a par with National Parks.

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- The AONB Manager welcomed having a 'sounding board' from Joint Advisory Committee Members to help prepare a response. Councillors McFarling, Wheeler, Watson and Colin Evers expressed their support to be involved in this matter.

We resolved:

- (i) to welcome the Government's Response to the Landscapes Review.
- (ii) to establish a 'sounding board' comprising of Councillors McFarling, Wheeler, Watson and Colin Evers to assist the AONB Manager in compiling a formal response to the Government's consultation, aided by commentary from the National Association for AONBs.
- (iii) to delegate the AONB Manager to submit comments on behalf of the AONB Partnership by the consultation deadline of 9th April 2022.
- (iv) to encourage individuals and partner organisations to make their own comments and submissions to the Government's consultation on the Landscapes Review.

7. Natural England LUC 'All-England Review' of potential areas

We received a report regarding Natural England's All-England Assessment and intended mapping of potential new Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other landscape designations.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- In July 2021 the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was advised of Natural England's announcement on proposals for two new AONBs and extension of two existing AONBs along with a programme to examine how more areas could be assessed for designation of their landscape.
- Natural England's 'All-England Assessment' of potential designated landscapes has now commenced, led by Land Use Consultants (LUC).
- This visionary mapping project aims to reflect the spirit of the Hobhouse Map that led to the establishment of the first National Parks & AONBs over 70 years ago.
- The Hobhouse map identified an area encompassing most of the current Wye Valley AONB and areas to the east across the Forest of Dean and south Herefordshire from Lydney and May Hill to Much Marcle and Tarrington.
- The known requests made by various interested parties relevant to the Wye Valley AONB designation are for:
 - The Wye Valley AONB to be extended up to the Marcle Ridge.
 - The Forest of Dean to be designated and AONB.

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- The whole 'Forest of Dean and Wye Valley' area of the Hobhouse map to be designated an AONB.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Liz O'Sullivan informed the Joint Advisory Committee that the two most relevant areas for extending the AONB were economic and connectivity. The Old Hobhouse area demonstrates these two issues and there is a solid argument for extending the AONB to incorporate this area.
- Concern was expressed that the Glover Review is being positioned to help implement the Government's Planning White Paper.
- In the previous year, biodiversity and wildlife in the lower Wye Valley has been negatively impacted. It was considered that we should support the ambitions of the Glover Review.
- It was considered that the Joint Advisory Committee along with Forest of Dean District Council and Herefordshire Council need to respond robustly to this review.

We resolved:

- (i) to welcome the initiation of Natural England's new landscape designation programme.
- (ii) to note the three existing local requests for AONB designation & / or extension.

8. Wye Valley AONB Villages Stage 3 Report

We received a report regarding the final Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report covering the main village in the Monmouthshire area of the AONB.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan has been a joint project between Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the four constituent Community Councils of St. Arvans, Trellech United, Devauden and Tintern.
- The catalyst for the study was road safety issues and excessive traffic speeds in many of the Monmouthshire villages in the Lower Wye Valley but the scope was widened to consider the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the communities.
- ARUP was commissioned in December 2020 by MCC to carry out this study.

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- Funding was secured from the Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme along with contributions from MCC and the Community Councils.
- A Steering Group of representatives from the four Community Councils, County Councillors, AONB Manager and MCC officers has been overseeing progress.
- The final Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report is now completed and available to download.
- The preparation of new village gateway signage is underway as an initial project.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- It is a good scheme but it does not take in the English side of the A466 through the Wye Valley due the Welsh funding constraints.
- The benefits of its success need to be assessed with a view to replicating it on the English side of the A466 making the scheme integral to the whole of the AONB.

We resolved:

- (i) to endorse the Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report and continue engagement with the local stakeholders in delivering the Plan.
- (ii) to encourage the respective Community Councils to adopt the Plan and provide representatives to sit on the Delivery Group.

9. WyeNAC nominee

We received a report to nominate a representative from the Wye Valley AONB Partnership to the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (Wye NAC).

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Environment Agency (EA) is responsible for navigation on the navigable part of the non-tidal Rivers Wye and Lugg.
- The Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (Wye NAC) is serviced by EA, who require appointments to Wye NAC to be reviewed every three years.
- The AONB Manager has represented the AONB Partnership on the Wye NAC since its establishment.
- Several other members of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) sit on the Wye NAC in other capacities.

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- The JAC needs to consider who should represent it on Wye NAC for the next three years.

We resolved to nominate the Wye Valley AONB Manager, Andrew Blake, to continue to represent the Wye Valley AONB Partnership on the Wye NAC.

10. Farming in Protected Landscapes

We received a report regarding progress of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- Each AONB and National Park in England has an allocation from DEFRA to administer the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme for farmers and land managers to provide benefits for nature, climate, people and places.
- The Local Assessment Panel meets regularly to determine applications for Farming in Protected Landscapes grants and has approved the full allocation of funds for 2021/22.
- The recruitment of a Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer is underway to assist farmers and land managers applying to the programme.

We resolved to endorse the allocations of the Local Assessment Panel for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

11. Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in AONBs

We received a report regarding the Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in AONBs in England, prepared with Historic England and the National Association for AONBs.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) has been working with Historic England to revise a previous accord on the Historic Environment in AONBs.
- Endorsement by each AONB Partnership is sought before the Joint Statement is launched later in 2022.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Manager would make enquires regarding why this statement is solely England based and not British based and report back.

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- The Joint Statement is missing the inclusion of heritage and the historic environment and its protection in the planning system, particularly with planning applications.

We resolved to endorse the Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in AONBs in England, prepared with Historic England and the National Association for AONBs.

12. Wye Valley River Festival update

We received a report regarding the progress of the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company (CIC) with the Wye Valley River Festival 2022 scheduled for 27th May - 5th June 2022.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) supported the establishment of the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company (CIC) to take forward the Wye Valley River Festival.
- The Wye Valley River Festival CIC has been successful with various grant applications to enable it to plan for a Wye Valley River Festival 2022 on 27th May - 5th June 2022.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Team and the CIC were congratulated for their work in this matter.
- The Wye Valley River Festival will coincide with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and will be able to make use of infrastructure that is already in place.

We noted the report.

13. AONB Management Plan - Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

We received a report regarding the context of Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services in the AONB Management Plan 2021-2026, in response to the Public Questions raised in November 2021.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- A number of questions were posed in the Public Question item to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meeting on 1st November 2021 relating to Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.
- The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan was adopted by the Local Authorities in early 2021 following staged reviews and public consultation between 2018 and 2021.

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- Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services are adopted terms and concepts of the British Government that are referenced in the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.
- In Wales the concepts of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 along with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) are the defining principles.
- The majority of land in the Wye Valley AONB is privately owned over which the JAC has no direct control. Forestry England and Natural Resources Wales manage the Public Forest Estate in their respective countries. Third sector organisations, particularly the Wildlife Trusts and Woodland Trusts also own reserves that are key areas of environmental value.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- There is a need to keep a watching brief regarding this matter, in particular, issues around carbon tax, carbon off-setting and biodiversity net gain.
- Concern was expressed that natural capital is being used as a policy tool.

We noted the report.

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

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

- AONB 50th Anniversary programme.
- Nature Recovery Plan.
- Undergrounding Powerlines.
- Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects.
- Natural Flood Management & Riparian Tree work (England only).
- Peatland Restoration – Cleddon Bog SSSI.
- Youth Rangers & AONB Volunteers.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, had left the AONB Unit in December 2021 after 13 years of Service. The Joint Advisory Committee wished her well for the future.

We noted the report.

15. **Dates of next meetings:**

Monday 4th July 2022 at 2.00pm.

Monday 7th November 2022 at 2.00pm.

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Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Meeting on Monday, 7th March, 2022 at 2.00 pm

Subject to Covid-19 restrictions the meetings will be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.

Before the meeting concluded the following points were noted:

- A Heritage Strategy is being prepared in Monmouthshire with support from the Heritage Fund and is primarily a MonLife Heritage Strategy.
- Herefordshire MPs have been raising the state of the River Wye in the House of Commons. There are now more resources going into the Environment Agency and Natural England to focus on the River Wye.
- Bridget Vine, a member of the public, informed the Joint Advisory Committee that she is a citizen scientist and volunteer undertaking water sampling measurements on the River Wye. She referred to a letter sent to Minister for the Environment Rebecca Pow MP regarding the state of the River Wye. She agreed to forward a copy of the letter to the AONB Manager.

The meeting ended at 4.03 pm.

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VENUE AND FORMAT OF THE JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Purpose

To determine the venue and format of future meetings of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

Recommendations

That the JAC make appropriate arrangements for the future meetings to be accessible in a hybrid format.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is established jointly under a formal Agreement between the four constituent local authorities.
- The Agreement states that the JAC Clerk is Monmouthshire County Council and JAC meetings are held in Coleford unless or until the Committee decides to make other arrangements.
- Meetings fall under the jurisdiction of the law of the land in which they are held.
- Post-Covid, Council meetings held in England are required to meet face to face, whereas in Wales Councils must give participants the option of attending remotely.
- The English local authorities tend to only have the technology installed for hybrid meetings in small meeting rooms.
- Monmouthshire County Council have the technology for hosting hybrid Full Council meetings at County Hall, Usk.
- Several other AONB Partnerships in England hold hybrid meetings where the technology exists, often purchased by the AONB Partnership.
- The AONB Unit could investigate the purchase, or hire, of bespoke equipment for hybrid JAC and other meetings as necessary, alternatively the JAC could meet in Usk.

Reasons

The Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is a joint committee of Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council. The JAC was set up in 1972 and in its current form governed by an Agreement between the four constituent local authorities made in 2000 and varied in 2009.

The Agreement says “Until such time as the Committee may decide to make other arrangements the Chief Executive Officer of Monmouthshire County Council shall act as

Clerk of the Committee”.... “The meetings of the Committee shall be convened by the Clerk of the Committee and the said meetings shall be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford or such other place or places as the Committee may direct”.

The Forest of Dean Council chamber in Coleford was originally chosen as the JAC venue as it is reasonably central geographically to the AONB and therefore fairly convenient for all JAC members to access. Other ‘hosing’ arrangements for the AONB Partnership are shared between the local authorities partners, notably Herefordshire Council being the treasurer for the AONB Unit, and AONB staff being variously employed by Herefordshire, Monmouthshire & Forest of Dean District Councils.

During the pandemic the JAC met virtually, as everybody else did, enabled by emergency legislation and the adoption of platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. In England the emergency legislation has been removed and now English authorities are required to meet face to face. Consequently, in England any members of a committee wishing to vote need to be in the physical room. In Wales different rules apply and Councils must give participants the option of attending and voting remotely.

The cross-border nature of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee creates a potential conundrum.

Implications

Aside from pandemic control, remote attendance at meetings is recognised as a way of reducing the carbon footprint of organisations, facilitating reduced travel requirements. However, the social and networking benefits of face to face meetings are also acknowledged.

Differences now exist between the 2 countries over whether Council meetings need to be hybrid or face to face. If the meeting is held in Wales then participants have to be given the option of attending remotely as long as they can see/hear and be seen/heard. If it is held in England then it has to be face to face as per pre-Covid laws. It doesn’t matter where the participants are from – the law applies geographically. So if the meeting is held in Usk, participants from both England and Wales can choose whether to attend in person or not. If it is held in Coleford, then it has to happen face to face. However, as an ‘advisory’ body, it is not entirely clear how strictly the legislation applies to the JAC. But under the JAC Agreement “meetings shall be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford or such other place or places as the Committee may direct”.

The Forest of Dean Council chamber in Coleford is not set up to hold hybrid meetings, as required of English councils. However the technology exists in smaller rooms and could be bought and installed (or hired) as necessary. Regulations may change in England and the District Council may be required to offer hybrid meetings in the Council Chamber. The same is likely to be the case with Herefordshire Council and Gloucestershire County Council.

Hybrid meetings can be hosted in Monmouthshire County Hall at Usk which has remote attendance functionality. However this would be over 14 miles from the AONB Office, whereas Coleford is under 6 miles. It would most likely require a longer journey for any

member from England wishing to attend in person. Under current circumstances Councillors from the English authorities may be expected to attend in person, which would seem to negate any carbon benefits of holding hybrid meetings in a more distant location.

Several other AONB Partnerships in England have purchased the necessary equipment to host hybrid meetings. It appears they are ones that have tended to use &/or rotate meetings around their AONBs using Village Halls & Community Centres, rather than local authority Council Chambers. However, it may be worth investigating whether purchase, or hire, of such equipment would enable the JAC to meet in a hybrid manner whether in Coleford or another relatively local, appropriately sized venue.

It is not considered proportionate at this stage to completely review and renegotiate the JAC Agreement as a long term solution. But it is for the Committee to direct where and in what manner the meetings should be held; the preferred future format and venue of meetings.

Currently, the fact is that if the JAC were held in Usk it can be done as a hybrid meeting, and if it is held in Coleford then it has to be face to face because they don't have the equipment installed for hybrid functionality. Irrespective of the legislation, the limiting factor on hybrid meetings is availability of the appropriate technology. If the Committee determines to meet in a hybrid manner in future, then a viable solution will be arranged for the next JAC, in consultation with the clerk and the local authorities.

Background

In 2018 the JAC undertook a detailed review of governance processes and structures against the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales (2017). The review identified a number of aspects of 'what we do well' and 20 recommendations proposed to address the findings of 'what we could do better'. These did not recommend any significant or radical changes to the governance arrangements but were mostly small and/or administrative changes to procedures. However more resources and capacity were identified as being needed to fully deliver all the recommendations. There are further governance proposals in the Glover Review which would augment these recommendations if enacted in England.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th July 2022

AONB UNIT WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023

Purpose

To seek members' approval for the finalised AONB Unit work programme for this financial year, following confirmation of funding from DEFRA, NRW and Welsh Government.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the finalised Wye Valley AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023

Key Issues

- The proposed Wye Valley AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023 was presented in draft and endorsed at the last meeting, due to budgets for the AONB not having been confirmed.
- New AONB core funding allocations have been offered by DEFRA and Welsh Government for 2022-2025 and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for 2022-2024. Welsh Government have also confirmed allocations for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme for 2022-2025.
- Various project funding bids have also been confirmed covering this financial year.
- The new Community Links Officer and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer have been recruited and both start in the coming weeks.
- The medium term funding has also enabled consolidation of the Lower Wye Projects Officer and Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer posts. The shared AONB Planning Officer with the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership is also being proceeded. This will take the AONB Unit up to 7.3FTE.
- The finalised Wye Valley AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023. An estimated percentage of each staff member's time on each work programme activity is included. Activities are also assessed for impacts of any potential on-going implications from Covid-19.
- The AONB Unit operating budget for 2022/23 is £342,540 with an additional £1.1million of project funding, delegated grants and leveraged match funding during the year.
- This enables an ambitious work programme focused on the delivery of the AONB Management Plan and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

Reasons

Both Welsh & UK governments have acknowledged the need to improve funding for AONBs. The Wye Valley AONB Unit has received multi-year funding agreements from DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The DEFRA allocation included a 14.7%

increase on last year's offer and the NRW reinstated/reversed the 7% cut made last year. Welsh Government also confirm a Revenue funding allocation along with the delegated Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grant and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme.

Overall the AONB Unit business plan, based on the Work Programme, focuses on optimising the resources available to address climate action and nature recovery while maximising the benefits for the local communities, the local economy and the outstanding landscape. Best use is made of opportunities for collaboration and maintaining a level of flexibility and capacity to lever in funding and resources wherever possible.

Implications

The consolidation of medium-term core funding for the AONB Unit enables an operating budget for 2022/23 of £342,540. The Work Programme is also facilitated by additional project funding, delegated grants and leveraged match funding which is expected to exceed £1.1million for the year.

With the AONB Unit getting up to a full complement of staff, equalling 7.3FTE, this enables an ambitious work programme to be delivered, focused on the AONB Management Plan and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

The Work Programme is augmented by projects and partnership initiatives with funding and grants from a variety of sources. For example the Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer helps deliver the Lower Wye Nature Networks project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Nature Networks Fund. There are a range of projects funded through the Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. Delegated grant schemes, particularly DEFRA's Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) programme and Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) bring in significant match funding from applicants, adding value to the core AONB activities and leveraging investment into the AONB.

Long term security of funding for the AONB Unit and future AONB work programmes will depend on the way in which both DEFRA and Welsh Government progress recommendations in the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in England and Wales about appropriate purposes, powers and resources for AONBs.

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
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AONB Unit Initiatives / activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs 	AONB Budget £ <i>[nonAONB£]</i> Key Staff %	Outcomes AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives <i>[NRW South East Area Statement outcomes:</i> <i>Outcome A - Linking Our Landscapes</i> <i>Outcome B - Climate Ready Gwent</i> <i>Outcome C - Healthy Active Connected</i> <i>Outcome D - Ways of Working]</i>	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when [Covid RAG]
Conservation and enhancement of landscape quality, character and distinctiveness, and the sustainable management of natural resources.				
AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise and promote Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Monitor use of Management Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries and by stakeholders 	1,500 AM 4% SPO 4%	WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	3.e) 5.a) 5.b) 5.c) 5.d) 5.e) 5.f) #down-loads	Q1-3 Q4 ●
AONB Planning & Development Control Review contract for Planning Advice support jointly with Malvern Halls AONB Partnership. Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members 	~ SPO 75% AM 10%	WV-D1 Ensure a consistent and coherent framework of planning policies relating to the AONB is fully reflected in the statutory land use planning documents and their effectiveness monitored WV-D2 Encourage and support high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage, landscaping and Green Infrastructure in all developments, including Permitted Development, to ensure greater sustainability and decarbonisation, and that they complement, conserve and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and benefit or enhance the natural environment WV-D3 Resist inappropriate development which will create a persistent and dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and/or if it damages Special Qualities in the AONB, including through high levels of noise and/or light pollution or any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or other sites designated as environmentally important WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	5.a) 5.b) 5.c) 5.d) 5.e)	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem resilience, including land, water, and woodland / forest management, including developing sustainable agricultural practice.				
Nature Recovery & Landscape connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop AONB Nature Recovery and Species Action plans to focus priority areas for habitat creation and connectivity particularly between woodland, species rich 	4000 <i>[£264,525]</i> NRO 50% PO 40%	WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features WV-L2 Encourage and enhance appropriate landscape scale and green infrastructure	1.a) 1.b) 1.c) 3.a) 3.b)	Q1-3 Q4 ●



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<p>grassland, riparian habitats, orchards and veteran trees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Species Action Plans for Orchards (Noble Chafer), River (Water Crowfoot), Woodland (Woodland Butterfly assemblage), Grassland (Bumblebee assemblage), and Hedgehogs. Manage the Lower Wye Nature Networks Project with National Lottery Heritage Fund and Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust. Continue Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) initiatives working with local land owners, managers & stakeholders Manage control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) particularly Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and American Skunk Cabbage through Wye Invasive Species Programme (WISP) Promotion of Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Riparian Trees initiatives Organise regular volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves Host Woolhope Dome workshop and collaborate over outputs and outcomes Collaborate and support landscape connectivity initiatives including 'Wye to Wyre'. Investigate opportunities for the National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & landowners 	<p>DO 18% CLO 15% IO 10% AM 5% FAO 3% FO 2%</p>	<p>action by all particularly on consolidating ecosystem services and positively contributing to habitat connectivity that allows wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change</p> <p>WV-L4 Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change</p> <p>WV-B2 Encourage and support measures that contribute to the management of all statutory designated sites and County local/key wildlife sites so that they are in favourable condition and within robust ecological networks</p> <p>WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity</p> <p>WV-B4 Identify species and diseases considered to be detrimental to the biodiversity value of the AONB and encourage their monitoring, management and, where appropriate, their control</p> <p>WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB</p> <p>WV-W3 Support the development of employment and skills and markets for local timber and woodland produce</p> <p>WV-W4 Support the monitoring, management and where appropriate, control of diseases, pests and other threats, which may cause substantial mortality in tree species and woodland habitats and seek to mitigate the landscape impact of any loss</p> <p>WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan</p> <p>WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme</p> <p><i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i></p>	<p>3.d) 4.a) 4.b) 5.a) 6.c) 6.d) 6.e)</p>	



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue liaison with Herefordshire Meadows Network, Monmouthshire Meadows and Parish Grassland Project. Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB particularly those linked to improving water quality in the Wye. 				
Climate change adaptation, mitigation, and carbon management, including coastal and marine issues.				
Climate Emergency Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare & implement action plan from Carbon Neutral Designated Landscapes Organisation assessment Develop action plan from Wales Designated Landscapes Carbon Footprint Programme Continue Peatland Restoration initiatives particularly at Cleddon Bog SSSI Support grassland sequestration investigations with Herefordshire Meadows and Floodplain Meadows Partnership 	3,000 <i>[£16,000]?</i> DO 8% PO 5% NRO 5% CLO 3% AM 2%	WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features WV-L2 Encourage and enhance appropriate landscape scale and green infrastructure action by all particularly on consolidating ecosystem services and positively contributing to habitat connectivity that allows wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change WV-L4 Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change WV-B2 Encourage and support measures that contribute to the management of all statutory designated sites and County local/key wildlife sites so that they are in favourable condition and within robust ecological networks WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity WV-W4 Support the monitoring, management and where appropriate, control of diseases, pests and other threats, which may cause substantial mortality in tree species and woodland habitats and seek to mitigate the landscape impact of any loss WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through	1.a) 4.a) 4.b) 5.a) 6.c) 6.d)	Q1-3 Q4 ●

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exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas [Outcomes A, B, C & D]				
Undergrounding Continue working with Western Power & local communities to identify power-lines within the AONB suitable for undergrounding, via Western Power South Wales Protected Landscape Undergrounding group and the West Midlands Undergrounding group.	[c£100,000] DO 8%	WV-U2 Encourage further under-grounding of existing and proposed power and telephone lines, where these do not conflict with any SAC, and resist new overhead lines where skylines or important views are affected WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme [Outcomes A, B & D]	1.d) 4.a)	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Access, recreation and sustainable tourism for health and well-being				
Wye Valley Walk • Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership • Launch new website www.wyevalleywalk.org including replacement of Passport scheme • Continuing Piercefield Walk enhancements with Gwent Wildlife Trust and landowner • Pursue creation of Friends of Wye Valley Walk • Audit & co-ordinate refresh of way-marking • Collate route counter data & review options • Review Cicerone Route Guide • Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge and Redbrook Bridge. • Progress Wyesham riverbank revetment • Review & republish 'Easy Access' walks.	2,000 [£10,000] IO 10% CLO 7% AM 3% FAO 3% PO 3%	WV-S1 Encourage and promote the AONB as a sustainable tourism destination with forms of tourism activity and development that are based on the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Special Qualities and features of the AONB WV-S2 Promote the improvement of the visitor experience, particularly at the most heavily visited sites, and facilitate the opportunity for visitors to explore and discover other appropriate but less used locations throughout the AONB, thus spreading demand and balancing pressures across sites where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs WV-R1 Encourage and promote recreational pursuits and responsible access compatible with the AONB purposes, particularly linking sustainable transport and town and village facilities. Associated development and new access to land should be subject to WV-D2 & -D3 WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas [Outcomes A, B, C & D]	1.c) 3.a) 3.d) 4.a) 6.c) 6.d) #counter data #web-stats	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Supporting Welsh language, culture, and the historic environment.				
Overlooking the Wye legacy Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme • Continuing Cleddon Falls & Wordsworth	[£25,000] PO 5% FAO 5% DO 3%	WV-H1 Initiate and encourage schemes, policy development, advice and sympathetic management through partnerships and positive action to conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment, in conjunction with landowners, national agencies and other relevant organisations WV-H3 Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage and historic	1.c) 2.a) 2.b) 2.c) 3.a)	Q1-3 Q4 ●



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk enhancements with landowner(s) Review & reprint of Walks leaflets Audit and repair & maintenance of Overlooking the Wye infrastructure 	IO 3% AM 2%	environment WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas <i>[Outcomes A, C & D]</i>	3.b) 4.a) 4.b) 6.c) 6.d)	
Offa's Dyke Collaboratory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for future cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological research and investigation into the landscape significance of the 8th century monument Participate in Collaboratory conferences, meetings and events Support community based research and events. 	~ AM 2%	WV-H1 Initiate and encourage schemes, policy development, advice and sympathetic management through partnerships and positive action to conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment, in conjunction with landowners, national agencies and other relevant organisations <i>[Outcome D]</i>	1.c) 2.a) 2.b) 2.c) 3.a) 4.a) 4.b) 6.d) 6.e)	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Cross-cutting themes				
Communications & social media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular social media (SM) posts e.g. Facebook, Instagram and twitter On-going updating and management of www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk. Regular publication of on-line AONB newsletter 'Picturesque' Revise and publish AONB Map & Guide 	4,000 IO 45% PO 3% FAO 3%	WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	3.f) #SM stats	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Outreach Activities Promote the AONB through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks/presentations to local groups Stands at relevant shows. Promote, sponsor &/or lead guided walks, events, activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB 	1,400 IO 8% CLO 5% PO 4% NRO 4%	WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape WV-E4 Raise awareness of the value of the AONB and the importance of retaining a high quality environment in attracting and retaining entrepreneurs, relocating businesses, inward investment and skilled personnel WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and	3.a) 3.b) 3.c) 3.d)	Q1-3 Q4 ●

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Wye Valley River Festival 2022 		businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>		
Youth Rangers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review programme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage Train new Leaders and scope for next Cohort, as required/appropriate 	1,000 CLO 15% NRO 4%	WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	3.a) 3.b) 3.c) 3.d) 4.a)	Q3 Q4 ●
Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues in late September 2022 Run AONB Partnership Seminar/forum in winter Continue implementation of recommendations from AONB Good Governance Review 	1,600 AM 18% DO 4% FAO 3%	WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB WV-P2 Sustain and enhance local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit to add value to delivery of the AONB purposes WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB WV-P7 Encourage partners to be champions and ambassadors for the AONB in their contact with other interests, and ensure those interests recognise and consider the Management Plan and AONB work programme when relating to the area <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	3.b)	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Local Partnerships & Collaboration Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wye Catchment Partnership Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism 	~ AM 8% DO 8%	WV-R2 Assist the resolving of conflicts, real and perceived, between recreation, conservation and local interests, including other economic activities, and between different recreation interest groups in relation to the purposes of the AONB designation WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement	4.a) 4.b) 6.c) 6.d)	Q1-3 Q4 ●

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Association, South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire and Visit Herefordshire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley River Festival CIC Advisory Board Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership Gwent Green Grid Partnership Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Support Town, Parish & Community Councils with advice & guidance as appropriate 		the AONB Management Plan WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB WV-P7 Encourage partners to be champions and ambassadors for the AONB in their contact with other interests, and ensure those interests recognise and consider the Management Plan and AONB work programme when relating to the area <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>		
National Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and engage with the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and attend appropriate seminars & events Work with Welsh Government and Landscape Wales (National Designated Landscapes Partnership) and other stakeholders, including NRW & NAAONB Work with DEFRA and others in progressing the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England, including Natural England & NAAONB 	~ AM 8% DO 4%	WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate <i>[Outcome D]</i>	4.b) 6.b) 6.c)	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS and State of the AONB data, Complete Phase 1 Habitat Survey mapping & digitising Progress Nature Recovery Network map & ground-truthing 	# DO 7% NRO 5% IO 5% FO 5% CLO 3% FAO 3%	WV-L4 Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change WV-B5 Support the identification and monitoring of key indicator species and priority species and habitats, in partnership with conservation organisations, relevant individuals and the Local Biological Record Centres WV-H2 Promote establishment of baseline data to monitor change and improve the local databases of historic landscape assessments, conservation areas, locally important buildings, buildings at risk, ancient trees, heritage features and sites in the	1-6	Q1-3 Q4 ●

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AONB Unit Initiatives / activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs 	AONB Budget £ <i>[nonAONB£]</i> Key Staff %	Outcomes AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives <i>[NRW South East Area Statement outcomes: Outcome A - Linking Our Landscapes Outcome B - Climate Ready Gwent Outcome C - Healthy Active Connected Outcome D - Ways of Working]</i>	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when [Covid RAG]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities to update heritage, tourism and recreation monitoring. Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Undertake Fixed point photography across the AONB 	PO 3% SPO 3% AM 2%	AONB in conjunction with Local Planning Authorities, local archaeological trusts and individuals WV-S3 Ensure adequate provision of co-ordinated tourism data and visitor engagement to inform strategic and practical decision making on conserving or enhancing the Special Qualities of the AONB WV-P8 Develop and co-ordinate the acquisition and analysis of data across the AONB, to inform priority setting, planning, implementation and monitoring of change affecting the natural beauty, including developing a better understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on the landscape of the Wye Valley AONB and supporting mitigation and adaptation actions <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>		
Funding and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare grant bids and claims for NRW, Welsh Government and DEFRA, and other funding bodies as required. Continue pursuing funding and develop opportunities for external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects Develop fundraising campaign for HCF Wye Valley AONB Fund 	~ FAO 45% AM 8% DO 7% PO 3% CLO 2%	WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB WV-P2 Sustain and enhance local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit to add value to delivery of the AONB purposes WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	6.a) 6.b) 6.c) 6.d) 6.e)	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Work placements Support the needs of student placements/group projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities 	~ all	WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	3.a) 3.c)	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Delegated Grant Programmes				
Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice & guidance, as directed by DEFRA, to farmers and land managers to develop applications to help deliver bigger and better outcomes under the themes of 	<i>[£220,110 + c£100k match]</i> FO 75% DO 16% FAO 8% AM 3%	WV-L5 Support measures which increase public awareness and appreciation of the natural beauty and importance of the Wye Valley AONB WV-F1 Encourage farmers and landowners to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve or enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB WV-F2 Influence policy on, and encourage the maximum uptake of, agri-environment and other appropriate schemes, including support for small-holders, where they	1.a) 5.f) 6.b) 6.c) 6.d) #DEFRA	Q1-3 Q4 ●



AONB Unit Initiatives / activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs 	AONB Budget £ <i>[nonAONB£]</i> Key Staff %	Outcomes AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives <i>[NRW South East Area Statement outcomes:</i> <i>Outcome A - Linking Our Landscapes</i> <i>Outcome B - Climate Ready Gwent</i> <i>Outcome C - Healthy Active Connected</i> <i>Outcome D - Ways of Working]</i>	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when [Covid RAG]
Climate, Nature, People and Place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service the Local Assessment Panel in determining applications and allocating funding. Manage delegated grants (<£5k) Administer grant payments and monitor and report to DEFRA Consider using the AONB Farming Award to present to a notable project. 		progress the conservation or enhancement of the natural beauty, biodiversity, historic environment and Special Qualities of the AONB, particularly through Catchment Sensitive Farming and mixed farming of resilient, sustainable and low-GHG emission systems WV-F3 Identify good agricultural practices that are appropriate to the challenges facing the farmers of the AONB and disseminate through networks, partnerships and training. WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB WV-F5 Promote a wider understanding of the value of farming to the landscape and economy of the AONB WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape WV-E2 Raise awareness of good practice and encourage local businesses in the AONB to take opportunities to become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, particularly in ways that sustain the natural beauty of the area <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>		
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver & manage Welsh Government capital investment scheme focussed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting Biodiversity and nature recovery Accelerating Decarbonisation Supporting Resilient and Green communities Delivering Sustainable tourism. including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan implementation Wye Valley Walk enhancements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piercefield Permissive Path 	[£175,000 + £30k <i>Collaborative Projects]</i> PO 20%, AM 15% FAO 8% NRO 8% DO 7% CLO 7% IO 3%	WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features WV-C1 Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment, decarbonisation and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 WV-S2 Promote the improvement of the visitor experience, particularly at the most heavily visited sites, and facilitate the opportunity for visitors to explore and discover other appropriate but less used locations throughout the AONB, thus spreading demand and balancing pressures across sites where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs WV-S4 Encourage the mitigation and/or reduction of the adverse impacts of existing tourism activity and attractions, particularly where they are concentrated around certain locations or sites, and/or those that fall outside the aims of conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Special Qualities and features of the AONB and decarbonisation.	1.a) 3.b) 3.d) 4.a) 5.a) 6.c) 6.d) #WG	Q1-3 Q4 ●



AONB Unit Initiatives / activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs 	AONB Budget £ <i>[nonAONB£]</i> Key Staff %	Outcomes AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives <i>[NRW South East Area Statement outcomes: Outcome A - Linking Our Landscapes Outcome B - Climate Ready Gwent Outcome C - Healthy Active Connected Outcome D - Ways of Working]</i>	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when [Covid RAG]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wyesham Riverbank revetment Engagement in collaborative projects across multiple Designated Landscapes Wales Dark Skies 		Highest priority will be given to addressing the issues in the Symonds Yat and Tintern areas WV-R4 Assist in identifying gaps in access and recreational provision, including for under-represented and minority groups, and work with appropriate bodies and stakeholders to support and promote access enhancements and improved access for all, where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>		
Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of SDF to potential applicants Assist potential applicants with application process and project development Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating SDF funds. Manage delegated grants and Landscape & Biodiversity Enhancement Grants (<£3k) Training for SDF Assessment Panel members Administration of grant scheme and reporting to Welsh Government 	<i>[£100,000 + c£80k match]</i> CLO 20% NRO 10% FAO 8% AM 3% IO 3% PO 3%	WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity WV-C1 Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment, decarbonisation and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	1.a) 3.a) 3.c) 3.d) 4.b) 5.a) 6.c) 6.d) 6.e) #WG	Q1-3 Q4 ●
Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Wye Valley AONB Fund with HCF to potential applicants Assist potential applicants with application process and project development Collate applications for the SDF Assessment Panel and liaise with HCF Service SDF Assessment Panel recommending allocations to HCF. 	<i>[c£10k + c£10k match]</i> CLO 8% AM 2%	WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity WV-C1 Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment, decarbonisation and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 <i>[Outcomes A, B, C & D]</i>	1.a) 3.a) 3.d) 4.b) 6.c) 6.d) 6.e)	Q1-3 Q4 ●

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ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To present the annual report figures for 2021/22 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 2021/22.

Key Issues

- The 2021/22 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 £16 for every £1 of local authority contribution during 2021/22.

Reasons

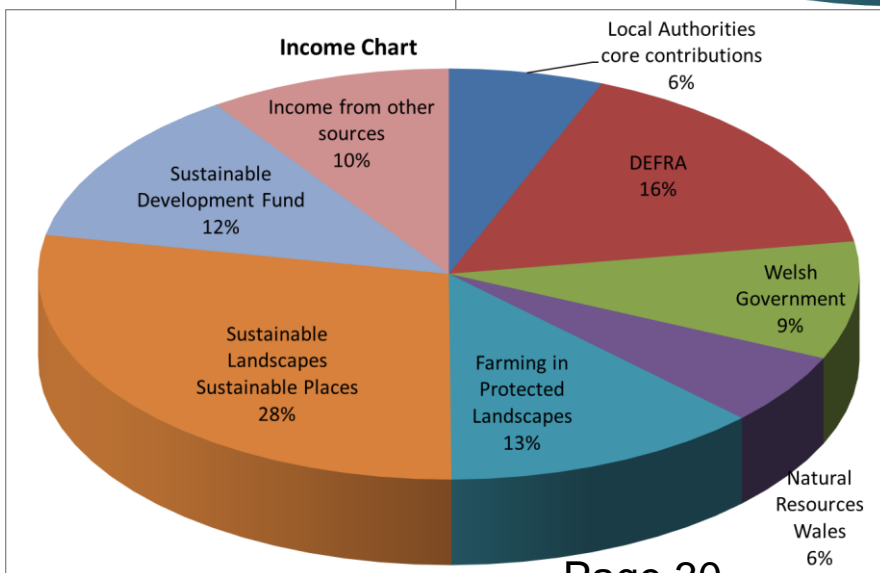
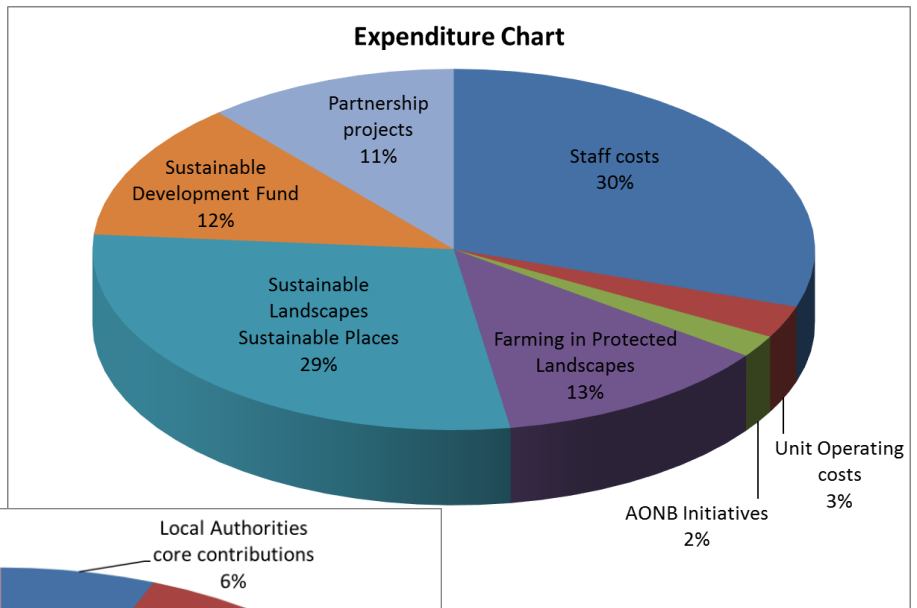
The Annual Work Programme Report for the AONB Unit is usually presented to the July JAC. However the Report is not yet complete due to other work commitments. The Work Programme Report will be finalised and presented to DEFRA, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the JAC at next meeting in November.

Implications

There have been a number of challenges in 2021/22 including the obvious on-going disruption caused by the Covid lockdowns and restrictions. However, there were some significant achievements too, that will be outlined in the Annual Report for the AONB Unit Work Programme. The Lower Wye Project Officer co-ordinated further Japanese Knotweed control and more farm plans were delivered by the seconded Catchment Advisor. Natural Flood Management (NFM) and riparian trees works were funded on a number of landholdings. A Lower Wye Valley Nature Recovery Officer was recruited. The Lower Wye Nature Networks bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was successful. AONB volunteers and Youth Rangers continued to meet whenever possible, until sadly the Community Links Officer left in December. The Monmouthshire Wye Valley AONB Villages study progressed with Arup. The AONB 50th Anniversary programme concluded with regular 50@50 Walks and the What is Natural Beauty? symposium.

The overall turnover of the AONB Unit increased in 2021/22, mostly accounted for by the income and expenditure of the DEFRA Farming in Protected Landscape programme and the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places funding. The leverage of the AONB Partnership in 2021/22 means that for every £1 of local authority contribution, the AONB Unit has brought in over £16.

Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts	2020/21	2021/22
Expenditure	£	£
Staff costs	206,732	243,843
Unit Operating costs	20,623	23,260
AONB Initiatives	18,055	15,970
Farming in Protected Landscapes	~	96,525
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	194,700	233,000
Sustainable Development Fund	100,000	100,000
Partnership projects	56,162	91,525
TOTAL	596,272	804,123
Income		
Local Authorities core contributions	49,002	49,182
Defra AONB grant	137,645	132,443
Welsh Government	~	75,000
Natural Resources Wales Grant	49,600	45,500
Farming in Protected Landscapes	~	96,525
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	194,700	227,500
Sustainable Development Fund	100,000	100,000
Income from other sources	65,324	77,973
TOTAL	596,272	804,123



AONB PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL STUDY TOUR

Purpose

To endorse the date and outline programme for the Annual AONB Partnership Study Tour.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Note the date of Friday 23rd September 2022 for the Study Tour and encourage a good attendance, at £20 each.
- B. Invite representatives from our neighbouring Shropshire Hills and Malvern Hills AONB Partnerships and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and other appropriate partners.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour has not been held since 2019.
- This year the intention is to revive the Tour, to be held on Friday 23rd September.
- The programme is still being finalised but will focus predominantly on projects and management issues in the part of the AONB around Ross-on-Wye and south Herefordshire.
- Initial invitations for expressions of interest to attend will be sent out shortly.
- Invitations could be extended to representatives from our neighbouring Designated Landscapes and other appropriate partner organisations in the interest of sharing good practice and broadening collaboration.

Reasons

The Annual Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour is hosted by the JAC and pre-Covid had a good reputation as both an information exchange and networking opportunity, with good attendance from the wider AONB Partnership. The invitation to attend 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 and around the AONB.

Implications

The date of 23rd September is proposed for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour because there appear to be no conflicting council meetings of the four constituent local authorities. In the interests of wider collaboration invitations will be made to other appropriate partner organisations and neighbouring Designated Landscapes; including the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, the Malvern Hills AONB and Shropshire Hills Partnerships, the

National Association for AONBs, Welsh Government's Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group and DEFRA's Landscape & Access Unit. In most recent years the Tour comprised of 2 mini-buses, driven by AONB staff, and there is the capacity to provide a 3rd mini-bus.

The programme for the Tour is still being finalised, but will include visiting one or two farm projects in receipt of Farming in Protected Landscapes funding, some river catchment and water quality issues and other initiatives and management issues in the area around Ross-on-Wye.

The event reaches a wide audience of AONB partners and interested parties and always proves to be very popular and informative for those who attend. Lunch and transport will be included in the total cost of £20 per person.

Background

Each year up to 2019 the JAC hosted the Annual Study Tour.

In 2019 a total of 28 people attended the annual AONB Partnership Tour which focused predominantly on the Monmouthshire part of the AONB. The tour visited a range of sites primarily associated with the Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) Project. It also included the 'heart in the landscape' photo-opportunity in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

In 2018, 29 people attended the Tour, which 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 at Sollers Hope; the Canwood Gallery & Sculpture Park at Checkley; Haugh Wood; Ballingham Court Farm – 3x AONB Farming Award winners; Tresseck Campsite at Hoarwithy and the Duchy of Cornwall's Harewood Park Estate.

The 2017, 29 people attended Tour visiting sites between Ross-on-Wye and Lydbrook. The Tour visited the riverside at Ross, Goodrich Castle, Coppett Hill Common, Brelston Green and Lydbrook Bridge.

AONB CLIMATE ACTION

Purpose

To seek members support for the Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Endorse the signing of the Statement of Commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action.
- B. Welcome the Carbon Audits of the Wye Valley AONB Unit and wider landscape and the development of actions to achieve the target of Net Zero Carbon emissions.

Key Issues

- Climate change is a major challenge for society and the environment and a key priority for the conservation and enhancement of our National Landscapes.
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation requires collaborative action, working with partners, stakeholders, land managers and local communities to multiply the capacity and impact of individual and collective activity.
- AONB teams and partnerships must now more than ever confirm their leading role and ambition in addressing this challenge.
- AONB staff from across the country, supported by the National Association for AONBs, have created a collaborative Climate Action Framework and Toolkit with a programme of five workstreams.
- The Wye Valley AONB Unit has undertaken a carbon audit of operations with a plan of action to help achieve the target of Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2030.
- An audit of the organic carbon stocks and stores across the whole AONB as a landscape has estimated that there may be up to 5million tonnes of carbon stored in the AONB.
- A consumption-based assessment has been conducted on the Greenhouse Gas footprint of residents, businesses, tourism and land use in the AONB. The executive summary is appended, while the text of the Final report is being finalised.

Reasons

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated for the nation. The combined climate and biodiversity crisis is one of the biggest challenges we face. Responding to climate change is fundamental to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

Collaborative working is required to address the challenges of both the climate and biodiversity crisis, with local partners generating influence and action to help move entire communities in the right direction. The orientation and alignment of actions can also give more weight to the AONB designation.

The Climate Action Framework & Toolkit is being produced and co-ordinated by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). It is the result of a sustained collaborative endeavour involving over 40 people from 18 different AONBs. They have come together drawn by a sense of urgency and a need for clarity. The Statement was co-created with AONB Chairs and Lead Officers in parallel with the development of the Climate Action Framework & Toolkit.

Implications

NAAONB Climate Action Framework & Toolkit

The Climate Action Framework is aimed both internally and externally to set out positions for AONB teams & partnerships on key climate change related issues. The Toolkit is primarily aimed at AONB teams and key partners with practical guidance to support farmers, communities, planners and other relevant stakeholders in planning their own climate actions.

The Toolkit focuses on the five aspects of climate change which AONB teams & partnership can have direct impact and/or influence:

- ***Agriculture and Climate Change***: How can we support AONB farming communities to move towards more sustainable practices whilst maintaining food production and security?
- ***Nature-based Solutions***: How to integrate climate and nature recovery action through nature-based solutions in AONBs when there can be no one-size fits all solution?
- ***Building Design and Planning***: How can AONB teams contribute to solving the multi-faceted challenge of making existing and future homes and buildings resilient to climate change whilst minimising GHG emissions?
- ***Renewable Energy***: How can we reconcile landscapes with renewable energy deployment and serve both objectives in a coherent way?
- ***Sustainable Tourism and Transport***: How can we reduce the negative impacts of tourism and transport in AONBs whilst maintaining access to our landscapes?

Each of these major questions requires coordinated action ranging from research, data analysis, evidence collection and planning and delivery of actions.

Wye Valley AONB Unit Carbon Audit

Aquatera were commissioned by the 3 Welsh National Park Authorities and 3 of the 5 Welsh AONBs to undertake baseline assessments of each of respective organisations' Carbon emissions and offer guidance on where attempts can be made to achieve a target of Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2030. The baseline used operational figures from 2016/17 – 2019/20. The diagram below outlines the proportion of activities contributing to the AONB Unit's carbon emissions for that period.

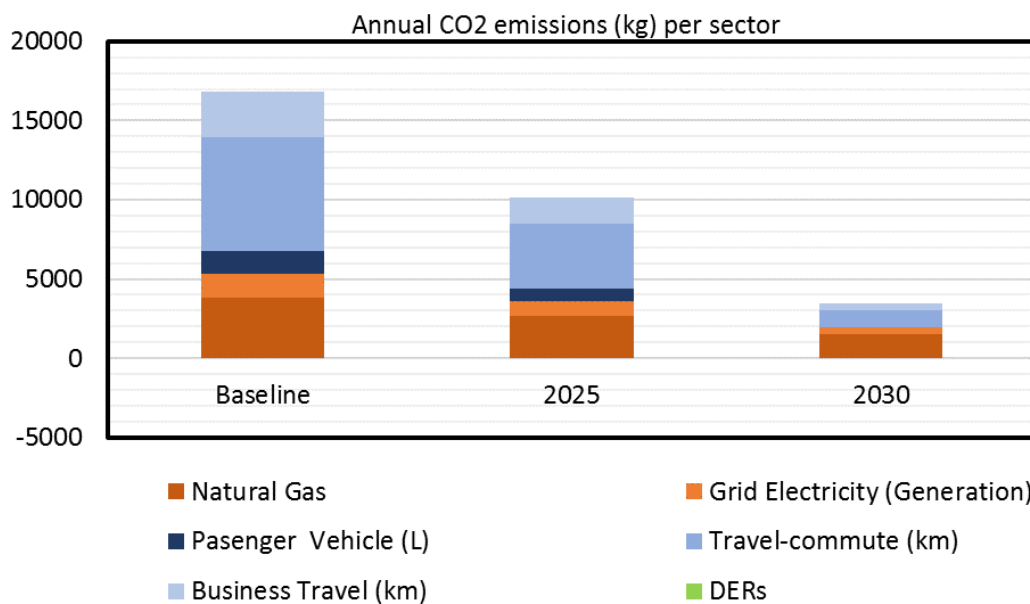
In 2021 the Wye Valley AONB Office had a complete refurbishment to help decarbonise operations, including improving the thermal efficiency of the building and the replacement of a diesel van with an electric van (EV). These actions should make a significant contribution to reducing Carbon emissions. The next highest carbon emitting activity of the AONB Unit is identified as travel and transport, including commuting. AONB staff are appraising

opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint to identify realistic opportunities to achieve net zero.



Wye Valley AONB Baseline emissions summary chart

The AONB Unit is improving the way trips were planned to make better use of the EV as a 'pool vehicle'. Commuting could be made more efficient by adopting more car sharing where appropriate and/or cycling (now the AONB Office has shower facilities). Working from Home (WFH) is also a more established procedure post-Covid, which helps reduce commuting emissions. However, the increase in home energy use WFH also needs to be considered.



Wye Valley AONB Pathway to Net Zero

Aquatera has provided an action plan focusing on eight areas to address the emissions reductions agreed as part of the Pathway modelling and the remaining residual emissions identified at the target date. These focus areas are:

- A decarbonisation programme covering vehicle fleet.
- Business Travel and Employee commuting.
- Decarbonisation Programme of Estates Assets (Buildings)
- Organisational Behaviours
- Policy, Procurement & Governance
- Supply Chain Management
- Waste Minimisation

The project has produced a comprehensive set of baseline models, options for emissions reductions and a realistic pathway objective for 2030 which has followed the current Welsh Guidance along with industry standard resources and PhD research designed tools and calculations. The commission was funded through Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places collaboration programme.

Wye Valley AONB landscape Carbon Audit

Funded by Natural England, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) commissioned Cranfield University to undertake an audit of carbon across all 34 AONBs in England, using pre-existing datasets. Data for the Wye Valley AONB covers the whole AONB in England and Wales.

The primary goal of the project was to provide an estimate of organic carbon stocks and stores carried out in a consistent manner across all AONBs in England. The methodology used readily available national soil datasets as well as estimates based on data of carbon stocks under different priority and non-priority habitats published in literature that are relevant to British conditions. This was followed by an estimation of carbon sequestration potential of each habitat, based again on data available in literature. The assessments are based on the natural capacity of habitats to store and sequester carbon in soils and biomass and do not include land management and land use impacts on the carbon stores.

The work concerned the estimation of organic carbon stocks and stores as well as fluxes from different habitat across the AONBs. In nature, and particularly in soils, carbon can occur in both organic and mineral forms, a sum of which constitutes the total carbon. Whilst mineral carbon is considered as a more stable fraction, soil organic carbon is subject to processes of accumulation, respiration and decomposition, and may contribute either to increased storage of carbon in the soils, or to emissions of carbon to the atmosphere in the form of greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change.

The report uses a number of different terms for the type of process considered:

- *Carbon stocks*: are the amount of carbon contained within soils or biomass at a given time, described in terms of mass per standardised unit area, for example tonnes per hectare or kilograms per metre square, and often referred to as carbon density.
- *Carbon store*: refers to the amount of carbon stored in soils or biomass within a subjectively defined area. Carbon stores are directly derived from carbon stocks and are expressed in the units of mass, such as tonnes or kilograms.
- *Carbon fluxes*: refer to the overall capacity of a habitat to remove or release carbon from or to the atmosphere, often expressed in the units of mass of carbon dioxide per area per time. Carbon emissions from soil/biomass to the atmosphere are often reported as the positive flux to the atmosphere, whilst carbon sequestration is removal from the atmosphere to soils/biomass. Carbon fluxes are often expressed as

CO2 equivalents, taking into account the global warming potential, i.e., the amount of warming a gas causes over a period of time (typically taken to be 100 years), of various greenhouse gasses. CO2 has the global warming potential (GWP100) of 1 whilst for methane it is 25.

- *Carbon sequestration*: is the capacity of a habitat to accumulate carbon within soils or biomass over time, expressed in the units of mass per standardised area per time, eg tonnes C per hectare per year or tonnes of CO2 per hectare per year. A habitat that accumulates (captures) carbon from the atmosphere constitutes a carbon sink.
- *Carbon emissions*: is the release of carbon from soils or biomass to the atmosphere due to processes of respiration or combustion. Apart from CO2, habitats may emit methane. A habitat that emits carbon to the atmosphere constitutes a carbon source.

Two approaches were undertaken to estimate the carbon stocks and stores in soil and biomass within priority and non-priority habitats across the English AONBs.

- One approach allowed for assessment of soil organic carbon stocks and stores by using the NATMAP Carbon dataset that maps organic carbon stocks at a national scale.
- The second involved the attribution of habitat patches with typical values of organic carbon stocks in soils and biomass found in literature, based on NERR09 report - Gregg et al., (2021), which constitutes a compilation of data on carbon stocks and fluxes from various habitat types in the UK. Carbon stocks in soil based on values reported in literature were standardised to the 0-30cm depth, wherever possible, to ensure comparability to the soil carbon stock values reported by the NATMAP Carbon dataset at this depth.

The results spreadsheet provided for the each AONB contains a great deal of information which needs further analysis to provide more detailed insight. Carbon stores, stocks and fluxes are broken down into habitat types, with low, medium and high ranges provided, as well as figures for different soil depths. Results based on the Literature and NATMAP approaches vary and can be compared with each other.

For the Wye Valley AONB, results from Literature, based on a 'high estimate' indicate that up to 2,350,799 tonnes of carbon are stored in soils and 1,698,749 stored in biomass, a total of 4,049,549 tonnes.

NATMAP data shows up to 5,236,605 tonnes of carbon are stored in Wye Valley AONB soils (up to 1.5m deep). The levels of carbon stores and stocks depend on the depth of soil and the report provides figures at depths of between 0-30cm and 0-150cm.

However, without wider context these figures mean little and results will be analysed further in due course to provide a more detailed and comprehensive picture of carbon in the AONB.

Consumption-based assessment of the Greenhouse Gas footprint for the AONB

The Executive summary is appended for the consumption-based assessment of the Greenhouse Gas footprint for each National Park and AONB in Wales, however final report is still being proof-read. The report contains a consumption-based assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions attributable to residents and visitors, including travel to and from the landscape, and a set of Paris-aligned target recommendations for transitioning to a low-carbon economy. This uses the methodology developed with the National Park Authorities in England. The commission was funded through Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places collaboration programme.

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Statement of commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated for the precious landscapes they enfold. As such they must make an important contribution to face climate change and its consequences. **AONB teams and partnerships must now more than ever confirm their leading role and ambition in addressing this challenge.**

Climate change mitigation and adaptation will **in part** be delivered by AONB teams, but they are small and cannot do everything. AONB partnerships bring many stakeholders together and this capacity must be harnessed. These stakeholders also extend their reach and activities beyond AONB partnerships thus multiplying this capacity and placing AONBs as **catalysts and trusted partners**. In parallel, AONB teams and partnerships must continue to support **land managers and communities** within AONBs to take their own action.

Rising to this challenge means **working collaboratively** across the national Family of AONB teams, their partners, and their communities, using the AONB designation to influence relevant stakeholders. This ambition will only be achieved if AONBs are supported both in terms of **funding and policy changes** to the levels recommended by the **Landscapes Review**.

This statement of commitment from AONB chairs is the evidence that **AONBs teams and partnerships are ready to act** but it is also a **call for more support** to help them achieve their ambition.

Context

Through 2021 a subset of AONB staff from across the country, with the support from the National Association for AONBs, has come together to create and take forward a **collaborative climate change action programme** (hereafter ‘the Collaborative Programme’) aiming to:

1. **Develop a greater, data-based understanding** of climate change and its impacts on AONBs and people, **enabling decision and action**;
2. **Generate a strong evidence base** for an AONB offer and narrative on the inter-connected climate and ecological emergencies;
3. **Generate tangible outputs** at a national and local level.

This Collaborative Programme brings focus on **five workstreams** to enhance the AONB teams’ and partnerships’ capacity to assess issues and deliver tangible solutions: **Agriculture, Nature-based Solutions, Building Design and Planning, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Tourism and Transport**. They are described in the **Climate Action Framework and Toolkit**.

This Collaborative Programme directly supports the pledge set out in the [Colchester Declaration](#): ‘by 2024, to ensure all AONB Management Plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero’.

The Collaborative Programme also acknowledges that it must carefully **align with the 25-Year Environment Plan** and **other relevant policies** developed by central government.

In November 2021 the National Association for AONBs signed the [Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Crises](#), asserting the crucial role designated landscapes must play in relation to the connected challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Finally, since January 2022, [AONB teams are working to articulate what a 21st century landscape designation looks like](#) and how to get there, in the context of the ongoing consultation on the Government response to the Landscapes Review. **Climate change is a major challenge** of this start of the century and has to be highlighted as **a key priority for national landscapes**, here and now.

Commitments

We, as chairs from AONB partnerships across England and Wales and in conjunction with our Lead Officers, **assert our support for the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit** emerging from the Collaborative Programme. We **reassert our support for the collaborative way of working** fostered by the National Association as a key mechanism to develop and deliver climate solutions urgently and at scale.

We abide by the global commitments set out in the Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement. We also acknowledge the imperative to **remain aligned with evolving national policies** connected to climate change issues.

As chairs we are **custodians of the AONB partnerships' power to convene** and are responsible for opening and maintaining space for debate and empowerment. **We support and encourage our Lead Officers and AONB teams to take action forward on climate change.**

We commit to:

- **Stimulate debate and generate engagement** across our partnerships for ambitious, tangible climate action across the five workstreams and adapted to our local areas,
- **Empower our partnerships** to explore their full potential in terms of climate action: what they can deliver directly and what they can influence,
- Each with our own capacity and ability and in alignment with emerging outputs from the Collaborative Programme, **support the creation of a collective, broad-level climate action plan** for all AONBs and **lead the development of a local action plan in our own AONB partnership** by the end of 2022.

To these ends, we will:

- **Bring climate action to our AONB partnerships as a top agenda item at our next partnership meeting and before the end of 2022,**
- **Promote and use the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit** and make it **immediately** accessible to partnership members, to enable them to take meaningful actions on climate change issues;
- **Facilitate ongoing conversations to include tangible climate action in AONB Management Plans** and associated business and delivery plans, in line with the present Statement, the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit and the Colchester Declaration;
- **Maintain awareness** of other parallel or relevant activities taking place in our local areas, co-ordinating with and supporting these as far as possible;
- **Support each other** in fulfilling these commitments through sharing learning and demonstrating collaborative behaviours across the AONB Family.

To support us in this process, the Collaboration Advisory Group leading on the Collaborative Programme commits to ensuring a mechanism is in place to provide information and a space for conversation and ongoing collaboration for AONB chairs.

Signatures

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A greenhouse gas emissions assessment and target scenario for the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

A report by Small World Consulting Ltd

Executive summary

Background

As the world wakes up to the climate and wider environmental emergency, rapid reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable land management are becoming increasingly central to the local, national and international policy agendas.

Together, the UK's 15 National Parks (NPs) and 46 Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (AONBs) are home to over 1.5 million residents, attract approximately 250 million visitors per year, and account for around 18% of the UK's land area. If these protected landscapes can become exemplars of low-carbon transition and environment-conscious land management, their national and international profiles could give them a level of influence that far outweighs the scale of their own emissions. The exciting and creative challenge for each protected landscape is to find a way to cut emissions in line with current science, and be leaders in land stewardship and planning authority while simultaneously creating better places for people to live, work and visit.

This report

This report, for the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is one of a series of methodologically compatible reports produced for each UK National Park and Welsh AONB, with the Cotswolds AONB and Cannock Chase AONB also joining. They are designed to provide a robust and consistent evidence basis for climate action, matched to the unique characteristics and circumstances of each protected landscape, as we enter an era in which climate mitigation and sustainable land management become ever more central to all our lives, our work and to all policy decisions.

This report contains a consumption-based assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions attributable to residents and visitors, including travel to and from the landscape (Figure 1), and a set of Paris-aligned target recommendations for transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

Consumption-based emissions reporting differs from more traditional production-based reporting, such as that used by the UK in setting its 2050 net zero target. A production-based assessment would cover all the emissions that are directly produced within the boundary of the landscape whether by people or businesses or from land, plus those arising from production of the electricity used within the landscape. However, the consumption-based approach adopted here covers, in addition, all indirect emissions that are embodied in the goods and services consumed by residents and visitors within the landscape. In doing so, it better reflects the full climate impact of people's lifestyles, and brings into focus for policymakers important areas of climate impact that a production-based assessment overlooks. The most important of these are the impact of food, of other purchased items (such as cars, clothes, IT equipment, household goods and furnishings), and of residents' and visitors' travel to and from the landscape, outside its boundaries.

Accounting for emissions from land use and management is also crucial for National Parks and AONBs. These landscapes are mostly rural, with comparatively small population and large parts of land under various forms of agricultural management, in addition to non-agricultural habitats such as woodlands, wildflower meadows, heathlands and peatlands. Land-based emissions originate predominantly from ruminants (methane), synthetic fertiliser use (nitrous oxide), and degrading peatlands (mostly CO₂). These emissions are, to a degree, compensated by carbon sequestration in existing woodlands, meadows, hedgerows, and healthy peatlands, while agricultural soils could also sequester carbon under certain types of management. Reducing land-based emissions and scaling up land-based carbon sequestration efforts is going to be crucial for addressing the joint climate and ecological emergencies.

One feature of consumption-based reporting is that it does not include emissions from industry (except where an industry's goods and services are consumed by residents and visitors). Therefore, for perspective, this report also includes a simple estimate of emissions related to industries within the National Park or AONB, including their supply chains. It is important to note that there is some inevitable overlap between industry-related emissions and residents' and visitors' emissions, for example when people buy from local businesses within the area. Likewise, there is an overlap between emissions from agriculture as an industry sector and land-based emission within each landscape. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the main components of our central assessment and the industry emissions.

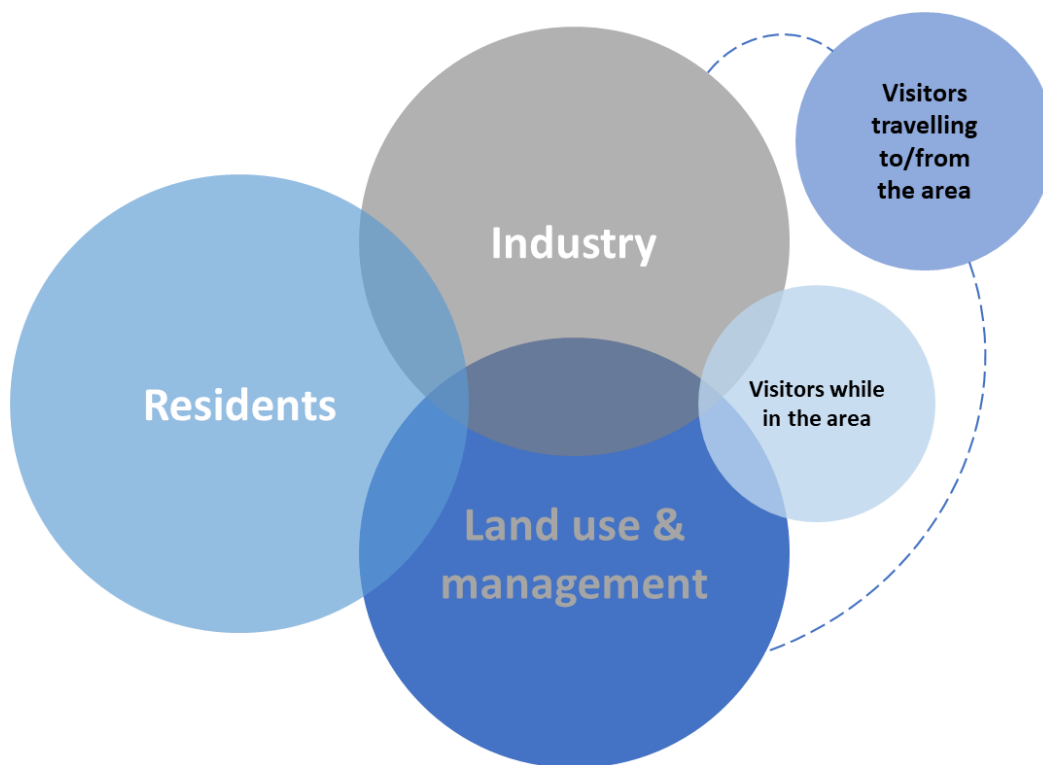


Figure 1: Boundaries of the greenhouse gas footprint assessment

This report also includes a scenario for Paris-aligned greenhouse gas emission targets across six key areas. These areas were selected for the original Lake District National Park assessment, and have

been chosen in order to find a “best fit” between competing desires: to cover everything of significance within the influence of local policymakers, to keep the boundary simple to describe, to avoid double-counting, and to make use of any data readily available for tracking progress. As a result, the scope for the target areas is slightly different from that of the overall emissions assessment. The six target areas are:

- Energy-only emissions by residents, visitors and industry
- Food and drink consumed by residents and visitors
- Other goods purchased by residents and visitors
- Visitor travel to and from the National Park or AONB
- LULUCF¹ Non-CO₂ component
- LULUCF CO₂ component

Limitations and uncertainties

Due to the complexity of supply chains and the limitations of available data, consumption-based emissions estimates always contain a considerable degree of uncertainty. However, given current constraints on data availability, these estimates are sufficiently robust to provide an evidence basis for carbon management and target setting. The estimate of industry-related emissions is particularly crude, being based on comparatively simple revenue data and generic UK-wide emission factors.

Results

Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	
Annual emissions from residents	431,663 tCO₂e (14.8 tCO ₂ e per person per year)
Annual emissions from visitors while in the AONB	47,456 tCO₂e (18.8 kgCO ₂ e per visitor-day)
Annual emissions from visitors travelling to/from the AONB	60,819 tCO₂e (37.7 kgCO ₂ e per visit)
Annual industry emissions	242,500 tCO₂e

Key highlights

The Wye Valley AONB is the only designated landscape overlapping with two of the UK’s nations, Wales and England. It has a comparatively high residential population and a relatively small number of visitors given its area. As a result, the total GHG footprint of the residents is estimated to be nearly four times higher than that of all visitors.

Wye Valley residents’ consumption is roughly 13% above the UK average (excl. public services), which is the average among all National Parks and AONBs on the programme. Demographic data points to a predominantly retired population, with health expenditure being particularly high.

¹ LULUCF stands for Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry. It is a commonly-used way to describe land-based emissions excluding fuel and electricity consumption by agricultural activities.

In a given year, the residents' footprint is estimated to be around 20% higher than the UK average. Several fossil fuel-based sources of greenhouse gas emissions are particularly high, most notably for travel: residents' emissions from flying are estimated to be over 80% higher than for an average UK resident, while transport emissions (excl. driving) and driving emissions are around 33% and 26% above the UK average, respectively. The household electricity and fuel use (excl. vehicle fuel) footprints are around 26% and 13% higher than the respective UK averages. It must be noted that our estimates for emissions from household fuel and electricity use do not include renewable energy solutions such as solar panels and heat pumps, nor do they factor in the uptake of electric vehicles. As of 2019, the share of these technologies across households was comparatively low and no suitable data with sufficient geographical detail was available. The footprint from household fuel use (excluding driving) is particularly uncertain since more properties are off the gas grid in Wye Valley compared to the overlapping unitary Local Authorities, and because there is insufficient data for residual fuel use (oil, coal, biomass).

Wye Valley's share of visitors staying overnight (around 20%) and their average duration of stay (4 days) are in the middle of the range among all National Parks and AONBs on the programme. The visitors' footprint while in the AONB is dominated by food (46%), followed by driving (16%) and non-food shopping (11%). Estimated average mileage travelled on land to get to Wye Valley (around 90 miles) is on a lower side and is dominated by cars, while relatively few visitors come from overseas. The visitors' footprint while travelling to and from the AONB is dominated by driving (55%), and overall is around 30% higher than the footprint of travel within the AONB.

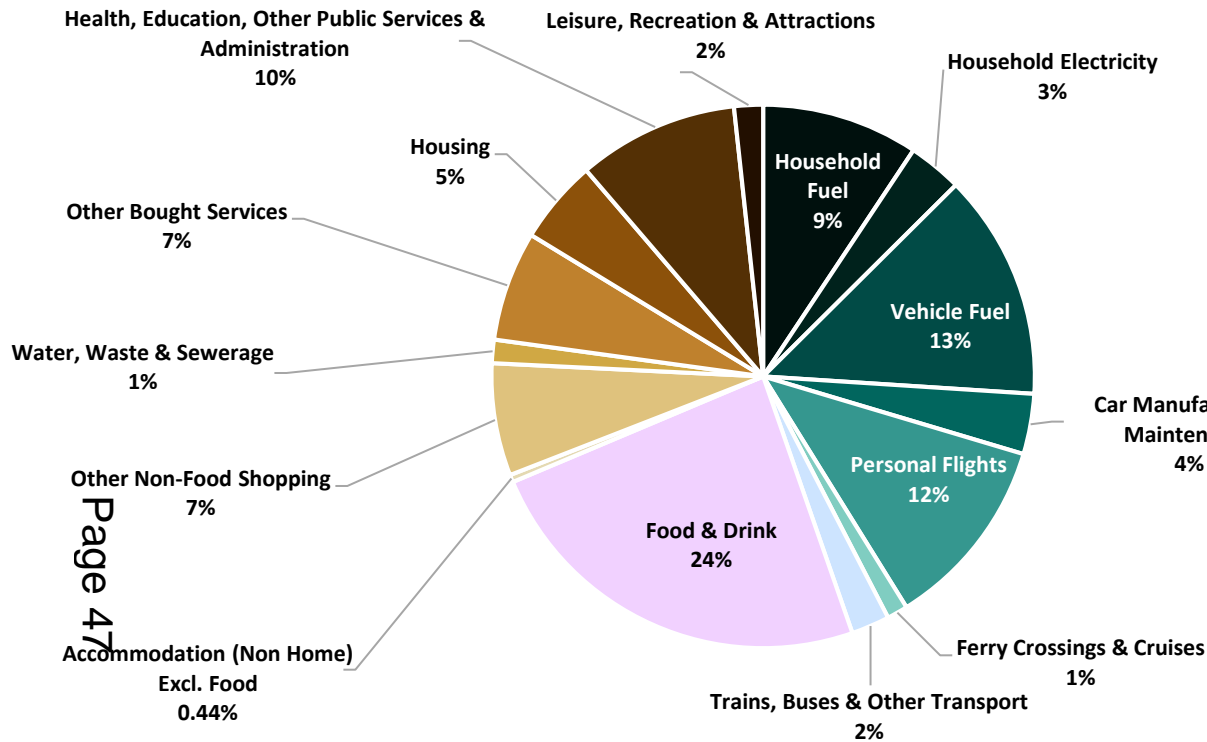
The industry footprint in the Wye Valley AONB is dominated by agriculture and fishing (45%) and production (26%).

Wye Valley AONB is estimated to have a considerable traffic footprint from the major A roads (particularly A40), which amounts to around 20% compared to the total footprint of the residents. Through traffic is estimated to account for as much as 85% of the emissions from the major A roads.

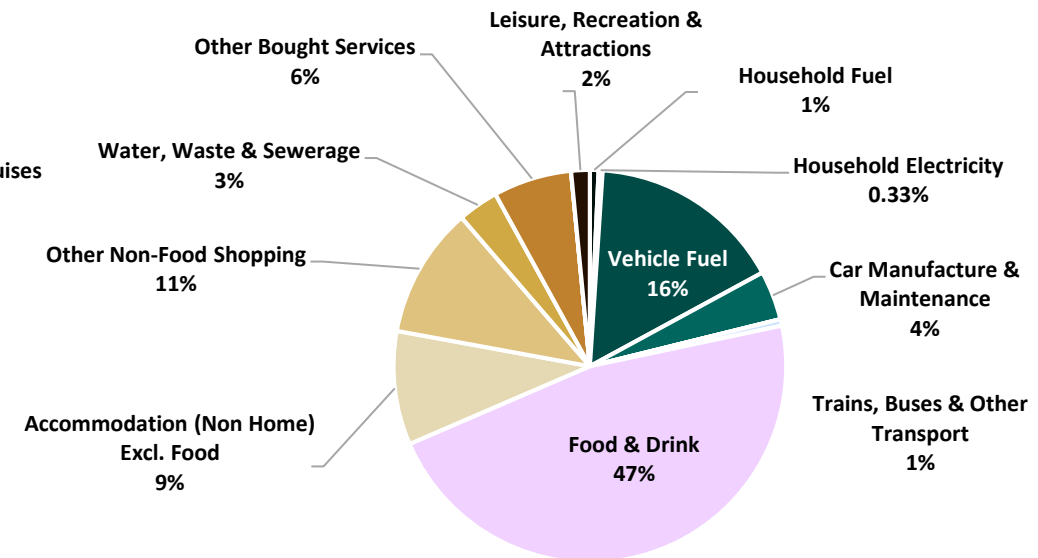
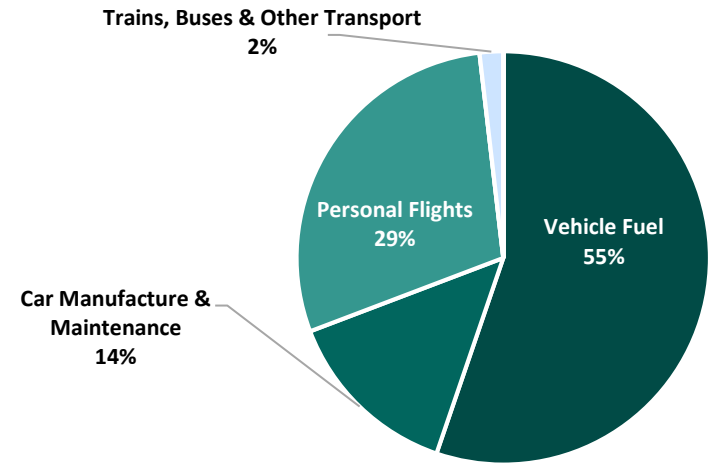
Targets scenario

A minimum Paris-aligned target trajectory has been constructed for each of the six elements of the targets, as illustrated in *Figure 6*. When combined, they result in a net zero date of 2038 for the Wye Valley AONB. We note that the net zero date reflects the unique characteristics of the landscape, including the land use types and their respective areas, the number of residents and visitors and their consumption patterns, and the level and type of industrial activity (see Section **Error! Reference source not found.** for the target figures). It also assumes the recommended decarbonisation and carbon sequestration efforts, including land use change, ratchet up to the required levels immediately in the base year of the assessment. In reality, the high levels of ambition for different sectors explored in this report are likely going take several years to achieve, given that post-COVID emissions have largely rebounded, and that decarbonisation trends to date have been relatively small in magnitude compared to what we know is required for keeping global warming below the safer 1.5°C limit from the Paris Agreement. These factors are expected to push the projected net zero year back by several years. The net zero date should therefore not be taken in isolation as a level of ambition.

Residents: 431,663 tCO₂e



Visitors travelling to and from the AONB: 60,819 tCO₂e



Visitors while in the AONB: 47,456 tCO₂e

Figure 2: (left) Residents' GHG emissions in the Wye Valley AONB, by percentage

Figure 3: (top right) Visitors' GHG emissions from travel to and from the Wye Valley AONB, by percentage

Figure 4: (bottom right) Visitors' GHG emissions while in the Wye Valley AONB

Industry: 242,500 tCO2e

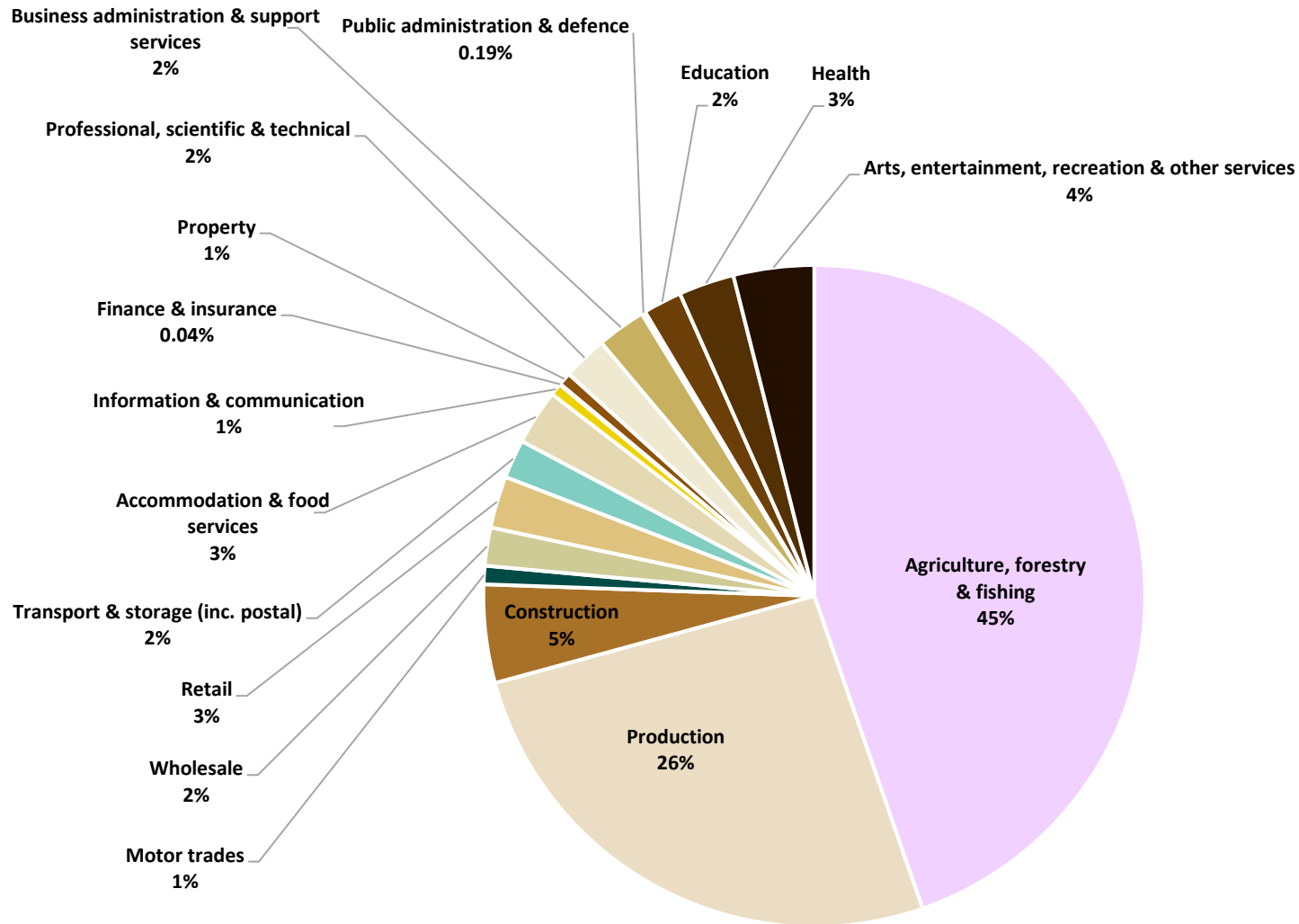


Figure 5: A estimate of emissions from industries within the AONB and their supply chains (scopes 1, 2 and upstream scope 3)

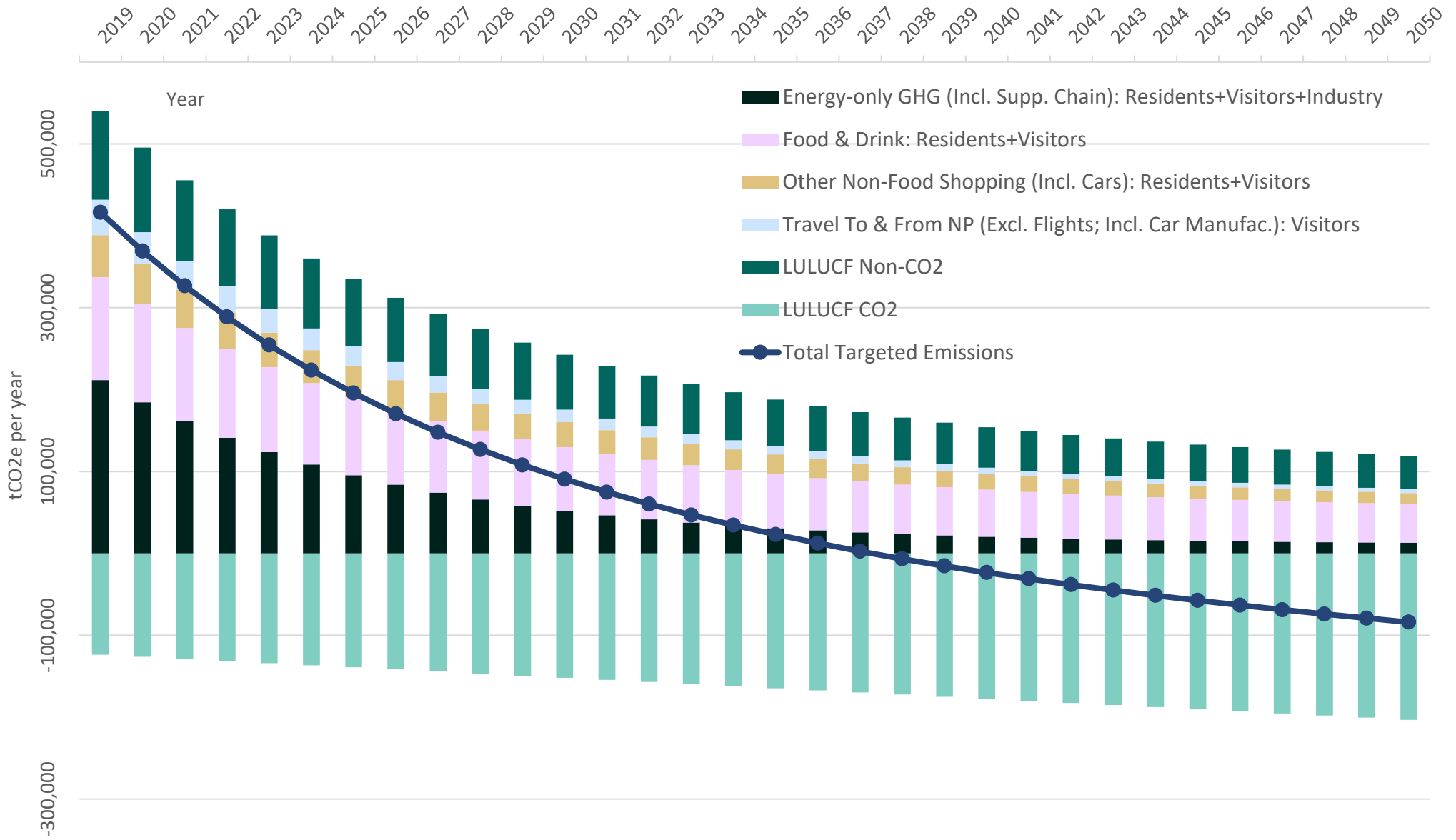


Figure 6: Recommended target pathways leading to net zero emissions for the Wye Valley AONB by 2038 (subject to the caveats outlined in the text)

REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Purpose

To advise members of the on-going progress following the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in Wales and England.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Welsh AONB lead officers continue to meet with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, the National Association for AONBs and the Welsh National Parks working together as Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales.
- Welsh Government and DEFRA have committed to 3 year core funding agreements for AONBs with additional or proposed capital funding programmes.
- DEFRA are assimilating the results of the public consultation on the Government Response to the Landscapes Review, with further announcements and outcomes anticipated.
- Natural England are progressing work on the All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment Tool and evaluating the Yorkshire Wolds for potential AONB designation.
- Welsh Government are undertaking a deep dive focussing on how Wales can implement the target to restore 30% of land and sea by 2030 (known as '30 by 30') including convening a Designated Landscapes Expert Subgroup.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) continues to liaise and co-ordinate collaboration with both governments and key stakeholders over progressing the agenda for AONBs.

Reasons

Both Reviews of Designated Landscapes in Wales and England are recognised as once in a generation opportunities for AONBs.

Implications

Both governments are broadly supportive of enhancing the purposes, powers and resources for AONBs. However, any changes to legislation take time to secure the necessary legislative platform, which can take 12 months or longer. Meanwhile public resources remain

significantly constrained, despite the Glover Review advocating an immediate doubling in core funding for England's AONBs (2½ years ago), from £6million to £12million per annum.

Further announcements from DEFRA are expected in the coming months on the conclusions of their consultation and pathway to implementing the desired outcomes.

DEFRA provision of the Farming in Protected Landscape programme is a major enhancement for land management funding in AONBs & National Parks in England. It helps farmers & landowners, working with their local Protected Landscape team, to deliver bigger and better outcomes for the climate, nature, people and place. See the AONB Update agenda item for an outline of projects supported to date.

As reported at the previous JAC meeting, Land Use Consultants (LUC) and Gillespies have been commissioned by Natural England to develop an 'All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment Tool'. This has been reviewing and processing a wide range of datasets to create a series of indicator maps to highlight areas of search for existing national landscape designations and alternative landscape approaches. Information on the early stages of this commission are available here: <https://all-england-strategic-landscapes-mapping-hub-luc.hub.arcgis.com/>.

Meanwhile Natural England have commenced investigations into the proposal to designate the Yorkshire Wolds as a new AONB, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-yorkshire-wolds-need-you-have-your-say-on-potential-area-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-designation> . A new website gives further information on this process, which is likely to form the template for any subsequent areas identified as suitable to potential designation, see: <https://www.yorkshire-wolds-designation-project.org/>.

The Welsh Government Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, has launched a deep dive focussing on how Wales can effectively implement the Convention on Biological Diversity target to restore 30% of land and sea by 2030 (known as '30 by 30'). The aim is to develop a set of collective actions that will support meaningful delivery of the '30 by 30' target, recognising the capabilities under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Environment (Wales) Act. A Designated Landscapes Expert Subgroup has been convened to determine how National Parks and AONBs can most effectively deliver landscape scale biodiversity and ecosystem enhancement to support the 30x30 target. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager and Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer have both contributed to the subgroup.

Over recent years Welsh Government have provided a considerable increase in both capital and revenue funding for AONBs, including through the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. This focuses on key Welsh Government objectives around nature recovery, decarbonisation, more resilient rural economies and more sustainable tourism.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales is the National Designated Landscapes Partnership in Wales which brings together the National Park and AONB lead officers with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). It aims to champion collaborative approaches to maximise benefits and tackle challenges. Current priorities include feeding into Welsh Government on the design of the proposed Sustainable Farm Scheme (SFS). This also feeds into the Biodiversity Deep Dive.

Background

The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales, the ‘Marsden Review’ *National Landscapes: Realising their Potential* was published in October 2015. It highlighted among other things the inequalities between AONBs and National Parks. These disparities were reiterated in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* (published in March 2017) and the subsequent *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government’s Priorities for AONBs & National Parks* (published in July 2018). This identified that although parity broadly exists between National Parks and AONBs in terms of planning policy, there is an inequality of status, profile and resourcing. Welsh Government continue to work towards addressing the levels of resourcing for AONBs.

The Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England was launched in May 2018 by the then Environment Secretary Michael Gove MP. The ‘Landscapes Review’ was led by the writer and journalist Julian Glover and the final report was published in September 2019 with 27 Proposals for Government. For more information on the Glover Review visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>. A Written Ministerial Statement in June 2021 provided the Government’s initial response to the Landscapes Review. In January 2022 the Government released its formal response to the Landscapes Review, indicating the Government’s preferred direction for England’s AONBs & National Parks with 25 questions, see: [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response) . A 12 week public consultation on the Government’s response closed in April 2022.

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TINTERN WIREWORKS BRIDGE CLOSURE & REFURBISHMENT

Purpose

To advise members of the closure of the Tintern Wireworks Bridge for refurbishment.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Wireworks Bridge at Tintern is one of the three remaining former railway bridges spanning the River Wye in the AONB. It provides a strategic crossing point for recreational users, particularly walkers and cyclists using the recently opened Wye Valley Greenway.
- Gloucestershire County Council leads on repairs and maintenance under share ownership with Monmouthshire County Council.
- The bridge is in poor condition and in need of significant repairs. Contractors have been commissioned to undertake these repairs.
- The bridge will be closed from mid-July until Spring 2023.

Reasons

The Wireworks Bridge, Tintern spans the Wye and the England Wales border. Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire County Councils share responsibility and ownership of the bridge, however Gloucestershire County Council leads on repairs and maintenance.

Inspections and investigations over recent years had identified that the bridge needed significant repairs. A project is now underway to renovate the bridge.

Further information is available posted on

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/tintern-wireworks-bridge-improvements/> .

Implications

The construction contract has been awarded to VolkerLaser who are due to start works on site in early July. The refurbishment of the bridge is anticipated to take approximately 8 - 9 months to complete and will include:

- Full removal of the timber deck and replacement with a steel deck to meet the required capacity. This will have a timber look finish to meet heritage requirements

- Strengthening of the structure, including the installation of new box beams to replace the existing corroding steel infrastructure
- The structure will be fully enclosed for grit blasting and painting
- The masonry supports will be repointed to extend their life

Most of these activities make access impossible across the bridge, as the deck will be fully removed for a significant period of the construction phase so it will not be possible to keep the bridge open while the work is carried out. Walkers will be able to use Brockweir Bridge to cross the Wye. However, there are no suitable alternative routes for cyclist linking Tintern and the Wye Valley Greenway for the duration of 2022.

Background

Six of the 10 railway bridges that once spanned the River Wye between Chepstow and Hereford have been removed. The other remaining 3 are Lydbrook Bridge, Redbrook Bridge and the Wireworks Bridge. There is also the Beaufort Bridge at Monmouth, just outside the AONB boundary. Redbrook and Lydbrook are strategic crossings for the Wye Valley Walk. The bridges are in excess of 130 years' old which exceeds the current required design life of 120 years for a new structure. The condition of these 3(+1) bridges has been a cause for concern for a number of years, with their steel structures generally in a poor condition, along with their paintwork. Without sufficient funding these historic railway bridges over the Wye could have to be closed and dismantled on public safety grounds over the next 10-20 years.

In December 2013 the AONB Unit submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the conservation and restoration of Redbrook railway bridge totalling £1.1million. This was unsuccessful.

Lydbrook Bridge was closed in February 2016 due to safety issues. In March 2018 the AONB Manager assisted Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) in submitting a Heritage Grant application to HLF for the restoration of Lydbrook Black Bridge totalling £1.5million. The application was also unsuccessful. In September 2018 GCC were able to reopen the bridge having undertaken essential safety work and installed a temporary scaffold walkway on top of the stripped down railway bridge. The temporary walkway on the bridge structure remains.

WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL 2022

Purpose

To inform members of the success of the Wye Valley River Festival, 27th May - 5th June, supported by the Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley River Festival 2022 ran from 27th May - 5th June, organised by the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company (CIC).
- The Wye Valley River Festival CIC received funding from Arts Council England (ACE), Community Renewal Fund UK, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Welsh Government Major Events -Festival Growth Fund, Arts Council of Wales (ACW), Forestry England and in-kind support from Cadw.
- The Festival on the theme of HUMAN⇌NATURE was a great success with a range of bespoke outdoor arts events and activities while some augmented local Platinum Jubilee celebrations. A summary report from the Festival Team is appended.
- Further events are planned, including in Tintern Abbey 21st - 23rd October 2022.
- Meanwhile a full evaluation of the Festival will be available later in the year. Then the CIC will begin contemplating the next Wye Valley River Festival.

Reasons

This was the first Wye Valley River Festival organised by the new CIC, although several of the CIC team had been heavily involved in the previous Wye Valley River Festivals.

Implications

The main festival ran between 27th May - 5th June 2022 with the theme of HUMAN⇌NATURE. There was additional outreach work in the run-up to the Festival and further events are planned later in the year, including in Tintern Abbey 21st-23rd October. The Festival attracted an audience of over 11,300, excluding at Tintern Abbey and the workshops and outreach events. The CIC team have over 600 audience evaluation forms which are being processed. A brief summary report is appended. Further details are available on bilingual website <https://wyevalleyriverfest.com/> which will be further developed and improved as time goes on.

Background

Wye Valley River Festivals in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 were 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.

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WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL GŴYL AFON DYFFRYN GWY

WOW what a great ten days that was!

We promised spectacular events in outstanding landscapes, music, theatre, extraordinary creatures, songs, and laughter: we hope you enjoyed the results !!



It was fantastic to greet old friends of the festival and meet new ones in the fields, woods and streets of the valley, so good to be back in nature together laughing and playing with you all again. We have missed you.

Parading Jabberwockies, grass men and brownies, accompanied by world renowned street musicians, bouncing giant kangaroos, and extraordinary contemporary Welsh folk dance, plus beautiful 4 metre silk flags fluttering on the breeze at every site and numerous sightings of the elusive Whistlers.

Delighted audiences People turned out in their droves in the sunshine (and on the last day a chilly breeze). If you were amongst them then thank you, we hope you had a good time and if you were unable to attend this summer keep reading there are other events you can attend.



The Festival troupe the Bikesplorers were triumphant in their quest to find Thrutopia and have now [provided a reading list](#) on their webpage for anyone looking for further inspiration. The carbon footprint of this show was almost Zero as they rode, camped and ate vegan throughout the whole route, plus performed the show twice a day – they are our new ensemble heroes.

Talking of which we achieved a good carbon footprint all round this year, we hope to produce an impact evaluation later in the year. But we had no generators on site, minimal imported infrastructure, we repurposed, renewed and recycled as much as we could from previous iterations and did a complex production and crew travel plan throughout.



Tintern Abbey sang to the sounds of the skies and seas. It is always such a privilege to be allowed to create work for this space and **we are planning a magical event for the 21- 23rd October 2022** so keep your eyes peeled for news on that.



Through our partnership with **Diverse Artist Network** and Bristol Bridges, we had the pleasure of welcoming over 100 Afghan refugee families to Tintern for a day's walking, picnicking and visits to the Abbey. It was such a delight to see the children running happy and free for the day.



Community Projects

The projects that our Creative Community Champions have made with communities have been amazing and we are now looking to see how we can continue this work. Some of the projects are still running:

There is an [exhibition of work](#) by local young people responding to the theme I Live Here at the [Brockweir and Hewelsfield Village Shop](#), and an [interactive trail around the Sedbury Floral Mile](#) - how many of the trail elements can you spot en route?

The photographic exhibition at the [Redbrook Creative Hub](#) will be up till the end of June, after which we hope to display the amazing flags which were created with young people from Chepstow to Ross.

There will be another opportunity to see [the Flags](#) and the giant puppet when they appear at Hereford River Carnival on 27th August.

[Queering the Wye](#) has been asked to attend several Pride events during June and the queer nature cards are now available for sale. Keep your eyes peeled if you are at any Pride events in the area and do say hello.

We have one favour to ask, if you were at the Festival please could you [fill in our evaluation form](#). It helps us to secure funding, to improve how we serve communities and to plan for the future.

Have a fantastic summer and see you in the autumn!

Wye Valley River Festival team



AONB UNIT REPORTS

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a. AONB Species Action Plans***
- b. Wye Invasive Species Programme (WISP)***
- c. Wye Valley AONB Villages signage***
- d. Farming in Protected Landscapes***
- e. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) & and Herefordshire Community Foundation Wye Valley AONB Fund***
- f. Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects***
- g. National Association for AONBs Conference***

a. AONB Species Action Plans

Ellie Baggett, Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer, has been progressing with the first two AONB Species Action Plans. There are 5 species or assemblages identified by the AONB team and partners in response to the Colchester Declaration pledge to adopt species and reverse their decline. The species are Noble Chafer beetle in relation to orchard habitats, Hedgehog as a locally iconic species, Water Crowfoot as an indicator for water quality, Woodland butterfly assemblage with special interest in the Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary in relation to woodlands, Bumblebee assemblage with particular focus on Shril Carder, Brown Banded Carder, Redshank Carder and long horned bees in relation to grassland sites. The Plans aim to increase public engagement to highlight what people can do help nature recover.

The Noble Chafer (*Gnorimus nobilis*) is a rare and beautiful beetle that can be found in traditional orchards. The adult is approximately 20mm long and has a metallic-green iridescent body, speckled with white. The key habitat for Noble Chafers is inside hollow open-grown mature fruit trees between 50 and 80 years old, especially cherry, plum and apple. These trees and traditional orchard habitats are vulnerable to removal or clearance, particularly if the trees are reaching the end of their productive life. Fragmentation of these old-tree landscapes is a key issue, producing smaller and less viable populations which are increasingly isolated from each other. The species is currently classed as Nationally Scarce in Great Britain, and has an IUCN status of Vulnerable. The main national distribution today is in the old orchard country of the 'Three Counties' (Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire). Within the Wye Valley AONB there are only current records of Noble Chafer in Herefordshire, but it is still likely that Noble Chafer beetles may be present in Monmouthshire due to the close geographical proximity to other population strongholds.

The largest distance that Noble Chafers have been recorded to fly is 700m. Hence the Species Action Plan is based on a buffer zone of 700m around each traditional orchard site with potential within the AONB. The Plan then examines the constraints and opportunities to expanding and reconnecting priority orchard habitats, thereby creating more opportunities for the Noble Chafer to expand its population size and range. The key Actions in the Plan for 2022-2027 are:

- Raise the profile of the Noble Chafer, its ecology, and how to manage orchards for Noble Chafer, amongst orchard owners.
- Encourage suitable sites to be managed to create, maintain or otherwise provide good habitat for Noble Chafer.
- Promote survey work to better understand the current condition of traditional orchards in the Wye Valley AONB.
- Promote survey work to reinforce our understanding of the Noble Chafer's population and distribution within the Wye Valley AONB.
- Expand survey effort to include, where practicable, the investigation of non-fruit tree species for evidence of the Noble Chafer.
- Support and encourage the expansion of current orchard habitats, planting new trees to replace old ones and leaving standing deadwood for Noble Chafer habitat.
- Support and encourage the creation of new orchards (or the creation/provision of suitable deadwood habitat) in locations that will form habitat stepping stones between known or likely Noble Chafer orchards.
- Promote the planting of fruit trees generally, including within hedgerows, in particular where trees can function as habitat stepping stones between known or likely Noble Chafer orchards.
- Produce habitat boxes to trial the effectiveness of using artificial deadwood habitat as replacement orchard habitat/stepping stones between known or likely Noble Chafer orchards.
- Monitor all Noble Chafer habitat boxes after three years to assess effectiveness of trial
- Develop a programme of surveying to better establish populations and monitor population changes following action.

The Wye Valley AONB Nature Recovery Plan considers orchard habitat enhancement and expansion in more detail. The Noble Chafer Action Plan will be published on the AONB website shortly.

Through June, Ellie has been running pheromone lure trapping surveys to monitor for the Noble Chafer. Working with a range of traditional orchard owners across the AONB, noble chafer traps, fitted with a (harmless!) chemical pheromone lure, are closely monitored to give us a better idea of the population here in the AONB. This will also help us identify sites which may act as bridges between known populations. This will be the next phase of the project, where we can work with landowners to create the right habitat or mimic the right conditions by installing beetle boxes.

Hedgehogs are the subject of the next AONB Species Action Plan which is being drafted. The 'Wye Hedgehogs' campaign was launched on AONB social media – see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/wye-hedgehogs-priority-species-project/>. This highlights individual and local actions that people can take to help conserve and enhance this emblematic species.

b. Wye Invasive Species Programme (WISP)

Nickie Moore, AONB Lower Wye Project Officer, has been busy leading work with local communities and stakeholders to stop the spread of four Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) – Japanese Knotweed, American Skunk Cabbage, Cherry Laurel and Himalayan Balsam – see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-projects/wisp/>. A range of public events and training days have been organised, including community ‘Balsam Bashing’ and the production and promotion of a Himalayan Balsam Action Toolkit <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-projects/wisp/balsam-action-toolkit/>.

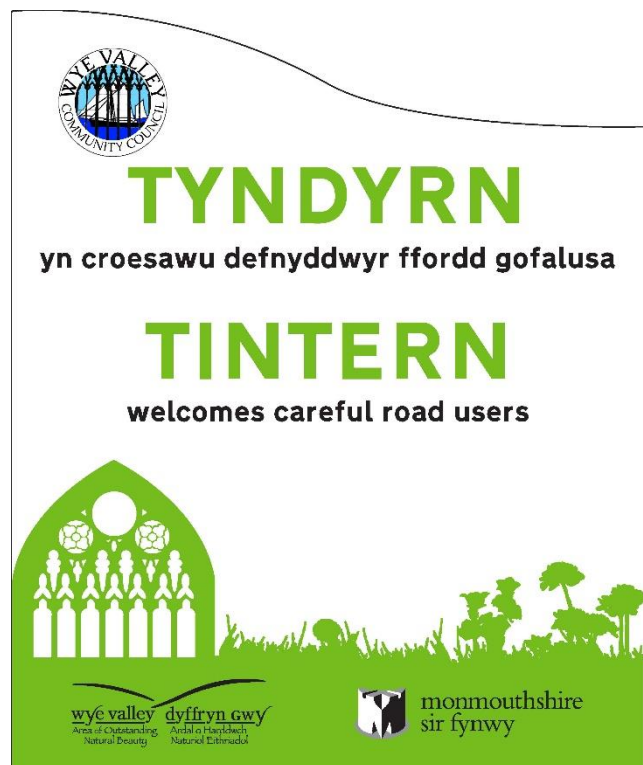


Meanwhile surveying continues for the presence of INNS, - see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-projects/wisp/wisp-report-sightings/>. Nickie uses these records, adding to previous years, to co-ordinate contractors using chemical control particularly of Japanese Knotweed and American Skunk Cabbage in the lower Wye Valley.

c. Wye Valley AONB Villages signage

Final arrangements are being made for the production and installation of the new village gateway signage in the 9 villages in the AONB in Monmouthshire; Devauden, Llanishen, Trellech, The Narth, Penallt, Catbrook, Llandogo, Tintern and St Arvans. This is one of the outcomes from the Wye Valley Villages Strategy & Action Plan produced earlier in the year by Monmouthshire County Council, the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the four Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United, funded through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme.

This is an example of the style of the new signs:



d. Farming in Protected Landscapes

All Year 1 (2021-22) project work is complete with a total grant expenditure of £96,525. The Year 2 (2022-23) allocation from DEFRA for the Wye Valley AONB is £220,110 of which £132,194 has already been committed. Therefore remaining available budget for grants in Year 2 is £87,915.60. The Year 3 (2023-24) final allocation is £219,490 of which £70,295 has already been committed and £149,195 available for grants. For further information see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/farming-in-protected-landscapes/>.

The recently recruited Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer joins the AONB Unit in August. They will take over the day to day running of the programme from Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer.

e. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) & and Herefordshire Community Foundation Wye Valley AONB Fund

Welsh Government have confirmed that the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for 2022/23 will remain at £100,000 per annum up to March 2025. Currently £52,153 has been committed to projects meaning that £47,847 remains available for grant applications. For further information see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/grants/>.

The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley AONB Fund latest balances were £839.97 remaining in the immediate impact fund and £59,838.79 in the Endowment Fund, meaning that there is about £10,000 available for grants. For further information see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/aonb-fund/>

The new AONB Community Links Officer was recently recruited joins the AONB Unit in early July. They will be the main point of contact for SDF and HCF AONB Fund applicants, among other duties.

f. Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects

Welsh Government have confirmed that the SLSP offer for 2022/23 is £175,000 per AONB, rising to £200,000 for both 2023/4 and 2024/5. The Wye Valley AONB proposed projects for SLSP are being finalised in line with the programme criteria:

Nature Recovery

Lower Wye Valley Nature Recovery Initiatives:

- Invasive non-native species (INNS) control
- Landscape Connectivity
- Species Action Plans esp. Orchards project

Sustainable Tourism

Lower Wye Valley Tourism & Access Improvements

- Wye Valley Walk enhancements: Wyesham & Piercefield
- Integrated Access Strategy

Decarbonisation & Supporting Communities

Lower Wye Valley Village Halls Energy efficiency & Hub development

g. National Association for AONBs annual Conference, 13th to 15th September.

For full details see <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/events/landscapes-life-conference/landscapes-life-conference2022>. The AONB Unit intend to have a good presence at the conference, and will report back to the next JAC.