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Monday, 27 February 2023

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 6th March, 2023 at 2.00 pm

The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence, Introductions & New Members.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Questions.	
4.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	1 - 10
4.1.	Matters arising from minutes: i. [4.1] Format of future meetings. ii. [4.2] Gloucestershire County Voluntary Conservation Sector vacancy.	
5.	AONB (shared) Planning Officer (verbal update).	
6.	AONB Unit 2023/24 Work Programme.	11 - 22
7.	Designated Landscapes Review in England and Wales.	23 - 26
8.	Farming in Protected Landscapes update.	27 - 30
9.	Sustainable Development Fund & HCF AONB Fund allocations.	31 - 34
10.	National Association for AONBs.	35 - 36
11.	Partner and AONB Unit progress reports and updates.	37 - 40

12.	Dates of next meetings: Commencing at 2pm at Coleford:	
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	Monday 3rd July 2023. Monday 6th November 2023.	
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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

Vacancy – 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

C. Barron – Wye Valley Society
R. Hesketh – River Wye Preservation Trust
A. Lee – Recreation Sector
R. Clay – Local Tourism Sector
C. Spicer – Local Wildlife Trusts
D. Price – National Farmers Union Wales

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

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

Welsh Language

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

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Outcomes we are working towards

Nobody Is Left Behind

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

People Are Confident, Capable and Involved

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

Our County Thrives

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

Our priorities

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

Our Values

- **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.
- **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.
- **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 held at
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford,
GL16 8HG on Monday, 4th July, 2022 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor: C. McFarling (Vice Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: E. Bryn and S. Garratt

Gloucestershire County Council

County Councillor: T. Hale

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillor: D. Wheeler

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC – C. Evers

Herefordshire Association Local Councils – R. Gething

One Voice Wales – R. Edwards

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire – B. Nash

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – C. Barron

River Wye Preservation Trust – R. Hesketh

Technical Advice Officers:

Wye Valley AONB Manager – A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council – M. Lewis

Wye Valley AONB Admin Officer – S. Seymour

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held at
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford,
GL16 8HG on Monday, 4th July, 2022 at 2.00 pm**

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor A. Webb, Councillor B. Durkin, Councillor Y. Watson, Councillor J. Hardwick, A. Thomas, M. Price, R. Williams and J. Atkin

1. Introductions & New Members

The Vice Chairman took the chair and welcomed the members.
S. Seymour attended to note minutes as the Clerk was also unable to attend.

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public had been received.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 4th July 2022 were confirmed as accurate. It was suggested that minutes should be shared with Town & Community Councils. Also it was requested that it would be advantageous to have main actions in minutes distributed early.

4.1 Format / location of future meetings at Coleford

It was agreed that Coleford was the most convenient venue for the meetings. At present it is without a system to enable hybrid meetings within the Council Chamber. The AONB Manager will further investigate purchase or hire of a mobile system to use at the venue. Councillor C McFarling advised that an estimate of £20K had been received for a fixed hybrid system.

4.2 Joint Advisory Committee Co-opted members, nominations & attendance

A vacancy has arisen with the retirement of Dr George Peterken as JAC member representing the Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire. The Vice-chairman extended thanks and appreciation to George for all his work with the committee. It was agreed that recruitment for this position needs to be inclusive and diverse. The AONB Manager will look into expanding the representation through new members.

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5. Annual Report 2021/22

We received the annual report for 2021/22 on the achievements of the Wye Valley AONB Unit. The Vice-chairman congratulated the extent of the work of the team. In doing so, the following information was noted:

- High levels of achievement were maintained by the AONB Unit despite the challenges of the on-going Coronavirus pandemic restricting many activities and some reduced capacity due to staffing issues.
- The AONB Unit has levered in over £16 for every £1 of local authority contribution during 2020/21.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- There was a late settlement from NRW but extra funding received from DEFRA.
- AONB Manager confirmed that new members of staff have added a fresh dynamic and enthusiastic approach to their roles within the team.
- The Vice-chairman noted that the large work programme with activities and outcomes is difficult to scrutinise. KPI's could be used.
- A presentation to show achievements of the AONB unit would be beneficial.
- A traffic light system to high light progress against the original work programme could be advantageous. It was agreed that not all actions are measurable and that setting targets can go against the main objectives.

The JAC welcomed the Annual Report of the AONB achievements for 2021/22.

6. River Wye Emergency and Action

We received a report regarding the latest activities and plans to improve water quality, reduce excess nutrients and help restore the River Wye.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- It is widely recognised that coordinated work needs to progress on the restoration of the River Wye and River Lugg to conserve and enhance the catchment's biodiversity, natural beauty and to enable future sustainable development, in the context of the climate and environment emergency.
- The Environment Agency (EA), in their River Wye Report (July 22), stress that the issues facing the River Wye and its high phosphate levels are complex and require urgent action by all contributing sectors with a coordinated catchment based approach.
- Phosphate discharges into the rivers Wye and Lugg originate from 2 main sources; diffuse agricultural pollution (about 60%) and sewage treatment works (up to 40%)
- The Wye Nutrient Management Board (NMB) have adopted the River Wye Phosphate Action Plan.

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- The NMB Technical Advisory Group (TAG) established 5 sub-groups to progress key themes in the Phosphate Action Plan. The AONB Manager sits on the Innovation & projects sub-group.
- Herefordshire Council have set up a Phosphates Commission to consider their strategic approach to water quality issues in the Wye & Lugg, with neighbouring local authorities.
- Monmouthshire County Council recognises its rivers and coast are in crisis and has adopted a Motion for the Rivers and Oceans Action Plan.
- Significant reduction in nutrient input from all sources is required across the whole catchment, but 5 key areas, all upstream of the AONB, have been identified with a high proportion of pressures and high phosphate concentrations for targeted investigations, analysis and remedial action.
- The AONB Unit continues to manage partnership projects and collaborative initiatives including through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, to support farmers and land-managers in and around the AONB.
- The AONB Partnership winter seminar will focus on issues and activities in & around the AONB that improve water quality, reduce excess nutrients & help restore the River Wye.
- The Wye Valley AONB Partnership will do everything within its powers, purposes and resources to work with all individuals, groups and organisations to convene, enable and deliver on the restoration, conservation and enhancement of the River Wye and its tributaries, which are one of the central Special Qualities of the Wye Valley AONB.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Wye Valley AONB Unit manages several projects and initiatives, including with EA, NRW, WUF, Herefordshire Meadows and Farm Herefordshire that support and advise farmers to address some of the contributing factors to poor water quality in the Wye, such as reducing soil erosion and agricultural run-off into the river in the AONB.
- Large amounts of action is taking place with many organisations, groups and individuals including Friends of the Lower Wye. The Main organisation is the Wye & Usk Foundation who, as a charity, help coordinate the smaller groups.
- A discussion regarding the current state of the river, including the run off from the spread of poultry waste, concluded that poultry legislation is not fit for purpose and Rivers (Prevention of Pollution) Act 1961 has failed.
- Information is gathered across the catchment with data gathering every 15 minutes at key points.
- One technical solution is the use of anaerobic digesters for the excess manure.
- Funding is being negotiated with EA to support a winter programme of promotion of water management events to raise awareness with farmers and land managers, with WUF, Herefordshire Meadows and Farm Herefordshire.
- AONB Species Action Plans are being prepared in response to the National AONB Colchester Declaration pledge to adopt species and reverse their decline. Water Crowfoot is one of the Species Action Plans that the AONB Unit will publish in 2023 as an indicator for water quality in the AONB.

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- The AONB Partnership winter seminar, in late February or early March, will focus on land management issues in and around the AONB and activities and plans to improve water quality, reduce excess nutrients and help restore the River Wye. More information will follow regarding this seminar.

We resolved that:

The JAC, as an organisation long aware of the significant decline in the condition of the River Wye, which is so central to the Wye Valley AONB, welcomes the statements and concerted collaborative actions now being declared and advanced by the main stake holders in the Wye catchment, to improve, water quality, reduce excess nutrients and help restore the River Wye and its tributaries.

The Wye Valley AONB Partnership will do everything within its powers, purposes and resource to work with all individuals, groups and organisations to convene, enable and deliver on the restoration, conservation and enhancement of the River Wye and its tributaries, which are one of the Special Qualities of the Wye Valley AONB.

7. AONB Special Species Action Plans

We received a report regarding the first of the 5 AONB Species Action Plans, for the Noble Chafer Beetle, under the Colchester Declaration.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Colchester Declaration – a ‘declaration for nature’ was produced by the National Association for AONBS (NAAONB) and supported by all the AONB partnerships in 2019.
- Five species, or assemblage of species, have been chosen as representative of the Wye Valley AONB Special Qualities.
- The first Species Action Plan, for the Noble Chafer Beetle, relating to orchard habitats & Veteran Trees has been published, and is appended below.
- The AONB Unit is working on the production of the remaining Species Action Plans and an accompanying Wye Valley AONB Nature Recovery Plan.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Manager apologised for the misspelling of Noble in the report.
- Progress to date on delivering the Noble Chafer Beetle Species Action Plan (SAP), is led by Ellie Baggett, AONB Nature Recovery Officer
- A partnership was developed with Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL) during initial discussions about the species.
 - 27 orchard sites across the 3 AONB counties (Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire & Herefordshire) were surveyed, resulting in two sightings of adult beetles, and one sighting of larvae, all in Herefordshire orchards near Woolhope & Checkley.
- A presentation about the noble chafer SAP was given during the AONB Partnership Study Tour in September.

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- It was questioned whether Pine Martens were detrimental to this species and others in orchard habitats and veteran trees. There is a lack of data on this species.
- Work is also progressing on the other Species Actions Plans.

We resolved to endorse the Noble Chafer Beetle Specie Action Plan and welcome the progress on the commitments in the Colchester Declaration and the other forthcoming Species Action Plans.

8. Review of the Designated Landscapes in England and Wales

We received an update regarding the progress with the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes England and Wales.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The DEFRA announcement following the public consultation on the Government Response to the Landscapes Review has been delayed due to the recent turmoil in Westminster.
- Dr Thérèse Coffey MP has now been appointed as the new DEFRA Secretary of State Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. A request for her or other M.P.s to visit the area would be beneficial.
- Meanwhile Natural England, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB), National Parks England and AONB lead officers are collaborating with DEFRA on various aspects of the anticipated proposals, including the potential rebranding of AONBs to 'National Landscapes'.
- Natural England have published the All England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment Tool and are continuing the evaluation of the Yorkshire Wolds for potential AONB designation.
- Welsh Government have published the recommendations from the Biodiversity Deep Dive which includes unlocking the potential of the Designated Landscapes.
- Responsibility for AONBs in Welsh Government has moved back to the Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd.
- 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Glover Review response is still awaited.

We noted the report.

9. AONB Partnership Study Tour

We received a report regarding feedback on the success of the AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour.

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In doing so, the following information was noted:

- A total of 33 people attended the annual AONB Partnership Tour on 30th September.
- There was a good spread of representation from throughout the AONB even though the Tour was focused around Ross-on-Wye, Brampton Abbots, Lydbrook & Welsh Bicknor in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire in the AONB.
- The tour visited a range of sites associated land-use and land management around various AONB projects and initiatives along with regenerative farming and recreation, including variously football, fishing and hostel accommodation.
- The time and dedication of the speakers and hosts is greatly appreciated.
- Feedback from attendees of the Tour has been extremely positive.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- After a 2 year absence, the Tour was greatly appreciated.
- The presentation at Townsend farm on regenerative agriculture and Farming in Protected Landscapes was inspiring, thought provoking, and an excellent choice.
- The AONB manager will organise a JAC Winter seminar which will focus on regenerative farming.

We noted the report.

10. National Association for AONBs

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

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The national 'Landscapes for Life' Conference 2022 was held at Lancaster University in mid-September attended by most of the AONB team.
- AONB Lead Officers have met on-line regularly to debate issues including the forthcoming Government response to the Glover Landscape Review.
- The NAAONB has recruited a new part-time Collaboration and National Partnerships Lead to liaise with DEFRA over development of a Landscapes, Parks & Trails Partnership.
- The NAAONB AGM and national AONBs Chairpersons' will be held on-line on 17th November, with the topic "Green Finance – What is it? What isn't it? And what potential does it hold for AONBs?"

Having received the update, the following points were noted:

- New AONB staff members found the conference very rewarding.
- AONBs should only be renamed to National Landscapes if or when there are extra powers and resources.
- The Designation will remain 'AONB' in law.
- NE Mapping of 'natural beauty' is a giving concern to some AONB Partnerships.

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We noted the report.

11. AONB Unit and Partner progress reports and updates

We received a report regarding the activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit and other partners.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Farming in Protected Landscapes – the new officer Anna Stankiewicz joined the AONB unit in August and has been very active in her new role. The panel met in September and approved 3 further projects. Just under £60,000 remains available for FiPL grants until March 2023. There were a few changes to the Assessment Panel – Andrew Nixon has left Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and will need to be replaced. Rob Edwards has replaced Rachel Bosanquet.
- Wye Valley Invasive Species programme (WISP) – AONB Lower Wye project Officer, and Lower Wye Nature Recovery officer, have been supervising contractors and working with local communities and Action Groups to stop the spread of the four invasive species – Japanese Knotweed, American Skunk Cabbage, Cherry Laurel and Himalayan Balsam.
- Lower Wye Nature Networks Partnership Project – AONB Development Officer alongside Gwent Wildlife Trust and The Woodland Trust are improving the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the AONB as well as improving connectivity between them. The funding is from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places:
 - Collaborative Dark Skies Wales project – A 3 year project covering all 8 Designated Landscapes. A Wales Dark Skies Officer will be appointed. This will complement the Kerne Bridge Dark Skies Project operating in the Walford Parish.
 - Lower Wye Valley Village Halls Energy efficiency & Hub development. – The new AONB Community Links Officer is managing the SLSP grants to village halls under the themes of: Decarbonisation, Resilient and Green Local Communities and More Sustainable Tourism.
- Sustainable Development Fund and Herefordshire Community Foundation Wye Valley AONB Fund. The new Community Links Officer is managing these. £54,453 has been committed leaving £45,547 available for SDF grant applications. £5,000 now available through HCF. There will be an additional donation from a film company of approx. £10K.
- Wye Valley Walk website: This is now live with QR codes replacing the stamped passport system, registration is via the website.
- Wye Valley River festival 2022 update: the final event of the Wye Valley River Festival 2022 was held in the grounds of Tintern Abbey. Despite the weather this was well attended. ‘Alchemy and Artistry – Tintern Fire Garden!’ did not fail to impress all.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

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- Footway on the Wye Valley Walk at Redbrook has some erosion. Mon CC has this listed for future improvement and will check if there is space for a pavement.
- A question was asked if a Welsh Version of the Wye Valley Walk Map was available. AONB Manager will check.

We noted the report.

12. Date of next meetings at 2pm

Monday 6th March 2023 at 2.00pm

Monday 3rd July 2023 at 2.00pm

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
6th March 2023

AONB UNIT WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024

Purpose

To seek members' approval for the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year, under the current funding agreements with DEFRA, NRW and Welsh Government.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the AONB Unit Work Programme for 2023/2024

Key Issues

- The attached table sets out the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit in the form of the Work Programme 2023/2024.
- During the year it is expected that the AONB Unit will remain with 8.4 FTE posts although a partnership project with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust may enable the secondment of a Farm Advisor to work with the AONB Unit.
- Priorities include the on-going development of the AONB Nature Recovery Plan and Species Action Plans; promotion and delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme (in England); the distribution and administration of grants through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation AONB Fund; the conclusion of the Lower Wye Nature Networks Fund project; the delivery of the second year of projects funded through the 3-year tranche of Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme; including ongoing control of Invasive Non-Native Species, support for Village Halls and enhancements to the Wye Valley Walk; being a co-host for the National AONB Conference and continuing a range of existing activities and projects; while retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.
- The AONB Unit core budget for 2023/4 presented to the AONB Steering Group is £361,000 with additional funding programmes, grants and match funding anticipated to exceed £710,000 levered into the AONB during the year.

Reasons

This will be the second year of three year funding agreements for the Wye Valley AONB Unit from both DEFRA and Welsh Government and the second of two year funding from Natural Resources Wales (NRW). This relative stability enables the AONB Unit to plan ahead and

consolidate team capacity. This is in contrast to the two previous years which saw successive one year funding agreements of varying rates, often with late approval, causing significant uncertainty for AONB staff and the development of longer term projects.

Implications

The AONB core budget for 2023-24 has been estimated at £361,000 based on a current flat-line budget. This is augmented by the Farming in Protected Landscapes and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places programmes (in England and Wales respectively) and the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) which between them also lever in varying levels of match funding into the AONB. Various partnership projects also substantially increase the capacity and reach of the AONB Partnership, through the development and delivery of new initiatives and funding bids to further the implementation of the AONB Management Plan.

The Work Programme incorporates this range of externally funded projects, grants and match funding initiatives which add value to the core AONB activities. The anticipated leverage of investment and expenditure is anticipated to exceed £710,000 through the year. This will take the turnover of the AONB Unit Business Plan to over £1.7million.

AONB Unit Initiatives / activities • Outputs	AONB Budget £ [nonAONB£] Key Staff %	Outcomes AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
Nature				
<p>Nature Recovery & Landscape connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop AONB Nature Recovery Plan to focus priority areas for habitat creation and connectivity particularly between woodland, species-rich grassland, riparian habitats, orchards and veteran trees. Complete Species Action Plans for Orchards (Noble Chafer), River (Water Crowfoot), Woodland (Woodland Butterfly assemblage), Grassland (Bumblebee assemblage), and Hedgehogs. Manage final period the Lower Wye Nature Networks Project with National Lottery Heritage Fund and Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust. 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), Green Infrastructure (GI) & Riparian Trees initiatives working with local land owners, managers & stakeholders Organise regular volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves Collaborate over outputs and outcomes of Woolhope Dome workshop Collaborate and support landscape connectivity initiatives including Wye to Wyre - Severn Treescapes. 	<p>4000 [£264,525]</p> <p>NRO 50% PO 40% DO 18% CLO 15% IO 10% AM 5% FAO 3% FO 2%</p>	<p>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</p> <p>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</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</p>	<p>1.a) 1.b) 1.c) 3.a) 3.b) 3.d) 4.a) 4.b) 5.a) 6.c) 6.d) 6.e)</p>	<p>Q1-3 Q4</p>

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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for the National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & landowners 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. 		their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme		
Climate				
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	1.a) 4.a) 4.b) 5.a) 6.c) 6.d)	Q1-3 Q4

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AONB Unit Initiatives / activities • Outputs	AONB Budget £ [nonAONB£] Key Staff %	Outcomes AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
		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 exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas		
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	1.d) 4.a)	Q1-3 Q4
People				
Wye Valley Walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership • Maintain new website www.wyevallywalk.org • Manage new on-line Passport scheme • Continue Piercefield Walk enhancements with Gwent Wildlife Trust, MCC PRoW 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	1.c) 3.a) 3.d) 4.a) 6.c) 6.d) #counter data #web-stats	Q1-3 Q4
Overlooking the Wye legacy	[£25,000] PO 5% FAO 5%	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	1.c) 2.a) 2.b) 2.c)	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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing Cleddon Falls & Wordsworth Walk enhancements with landowner(s) Review & reprint of Walks leaflets Audit and repair & maintenance of Overlooking the Wye infrastructure 	DO 3% IO 3% AM 2%	WV-H3 Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage and historic 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	3.a) 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	1.c) 2.a) 2.b) 2.c) 3.a) 4.a) 4.b) 6.d) 6.e)	Q1-3 Q4
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.wyevallyeaonb.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	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. 	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	3.a) 3.b) 3.c) 3.d)	Q1-3 Q4

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
Business Plan for 2023/2024



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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote, sponsor &/or lead guided walks, events, activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB Support the Wye Valley River Festival CIC 		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		
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 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	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 2023 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	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) 	~ 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	4.a) 4.b) 6.c) 6.d)	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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire and Visit Herefordshire Wye Valley River Festival CIC Advisory Board Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership Gwent Green Grid Partnership Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Monmouthshire Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group Support Town, Parish & Community Councils with advice & guidance as appropriate 		AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement 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		
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 Co-host 2023 National AONB Seminar 5th-7th Sept including hosting Field Trip Work with Welsh Government and Tirweddau Cymru 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	4.b) 6.b) 6.c)	Q1-3 Q4
Place				

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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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
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	3.e) 5.a) 5.b) 5.c) 5.d) 5.e) 5.f)	Q1-3 Q4
AONB Planning & Development Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members Monitor Planning support & activity jointly with Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. 	~ 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	5.a) 5.b) 5.c) 5.d) 5.e)	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 Investigate opportunities to update heritage, tourism and recreation monitoring. Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan 	# DO 7% NRO 5% IO 5% FO 5% CLO 3% FAO 3% PO 3% SPO 3% AM 2%	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 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	1-6	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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake Fixed point photography across 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 adaption actions		
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	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	3.a) 3.c)	Q1-3 Q4
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 Climate, Nature, People and Place. Service the Local Assessment Panel in determining applications and allocating funding. Manage delegated grants (<£5k) Administer grant payments and monitor and report to DEFRA 	<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 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	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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the AONB Farming Award to present to a notable project. 		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		
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) Deliver & manage scheme: Nature Recovery:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Wye Valley Nature Recovery Initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasive non-native species (INNS) control Landscape Connectivity Species Action Plans esp. Orchards project Sustainable Tourism:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Wye Valley Tourism & Access Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley Walk enhancements: Wyesham & Piercefield Integrated Access Strategy Decarbonisation & Supporting Communities:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Wye Valley Village Halls Energy efficiency & Hub development Engagement in collaborative projects across multiple Designated Landscapes:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wales Dark Skies Education Resources Programme 	[£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. 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	1.a) 3.b) 3.d) 4.a) 5.a) 6.c) 6.d) #WG	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	Metric (see ManPlan Sec13, p114)	By when
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£90k 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	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	1.a) 3.a) 3.d) 4.b) 6.c) 6.d) 6.e)	Q1-3 Q4

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
6th March 2023

REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- DEFRA have published Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 as the first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018).
- Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 focuses on 10 goals including "Thriving plants and wildlife", "Clean and plentiful water", "Mitigating and adapting to climate change" and "Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment".
- Under the 'enhanced beauty' goal the Government will "invest in a new national landscapes partnership for National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and National Trails" and "extend the delivery of our Farming in Protected Landscapes programme".
- The Welsh National Designated Landscapes Partnership, Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW), is hosting a seminar on the role of Designated Landscapes in the nature emergency, on 9th-10th March 2023 on Gower, Swansea.
- Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) has three new seconded staff taking strategic leads for the AONBs and National Parks, meanwhile Andrew Blake, Wye Valley AONB Manager, has been appointed vice-chair of TCLW for 2023-25.
- 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

The 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) was published in 2018. One of the outcomes was the 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England, produced in 2019 with 27 Proposals for Government. Proposal 24 stated that "AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes." Proposal 25 suggested "A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts".

In January Environment Secretary Dr Therese Coffey unveiled the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#) which sets out how the government plans to restore nature, improve environmental quality and increase the prosperity of the country. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 represents the first review of the 25YEP. It builds on the 25YEP vision and 10 goals setting out how government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each of the environmental goals, with interim targets to measure progress. The apex goal is “improving nature”.

Welsh Government have been working with AONB and National Park lead officers, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the NAAONB through Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales and the Biodiversity Deep Dive Designated Landscapes Subgroup to advance a range of collaborative initiatives.

Implications

DEFRA are continuing to develop proposals for the new National Landscapes, Parks and Trails Partnership. Investment will enable National Parks, AONBs and National Trails to Collaborate more closely on three national priorities; improving nature; access for all parts of society; and building capacity for the National Parks Partnerships and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) to generate more private finance to deliver more for nature, climate, people and place.

Support is also forthcoming for the NAAONB to rebrand AONBs as ‘National Landscapes’. This is intended to reflect renewed values and boost understanding of the national significance of AONBs with more diverse communities, including residents, partners and visitors. However, there are currently no proposals to strengthen AONBs with new purposes and powers.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme will be extended by one year to March 2025, in recognition of the positive feedback and outcomes delivered by FiPL. This will continue to support the important role that Protected Landscapes play in delivering for nature, climate, people and place. It is anticipated that the best aspects of FiPL will be integrated within future environmental land management schemes within Protected Landscapes.

Natural England will be updating their guidance to strengthen Protected Landscapes’ management plans, promoting the importance of supporting thriving local communities and access for all, alongside climate change mitigation and adaptation and nature recovery.

Most of these initiatives were signalled in the Government’s response to the Landscapes Review last year. The NAAONB is working closely with DEFRA, the National Parks and Natural England to enable them. But without a strengthening of the duties on other public bodies to ‘have regard’ to AONB purposes, it is difficult to see how these commitments make a sufficient difference at the scale and the pace that is needed. The lack of movement by the Government to strengthen the duty of regard through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is a major concern. Similarly, all of the numerous initiatives, targets and commitments require funding. With the exception of private green finance and using the levers of farm policy, it is not clear where the balance of investment will come from for many of these commitments in the nationally Protected Landscapes.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) is the partnership of the Designated Landscapes in Wales: three National Parks and five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), who are working together to address key shared challenges, including action on the climate change and nature emergencies. TCLW combines the strengths of its partners, working together for the benefit of Wales and its people, securing the long-term resilience of the landscapes and their communities. TCLW includes the lead officers from AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities (NPAs), Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). The recently appointed new chair of TCLW is Emyr Williams, Chief Executive Eryri NPA, and Andrew Blake has been appointed vice-chair for a two year term.

Three new staff are seconded to TCLW from the National Parks to take a strategic lead across all 8 Designated Landscapes in Wales on: Nature Recovery and Carbon Sequestration; Nature Recovery and Nutrient Management; and Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence. There is also a TCLW working group on the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS).

The TCLW seminar will take place on 9th & 10th March, with a closer look into the Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive and will ask some critical questions about the role of Designated Landscapes and how they can contribute to the 30 by 30 target. Key note speakers are Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change; Abi Reader, Deputy President NFU Cymru and Anita Kerwin-Nye, Executive Director of Strategy, Commercial and Engagement YHA.

Background

In 2018 the [25 Year Environment Plan \(25YEP\)](#) set out the Government's vision for a quarter-of-a-century of action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. Various progress reports have been published since: [reports on our progress since 25YEP](#).

In October 2022 Welsh Government published the Recommendations of the Biodiversity Deep Dive. Julie James, Welsh Government Minister for Climate Change announced the recommendations designed to develop a set of collective actions to support nature's recovery, see <https://gov.wales/written-statement-biodiversity-deep-dive>. Recommendation 3 is "Unlock the potential of designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) to deliver more for nature and 30 by 30" (see <https://gov.wales/biodiversity-deep-dive-recommendations-html#section-105982>).

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales was established following the commitment to create a National Designated Landscape Partnership in 'Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks' (July 2018).

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FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Purpose

To advise members of the progress of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the extension of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and endorses the allocations of the Local Assessment Panel.

Key Issues

- Each AONB and National Park in England has an allocation from DEFRA to provide grants through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme for farmers and land managers to provide benefits for nature, climate, people and places.
- The original FiPL programme was for 2021/22 to 2023/24. The programme has now be extended for further year to March 2025.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer is able to assist farmers and land managers applying to the programme.
- The Local Assessment Panel meets regularly to determine applications for Farming in Protected Landscapes grants and has approved the full allocation of funds for 2022/23.

Reasons

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme allows farmers and other land managers in England to liaise with the AONB Unit and apply for funding to improve public access, and deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment, for people and for places.

Applications need to demonstrate that proposed projects help deliver the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and must deliver against at least one of the following items under the four key themes:

Climate

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

Nature

- There is a greater area of wildlife rich habitat

- There is greater connectivity between habitats
- Existing habitat is better managed for biodiversity
- There is an increase in biodiversity

People

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

Place

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

The FiPL Local Assessment Panel members are listed below. The Local Assessment Panel determines applications over £5,000. Applications under £5,000 are delegated to the AONB Manager for decision.

Implications

The FiPL allocation for the Wye Valley AONB Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme budget is as follows:

Year	Budget	Grants awarded	Projects supported
2021/22	£ 96,525	£ 96,473.46	7 projects
2022/23	£ 220,110	£ 228,622.29	22 projects (including some multiyear from Year 1)
2023/24	£ 219,488	£ 128,425.55 [to date]	currently 11 projects (all multiyear from Year 1 &/or Year 2)
2024/25	<i>tbc</i>	<i>0</i>	~

In total 30 applications have been received and assessed, with 5 projects being refused or deferred. There are 14 multi-year projects, 4 spanning Years 1 & 2 and 11 spanning Years 2 & 3. One spans all 3 years.

Currently there is a slight overspend in Year 2 which may be mitigated by additional allocation from DEFRA, from a national pot redistributing underspends from other Protected Landscapes. Alternatively some project spends can be rolled over into Year 3.

For Year 3 (2023/24) currently £ 91,062 remains unallocated. However DEFRA have enquired whether any further resources might be required and an additional bid has been submitted.

The recently published Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 announced that the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme will be extended by one year to March 2025, with additional budget resources. However, individual allocations have not been confirmed.

The full list of approved projects are outlined below:

Project number	Farm / applicant	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	Total
WV001	Grazing Management Ltd	4,938.75			4,938.75
WV002	Nature's Nest	7,146.70	951.00		8,097.70
WV003	Wye & Usk Foundation	14,942.00	31,658.00	19,125.00	65,725.00
WV004	Townsend Farm	31,144.20	34,386.00		65,530.20
WV006	Lewstone Farm	4,498.00			4,498.00
WV007	Sandford Farm	756.71	742.22		1,498.93
WV009	Ballingham Court Farm	4,000.00			4,000.00
WV010	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust		16,357.60		16,357.60
WV012	Wye & Usk Foundation		6,284.48	11,908.00	18,192.48
WV013	Brampton Orchard		15,471.50	2,843.40	18,314.90
WV014	AONB noble chafer project		7,375.74	500.00	7,875.74
WV016	The Dingle, Checkley		10,021.26	3,694.91	13,716.17
WV017	Huntsham Farm		3,599.25		3,599.25
WV018	Tump Farm		3,073.12	5,271.21	8,344.33
WV019	Coxbury Farm		7,624.81		7,624.81
WV020	Bicknor Court Farm		6,587.46	14,264.70	20,852.16
WV021	LEAF education		700.00	13,500.00	14,200.00
WV022	Ballingham Court Farm		10,731.16	659.24	11,390.40
WV023	Taste of Self-Sufficiency		2,083.03		2,083.03
WV024	Grazing Management Ltd		2,472.76		2,472.76
WV025	Townsend Farm Modern Field		7,470.00		7,470.00
WV026	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust		5,150.00		5,150.00
WV027	Benhall Farm		2,732.64	2,818.98	5,551.62
WV028	Coxbury Farm		1,990.00		1,990.00
WV029	Dryslade Farm		2,275.26	6,309.78	8,585.04
Advice & Guidance	AONB costs	17,631.60	29,800.00	29,825.76	77,257.36
Admin	AONB costs	11,415.5	19,085	17,704.57	37,906.07
Total spend		96,473.46	228,622.29	128,425.55	453,521.30
Total budget		96,525.08	220,110.00	219,488.00	536,123.08
	<i>remainder</i>	<i>51.62</i>	<i>-8,512.29</i>	<i>91,062.45</i>	<i>82,601.78</i>

In total 73 enquires have been received about the FiPL programme. Recently 10 farmers and smallholders have enquired, with at least three new applications anticipated in the near future for work to be undertaken in Year 3. Meanwhile the Wye & Usk Foundation and Herefordshire Meadows are also providing advice to farmers and supporting the development of FiPL applications.

Background

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme was originally announced in the Agricultural Transition Plan in November 2020 and launched by the DEFRA Minister in July 2021. (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>)

In January Environment Secretary Dr Thérèse Coffey unveiled the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#) which included extending the delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

FiPL Local Assessment Panel members:

Andrew Blake, Wye Valley AONB Manager (chair)

Rob Edwards, Natural England

Cllr John Hardwick, Wye Valley AONB JAC/Herefordshire Council/Oldstone Farm

Ann Herbert, Lewstone Farm/NFU

Ali Parker, NFU

Esther Rudge, Ballingham Court Farm

Claire Spicer, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

Officers in attendance:

Anna Stankiewicz, Wye Valley AONB Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer

Nick Critchley, Wye Valley AONB Development Officer

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND AND HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION WYE VALLEY AONB FUND

Purpose

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

Recommendation

That the JAC endorse the allocations of the SDF for 2022/23, including allocation of any remaining funds to the Wye Valley River Festival.

Key Issues

- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £54,453 allocated from the £100,000 offered by Welsh Government for 2022/23, with £45,547 remaining.
- At least two more applications are expected to be appraised imminently, with a combined value of about £35,000.
- The JAC had previously endorsed the principle of allocating remaining SDF at end of year to specific projects such as the Wye Valley River Festival.
- The National Association for AONBs have commissioned an independent evaluation of the SDF for Welsh Government.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) host the Wye Valley AONB Fund for which the 2022/23 Quarter Three balance was £65,399.70. This included a £10,000 donation to the Endowment Fund from Bad Wolf Productions.
- Applications are welcome for both sets of funding for 2023/24.

Reasons

Welsh Government have allocated £100,000 of SDF each year for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25. This enables the SDF to continue to provide an exceptional opportunity for organisations, individuals and community groups to apply for grant aid for innovative, sustainable, environmental projects, which benefit the Welsh part of the AONB.

With the support of Welsh Government, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has commissioned an independent evaluation of the Sustainable Development Fund across the 5 AONBs in Wales.

The Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) was established with a £10,000 Immediate Impact fund and a £50,000 Endowment Fund. The Immediate Impact fund has now been fully allocated to projects. The Endowment Fund had been growing at a modest rate but has also received a donation of £10,000 from South Wales TV production company Bad Wolf. Opportunities will be sought to grow the AONB Fund further over time.

Implications

The SDF Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on each application over £3,000. Application under £3,000 are determined by the AONB Manager. The list of approved grants during 2022/23, totalling £54,453, is in the table below.

Catrin Evans Consultancy has been commissioned by the NAAONB to carry out an independent evaluation of the Sustainable Development Fund across the 5 AONBs in Wales. The evaluation is looking at how the SDF delivers against individual AONB priorities and objectives (as set out in the Management Plans) and also how it delivers against national priorities. As part of this process, a number of projects grant aided between 2018 and 2021 have been selected for a visit. Project selection has been based on ensuring that a wide a range of themes, outcomes and scale have been selected, to try and capture the full scope of the Fund.

2022/23 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants approved

Code	Applicant	Project Title	years		Total Cost	SDF Grant
			This	Total		
WV00 YR22W	Wye Valley AONB Unit	Admin 10%	1	1	n/a	10,000.00
WV01 YR22W	Jamie's Farm	Monmouth Environmental Improvements	2	2	£25,679.28	£3,300.00
WV02 YR22W	Wye Valley River Festival (WVRF) CIC	WVRF 2022	2	2	£60,500.00	£25,000.00
WV03 YR22W	Monmouthshire Meadows	Wet Meadow Pond Project	1	1	£11,354.00	£5,280.00
WV04 YR22W	Busy Bees Toddler Group	Sensory Garden	2	2	£8,308.00	£5,158.00
WV05 YR22W	Chepstow school	Wildlife Garden etc.	2	2	£3,274.70	£1,500.00
WV06 YR22W	Tintern Village fete	Child Creative engagement	2	2	£3,973.00	£1,915.00
WV07 YR22W	Jamie's Farm	Carbon Management Plan	1	1	£2,736.00	£2,300.00
WV08 YR22W	One Planet Matt Dun	Dôl-Wen hedgerow restoration	1	1	£4560.20	£1952.60
TOTALS (to date)					£115,824.98	£54,453.00
					<i>Remaining from £100,000</i>	<i>£45,547.00</i>

Lucinda James, AONB Community Links Officer, is currently assisting two applicants with projects totalling approximately £35,000. It is anticipated these will be presented to the Assessment Panel shortly, within 2022/23.

The JAC had previously endorsed the principle of directing unallocated SDF towards significant AONB projects with major community benefits such as the Overlooking the Wye scheme and the Wye Valley River Festival. It is proposed that any remaining unallocated SDF is likewise allocated to specific AONB projects and/or to the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company.

The Wye Valley AONB Fund with the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has a balance of £65,399.70 (as of the last statement dated 31st December 2022). This includes a £10,000 donation to the Endowment Fund from Bad Wolf Productions, a South Wales TV production company that often makes use of locations in the Wye Valley. Bad Wolf credits include His Dark Materials and Doctor Who. Their donation is primarily for drawdown to support the re-establishment of the AONB Youth Ranger programme, but they are willing for the interest on their donation to be used to contribute towards other projects. The SDF Assessment Panel recommends applications to the HCF for funding.

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

Background

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) supports living and working more sustainably in association with enhancing natural beauty, wildlife, culture, landscape, land use and community within the context of the Wales sustainable development goals and principles in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Wye Valley AONB Unit administer the fund on behalf of Welsh Government.

The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) host and manage the Wye Valley AONB Fund on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
6th March 2023

NAAONB UPDATE

Purpose

To advise members of activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB), including the Wye Valley AONB being a co-host of the National AONB Conference in Bath in September.

Recommendation

That the JAC

- A. welcomes the opportunity to co-host the National AONB Conference on 5th-7th September 2023 and provide a fieldtrip to the Wye Valley AONB
- B. encourages AONB partners to attend the AONB Conference at Bath University
- C. supports the AONB staff development programme in Wales

Key Issues

- The National AONB Conference will be on 5th - 7th September 2023, with the focus on 'Investing in Landscape'
- The Conference will be held at Bath University with field trips to the co-hosting AONBs of Cotswolds, Cranborne Chase, Mendip Hills, North Wessex Downs, Quantock Hills and Wye Valley.
- The NAAONB is organising a staff development programme in the AONBs in Wales.

Landscapes for Life Conference 2023

The 2023 Conference will be hosted by 6 AONBs surrounding the venue at Bath University. The co-hosting AONBs are the Cotswolds, Cranborne Chase, Mendip Hills, North Wessex Downs, Quantock Hills and Wye Valley. The theme of the conference is 'Investing in Landscape' which will look at the impact and opportunity of committing time, money and creativity to conserving and enhancing outstanding landscapes. The programme is being prepared and will be available through the NAAONB website here:

<https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/events/landscapes-life-conference/landscapes-life-conference2023>

The AONB Unit is arranging a fieldtrip for the conference to the lower Wye Valley for 6th September. Further details will follow in due course.

It is hope that there will be good representation from AONB partners at the conference in Bath.

AONB staff development programme in Wales

The NAAONB has commissioned some staff development work for the AONB teams in Wales. This will involve preparing Lumina Spark portraits for staff in the 5 AONB team. Each portrait is accompanied by a mentored 'walk-through' designed to help the participant understand what the portrait is saying about them and their work styles. There will be a subsequent coaching session using the Lumina Spark portraits or look at ways colleagues work together in the AONB team. Finally there will a Wales wide workshop for AONB staff to develop shared understanding of critical issues and collaborative behaviours to enable better joint working. There is also the opportunity for each of the AONB lead officers to have a one to one coaching session with an Executive coach under the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM7) to provide valuable personal development.

Background

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

AONB UNIT & PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a. AONB Partnership Seminar - 16th March 2023
- b. Cleddon Bog SSSI & NRW Peatland funding
- c. AONB Species Action Plans
- d. Lower Wye Nature Networks Partnership Project
- e. Integrated Recreational Access Strategy - Monmouthshire.
- f. Wye Valley Villages signage (Monmouthshire) & Delivery Group
- g. Wye Valley River Festival

a. Wye Valley AONB Partnership Seminar - 16th March 2023

The AONB Partnership Seminar will be on Thursday 16th March 2023 from 10am-3pm at Goodrich Village Hall. The title is 'Enhancing water catchment through innovative land management'. The objective is to attract a wide audience of politicians, officers, farmers and landowners that can influence the development of policies and practices to conserve and enhance water resources in our outstanding landscape. There will be talks from experts in soil and land management, agroforestry and Natural Flood Management by

Niels Corfield—Regenerative Agriculture Consultant

Stephen Briggs—Abacus Agriculture, Nuffield Scholar

Chris Uttley—Stroud Valleys Natural Flood Management Officer

followed by a Q&A panel discussion. Refreshments and lunch provided. The event has been supported by the Environment Agency.

b. Cleddon Bog & NRW Peatland funding

The AONB Unit secured £16K from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in 2022/3 for habitat restoration work at Cleddon Bog SSSI, the 15ha lowland peatland Common near Trellech. Large areas of the Bog have become overgrown with birch, willow and purple moor grass which is diminishing the biodiversity and threatening to dry the bog out. This leads to carbon and other gas emissions. Preparation work got underway in Autumn 2022 following liaison with the Commoners and the securing of permissions and contractors to carry out vegetation management work plus awareness raising of the project through social media. The year culminated in a highly successful community-based work party, led by Nature Conservation Services and the AONB team, with ¼ acre of birch and willow cleared in just two days.



NRW have offered further funding to continue the restoration work up until March 2025 and we are working with partners to commence a conservation grazing pilot this March. The Brockweir-based Grazing Management Ltd., will be bringing four Belted Galloway cows with NoFence collars onto the Bog for conservation grazing. These will be checked daily by a team of local residents who have been trained and become certified Livestock Checkers. The cattle will graze the Bog for one month, then it's up onto the NRW Forestry Estate at Beacon Hill for the summer and then back to the Bog through to November; connecting two important sites within the same small sub-catchment of the Wye. We'll be monitoring the impact of the grazing using drone footage and aerial photos to inform the following years' management regime.

c. **AONB Species Action Plans (SAP)**

The Noble Chafer SAP is currently in its review phase, and has gone out to Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), our project partner, for review. Once PTES have given their feedback, the SAP will be translated into Welsh and published in a downloadable format on the AONB website. Funded through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL), 13 habitat boxes are being installed this month across 6 orchard sites in Herefordshire, as well as the planting of 20 damson and plum trees. A Traditional Orchard Management training event took place last month, hosted by the Colwall Orchard Group, which was met with much enthusiasm from the participants. A second event will be held in June focusing on Traditional Orchard wildlife. FiPL funding has also secured enough noble chafer pheromone to run the lure trapping survey for another two years in the English part of the AONB. Plans are in place to use Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding to mirror these efforts in the Welsh part of the AONB, to include habitat box installation and pheromone surveying.

The Hedgehog SAP is nearly completed and will be presented to the JAC at the next meeting. We are continuing to support Dylan Allman, our Wye Valley AONB 'Hedgehog Hero', with his Be Hedgehog Aware campaign. The AONB Unit is the supporting organisation for his recent project with GAVO, where he has been awarded a 'Cash 4 U Youth Led' grant to deliver presentations to community groups and continue raising awareness of the plight of hedgehogs. Plans for this Spring (after the hibernation period) include further engagement with schools and local communities (talks, sessions with children, camera trap loans), mammal footprint surveys as citizen science/engagement tool. We will continue to promote conservation action for hedgehogs through AONB projects and grant funding, particularly focusing on opportunities for hedgerow creation &/or restoration or field margin buffers through the FiPL, Lower Wye Valley

Nature Networks project, SDF Landscape & Biodiversity Enhancement Grants and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP).

Bumblebee assemblage and Woodland butterfly assemblage SAPs will be a key focus of Nature Recovery work this Spring & Summer, utilising citizen science surveys to collect baseline data for the AONB, and establishing how we can better work with partners to promote these priority species.

d. Lower Wye Nature Networks Partnership Project

A project deadline extension has been received for the Lower Wye Valley Networks Project; the project will now finish at the end of September 2023. Whilst much work has taken place, this additional time will allow for an extra season of Invasive Non-Native Species treatment and further seasonally dependant habitat enhancement work on farms and both sites owned by project partners Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust.

As well as project management and administration, the Wye Valley AONB Team are delivering elements of this project on private land. Consultants The Environment Partnership have complete advice visits and plans on 10 farms, and the AONB team are now working with these farmers to deliver opportunities identified.

e. Integrated Recreational Access Strategy

For many years the AONB Unit has worked closely with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) Highways and Countryside Access teams on the safety and accessibility of key access routes. We are acutely aware of the legal and moral obligation to safeguard these routes and the opportunities and impacts of their use on the wider network and local communities. This was further documented in the 2022 public consultation for the Wye Valley Villages Study.

Over the last 4 years some progress has been made to better understand the issues and explore potential solutions for some routes, but across the network these issues have generally remained unresolved due to their physical and legal complexity and the resulting resource requirements. Recent discussions between the AONB Unit and MCC Highways and Countryside Access have reaffirmed that a strategic approach is desirable, rather than cherry-picking routes that could prove difficult to justify versus other routes, and/or not actually be what the local communities and users want or need. This strategic approach has been agreed in principle by the Local Access Forum.

It was agreed that the AONB Unit, with its strong multi-sector stakeholder connections, is best placed to lead this new strategy, which will incorporate MCC's statutory requirements as the Public Rights of Way and Highways Authority, but also consider the effects of climate change, nature recovery, heritage, tourism and active travel agendas, and the context of the AONB Management Plan. The AONB Unit has secured funding from the Welsh Government (WG) Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme to take this forward up to March 2025. We are currently developing the necessary project management processes and structures and producing a consultancy brief for the scoping and consultation processes.

f. Wye Valley Villages signage (Monmouthshire) & Delivery Group

The Wye Valley Villages Steering Group, consisting of representatives from Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the four constituent Community Councils of St Arvans, Trellech United, Devauden and Tintern (now redefined as Wye Valley), has overseen the design and installation of the new village entrance signs. These have now been installed at all the 9 villages in the AONB in Monmouthshire; Devauden, Llanishen, Trellech, The Narth, Penallt, Catbrook, Llandogo, Tintern and St Arvans.

The preparation of new village gateway signage was taken from the Wye Valley Villages Action Plan as a 'quick win' initial project by the Steering Group. Funding was secured through the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. A local and long established Monmouth company won the competitive contract to design and produce the signs. Following guidance by the Steering Group the signs incorporate the AONB logo and an image representing something of local relevance for each village. The Steering Group determined the wording about 'road users' while the inclusion of the village name and other text in Welsh is a legal requirement. The signs are made of powder coated metal.

There has been some local objection to the new signage. The signs are intended to help communicate the individual village's unique identity within a design framework that identifies their location in the Wye Valley AONB, replacing the very varied, and in places dilapidated, village gateway signage.

The Steering Group is now renamed as the Delivery Group and will move forward to address further actions and proposals arising out of the Wye Valley Villages Plan.

g. Wye Valley River Festival



It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Jon Beedell, one of the founding Artistic Directors of the Wye Valley River Festival. Jon will be fondly remembered by many for his commanding characterisations in all 5 of Wye Valley River Festivals – from Judge Hog to jazz trombonist in street parades. It was of course street theatre that had been Jon's stage since the 1980s. As a co-founder of Desperate Men he brought a dynamism and eccentricity to the Wye Valley River Festival that helped turn it into such a phenomena, helping the Festival win the National AONB Bowland Award in 2018. His ambition and drive, inspired by the landscape, led the numerous arts professionals to collaborate with the local people throughout the valley. He always entertained and challenged audiences, and co-creators, to change the way we look at ourselves and how we see things, how we relate to our environment, neighbourhoods and to each other. He has left an outstanding legacy of memories and connections in the Wye Valley.