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28th February 2022

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 7th March, 2022 at 2.00 pm
Remote Meeting

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Chairperson's announcements.	
4.	Public Question Time. Responses to the public questions raised at the previous meeting are addressed in items 8 and 14.	
5.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	1 - 10
6.	AONB Unit 2022/23 Work Programme.	11 - 16
7.	Glover Review & Government Response.	
7.1.	JAC report.	17 - 20
7.2.	Summary of Government response.	21 - 26
8.	Natural England LUC 'All-England Review' of potential areas.	27 - 30
9.	Wye Valley AONB Villages Stage 3 Report.	31 - 34
10.	WyeNAC nominee.	35 - 36
11.	Farming in Protected Landscapes.	
11.1.	JAC report.	37 - 40

11.2.	Local Assessment Panel Terms of Reference.	41 - 42
11.3.	Local Assessment Panel members.	43 - 44
12.	Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in AONBs.	
12.1.	JAC Report.	45 - 46
12.2.	Joint Statement.	47 - 52
13.	Wye Valley River Festival update.	53 - 54
14.	AONB Management Plan - Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services.	
14.1.	JAC Report.	55 - 58
14.2.	Questions for the JAC.	59 - 62
15.	AONB Unit progress reports and updates.	63 - 68
16.	Dates of next meetings: Monday 4th July 2022 at 2.00pm. Monday 7th November 2022 at 2.00pm Subject to Covid-19 restrictions the meetings will be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.	

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:

C. Edwards
M. Feakins
M. Lane
A.E. Webb

Forest of Dean:

D. Wheeler
C. McFarling

Town / Parish Community Councils with Voting Powers

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

Co-opted Members with Voting Powers

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

Co-opted Members without Voting Powers

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

Public Information

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Welsh Language

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

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Outcomes we are working towards

Nobody Is Left Behind

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

People Are Confident, Capable and Involved

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

Our County Thrives

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

Our priorities

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

Our Values

- **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.
- **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.
- **Kindness:** We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Remote Attendance
Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor: A Webb (Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: C. Edwards and M. Lane

Herefordshire Council

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

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillors: C. McFarling and D. Wheeler

Gloucestershire County Council

County Councillor T. Hale

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC – Mr. C. Evers

Herefordshire Association Local Councils – Mr. R. Gething

One Voice Wales – Councillor R. Edwards

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas

National Farmers Union – Mr. M. Price

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron

Technical Advice Officers:

Wye Valley AONB Manager – Mr. A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams

Gloucestershire County Council – Mr. R. Niblett

Herefordshire Council – Mr. J. Bisset

Also in attendance:

Mr. A. Clay

Mr. A. Karran

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Attendance Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor M. Feakins, Councillor B. Durkin, Mr. B. Nash, Mr. D. Price, Mr. A. Taylor, Councillor S. Phelps, Councillor T. Forester and Mr. M. Quine

1. Declarations of Interest

None received.

2. Public Question Time:

2.1. Preservation of Rural Beauty proposal to extend the Wye Valley AONB.

A proposal had been received from The Preservation of Rural Beauty Herefordshire and Gloucestershire (PRuB) that the Wye Valley AONB be extended to include the eastern ridge forming the watershed between the River Wye and River Severn from Woolhope to the Forest of Dean.

In doing so it was noted that Natural England would be responsible for identifying and nominating proposed AONBs in discussion with the respective local authorities.

We resolved that:

- (i) the AONB Manager prepares a report for the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee with a response to the proposal having discussed it with officers via the Technical Officers' Working Party;
- (ii) representatives of PRuB be invited to attend the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee.

2.2. AONB Management Plan - Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

The following questions had been received from Councillor Forester, Forest of Dean District Council:

1) Are members of the Joint Advisory Committee aware that the Natural Capital model being adopted by the AONB Management Plan would, when combined with the associated ESS (Ecosystems Services) and PES (Payment for Ecosystems Services) mechanisms:

a) Audit our land, water, mineral, biodiversity and energy resources and seek to convert such resources into "marketable" financial assets (referred to as 'Natural Assets') through various "market-based instruments and payments for ecosystems services."

b) Permit financial institutions, hedge / pension funds, private individuals and multinational corporations to purchase, hold and trade our 'Natural Assets' through emerging Natural Capital and 'Carbon' markets?

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Attendance Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

c) Effectively privatise and commodify by stealth all land within the AONB and Public Forestry Estate by permitting companies and individuals to, for example, own the 'Carbon' contained within our forests (for offsetting, for-profit-trading or tax evasion purposes)?

2) Do the Committee members responsible view this privatisation by proxy as in anyway related to obligations implicit in the AONB's declaration of a Climate Emergency?

3) Do the Committee members responsible consider that there has been adequate public consultation (especially in the Forest of Dean); and that residents (and members) have been fully informed of the implications of such a policy?

We resolved that the AONB Manager prepares a report for the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee in response to the questions raised.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 5th July 2021 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. AONB Annual report 2020/21

We received a report regarding the annual reports for 2020/21 on the achievements of the Wye Valley AONB Unit.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The 2020/21 Annual Report on the Work Programme for the AONB Unit was appended to the report, along with a summary financial report.
- High standards of achievement were maintained by the AONB Unit despite the Coronavirus Pandemic restricting many activities.
- 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:

- The AONB Unit comments on around 1% of planning applications and tends to look at around 10% of them. The remainder of the applications tend to not have a detrimental impact on the AONB.
- The AONB Unit does not have resources to comment on more applications. Neither does it have the capacity to check whether comments made by the AONB Unit have been acted upon with a view to helping to determine the outcome of such applications.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Attendance Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- The Wye Valley Society and Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) track and comment upon planning applications located within the AONB.
- Planning Departments of local authorities located within the Wye Valley AONB have a duty and responsibility to have regard to the AONB.
- Town, Parish and Community Councils also have a duty of regard to the AONB are statutory consultees for planning applications.
- The AONB Manager has previously made a presentation on training which could be sent to Town, Parish and Community Councils.
- The AONB Manager would raise the issues of planning application inconsistencies regarding the Planning Inspectorate to the National Association for AONBs.

We welcomed the Annual Report of AONB achievements for 2020/21 and noted the comments made.

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

We received a report regarding the allocations of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Assessment Panel and update on the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) delegated by Welsh Government is £100,000 for 2021/22 and is yet to be confirmed for 2022/23.
- The SDF Assessment Panel has allocated £99,138.75 for 2021/22 and £25,000 for 2022/23 to date, subject to funds being made available.
- Negotiations are on-going with some applicants and full project delivery and spend may not be achieved this year leaving up to £5,000 unallocated and a commensurate transfer of grant offer to next year, subject to funds being available from Welsh Government.
- The Joint Advisory Committee had previously endorsed the principle of allocating any remaining SDF at end of year to specific AONB projects that meet the SDF criteria.
- The first of a number of podcasts on successful SDF projects has been produced.
- The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley AONB Fund latest balances were £966.19 remaining in the immediate impact fund and £58,554.32 in the Endowment Fund. There were no applications in the current round meaning £9,520 is available for grants.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Attendance Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- Applications are welcome for both sets of funding, including under the Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement Grant element.

We resolved to endorse the recent allocations of the SDF for 2021/22 and 2022/23, subject to minor variations and funds being available.

6. AONB 50th Anniversary Programme

We received a report regarding progress with the celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of the Wye Valley being designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1971.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The AONB's 50th Anniversary celebrations during 2021 have been less ambitious than originally planned due to the uncertainties and limitations of the Covid-19 restrictions.
- A consistent campaign of social media 'take-over' posts and regular promotions of 50walks@50 have helped raise the profile of the AONB.
- A repeat of the five yearly AONB Perceptions Survey is planned to benchmark activity against results from 2016 and 2011.
- The Wye Valley AONB Manager will be co-chairing a major on-line conference on 1st December 2021 on 'What is Natural Beauty'.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The perceptions questionnaire will be put onto social media with a view to reaching as wide an audience as possible.
- Details could be sent to each town, parish and community council with a view to the clerks distributing this information to all councillors and via their social media accounts.
- A report on the work undertaken by Youth Rangers would be presented to a future meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee.

We noted the report.

7. Wye Water quality update

We received a report regarding an update on the River Wye water quality situation.

In doing so the following information was noted:

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Attendance Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales provided a joint presentation at the previous meeting on the situation with water quality in the River Wye.
- Through July 2021 the 'Walking With the Wye' pilgrimage took place along the length of the River Wye to raise awareness of the environmental crisis in the Wye.
- RIVERCIDE - George Monbiot's live documentary on the state of the UK's rivers was broadcast on 14th July 2021 further raising the profile of the pollution impacts on the Wye.
- In late July / early August 2021 another severe algal bloom extended down the Wye from Hoarwithy to below Monmouth, smothering most of the Water Crowfoot beds.
- Citizens Science projects monitoring phosphate levels in the Wye and its tributaries have been initiated by Friends of the Upper Wye, Friends of the Lugg, CPRW and Herefordshire CPRW. A Friends of the Lower Wye group has also been formed.
- The Wye Nutrient Management Board met on 27th September 2021 to further debate the issues, including the Wye Phosphate Action Plan being finalised for publication.
- Avara Foods acknowledged at the Nutrient Management Board that they were "part of the problem" in polluting the Wye and so are looking at opportunities to be "part of the solution" through initiatives to remove its chicken manure from the catchment.
- DEFRA have increased funding for Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE) to enhance resources for advice, monitoring and enforcement.
- The AONB Unit continues to manage projects and initiatives including with EA, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Wye & Usk Foundation, to advise farmers in mitigating soil erosion and reducing agricultural run-off into the river.
- The AONB Farming in Protected Landscapes programme may be applicable to farm wetland enhancement schemes upstream of the AONB.
- Lobbying of both governments by public, private and 3rd sector interests continues for adequate resources to reduce phosphate levels across the Wye catchment.
- The Environment Agency has launched a 6 month consultation on the Severn River Basin Management Plan which includes the Wye catchment.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In 2018, regulations came into force regarding the reduction in prevention of agriculture diffuse pollution. The Environment Agency has written to all commercial poultry holdings in the Wye catchment on the England side of the border stating that these regulations will be enforced.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Attendance Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

- As of 22nd October 2021, a Government consultation document was issued regarding the Severn River Basin Management Plan. It was suggested that the Joint Advisory Committee makes a strong response to the consultation document highlighting the water quality issues in respect of the River Wye and its tributaries.
- An active group of Herefordshire farmers are working with the Wye and Usk foundation with regard to addressing the issue of phosphates in these rivers.
- Monitoring of the water quality within the River Wye is being undertaken.

We noted the report.

8. Monmouthshire Wye Valley Villages Plan

We received a report regarding the completion of the consultation on the Wye Valley Villages Plan for the Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley AONB.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Wye Valley Villages Travel & Transport Plan project is led by Monmouthshire County Council and a partnership made of representatives from St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United Community Councils, with local County Councillors and officers from Monmouthshire County Council and the Wye Valley AONB.
- ARUP have been commissioned to prepare a Plan for the main villages in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB to address and provide recommendations on a range of travel and transport issues.
- A 6 week public consultation period was completed on a Stage 2 Report with 260 comments received. ARUP are now assimilating the comments to prepare a Final Report and Action Plan later in November 2021.
- There are funds allocated in the AONB's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) allocation from Welsh Government this financial year for some 'quick win' delivery from the Plan.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Communication between Monmouthshire Highways and Gloucestershire Highways needed to improve with both authorities needing to work closely with parish councils within lower Wye with regard to signage in this area.

We noted the report.

9. NAAONB update

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Attendance Monday, 1st November, 2021 at 2.00 pm

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 2021 was held on-line in early July 'hosted' by the five Devon AONBs.
- John Watkins has taken over from Howard Davies as NAAONB Chief Executive. As a leaving event, the Wye Valley AONB Unit hosted a walk for Howard and the NAAONB team.
- AONB Lead Officers met on-line to debate the forthcoming Government response to the Glover Landscape Review due later this year.
- The NAAONB will be a signatory to a Global Statement on climate change in Protected Areas for COP26.
- Recruitment is underway for a new NAAONB Wales Development Manager.
- The national AONBs Chairpersons' Conference and AGM for the NAAONB will be held on-line on 18th November 2021.

We noted the report.

10. **AONB progress reports**

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

- a) Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme update.
- b) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects.
 - i. AONB Office decarbonisation refurbishment.
 - ii. Chapel Hill Road, Tintern.
 - iii. Old Station Tintern decarbonisation & refurbishment.
 - iv. Wyesham riverbank consolidation of Wye Valley Walk.
 - v. Designated Landscapes Wales seminar.
- c) Lower Wye Valley Nature Networks project with Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust: £258,500 awarded by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).
- d) Lower Wye Catchments projects in Monmouthshire & Gloucestershire.
 - i. INNS control – WISP.
 - ii. Cleddon Falls.
- e) AONB Volunteers & Youth Rangers.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Signage relating to Cleddon Falls will be completed in the coming weeks. An official opening will be held in due course.

We noted the report.

The Chair allowed the following matter to be raised:

Councillor Yolande Watson asked if members would be willing to share their water course consent forms with her as she was undertaking a piece of work on this matter.

11. Dates of next meetings:

2pm Monday 7th March 2022.

2pm Monday 4th July 2022.

2pm Monday 7th November 2022.

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

The AONB Manager stated that in February 2022 he will be looking to hold an on-line presentation / meeting instead of holding a Wye Valley Tour due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7th March 2022

AONB UNIT WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023

Purpose

To seek members' approval for the proposed outline work plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year, subject to confirmation of funding with DEFRA, NRW and Welsh Government.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the draft AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023

Key Issues

- The proposed Work Programme for the AONB Unit for 2022/2023 is presented in draft form as budgets for the AONB have yet to be confirmed. The Programme is ambitious but dependent on adequate funding and resources being available.
- New AONB core funding agreements are awaited from both DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Welsh Government also have yet to confirm allocations for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. Meanwhile various project funding bids are being prepared.
- Dependant on funding the AONB Unit may be able to expand slightly beyond 8 FTE posts. However currently 2 of those posts are vacant and in recruitment meaning capacity in the AONB Unit continues to be stretched.
- Consequently only a draft Work Programme can be presented.
- Priorities include the potential expansion of the planning support role, shared jointly with the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership; the successful recruitment of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer to take over the running of the grant programme (in England) ; the successful recruitment of a new Community Links Officer to lead on the promotion and administration of grants through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation AONB Fund, and reinvigorate the AONB Volunteers and Youth Rangers; the development of nature recovery in the AONB and delivery of the Lower Wye Nature Networks project; the delivery of a further year of projects funded through the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme; ongoing Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management projects, particularly those linked to improving water quality in the Wye; and continuing a range of existing activities and projects; while retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.

- The draft AONB Unit core budget as presented to the AONB Steering Group is £275,860 and additional funding programmes, grants and match funding is anticipated to exceed £650,000 levered into the AONB during the year.

Reasons

For a number of years the Wye Valley AONB Unit received multi-year funding agreements from both DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). However for the last 2 years DEFRA has only been able to commit to single year offers. Also NRW has transformed its grant procedures and in August last year offered single year project funding along with a 7% cut in supporting core AONB functions. The respective AONB grant offer funding agreements from DEFRA and NRW for 2022-23 have yet to be announced. Meanwhile Welsh Government have yet to confirm allocations for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. However, Welsh Government have proposed new revenue funding for AONB Units to consolidate team capacity. This is awaiting approval in full Welsh Government budgets.

Implications

The AONB core budget for 2022-23 has been estimated at £275,860 based on a current flat-line budget. Both Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and DEFRA have advised that new funding agreements are forthcoming but the details and funding allocations are yet to be confirmed. Therefore it is difficult to calculate what the impacts and implications will be for the AONB Unit, its core staff and delivery of the core functions. For example, if there are sufficient funds available the planning support role, shared jointly with the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, could be expanded and consolidated from a call-off contract to a FTE position. This would relieve the AONB Manager and AONB Finance & Admin Officer of much of the workload in dealing with Planning Applications and comments on strategic Development Plans. If this occurred it would substantially increase capacity enabling development of new initiatives and funding bids to further enhance delivery of the AONB Management Plan.

The Welsh Government have yet to confirm the funding levels of the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme and the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). The programmes are unlikely to be cut significantly but some reduction is possible. The scale of funding, and subsequent administration of schemes, similarly has implications for AONB staff capacity, as does the recruitment to fill the Community Links Officer post that leads on the SDF. Consequently a range of flexibility is required to accommodate the current uncertainty.

The Work Programme is enhanced by projects and partnership initiatives with funding and grants from a variety of sources. For example the Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer helps deliver the Lower Wye Nature Networks project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Nature Networks Fund. The range of externally funded projects, grants and match funding initiatives, adding value to the core AONB activities, are anticipated to lever in investment and expenditure in excess of £650,000 through the year.

Consequently there are a number assumptions, caveats and contingencies included in the ambitious, but draft, Work Programme outlined below. These may be relieved or exacerbated depending on the new DEFRA & NRW settlements and Welsh Government funding. Where required AONB budgets and grant match-funding commitments can be supplemented by drawing on AONB reserves.

Long term security of funding for the AONB Unit and future AONB work programmes will depend on the way both DEFRA and Welsh Government progress recommendations in the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in England and Wales about appropriate levels of funding and staffing for AONBs. It is hoped that government support for the nationally designated AONBs can move beyond short term funding to facilitate longer term and strategic planning, more akin to the nation's other nationally designated landscapes, the National Parks.

AONB Unit (draft) Work Programme 2022-23 priorities <i>{subject to budget confirmation & resources}</i>
<p>AONB Management Plan 2021-2026</p> <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
<p>Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme [England only]</p> <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 • Consider using the AONB Farming Award to present to a notable project.
<p>Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places [Wales only]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deliver & manage Welsh Government capital investment scheme focussed on:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Promoting Biodiversity and nature recovery</i> - <i>Accelerating Decarbonisation</i> - <i>Supporting Resilient and Green communities</i> - <i>Delivering Sustainable tourism.</i> <p><i>including</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan implementation</i> • <i>Engagement in collaborative projects across multiple Designated Landscapes</i>
<p>Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) [Wales only]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promotion of SDF to potential applicants</i> • <i>Assist potential applicants with application process and project development</i> • <i>Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating SDF funds.</i> • <i>Manage delegated grants and Landscape & Biodiversity Enhancement Grants (<£3k)</i> • <i>Training for SDF Assessment Panel members</i> • <i>Administration of grant scheme and reporting to Welsh Government</i>
<p>Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF)

AONB Unit (draft) Work Programme 2022-23 priorities*{subject to budget confirmation & resources}*

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.

Nature Recovery & Landscape connectivity

- *Develop AONB Nature Recovery and Species Action plans 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 the Lower Wye Nature Networks Project with National Lottery Heritage Fund and Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust.
- *Continue Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) initiatives working with local land owners, managers & stakeholders*
- *Manage control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) particularly Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and American Skunk Cabbage through Wye Invasive Species Programme (WISP)*
- *Promotion of Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Riparian Trees initiatives*
- *Organise regular volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves*
- Host Woolhope Dome workshop and collaborate over outputs and outcomes
- *Collaborate and support landscape connectivity initiatives including 'Wye to Wyre'.*
- *Investigate opportunities for the National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & landowners*
- Continue liaison with Herefordshire Meadows Network, Monmouthshire Meadows and Parish Grassland Project.
- *Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB particularly those linked to improving water quality in the Wye.*

Climate Emergency Action

- *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*

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.

Wye Valley Walk

- Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership
- Launch new website www.wyevalleywalk.org including replacement of Passport scheme
- *Continuing Piercefield Walk enhancements with Gwent Wildlife Trust and landowner*
- *Audit & co-ordinate refreshing of way-marking*

<p>AONB Unit (draft) Work Programme 2022-23 priorities</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>{subject to budget confirmation & resources}</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collate counter data along route and review options</i> • <i>Review Cicerone Route Guide</i> • <i>Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge and Redbrook Bridge.</i> • <i>Progress Monmouth riverbank erosion solutions</i> • <i>Review & republish 'Easy Access' walks.</i>
<p>Overlooking the Wye legacy</p> <p><i>Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Continuing Cleddon Falls & Wordsworth Walk enhancements with landowner(s)</i> • <i>Review & reprint of Walks leaflets</i> • <i>Audit and repair & maintenance of Overlooking the Wye infrastructure</i>
<p>Offa's Dyke Collaboratory</p> <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 • <i>Support community based research and events.</i>
<p>Communications & social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular social media posts e.g. Facebook, Instagram and twitter • On-going updating and management of www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk. • Regular publication of on-line AONB newsletter 'Picturesque' • <i>Revise and publish AONB Map & Guide</i>
<p>Outreach Activities</p> <p>Promote the AONB through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks/presentations to local groups • Stands at relevant shows. • <i>Promote, sponsor &/or lead guided walks, events, activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB</i> • <i>Support the Wye Valley River Festival 2022</i>
<p>Youth Rangers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Review programme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage</i> • <i>Train new Leaders and scope for next Cohort, as required/appropriate</i>
<p>AONB Planning & Development Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Review contract for Planning Advice support jointly with Malvern Halls AONB Partnership.</i> • <i>Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents</i> • <i>Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB</i> • <i>Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB</i> <p><i>Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members</i></p>
<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group • Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues in late September 2022

AONB Unit (draft) Work Programme 2022-23 priorities*{subject to budget confirmation & resources}*

- *Run AONB Partnership Seminar/forum in winter*
- *Continue implementation of recommendations from AONB Good Governance Review*

Local Partnerships & Collaboration

Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg:

- Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire Environment Partnership
- Wye Catchment Partnership
- Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC)
- Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire, Visit Herefordshire and Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire
- Support Town, Parish & Community Councils with advice & guidance as appropriate

National Collaboration

- Support and engage with the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and attend appropriate seminars & events
- Work with Welsh Government and Landscape Wales (National Designated Landscapes Partnership) and other stakeholders, including NRW & NAAONB
- Work with DEFRA and others in progressing the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England, including Natural England & NAAONB

Monitoring

- 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
- Undertake Fixed point photography across the AONB

Funding and resources

- Prepare grant bids and claims for Natural Resources Wales, 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 Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley AONB Fund*

Work placements

Support the needs of student placements/group projects.

- *Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities*

GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION ON THE RESPONSE TO THE GLOVER REVIEW

Purpose

To seek members' views on the Government Response to the Landscapes Review and delegate the submission of comments to the AONB Manager and a small task group to meet the consultation deadline of 9th April 2022.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Welcomes the Government Response to the Landscapes Review.
- B. Establish a small task group to assist the AONB Manager in compiling a formal response to the Government's consultation, aided by commentary from the National Association for AONBs.
- C. Delegate the AONB Manager to submit comments on behalf of the AONB Partnership by the consultation deadline of 9th April 2022.
- D. Encourage individuals and partner organisation to make their own comments and submissions to the Government's consultation on the Landscapes Review.

Key Issues

- The Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England, led by Julian Glover, was published in 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- A Written Ministerial Statement published on 24th June 2021 provided the Government's initial response to the Landscapes Review.
- In January 2022 the Government released the formal response to the Landscapes Review, indicating the Government's preferred direction for England's AONBs of, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response>
- A 12 week public consultation period on the Government's response is open until 9th April 2022 with 25 questions, listed in Appendix 1 below.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has been co-ordinating discussion and debate and collaborating with key stakeholders in preparation of a considered response to the consultation.
- The NAAONB and other environmental Non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) have noted that the Government's Response fall short of the ambitious, transformational

change that Glover envisaged, which AONB teams are keen to see implemented, and which the pressures on these nationally designated landscapes demand.

- There are potential knock-on implications for AONBs in Wales and consequently the Welsh part of the AONB and the integrity of the Wye Valley AONB.
- The AONB Manager will prepare a response drawing on NAAONB commentary and other sources as directed by members.

Reasons

Julian Glover's Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was broadly welcomed when published in September 2019 (see link below). The Glover Review established a conversation about what the nationally designated landscapes in England should deliver for a 21st century society and the environmental challenges they face. Central to the changes Glover recommended was a clear recognition of the enormous potential and frustrated ambition of the 34 AONBs, and their partnerships. Glover recognised that AONBs, covering 15% of England's land area, could deliver so much more for nature, climate and people at this critical time, if they were properly resourced.

The Government has now published its response, including a 12 week consultation until 9th April (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response>). There are 25 questions in the consultation which variously address most, but not all, of the 27 proposals in the Glover's Landscapes Review. The proposed changes tackle a number of important issues highlighted within the Glover Review, but DEFRA has recognised the need for further clarity in some areas and more detailed development of ideas through a consultative approach which is to be welcomed.

The Government's response indicates that they wish to reinvigorate the status of AONBs in line with Glover's Proposal 24: "AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes". There is a focus around the challenges of strengthening purposes through legal changes, increasing resources, to help drive nature recovery and access/inclusivity, and enhancing local and national networks to help secure transformational and positive change for all the nationally important landscapes. They also emphasise that the designated landscapes "should contribute to our target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 and our 30 by 30 commitment" and "drive forward nature recovery, and build our resilience to climate change".

There are also some new and additional aspects raised on managing visitor pressures and enforcement issues and uses of green lanes. A summary of relevant extracts of the response is in Appendix 1, along with the 25 consultation questions. These appear quite selective relative to the Glover's proposals, but are sequential following the order of the Government response.

Implications

The Landscapes Review was recognised as a once in a generation opportunity for AONBs. The Government's response is broadly welcomed by the NAAONB and many in the eNGO sector. However, the NAAONB believes that the Government's proposals, as currently

presented, fall short of the ambitious, transformational change that Glover and his team envisaged. The NAAONB note the chronic underfunding cited in the Landscapes Review, with Government funding for all 34 AONBs in England totalling around £6M per year, roughly the same as a single medium sized secondary school. Glover advocated an immediate doubling in core funding for England's AONBs as essential to secure the future for AONBs, with adequate teams to address the pressures on these nationally designated landscapes.

The headline position of the NAAONB and the AONB family is the full implementation of Proposal 24 of the Glover Review that: 'AONBs be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes'. The crux to this is that 'form follows function' and evidence is used to back up the following:

Purposes:

- Extension and revision of AONB purposes to reflect contemporary priorities for AONBs and natural beauty, with a strengthened link to nature recovery on a landscape scale and the importance of cultural heritage.
- A second purpose to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area (equal to National Parks and with a corresponding Sanford Principle - of primacy of the first purpose).

Powers:

- Strengthening the 'duty of regard' and linked to enhanced status of AONB Management Plans
- A formal role in planning and development management.

Resources:

- A doubling of core funding over this parliament (three years), leading to
- A dynamic and progressive formula which reflects ambition and future needs.

Governance:

- Robust minimum governance standards which provide sufficient independence to guarantee the integrity of the designation,
- More representative of the wider dynamic UK population.

National Landscapes:

- A colloquial name change where this reflects the step change above.

Appendix 1 outlines and summarises the key points raised in the Government's response. The NAAONB is working with AONB Partnership chairs and lead officers, environmental Non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) and other key stakeholders on preparing a co-ordinated, collaborative and comprehensive response. The AONB Manager, in liaison with the NAAONB, and potentially supported with a small JAC task group if appropriate, will prepare and submit comments on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

If the statutory purposes for AONBs in England change, along with the colloquial name of the designation, then there will be implications for the integrity of the cross-border Wye Valley AONB and potential knock-on effects for AONBs in Wales. The AONB Manager is working with the NAAONB Wales Officer, NRW & Welsh Government to assess those implications. This will form part of the response to the consultation.

Members of the public and partner organisations to the JAC are encouraged to submit views on the Government's response. This is a one in a generation opportunity for people to shape how nationally designated and protected landscapes will deliver benefits for people and nature for years to come.

Background

Government Response to the Landscapes Review document, published 15th January 2022:

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/future-landscapes-strategy/government-response-to-the-landscapes-review/supporting_documents/Consultation%20on%20the%20Government%20response%20to%20the%20Landscapes%20Review.pdf

The Written Ministerial Statement, published on 24th June 2021 on the Government's initial response to the Landscapes Review: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-06-24/hcws119>)

Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

Appendix 1.

Summary & extracts of Government Response to the Glover Review

For full document in HTML see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response>

and/or for the PDF document see:

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/future-landscapes-strategy/government-response-to-the-landscapes-review/supporting_documents/Consultation%20on%20the%20Government%20response%20to%20the%20Landscapes%20Review.pdf

The following are the principle extracts relating to AONBs, with the majority of text removed. The relevant consultation questions are included below.

New Name

Testing the proposal to rename AONBs as 'National Landscapes'

New National Landscapes Partnership

Will establish a new 'national landscapes partnership' to build on the existing collaboration between National Parks England and the National Association for AONBs, complemented by roles for the National Trails and National Parks Partnerships.

New National Landscape Strategy

Defra will provide clearer strategic direction for protected landscapes through a new national landscape strategy. This will set out a clear national framework to guide the development of plans and programmes by the national landscapes partnership and help to inform the development of local management plans.

Changed Statutory Purpose

- Create a single set of statutory purposes for AONB teams and National Park Authorities
- Propose to amend the current statutory purpose so that:
 - a core function of protected landscapes should be to drive nature recovery
 - a revised purpose should be more specific with regards to nature outcomes and explicitly mention biodiversity
 - the principle of natural capital should also be included to capture the societal value of nature in our protected landscapes and encompass a broader range of ecosystem services.
- Propose to amend the current statutory purpose to:
 - highlight the need to improve opportunities and remove barriers to access for all parts of society
 - clearly reference public health and wellbeing as an outcome
 - take a more active role in supporting access than just promoting opportunities

Monitoring

- By January 2023, new ambitious outcomes will be agreed for the role of protected landscapes in delivering on the government's goals for nature recovery and climate, aligned with the revised 25 Year Environment Plan and interim environmental targets under the Environment Act 2021 and the Net Zero Strategy.
- Natural England will monitor and evaluate progress against the key indicators and outcomes and will also support individual protected landscapes to translate these targets into their management plans.
- Developing the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA), which will provide data on habitats, natural capital, and ecosystem function. This will help to monitor progress against agreed outcomes.
- Natural England will produce an outcomes framework, provide annual reporting to track progress against the outcomes, and advise on where further action is needed.

Management Plans

- Ambitious goals to increase carbon sequestration, together with improved natural capital reporting, should be embedded in all protected landscapes' management plans.
- Management plans should also set out their local response to climate adaptation, managing long-term landscape change to increase the resilience of local communities and ecosystems.
- Natural England will review all revised management plans, ensuring that these make fair and ambitious contributions. To facilitate this new process, Natural England will also update their guidance on management plans for protected landscapes.
- We will also ensure clear alignment with Local Nature Recovery Strategies, to facilitate delivery of priority nature recovery actions without duplication.
- Look to strengthen management plans, and consider how best to ensure a smooth transition so that valuable work is not lost.

Planning reform

- Recognise the special role that protected landscapes hold within the planning system and will continue to explore opportunities for how this role could be developed further.
- An integral part of reviewing the planning reforms is considering how they align with and support our wider mission to level up the country and regenerate left-behind places.
- Intend to review the NPPF, and we will further consider how policy for protected landscapes is set out.
- Recognise that AONB teams can bring substantial evidence and expertise to the planning process, and wish to seek views on how the AONB teams can achieve better outcomes through the plan-making process.
- The review also identified strong support for AONB teams to be granted statutory consultee status for planning applications. Whilst we acknowledge the resource

implications this would place on AONB teams, we recognise the benefit of further strengthening their role and are seeking views on this potential change.

Permitted development

- will continue to monitor the use of permitted development rights in protected landscapes, and identify future opportunities to review their use.

AONB Partnerships

- Natural England will replace the former Countryside Agency guidance for AONB Partnerships, to set out clear governance principles, processes, and structures that local authorities would be expected to follow. This guidance will be flexible enough to be adapted to local circumstances but would aim to improve consistency, performance, and transparency.
- To ensure a high level of uptake and incentivise positive reforms, we could include conditions in our grant agreements, requiring evidence that this guidance has been applied to local governance structures and processes.

Duty of Regard

- The vagueness of the duties can lead to disagreements about their interpretation and allow damaging practices to occur. Propose strengthening the wording of these statutory duties so that they are given greater weight when exercising public functions.
- The current duties are also not clear that public bodies are expected to contribute to the delivery of management plans, which can lead to the underperformance of key partners and under-delivery of management plan objectives. The wording should also be made clearer with regards to the role of public bodies in preparing and implementing management plans.
- The government will produce guidance for public bodies on the application of the strengthened duties, making it clearer when and how it should be discharged in respect of public functions. These changes would help avoid disputes, reduce damaging practices, and lead to much more effective management of our protected landscapes.

Finances

- Relatively limited scope to increase the core grant by the scale suggested in the review, or to provide longer funding settlements that extend beyond a spending review period. Therefore, the core grant does not provide the opportunity to increase funding to the scale needed to deliver our vision.
- There has been increasing interest in private and blended financing models for nature recovery and nature-based solutions, and we believe that this area provides significant opportunities to lever more investment into protected landscapes.

Consultation Questions

Q1-5 personal details
Qs 6, 7 - Purposes

Qs 8, 9 - Farming
Qs 10, 11, 12 - AONBs
Qs 13, 14, 15, 24 - National Parks
Qs 16, 17 - Highways
Qs 18, 19, 20 - Planning
Qs 21, 22, 23 - Statutory Duties

Qs 6, 7 - Purposes

6. Should a strengthened first purpose of protected landscapes follow the proposals set out in Chapter 2?

7. Which other priorities should be reflected in a strengthened first purpose e.g. climate, cultural heritage?

Qs 8, 9 – Farming

8. Do you support any of the following options as we develop the role of protected landscapes in the new environmental land management schemes? Tick all that apply.

- Designing the environmental land management schemes in a way that works for all farmers and land managers, including the specific circumstances for those in protected landscapes, recognising that farmers in these areas are well-placed to deliver on our environmental priorities.
- Using Local Nature Recovery Strategies to identify projects or habitats within protected landscapes.
- Monitoring the effectiveness and uptake of the new environmental land management schemes in protected landscapes. Using this to inform whether further interventions are needed to ensure we are on track for wider nature recovery ambitions.
- Creating a clear role for protected landscape organisations in the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Our recent LNRS consultation specifically asks for views on the role of different organisations in the preparation of LNRSs, including protected landscapes.
- Building on FiPL, empowering protected landscapes to support decision-making and delivery against agreed priorities, including through dedicated project coordinators and advisers.

9. Do you have any views or supporting evidence you would like to input as we develop the role of protected landscapes in the new environmental land management schemes?

Qs 10, 11, 12 - AONBs

10. Should AONBs have a second purpose relating to connecting people and places, equivalent to that of National Parks?

11. Should a strengthened second purpose of protected landscapes follow the proposals set out in Chapter 3 to improve connections to all parts of society with our protected landscapes?

12. Are there any other priorities that should be reflected in a strengthened second purpose?

Qs 13, 14, 15, 24 - National Parks

13-15 only relevant to National Parks and the Broads

Qs 16, 17 - Highways

16. Should we legislate to restrict the use of motor vehicles on unsealed unclassified roads for recreational use, subject to appropriate exemptions?

- Yes – everywhere
- Yes – in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty only
- Yes – in National Parks only
- No
- Unsure

17. What exemptions do you think would be required to protect the rights and enjoyment of other users e.g., residents, businesses etc?

Qs 18, 19, 20 - Planning

18. What roles should AONBs teams play in the plan-making process to achieve better outcomes?

19. Should AONB teams be made statutory consultees for development management?

20. If yes, what type of planning applications should AONB teams be consulted on?

- AONB teams should formally agree with local planning authorities which planning applications should be consulted on.
- AONB teams should be consulted on all planning applications that require an Environmental Impact Assessment and are categorised as ‘major development’ as well as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

Qs 21, 22, 23 - Statutory Duties

21. Which of the following measures would you support to improve local governance? Tick all that apply.

- Improved training and materials
- Streamlined process for removing underperforming members
- Greater use of advisory panels
- Greater flexibility over the proportion of national, parish and local appointments
- Merit-based criteria for local authority appointments
- Reduced board size
- Secretary of State appointed chair
- Other (please state)

22. Should statutory duties be strengthened so that they are given greater weight when exercising public functions?

23. Should statutory duties be made clearer with regards to the role of public bodies in preparing and implementing management plans?

24. National Parks and the Broads only

25. If you have any further comments on any of the proposals in this document, please include them here.

ALL-ENGLAND ASSESSMENT FOR NEW LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Purpose

To advise members of Natural England's All-England Assessment and intended mapping of potential new Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other landscape designations, and note local requests for AONB designation.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Welcomes the initiation of Natural England's new landscape designation programme.
- B. Note the three existing local requests for AONB designation &/or extension.

Key Issues

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

Reasons

The 25 Year Environment Plan included the actions of:

- Commissioning a 21st Century 'Hobhouse' Review of National Parks and AONBs;

- Identifying opportunities for environmental enhancement in all of England's 159 National Character Areas.

Natural England has the responsibility, under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, Section 82(1), to make orders to designate AONBs or vary the boundaries of existing ones. Natural England's new Landscape Programme, announced in June 2021, highlights the ambition to create a strategic visionary map for England's landscapes in the 21st Century. It also includes consideration for the creation of two new AONBs in the Yorkshire Wolds and Cheshire Sandstone Ridge, and extensions to the Surrey Hills and Chilterns AONBs.

The Government's recent response (January 2022) to the Glover Landscapes Review reiterated the importance of this area of work stating that Natural England's Landscape Programme "... includes undertaking an All-England Assessment [whilst also] exploring new approaches to improve landscapes for people and nature ...".

Natural England has commenced the new All-England Assessment programme to explore new approaches to improve landscapes for people and nature, particularly in and around towns and cities and enable a more collaborative process to designate new National Parks and AONBs.

Implications

Natural England (NE) have commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to develop the All-England Strategic Landscape Mapping Assessment. Working in close collaboration with key stakeholders, the overall purpose of the strategic landscape mapping project is to help identify:

- Potential areas of new designated landscape;
- Potential areas where alternative landscape approaches may be appropriate.

As part of the programme, NE intend to assess the whole country to identify areas which may have potential for future landscape designation.

NE & LUC plan to work with stakeholders and communities to identify nature recovery and enhancement needs across England, including any remaining places suitable for future National Park or AONB designation. The assessment project will reconsider all existing proposals that have been submitted for National Park and AONB designation and variation. The Assessment will also seek to identify places where alternative forms of action may be more appropriate and where that are wanted by local communities. NE will work closely with Government to explore and develop the options and proposals. Consequently the Assessment will be strategic, not local; landscape focused, on where there is greatest natural beauty. It will not re-write the Natural Beauty criteria. But it will identify potential areas of opportunity and where there is greatest need both socially and environmentally.

In relation to the Wye Valley AONB there are three requests for designation or extension that are known to the JAC. These are:

- i. The Wye Valley AONB be extended up to the Marcle Ridge. This was proposed in the 1980s and 1990s to the Countryside Commission, a predecessor to Natural England.
- ii. The Forest of Dean be designated and AONB. This is another long standing request, endorsed by the Forest of Dean District Council, and listed in the Glover Review Annex 4.

- iii. The whole 'Forest of Dean and Wye Valley' area of the Hobhouse map to be designated an AONB. This proposal was presented at the previous JAC meeting by PRUB – Preservation of Rural Beauty, a private residents' group that straddles the south east Herefordshire/Gloucestershire border.

The Glover Review Annex 4 also lists two other proposals in region, but not contiguous with the Wye Valley: a new Herefordshire Marches AONB and Malvern Hills AONB/ Abberley Hills Variation.

Background

Sir Arthur Hobhouse chaired the 1947 National Parks Committee that published its report and accompanying map to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. The Hobhouse Report progressed the proposals in the 1946 Dower Report which outlined places and purposes suitable for National Park designation and "Other Amenity Areas". The latter were referred to as "Conservation Areas" in the Hobhouse Report, where it stated "special measures should be taken to preserve their natural beauty and interest" [p.51, para 227].

The Hobhouse Report is available here:

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/6215/8928/8648/Report_of_the_National_Parks_Committee_1947.pdf

The full map accompanying the Hobhouse Report can be viewed here:

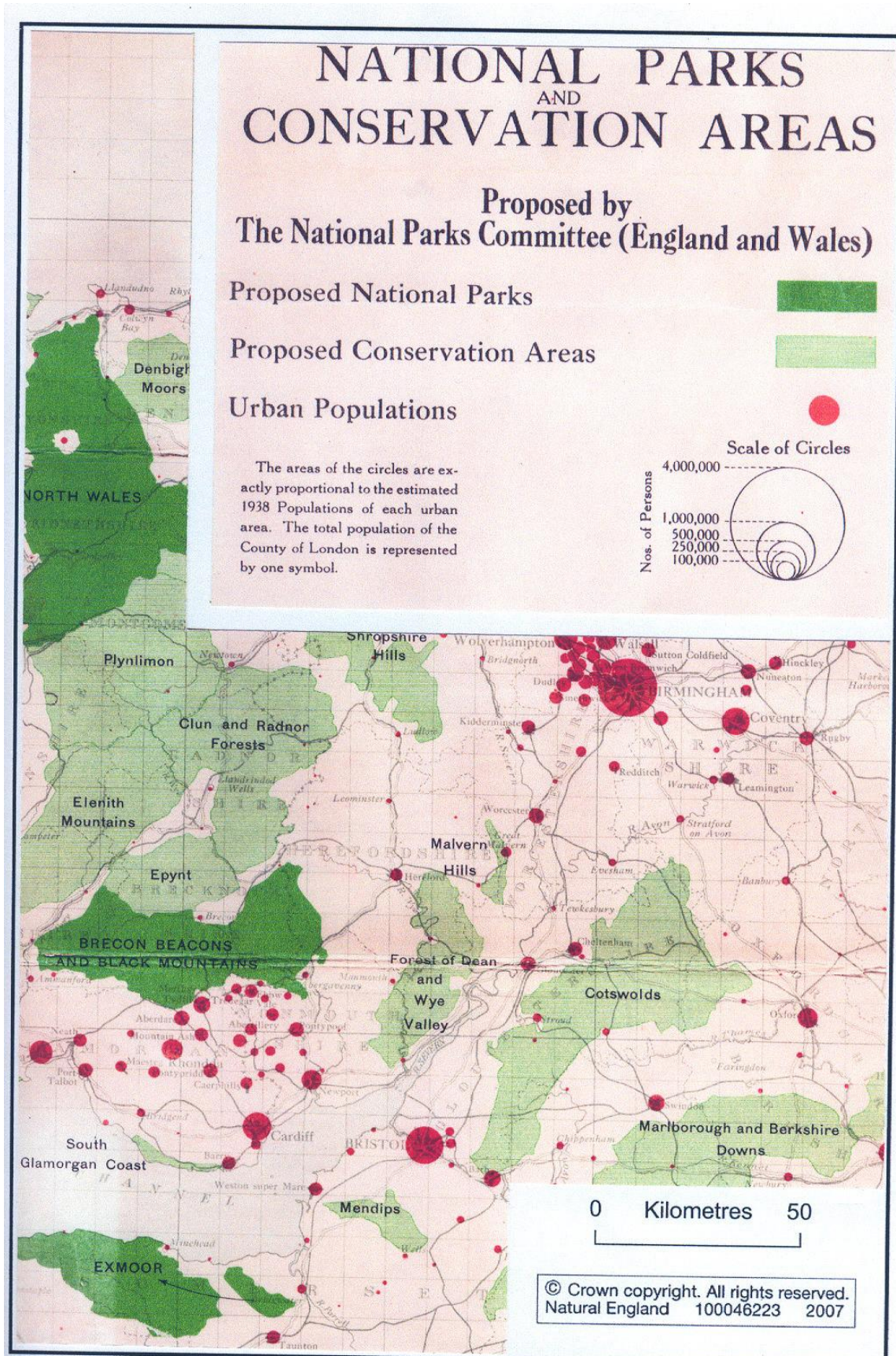
https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/6015/8935/4242/1947_Hobhouse_clean_map.pdf

In the 1949 National Parks and Access to Countryside Act, renamed Hobhouse's 'Conservation Areas' as 'areas of outstanding natural beauty'.

Extract from the map accompanying the Hobhouse Report

The full map accompanying the Hobhouse Report can be viewed here:

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/6015/8935/4242/1947_Hobhouse_clean_map.pdf



WYE VALLEY AONB VILLAGES PLAN FOR THE FUTURE – STAGE 3 REPORT

Purpose

To seek endorsement of the final Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report covering the main village in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Endorse the Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report and continue engagement with the local stakeholders in delivering the Plan.
- B. Encourage the respective Community Councils to adopt the Plan and provide representatives to sit on the Delivery Group.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan has been a joint project between Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the four constituent Community Councils of St Arvans, Trellech United, Devauden and Tintern.
- The catalyst for the study was road safety issues and excessive traffic speeds in many of the Monmouthshire villages in the Lower Wye Valley but the scope was widened to consider the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the communities.
- ARUP were commissioned in December 2020 by MCC to carry out this study.
- Funding was secured from the Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme along with contributions from MCC and the Community Councils.
- A Steering Group of representatives from the four Community Councils, County Councillors, AONB Manager and MCC officers has been overseeing progress.
- The final Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report is now completed and available to download (note that it is 250 pages)
- The preparation of new village gateway signage is underway as an initial project.

Reasons

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) established a partnership made of representatives from the Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United, with local county councillors and officers from MCC and the Wye Valley AONB. The intention was to address issues from a number of communities in the lower Wye Valley over concerns

about traffic speeds and road safety and also impacts and implications from various closures and restrictions on the A466 in the lower Wye Valley. However, these were recognised to form part of a much more complex set of challenges that needed to be considered in a broader village and Wye Valley AONB context.

In December 2020 Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) commissioned ARUP to prepare a Plan for the main villages in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB to address and provide recommendations on a range of issues. Wide consultation with the public was undertaken on the Stage 1 Report which gathered views on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Themes and village proposals were the focus of the Stage 2 Report through an online 6 week Virtual Engage consultation. Paper copies of the Stage 2 Report and a questionnaire were also made available. In total, 260 responses were received which shaped the proposals in the Final Report. Throughout the process, representatives from the Community Council have had the opportunity to input their views into the process and shape the project.

The final Stage 3 Report is available to download until 9th March from [Wye Valley Villages - Stage 3 Report](#). The final Stage 3 Report is 250 pages long and includes 3 main parts – the Six Point Plan, Village Plans and the Action Plan, along with 4 appendices including the Stage 1 & 2 Reports. The low resolution version is 23MB.

The Six Point Plan section outlines the projects and initiatives which are recommended to meet community needs and wider sustainable development goals. Given the strength of community support for road safety improvements this is afforded priority. The Plan addresses change over different timescales from smaller, localised projects such as speed reductions and signage which can be delivered early to broader and more complex initiatives such as improving the health of the River Wye. The six points are:

- Ensure safe and sustainable transport
- Conserve and enhance the landscape
- Enable sustainable tourism
- Retain and improve the network of unique villages
- Support the local economy
- Provide joined-up governance

The Village Plan section contains diagrammatic plans explaining how the proposed interventions could be implemented in each village and includes an individual action plan for each village setting out the projects and key information around timescale, the partners to be involved in delivery and the level of priority. This is followed by an Action Plan tabulating area wide actions. The report is appended by the results of the consultation and an example of a detailed illustrative plan including a suggested palette of materials and indicative costs.

Implications

The final Stage 3 Report contains a range of village and study area wide actions that are prioritised and suggest organisations that should be involved in delivery. Some actions are defined and ready to go whereas other actions will require more exploration to determine what needs to be done, who needs to be involved and how the project will be funded.

It is proposed that a Delivery Group is set up which could have a wider membership than the previous Steering Group. This is detailed in the Plan's Section 6 Next Steps. Each Community Council is encouraged to nominate two representatives to sit on the Delivery Group, alongside MCC and AONB representatives. This emphasises the importance of the next phase of this project and at the first meeting of the Delivery Group a Terms of Reference will be considered. Delivery Group members will be the link between their respective organisation and the Delivery Group. To improve communication, notes of the Delivery Group meetings will be taken and shared with Community Councils so that all Community Councillors can be kept informed. The JAC will continue to be regularly updated.

Delivery Group meetings may develop actions for each Community Council to take forward in terms of delivering a discreet village project, confirming a financial contribution, consulting with residents, etc.

In general, it is envisaged that officers from the different stakeholder organisations will be responsible for delivery. The Councillors role will be to ensure that the project to be delivered is the right project, that local considerations are taken into account and to assist, where appropriate, with assembling funding and local consultation.

Should a Community Council be the lead for a discreet village project then officers within MCC and the AONB Unit will be able to signpost Community Councillors and the clerk to organisations that can help them take forward their project and provide support and advice. For these projects, the respective Community Council would be expected to arrange meetings etc. to progress the project.

An example of how this relationship would work is the village gateway signs project. The workflow is set out below:

- The Action Plan has been identified in the need.
- MCC and Wye Valley AONB Unit are best placed to commission the contract to design a template to be used across the area for the main villages and to arrange installation.
- Design options to be discussed with the Delivery Group and a design agreed.
- Community Council reps will help confirm locations and sizes of existing signs.
- Funding is from the AONB and Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme, however depending on the final cost, Community Councils may be required to make a contribution to the manufacture and installation

Background

In October 2019 member representatives from the Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United met with local county councillors and officers from Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and the Wye Valley AONB along with the MCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment. The communities expressed concern about traffic speeds and road safety; the fragile state of commerce and the tourism economy; the need for greater emphasis upon active travel and public transport, both in terms of day to day getting about but also how it might support a future tourism offer that places less reliance upon the car; sympathetic signage in and of the Wye Valley AONB.

There was a consensus to work together on a joint project. It was agreed to create a plan for the Villages in the Monmouthshire / Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB that would be adopted by all of the local councils, the county council and Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7th March 2022

WYE NAVIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Purpose

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

Recommendation

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

Key Issues

- The Environment Agency (EA) are responsible for navigation on the navigable part of the non-tidal Rivers Wye and Lugg.
- The Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (Wye NAC) is serviced by EA, who require appointments to Wye NAC to be reviewed every 3 years.
- The AONB Manager has represented the AONB Partnership on the Wye NAC since its establishment.
- Several other members of the JAC sit on the Wye NAC in other capacities.
- The JAC needs to consider who should represent it on Wye NAC for the next three years.

Reasons

The Wye Valley AONB Manager, Andrew Blake, has served on Wye NAC since its establishment in 2003. The Guidance issued by the Environment Agency make it clear that no appointments should exceed 10 years in total unless there are exceptional circumstances and no appointment should be for more than 3 consecutive terms unless there is good reason.

The Environment Agency (EA) is the Navigation Authority for parts of the non-tidal Wye and Lugg. The Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (Wye NAC) is serviced by EA, who consult it on all matters substantially affecting the navigation and use of the rivers. Appointments to Wye NAC are for a three year period. A nominated person may act as a deputy for the member of the Committee and may attend and vote at a Committee meeting instead of that member.

The current member representing the interests of the Wye Valley AONB is Andrew Blake, AONB Manager.

Implications

There are good reasons why the AONB Manager should continue to represent the AONB on Wye NAC, having advised on the navigation and use of the river since the establishment of Wye NAC. Other JAC members sit on Wye NAC representing other bodies and they could be asked to represent the AONB Partnership. However this may reduce the influence of AONB issues on Wye NAC. It is proposed that the deputy be Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer.

Background

The Wye Navigation Order 2002 made the Environment Agency responsible for navigation on the navigable part of the non-tidal Rivers Wye and Lugg. The Wye Navigation Advisory Committee was established in 2003 following the Wye Navigation Order. Wye NAC membership is limited to a specific number of nominated representatives from each relevant stakeholder body or group, as defined in the Wye Navigation Order.

The Wye NAC meets twice a year and advises the Navigation Authority, the Environment Agency, about issues along the public right of navigation between Hay Bridge downstream to Bigsweir Bridge. The Gloucester Harbour Trustees are the Navigation Authority for the tidal Wye downstream of Bigsweir.

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Purpose

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

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the allocations of the Local Assessment Panel for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Key Issues

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

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.

Following DEFRA guidance, 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 Terms of Reference and membership of the Local Assessment Panel are attached (Appendix 1 & 2). The Local Assessment Panel determines applications over £5,000. Applications under £5,000 are delegated to the AONB Manager for decision.

Implications

After budget reprofiling and additional allocation, the Wye Valley AONB Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) budget for Year 1 of the programme is £101,525.08. Eight projects have been approved by the Local Assessment Panel, fully allocating the Year 1 budget. Multiyear applications have also been approved using Year 2 and 3 allocations.

Project number	Farm / applicant	2021/22 (£)	2022/23 (£)	2023/24 (£)	Total to date (£)
WV001	Grazing Management	4,938.75			4,938.75
WV002	Nature's Nest	6,746.70	951.00		7,697.70
WV003	Wye & Usk Foundation	14,942.00	31,658.00	22,925.00	69,525.00
WV004	Townsend Farm	33,064.20	32,466.00		65,530.20
WV005	Ballingham Parish Council	11,662.00			11,662.00
WV006	Lewstone Farm	4,498.00			4,498.00
WV007	Sandford Farm	994.88	484.03		1,478.91
WV008	Whitethorn Farm	600.00			600.00
Advice and Guidance	AONB costs	19,500.00	29,826.00	29,826.00	79,152.00
Admin	AONB costs	5,000.00	17,544.57	17,544.57	40,089.14
Total to date		101,946.53	112,929.60	70,295.57	285,171.70
Total budget		101,525.08	219,405.94	219,405.90	540,336.92
Allocation remaining		-421.45	106,476.34	149,110.33	255,165.22

Approved projects are outlined below:

WV001 - £4,938.75: for the development of a hard standing porous cattle handling area to enable safe handling of cattle used for conservation grazing of species rich grassland sites in the Gloucestershire part of the AONB.

WV002 - £7,697.70: for the purchase of electric bikes and associated equipment, establishment of hiring system, information panels interpreting features of the landscape, and advice and enhancement for an area of meadow grassland.

WV003 - £69,525: for a 3 year project to undertake natural capital assessments for 26 landholdings across the AONB, identifying priority habitats, with particular interest in floodplain meadows. Establishing opportunities for delivery of improvements to the condition, connectivity and extent to habitats. Assisting with the development of applications for funding to enable work.

WV004 - £65,530.20: for a wide ranging 2 year project, including fencing to assist with the establishment of mob grazing, fruit trees for the development of an agroforestry orchard, standard trees to be managed as veterans of the future, hedge laying, track surfacing to enable all-ability access to regenerative agriculture and landscape features around the farm, and contribution towards development of self-service farm shop and café.

WV005 - £11,662: towards replacement of damaged bridge on permissive footpath.

WV006 - £4,498: for the development of education area in a woodland site and work to enhance toilet facilities for school visits to the farm.

WV007 - £1,478.91: for a range of innovative vegetation planting to prevent erosion and soil and water loss on poultry range.

WV008 – £600: for the purchase of deer high seats to enable easier control of deer and associated reduction in damage to orchards.

In addition to the eight grants awarded, a further 15 farmers and smallholders have enquired or been provided with advice about the FiPL programme, with at least four applications anticipated in the near future for work to be undertaken in Year 2.

The AONB Development Officer, Nick Critchley, is currently leading on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Recruitment is underway for a Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer to take over the programme and assist farmers and land managers in applying for FiPL grants.

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>)

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DEFRA Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

Wye Valley AONB Partnership

Local Assessment Panel - Terms of Reference

Objectives

The purpose of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Local Assessment Panel is to decide upon allocation of the FiPL programme in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). FiPL is a delegated grant from DEFRA administered by Wye Valley AONB Partnership. Panel considerations are made according to the National Framework, Annex C - Expectations for Local Assessment Panels and the programme criteria as published in the information for applicants and the scoring system provided.

Panel Membership

- 1) The Panel is an appointed sub-committee of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and has delegated functions and co-opted members.
- 2) Membership of the Panel will be based on the National Framework, Annex C - Expectations for Local Assessment Panels (appended). Panel members are appointed by the Wye Valley AONB JAC. The current membership of the Panel is appended.
- 3) The Panel will elect a Chairman. In their absence at a subsequent meeting, those Panel members present will choose a Chairman for the meeting.
- 4) If a member of the Panel has any direct and significant involvement with a proposed application, then they must declare this prior to the application being considered, and revoke their voting rights for any vote on that project. Further detail on Conflicts of Interest are in the Annex C - Expectations for Local Assessment Panels.
- 5) Panel members are to treat the contents of applications as confidential for discussion only between panel members in Local Assessment Panel meetings.
- 6) Member are encouraged to champion the FiPL programme with farmers, land managers and other relevant organisations. However any enquiries about the FiPL grant or applications are to be passed to the AONB FiPL officer without prejudicing their decision-making function.

Meetings

The National Framework, Annex C - Expectations for Local Assessment Panels details the 'Organisation of LAP meetings' & 'Administration'.

- a. Meetings will be held about every 8 weeks, depending on the flow of applications, and will be serviced by the AONB Unit. Meetings may be on-line or in-person subject to conditions.

- b. Applications for consideration will be circulated to panel members at least 2 days in advance of Local Assessment Panel meetings.
- c. The quorum for a Panel meeting shall be 50% +1. However previously submitted comments on an application by a Panel member will be recorded as valid for that item. If at any time the number of members falls below quorum the meeting shall be adjourned.
- d. The order of business at each meeting shall be as follows:
 - to receive any apologies for absence
 - receive disclosures of interest
 - approve the Minutes of the last meeting
 - dispose of business (if any) remaining from the previous meeting
 - report on progress of approved schemes
 - consider applications for grants
 - receive reports on grant applications fast tracked and /or under £5,000
 - update on committed, spent and unallocated funds
 - any other business.
- e. Decisions by the Panel shall be made by show of hands with the Chairman having the casting vote, after consideration of any previously submitted comments by absent Panel Members.
- f. The AONB officers in attendance shall keep minutes of each meeting, which shall be circulated to Panel members as soon as possible after each meeting.
- g. A fast track process may be initiated in exceptional circumstances where an application needs to be determined before the next Panel meeting. The application will be circulated to members for comment before a fixed deadline. The determination of the application will be made by the AONB Manager and Chairman based on the comments received. The result will be reported to the next Panel meeting.
- h. Applications of less than £5,000 are delegated to the AONB Manager to determine. The result will be reported to the next Panel meeting.
- i. The cumulative FiPL allocation and outcomes of the approved applications shall be reported to the Wye Valley AONB JAC for information.

Appeals & Complaints.

Applicants will have a right of appeal to the Wye Valley AONB JAC as detailed in the National Framework, Annex C - Expectations for Local Assessment Panels.

Wye Valley AONB

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Assessment Panel

Members

Sector	Name	Organisation
AONB Manager	Andrew Blake	Wye Valley AONB Unit
Natural England	Rachel Bosanquet	Natural England
Farming interests	Ann Herbert	Lewstone Farm
Farming interests	Ester Rudge	Ballingham Court Farm
Farming interests	Cllr John Hardwick	Retired / JAC member (Herefordshire Council)
Wildlife Trusts	Andrew Nixon	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust JAC member (Wildlife Trusts)
<i>In attendance</i>		
AONB FiPL officer	Nick Critchley	Wye Valley AONB Unit



Department
 for Environment
 Food & Rural Affairs

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JOINT STATEMENT ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN AONBS

Purpose

To seek endorsement of the Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in AONBs in England, prepared with Historic England and the National Association for AONBs.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorse the Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in AONBs in England, prepared with Historic England and the National Association for AONBs.

Key Issues

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

Reasons

The AONB Historic Environment Steering Group have been reviewing the 2004 Joint Statement of intent between the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB), Cadw and English Heritage. The new Joint Statement has been agreed and approved by the Steering Group, the NAAONB and Historic England. Most AONB Partnerships are in the process of signing up to the Statement.

Implications

This new Joint Statement will re-establish and strengthen the working relationship between all the 34 English AONBs, Historic England and the NAAONB and will enable greater collaborative working between the AONBs and Historic England. The intention is that this initial statement is not overly onerous on any parties but rather consolidates a mutually positive relationship from which to develop ambitions to help safeguard and celebrate our Historic Environment further. It is hoped the Joint Statement can be launched in mid 2022.

Background

The 2004 Joint Statement led to the publication of Outstanding Beauty: Outstanding Heritage.

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JOINT STATEMENT ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

This Statement is a declaration of ambition and intent made between the 34 **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty** in England, **Historic England** and the **National Association for AONBs (NAAONB)**. All parties have an interest in, or responsibility for, the historic environment within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Shared Principles:

1. AONBs are national assets.
2. The landscapes of AONBs have been created by centuries of interaction between people and the environment.
3. The historic environment is fundamental to the distinctive character, sense of place and natural beauty of each AONB.
4. The principle that landscapes are an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity underpin our actions, as set out in the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Protected Landscapes.
5. By working together the parties can further the understanding, conservation, enhancement and public enjoyment and appreciation of the historic environment in AONBs.

Purpose of the statement

The historic environment is an intrinsic component of the character of today's world and a physical record of the past. It represents the investment of centuries of skills, resources and cultural influences that can never be replaced. It explains the development of the landscape and gives each place its distinctive character and sense of place. Culture, customs and rural traditions are essential elements of cultural and historic landscapes that forms tangible links to the past.

The historic and cultural environment is valuable for its own sake, but also generates jobs and attracts people to live and work in an area. It encourages businesses to invest and tourists to visit. It is a resource that needs to be used carefully and sustainably: a non-renewable resource, we lose or degrade it at our peril.

The parties to this statement recognise that the landscapes of AONBs have been created by centuries of interaction between people and nature, and the historic environment is fundamental to the character of today's AONB landscapes. The parties recognise the key role AONB partnerships make in the sustainable management of the historic environment, and the contribution that well-managed heritage can make to local economies, generating inward investment, employment, facilitating local branding and attracting visitors from home and abroad. The parties also recognise that historic environment and cultural heritage contribute to health and wellbeing and can be a positive education resource as better understanding of the past enables us to plan better for the future.

It is therefore the stated intention of the parties to this statement to work together to conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment. The parties will collaborate to further the understanding, conservation, public enjoyment and appreciation of the historic environment in AONBs. This collaborative work is needed not only in relation to scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and registered parks, gardens, sites and landscapes but with regard to the whole of the historic environment, the historic character of the wider landscape and cultural heritage.

Areas of Collaboration

The 34 English AONBs agree to:

1. Incorporate objectives into AONB Management Plans relating to the understanding, conservation, enhancement, management and public engagement and enjoyment of the historic environment of AONBs.
2. Secure better understanding, conservation, management and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.
3. Seek appropriate advice from relevant agencies and local authority historic environment professionals on proposals or work that has relevance to the historic environment.
4. Ensure Historic England is updated on who the key AONB contacts are on an annual basis and ensure that Historic England is kept engaged in the direction and delivery of AONBs work.
5. Undertake collaborative working and actively pursue opportunities to improve the condition of heritage@risk and other heritage assets. AONBs will work with partners to monitor the historic environment and assist in the provision of data as to condition and trends together with evidence of positive intervention undertaken or instigated by AONBs.

Historic England agrees to:

1. Assist in developing AONB Management Plan historic environment objectives and any associated strategies and programmes through:
 - the provision of strategic advice, and
 - the periodic provision and review of statutory heritage data specific to AONBs.
2. Ensure that AONBs are fully reflected in the Historic England programmes of research and characterisation in order to enhance the opportunities for Historic England and AONB partnerships and secure better understanding, conservation, management and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.

3. Ensure each AONB is updated on who their key Historic England contacts are and ensure that AONBs are kept engaged in the priorities and delivery of Historic England's work.

The NAAONB agrees to:

1. Provide key contact details for AONB units to Historic England on an annual basis through the collaborative platform – the National Landscapes Forum.

2. Encourage NAAONB members and others to incorporate objectives into AONB Management Plans relating to the understanding, conservation, and public engagement and enjoyment of the historic environment of AONBs.

3. Encourage NAAONB members and others to secure better understanding, conservation, management, and interpretation of the historic environment of AONBs.

4. Encourage NAAONB members and others to Seek appropriate advice from relevant agencies and local authority historic environment professionals on proposals or work that has relevance to the historic environment.

5. Encourage NAAONB members and others to Work to integrate their activities with those relevant activities of Historic England.

National Action Plan

It is the ambition of parties to produce a National Action Plan that can be reviewed by the partners to deliver shared objectives. The drafting of an Action Plan and sharing of best practice, case studies and research will be facilitated through the new digital platform hosted by NAAONB – the National Landscapes Forum.

It is the ambition of all parties to review of the Action Plan every five years to provide an opportunity to review the state of the historic environment of AONBs (including use of Heritage at Risk data) and direct reporting from AONBs on AONB Management Plan delivery to identify future priorities for action.

Together the parties will collaborate and encourage others to promote the sustainable management of the historic environment in AONBs by:

1. Showcasing exemplary projects and schemes.
2. Dissemination of appropriate guidance and codes of best practice.
3. Establishment of a historic environment working group of interested AONBs

Application of the statement

This statement applies to the 34 AONBs in England. It has effect from *[replace with revised date]* will be monitored annually and reviewed (along with the Action Plan)

every 5 years by the parties. The Statement does not affect the statutory duties of the respective organisations.

Parties to the statement

Historic England

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. They are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). They champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

They do this by:

- Championing historic places
- Identifying and protecting our heritage
- Supporting change
- Understanding historic places and
- Providing expertise at a local level

Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Historic England is required to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, abbreviated to AONB, are outstanding landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is safeguarded in the national interest.

There are 34 AONBs in England, created by the legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Protection of AONBs was further enhanced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 (CRoW2000).

AONB landscapes range from rugged coastline, dunes, salt marshes, peatlands, woodlands and estuaries to water meadows, gentle downland and upland moors.

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to **conserve** and **enhance** the natural beauty of the area. Social and economic development which contributes to the natural beauty of the AONB is encouraged so that communities are strengthened, and the experiences for locals and visitors alike are improved.

AONBs are designated because of their individual qualities. These include their flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as scenic views. They are living and working landscapes that have been, and continue to be, shaped by nature and human activity.

Arnside & Silverdale
Blackdown Hills
Cannock Chase
Chichester Harbour
Chilterns
Cornwall
Cotswolds
Cranborne Chase
Dedham Vale
Dorset
East Devon
Forest of Bowland
High Weald
Howardian Hills
Isle of Wight
Isles of Scilly
Kent Downs
Lincolnshire Wolds
Malvern Hills
Mendip Hills
Nidderdale
Norfolk Coast
North Devon
North Pennines
North Wessex Downs
Northumberland Coast
Quantock Hills
Shropshire Hills
Solway Coast
South Devon
Suffolk Coast and Heaths
Surrey Hills
Tamar Valley
Wye Valley

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) was formed in 1998 as an independent organisation to act on behalf of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales

The NAAONB became a Charitable Company limited by guarantee on 14th October 2014 having previously operated as an incorporated controlled company limited by guarantee.

The NAAONB has established itself as the voice of the AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards by working closely with them, and with Local Authorities, statutory agencies, central governments, and other interested bodies. By doing so it furthers the work of AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards and helps them deliver their statutory responsibilities.

The NAAONB

- is an influential, trusted organisation that is accepted as the voice of the AONB network,
- encourages and harnesses the collective experience, enthusiasm and goodwill of the AONB network,
- brings the AONB network together as a cohesive and coherent entity,
- develops and supports collaboration across all designated landscapes,
- celebrates the unique identity of its individual members,
- collaborates with others to achieve shared objectives, and
- is the single point of contact with the AONB network for governments.

WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL 2022

Purpose

To inform members of the progress of the Wye Valley River Festival Community Interest Company (CIC) with the Wye Valley River Festival 2022 scheduled for 27th May - 5th June.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

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

Reasons

The JAC endorsed the continuation of the Wye Valley River Festival through an independent management and delivery body. The Wye Valley River Festival CIC was established with 3 Directors who had all been involved in previous Wye Valley River Festivals.

The Wye Valley River Festival CIC subsequently secured Arts Council England funding for Organisational Development. This enabled the consolidation of the new CIC, developing systems and communications along with planning and discussions on all aspects of the CIC's ambition and aspirations. The CIC has written successful applications to the Community Renewal Fund UK, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Welsh Government Major Events -Festival Growth Fund, Arts Council England (ACE), Arts Council of Wales (ACW) and others. The CIC has been advertising for and interviewing a new team to set up and run the new Festival.

Implications

The CIC has secured nearly £300,000 for the Wye Valley River Festival (WVRF) 2022 programme. The main festival is being planned between 27th May - 5th June 2022 with the theme of HUMAN⇌NATURE. There will be additional outreach work in the run-up to the Festival and further events later in the year.

Over recent months the CIC has recruited four new staff to the core Festival team and six freelance artists for the performance ensemble plus an artist in residence. Four Creative

Community Champions have been selected and contracted until June 2022 to be cultural and artistic emissaries for the WVRF to galvanise activities in communities along the valley. They will be co-creating work with communities throughout the region, 'following their own artistic noses' and exploring their practice and interests by inviting local people to collaborate with them in a myriad of ways, creating new community based work for presentation and display during the Festival and beyond.

Thus far the CIC has created 9 part time freelance jobs/contracts to deliver various elements of the Festival, 7 of which have been awarded to creatives living within an 8 mile radius of Monmouth.

The Core Festival team consists of

Festival Director - Phillippa Haynes

Artistic Director – Jon Beedell

Company Manager - Rachel Buchanan

Festival Producer - Claire Teasdale

Marketing and Social Media manager - Mabel Moll

Outreach Co-ordinator - Natalia Colville

Production Manager – [recruitment underway]

CIC Directors are Phillippa Haynes, Jon Beedell and Mijanou Blech. The intention is to recruit two more Directors to the CIC. Accountant for the CIC is Hannah Winman, Current Accountancy Ltd.

Combined with the successful funding, these appointments create a capable, experienced and motivated team with both artistic and management skills which give confidence that the Wye Valley River Festival has a successful future.

The main Wye Valley River Festival 2022 events between 27th May - 5th June are currently being developed. It is acknowledged that these dates coincide with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and half-term. The Festival Ensemble will co-create elements of the performance with identified communities (and partners) in Llandogo, Redbrook, the Forest of Dean area including performance at Symonds Yat Rock, plus other locales. A series of Hyper-local events are proposed for Llandogo, Tintern, Redbrook and Symonds Yat. Permission is being secured for two installations, one at Tintern and another at Yat Rock. A third event in the Autumn, when the evenings are darker, is proposed in partnership with Cadw at Tintern Abbey, which will be ticketed.

Other community groups that the CIC is working with include Artspace Cinderford, Artsblast, Redbrook Art Angels, Monmouth Lantern Parade, Monmouth Transition Group and the Climate Futures Festival and the Savoy Youth Theatre.

Background

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

AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN - NATURAL CAPITAL AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES.

Purpose

To inform members of the context of Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services in the AONB Management Plan 2021-2026, in response to the Public Questions raised in November 2021.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- A number of questions were posed in the Public Question item to the JAC meeting on 1st November 2021 relating to Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. These are appended.
- The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan was adopted by the Local Authorities in early 2021 following staged reviews and public consultation between 2018 and 2021.
- Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services are adopted terms and concepts of the British Government that are referenced in the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.
- In Wales the concepts of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 along with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) are the defining principles.
- The majority of land in the Wye Valley AONB is privately owned over which the JAC has no direct control. Forestry England and Natural Resources Wales manage the Public Forest Estate in their respective countries. Third sector organisations, particularly the Wildlife Trusts and Woodland Trusts also own reserves that are key areas of environmental value.

Reasons

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) recognises that its use of a natural capital approach is a world first. This is in part to the ground-breaking work of Professor Dieter Helm's Natural Capital Committee (NCC). The 25YEP notes that "over coming years the UK intends to use a 'natural capital' approach as a tool to help us make key choices and long-term decisions". The 25YEP refers to 'natural capital' over 100 times, the Glover Landscapes Review mentions 'natural capital' 30 times.

The Welsh Government commissioned the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) as a country-wide assessment of the health and resilience of ecosystems and the extent to which Wales is sustainably managing its natural resources. SoNaRR recognised that the full value of natural resources and ecosystems were not fully considered and that new tools and techniques are required to understand the value of the contribution that ecosystems make.

Implications

The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026, Chapter 4 states “The guiding principles that underpin the approach to managing the AONB are sustainable development, natural resource management, the ecosystem approach and the landscape approach.”

These are elaborated on under the subsequent sections:

- 4.1 Sustainable development
- 4.2 Natural Capital
- 4.3 Ecosystem services
- 4.4 Landscape approach
- 4.5 The setting of the AONB

There is no ‘overriding principle’ that gives Natural Capital initiatives precedent over Sustainable Development or the Landscape approach.

It is well recognised, particularly in the environmental sector, that there are challenges and limitations with using a Natural Capital approach. Nevertheless it is currently part of government policy and the AONB Management Plan, as a statutory document for a nationally designated Protected Landscape, has to reflect national policy. But the primary purpose of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (and National Parks) is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Section 4.2.3 of the Wye Valley Management Plan 2021-26 states “However, it is critical in undertaking any valuation exercise that intrinsic and incalculable value delivered by ecosystem and cultural assets are recognised. A balanced approach to natural beauty and its conservation and enhancement cannot be fully economically valued, so cannot be fairly weighed against developments which would destroy or damage those ecosystem stocks in simple economic terms.”

Section 4.3.2 states “Therefore an ecosystem approach is more than managing the environment as an integrated system; it involves managing societal and economic drivers as part of this system. This is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. A fully functioning landscape should continue to provide these services; therefore it also correlates closely with landscape scale management and the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR).”

Section 4.3.3 states “However, while the ecosystem services and SMNR frameworks are useful means of assessing the benefits that the AONB provides to people, these need to be examined in conjunction with the primary purpose of AONBs which is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. This should help to secure ecosystem services, but these are an additional benefit of AONB designation. The intrinsic value of natural beauty therefore needs to be recognised alongside the ecosystem services approach. These sets of values are important, distinct and complementary.”

Section 1.1.4 & 1.1.5 outline the review and consultation process that the Management Plan has been through.

Section 1.3 outlines ‘What is Natural Beauty?’. As part of the Wye Valley AONB’s 50th Anniversary celebrations during 2021, a national symposium was hosted on 1st December entitled ‘What is Natural Beauty?’. One of the keynote speakers Sally Marsh FLI, co-Director of the High Weald AONB, concluded explaining “evidence from neuroscience suggests that beauty is not related to our desire to possess something, and if beauty is not about possession, how then can it be monetised or traded?”

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My questions below relate to the following sections within the AONB Management Plan, as finalised for adoption (2021-2026).

4.2 Natural Capital

4.2.1 The Management Plan adopts the '**Ecosystem Approach**', being a central principle in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2004).

4.2.2 The ecosystem approach provides a mechanism which can be used to look at whole ecosystems during the decision making process, and for valuing the ecosystem services they provide.

4.2.3 Natural capital refers to both the living (e.g. fish stocks, forests) and nonliving (e.g. minerals, energy resources) aspects of nature which produce value to people, both directly and indirectly(...) Essentially, natural capital is about nature's assets. **From these assets we derive a flow of benefits known as ecosystem services. A monetary value** can be placed on some elements of the natural system, using the concept of division of assets and flows.

4.3 Ecosystem services

4.3.1 Ecosystem services are the services provided by nature that benefit people. The environment is our life support system, important for its intrinsic value, as well as providing water, producing our food, energy and timber, sustaining our wildlife and creating employment and income worth billions of pounds (TEEB, 2010)

Questions:

1) Are members of the Joint Advisory Committee aware that the Natural Capital model being adopted by the AONB Management Plan would, when combined with the associated ESS (Ecosystems Services) and PES (Payment for Ecosystems Services) mechanisms:

a) audit our land, water, mineral, biodiversity and energy resources and seek to convert such resources into "marketable" financial assets (referred to as 'Natural Assets') through various "market-based instruments and payments for ecosystems services."

b) permit financial institutions, hedge/ pension funds, private individuals and multinational corporations to purchase, hold and trade our 'Natural Assets' through emerging Natural Capital and 'Carbon' markets?

c) effectively privatise and commodify by stealth all land within the AONB and Public Forestry Estate by permitting companies and individuals to, for example, own the 'Carbon' contained within our forests (for offsetting, for-profit-trading or tax evasion purposes)?

2) Do the Committee members responsible view this privatisation by proxy as in anyway related to obligations implicit in the AONB's declaration of a Climate Emergency?

3) Do the Committee members responsible consider that there has been adequate public consultation (especially in the Forest of Dean); and that residents (and members) have been fully informed of the implications of such a policy?

Related information/ context:

This 'Natural Capital' accountancy approach ought to be considered in the context of not just Forestry England/ Defra's interest in adopting a Natural Capital/ ESS approach, but also an invigorated United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which is supported by the World Bank's Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) programme and the EU and UN's Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) programme.

This also comes hot on the tail of the recent UK Dasgupta Review – The Economics of Biodiversity, published 2 February 2021, which is the Final Report of the Independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta.

The 610 page report mentions 'Natural Capital' a grand total of 357 times.

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>

The Convention on Biological Diversity, amongst other transnational commitments, helped to introduce the ecosystem approach and its related idea of ecosystem services to a succession of concepts which are increasingly becoming the basis for natural resource management in the United Kingdom.

In the context of forests, the 2007 Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI), "encourages recognition of the range of values derived from goods and services provided by all types of forests and trees outside forests, as well as **ways to reflect such values in the marketplace**, consistent with relevant national legislation and policies" (UN, 2007)

The UK Government has produced a series of reports including an Action Plan to promote "practical and innovative development of Payments for Ecosystem Services PES schemes, and considers the actions we can take to enable them. PES schemes are about identifying practical ways to deliver new and additional investment in the natural environment, as well as seeking better targeting and value for money of existing funding streams."

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-for-ecosystem-services-pes-action-plan>

"Carbon markets arguably present the biggest current opportunity for PES schemes in forestry, providing companies and individuals with the option of abating their emissions through investing in woodlands for carbon sequestration purposes. The government is supporting the woodland carbon market through further development of the Forestry Commission's Woodland Carbon Code

“Ecosystem services potentially relevant for PES - Carbon sequestration, flood alleviation, water quality, amenity, landscape, biodiversity.”

“Potential actors: (a) Buyers - Government and public agencies, visitors to woodlands, downstream beneficiaries including water companies, private businesses for CSR purposes and reducing business risk. Current buyers in relation to Woodland Carbon Code include retailers such as supermarkets and travel companies, and some manufacturing and haulage companies. Lack of scale and lack of access to compliance carbon markets mean that opportunities are currently more limited with big emitting companies (who are in the EU ETS)

(b) Providers - e.g. Public and private landowners and tenant land managers, private businesses (commercial interests and investors), conservationists, amenity owners.

(c) Intermediaries - Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, experts in market creation, market brokers (e.g. Forest Carbon).”

Source:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200889/pb13918-pes-actionplan-20130522.pdf

The 2013 Payments for ES Guide begins with a foreword by Sir John Lawton:

“Arguing that the natural world is priceless is deeply mistaken. How much is a skylark worth? Well it clearly isn’t zero, but nor is it infinite. I don’t want to pay to listen to skylarks, and being more precise than this about their value is tricky (to put it mildly), but as this best practice guide shows, **it is possible to put a value on many other aspects of nature’s services**, with varying degrees of difficulty and consensus. Increasingly, **paying for ecosystem services** will be another powerful reason for society to look after the natural world, and to stop taking for granted the benefits we derive from it.”

It defines the concept of Payment for Ecosystems Services as: “PES schemes involve **payments to the managers of land or other natural resources in exchange for the provision of specified ecosystem services** (or actions anticipated to deliver these services) over-and-above what would otherwise be provided in the absence of payment. Payments are made by the beneficiaries of the services in question, for example, individuals, communities, businesses or governments acting on behalf of various parties”

“PES therefore provides an opportunity to **put a price on previously un-priced ecosystem services like climate regulation, water quality regulation and the provision of habitat for wildlife** and, in doing so, brings them into the wider economy.”

Source: <https://www.cbd.int/financial/pes/unitedkingdom-bestpractice.pdf>

“In recent years, forestry policy, especially the international and European soft law on forests that has been negotiated since 1992, has progressively been influenced by the increased importance given to market mechanisms, voluntary regulations, and the private sector (Humphreys, 2009).

The current international dialogue on forests, according to Humphreys (2009), thus “needs to be understood as one in which neoliberal principles have become melded with the ideas of sustainable forest management and conservation” (p. 320).

The 2015 MCPFE Madrid Ministerial Resolution 1 (MCPFE, 2015) also commits itself to “incorporating the value of forests ecosystems services in a green economy”, including through tools such as “market-based instruments and payments for ecosystem services”.

The UK is no exception to this. Indeed, since the publication of Defra's ecosystem approach action plan and ecosystem services valuation guide in 2007, the government, through Defra, has gradually rolled out the ecosystem approach throughout the country, but placing a strong focus on ecosystem services and their valuation and marketisation.

The Government's 2013 Forestry and Woodland Policy Statement (Defra, 2013) also puts much emphasis on market approaches. However, there is a potential danger that the continued overemphasis on ecosystem services and market approaches could impact on current sustainable forest management practices and may weaken existing notions of stewardship. Indeed, there are concerns that this shift may endanger previous multiple forest management arrangements developed under sustainable forest management (Quine et al., 2013); management objectives could increasingly be driven by the supply and delivery of a small range of easily marketable ecosystem services (Collins and Larry, 2007, Quine et al., 2013).

These transnational ideas were taken up by the UK government in numerous more general policy statements, beginning with the 2007 Ecosystem Valuation Guide (Defra, 2007a). The Forestry Commission made an explicit reference to ecosystem services in its 2011 UK Forestry Standard (Forestry Commission, 2011). There, it also provided an extensive list of woodland ecosystem services, building on the 2005 MA and the 2011 UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA, 2011).”

Source of above: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837716307645>

Additional reading on these topics:

“The balance sheet of nature? On making monetary value of UK ‘natural capital’” Sian Sullivan

“Making nature investable: from legibility to leverageability in fabricating ‘nature’ as ‘natural capital’” (2018) *Science and Technology Studies* 31(3): 47-76. Sian Sullivan

Limits of monetization in protecting ecosystem services” (2018) *Conservation Biology* 32: 1048–1062. J. Temel, Aled Jones, N. Jones, et al., “

“Between priceless and worthless: challenges in using market mechanisms for conserving biodiversity” (2012) *Transnational Environmental Law* 2(2): 217-233.

AONB UNIT REPORTS

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

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

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

a) AONB 50th Anniversary programme

The AONB's 50th Anniversary celebrations culminated with the 'What is Natural Beauty?' national on-line symposium on 1st December. The event was hosted by the UK's Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA), and co-hosted by Andrew Blake, AONB Manager and Harriet Fraser of The PLACE Collective. Over 100 people attended with a cross-sectorial range of speakers from landscape management and conservation, arts and academia. In Workshop sessions attendees focused on three questions:

Q1: What actions could be taken to better conserve and enhance 'Natural Beauty'?

Q2: In what ways can we broaden access to 'Natural Beauty'?

Q3: What threats are there to 'Natural Beauty'?

The event report is available to download <https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/media/WINB-Report-FINAL-PDF.pdf> and the full recording of the event (excluding the individual breakout workshops) can be viewed on the CNPPA YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/3H1ljt2>.

Ruth Waycott, AONB Information Officer, has continued to develop the Wye Valley AONB social media 'take-over' posts and regular promotions of 50walks@50. This has raised the profile of the Wye Valley AONB and built AONB 'followers' on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.

The repeat of the 5 yearly AONB Perceptions Survey has yet to be undertaken. Commissioning has been delayed due to capacity issues in the AONB Unit. However it is still intended and will benchmark activity against results from 2016 and 2011 as well as linking to the 5 Pledges in the AONB Management Plan.

b) Nature Recovery Plan

Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer, and Ellie Baggett, Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer, have been progressing work with the development of the AONB's Nature Recovery Plan. The plan will be habitat based, focusing on Special Qualities set out in the AONB Management Plan. It will establish priority areas for the creation of and connectivity between woodland, species rich grassland, riparian habitats and orchards. Consideration is also being made for notable and veteran tree enhancements, and peatland, bog and heathland opportunities.

Running in parallel to the Nature Recovery Plan, and also linked to key habitats, 5 species action plans are also in production. These are for the 5 species or assemblages identified by the AONB team and partners in response to the Colchester Declaration pledge to adopt species and reverse their decline. The species are Nobel Chafer beetle in relation to orchard habitats, Woodland butterfly assemblage with special interest in the Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary in relation to woodlands, Water Crowfoot as an indicator for water quality, Bumblebee assemblage with particular focus on Shril Carder, Brown Banded Carder, Redshank Carder and long horned bees in relation to grassland sites, and Hedgehog as a species for public engagement to highlight species decline and what people can do themselves to help reverse decline.

Data gathering has taken place which will be followed shortly by a ground truthing exercise before draft priority areas are drawn up. Once in draft, the Nature Recovery Plan will be consulted upon before being finished and produced. This work will be undertaken and completed by the AONB Nature Recovery Officer and Development Officer throughout 2022. The finished Nature Recovery and Species Action plans will be used to prioritise and target the AONB's work with landowners and partners through available schemes, programmes and funding opportunities.

c) Undergrounding Powerlines

There are currently 4 approved schemes being delivered in the Wye Valley AONB by Western Power Distribution (WPD) teams. These are all at different stages of delivery, but once complete will place approximately 1.6km of cable underground in the AONB. Work is scheduled for completion before the end of the current price review period in 2023. Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer, had an excellent response to promotion of the scheme with Parish and Community Councils and there is now a long list of schemes to put forward to WPD as and when funding becomes available in the next price review period.

d) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects

i. AONB Office decarbonisation refurbishment

The AONB Office refurbishment is completed and the AONB team have been settling back into the office in line with the lifting of Covid restrictions. The new meeting room is starting to be used, including by the Wye Valley River Festival CIC as an in-kind contribution. There

are still a few of boxes of files to be sorted and now several boxes of empty lever-arch files to be re-housed.

ii. Old Station Tintern decarbonisation & refurbishment

The Planning application is being considered for the new Shower/Toilets pods to upgrade facilities and accessibility to meet current requirements for campers.

Work is underway on upgrade electrical works and the installation of double 10Kw electrical car charger point along with 2 new dedicated car park spaces for EVs. Also 2 new dedicated disabled parking bays are being marked out. On the railway carriage roofs 36 solar panels are being installed and all internal and external lighting is being upgraded to LED. Meanwhile secondary glazing is being installed to the Station building windows and new Site interpretation is also planned.

iv. Wyesham riverbank consolidation of Wye Valley Walk

The Lower Wye Projects Officer, Nickie Moore, has been co-ordinating progressing with the investigation for the Wye Valley Walk just downstream from the Duke of Beaufort Bridge at Wyesham. Ecological surveys have been carried out and an assessment of the badgers' sett. Next steps will be finalising the design work and establishing viable costs. It is hoped resources will be found to complete works during 2022/23.

v. Carbon Neutral Designated Landscapes Organisation

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority commissioned Aquatera on behalf of Snowdonia National Park Authority; Brecon Beacons National Park Authority; Clwydian and Deeside Valley AONB Partnership; Anglesey AONB Partnership and Wye Valley AONB Partnership to undertake a baseline assessment of the respective organisations and offer guidance on where attempts can be made to achieve a target of Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2030. Having just completed the decarbonisation of the AONB Office, the next highest carbon emitting activity of the AONB Unit appears to travel and transport, including commuting. The final stage of the assessment is yet to take place. AONB staff will appraise opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint and discuss AONB specific priorities and ambitions with the other departments within the Local Authorities and stakeholders to identify realistic opportunities to achieve net zero.

vi. Designated Landscapes Carbon Footprint

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority is also leading on a commission for the Welsh National Park Authorities and AONB Partnership to provide a consumption-based assessment of the Greenhouse Gas footprint for each National Park and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This uses the methodology developed with the National Park Authorities in England. It uses national and ONS data on businesses, tourism and land use to build consumption-based as well as more traditional production-based metrics for each Designated Landscape area. The consumption-based emissions reporting can be used to inform local carbon reduction initiatives covering aspects of human consumption that would not have been covered by more traditional production-based carbon accounts.

vii. Wye Valley AONB Travel & Transport

The Stage 3 Report of the Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan has been produced in consultation with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and the Community Councils of St Arvans, Trellech United, Devauden and Tintern. The development of new village gateway signage is underway as an initial project of the implementation of the Villages Plan.

vii. Wordsworth Walk / Cleddon Shoots Permissive Path

Lower Wye Projects Officer, Nickie Moore, has continued supervising the enhancement works for this unique path. Technical Access team, iBEX, have commenced the next phase of work restoring 80 steps in the middle gorge. Further cherry laurel control is also progressing. The private landowner is contributing both time and resources in clearing paths and coppicing undergrowth. Appropriate safety signage has been installed. Meanwhile the next phase of work is being planned which includes the replacement of a foot bridge along the Permissive Path.

viii Piercefield Walk Permissive Path – part of Wye Valley Walk

Gwent Wildlife Trust, who manage the Piercefield Woods on behalf of the private owner, have been undertaking path consolidation and management of trees infected by Ash Dieback along the Wye Valley Walk, a Permissive Path through this woodland SSSI.

e) Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Riparian Tree work (England only)

These two initiatives are funded by the Environment Agency.

The Wye and Usk Foundation (WUF) have been delivering farm advice in the English part of the AONB, initially through the Water Environment Grant ROAR project, but since December through Environment Agency funding. Ben Nott, the WUF Catchment Advisor, seconded to the AONB team under the ROAR project, has been cold calling farmers offering advice and grants for NFM and riparian habitat management work. Over the winter 11 grant aided projects are being taken forward.

The Riparian Tree management project is a partnership between the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, delivering project work both in the AONB and River Lugg catchment. Herefordshire Wildlife Trust have delivered 3 on farm riparian habitat management schemes along the Lugg.

The ROAR project ended in December along with Ben Nott's secondment to the AONB team, however he is being retained as a WUF Catchment Advisor and will continue to work in the and around the AONB, as resources allow.

f) Peatland Restoration – Cleddon Bog SSSI

The Peatland Restoration funding from Natural Resources Wales for 2021/22 was unexpected and finally approved in late October 2021. The late standing start and short term nature of the funding was always a concern. However, the main partners, NRW, Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Wye Valley AONB Unit were keen to grasp the opportunity to re-institute management of Cleddon Bog SSSI. There has been good collaborative working between the partners and sound progress has been made. The Commoners have been engaged, the draft Management Plan dusted off and the necessary SSSI consent secured. Most of the initially proposed capital work has not been able to be progressed in the tight timeframe but the foundation has been laid for future delivery of peatland restoration work on Cleddon Bog SSSI.

g) AONB Volunteers & AONB Youth Rangers

Sadly, Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, left the AONB Unit in December. While recruitment for her replacement is underway it has not been possible to maintain an activity

programme for the AONB Volunteers and AONB Youth Rangers. The last outing of the Youth Rangers was in late November; Ellie Baggett, Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer, gave an excellent talk on birds of the Wye Valley and the Angiddy Valley to the Youth Rangers who then built Nest box.



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