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Monday, 1 July 2024

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 8th July, 2024 at 2.00 pm
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair.	
2.	Appointment of Vice-Chair.	
3.	Apologies for Absence and Introductions.	
4.	Declarations of Interest.	
5.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting - 4th March 2024.	1 - 8
6.	Public Question Time.	
7.	Annual report 2023/24.	9 - 12
8.	Planning Guidance & Position Statements:	
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8.2.	Renewable Energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape & Setting.	19 - 64
8.3.	Dark Skies & Artificial Light Pollution.	65 - 122
9.	Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy:	
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9.2.	Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy.	127 - 170

10.	**AONB Species Action Plans (SAP):**	171 - 172
10.1.	**Hedgehog SAP.**	173 - 190
11.	**AONB Partnership Study Tour 2024.**	191 - 192
12.	**FiPL, SDF & HCF Grants update.**	193 - 198
13.	**Designated Landscapes in Wales updates.**	199 - 200
14.	**Partner and National Landscape Team progress reports and updates.**	201 - 206
15.	**Date of next meetings:** Monday 4th November 2024 at 2.00pm. Monday 3rd March 2025 at 2.00pm (to be confirmed). 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
G. Biggs
E. O'Driscoll
S. Cole

Monmouthshire:
E. Bryn
S. Garratt
D. Rooke
A.E. Webb

Forest of Dean:
D. Wheeler
C. McFarling

Town / Parish Community Councils with Voting Powers

C. Evers – Gloucestershire Association of Parish / Town Councils
B. Vine – Herefordshire Association Local Councils
Councillor L. Parker – One Voice Wales

Co-opted Members with Voting Powers

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

Co-opted Members without Voting Powers

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

Public Information

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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

Our purpose

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced.
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency.
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop.
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in.
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued.

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.

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 4th March, 2024 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor C. McFarling (Vice-Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: E. Bryn and D. Rooke

Gloucestershire County Council

County Councillor T. Hale

Herefordshire Council

Councillor: S. Cole

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC – Mr. C. Evers
(HALC) – Ms. B. Vine

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron

Technical Advice Officers

National Landscapes Manager – Mr. A. Blake
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams
AONB Planning Officer – Mr. J. Bailey
Wye Valley National Landscape – Mr. Celyn Davies
Wye Valley National Landscape – Mr. S. Evans
Gloucestershire County Council - Amartya Deb

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: S. Garratt, A. Webb, E. O'Driscoll, D. Wheeler and G. Morgan

Ms. R. Edwards, Mr. B. Nash, Mr. M. Price, Ms.R. Clay, R. Niblett, Ms. E. Whitehouse, Dr. J. Hynes, Ms. M. Getgood, Mr. R. Hatton and Mr. M. Sweeney

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 4th March, 2024 at 2.00 pm

1. Declarations of Interest

None received.

2. Public Questions - Bigsweir Bridge Restrictions & Monmouth Bridge Closure

In response to questions raised regarding Bigsweir Bridge restrictions, the Monmouth Bridge closure and the impact this will have on the area with potential highways issues arising regarding lorry access in the area, the National Landscapes Manager stated that he would make enquires with the Highways Departments for Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire County Councils with regard to traffic monitoring being undertaken and identify any alternative vehicular routes that are being established, and report back.

It was noted that surface repair work for the Wye Bridge was currently out to tender.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dated 6th November 2023 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) Review

We received a report to consider establishing a Task and Finish Group to review current vacancies and the constitution of the Joint Advisory Committee and propose recommendations with regard to changes of membership and terms of reference.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- There are a number of vacancies that have emerged in the co-opted membership of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).

- Recent initiatives, including the Glover Review and the Diversity & Inclusion training provided through Welsh Government, have highlighted the need for increasing diversity in public sector representation.

- The Joint Agreement as to the establishment and functions of the Wye Valley AONB JAC should be reviewed from time to time.

- A review of current vacancies and the constitution of the Joint Advisory Committee can be undertaken by a small Task and Finish Group, of three to five members supported by officers, who can report back to the JAC with proposed recommendations.

The following Joint Advisory Committee members agreed to sit on the Task and Finish Group:

Councillor Chris McFarling
County Councillor Emma Bryn
Chris Barron

The National Landscapes Manager informed the Committee that he would contact all Members of the Joint Advisory Committee as well as relevant external candidates to ascertain if they would like to join the Task and Finish Group.

5. National Landscape Team 2024/25 Work Programme

We received a report regarding the National Landscape Team 2024/25 Work Programme.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The table within the report establishes the proposed business plan for the National Landscape Team in the form of the outline Work Programme 2024/2025.

- The Work Programme remains 'draft' as final confirmation is awaited from DEFRA on new capital funding for 2024/25.

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the four constituent local authorities is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the National Landscape Partnership.

- The current MoU ends in March 2024 and a revised three year edition is being prepared, meanwhile it is prudent to extend the existing version for up to 12 months until the revised version is adopted and signed by the four local authorities.

- Work Programme priorities for 2024/2025 include the on-going development of the Nature Recovery Plan, Species Action Plans and Climate Action Plan; promotion and delivery of what is currently the final year of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant programme in England; the distribution and administration of grants through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation Wye Valley National Landscape Fund; the delivery of the final year of projects funded through the 3-year tranche of Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme; including ongoing control of Invasive Non-Native Species, support for Village Halls and enhancements to the Wye Valley Walk, in preparation for the route's 50th Anniversary in 2025; and continuing a range of existing activities and projects; while retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.

- The National Landscape Team core budget for 2024/5, as presented to the National Landscape Steering Group, is £457,000 with additional funding programmes, grants

and match funding anticipated to exceed £835,000 levered into the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty during the year.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Wye Valley Walk is being fully waymarked and enhanced in certain areas in readiness for the route's 50th Anniversary in 2025.

- The decking on Lydbrook Bridge is in need of repair / full scale restoration. Funding for the repair and maintenance work has been established.

- In response to a question raised regarding safeguarding, it was noted that Monmouthshire County Council takes the lead in providing safeguarding training. Most staff have completed the Level 1 training with some staff having already undertaken the Level 2 training. A complaints procedure exists for staff and volunteers whereby a mechanism has been established to allow for direct reporting of staff by other members of staff.

- The National Landscapes Manager would introduce a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating within the work programme for future Joint Advisory Committee Meetings.

We resolved:

(i) to endorse the outline Work Programme for the National Landscape Team for 2024/2025.

(ii) to note the need to roll forward the existing Memorandum of Understanding for the National Landscape Team until the constituent local authorities have adopted a revised version.

6. <u>Planning Guidance and Position Statements</u>

We received a report regarding two draft Position Statements for public consultation, which intend to establish the position of the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership on key issues affecting the area.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Position Statements provide further context, guidance and recommendations in relation to the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Strategic Objectives and associated issues.

- The two draft Position Statements will have respective formal public consultation periods, following which comments submitted will be considered and amendments made.

- Both revised 'post-consultation' versions will then be brought to the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for endorsement in due course.

- Shared experience from the similar Position Statements from the Malvern Hills National Landscape has helped inform both Position Statements.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Light pollution within the countryside is having a negative impact on the insect population as well as affecting fish spawning.

- In the Welsh side of the AONB, the Dark Skies Project can assist in assessing properties with a view to providing aid to retro fitting appropriate lighting. It has been identified that the types of buildings that are excessively lit are often public houses, doctors' surgeries, and schools.

- In the Welsh side of the AONB it is anticipated that one more bioluminescence walk will be held before Easter.

- The two draft position statements will go out for consultation for an eight-week period.

We resolved:

(i) to endorse the 'Renewable Energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting' Position Statement, and associated Appendices, as a consultation draft;

(ii) to endorse the 'Dark Skies and Artificial Light Pollution' Position Statement, and its associated Appendices, as a consultation draft;

(iii) to agree that if future 'non-material' amendments are required, as necessary, that these can be made by Wye Valley National Landscape Team, in consultation with the Wye Valley National Landscape Team Manager;

(iv) to agree a formal review date of both Position Statements once endorsed to take place every five years unless otherwise amended.

7. <u>Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) & HCF Wye Valley National Landscape Fund Update</u>

We received a report regarding the progress of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The DEFRA funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in England had an initial allocation of £339,063 for 2023/24 which has subsequently been increased.

- The FiPL Assessment Panel has approved grants totalling £356,307 in 2023/24 having been able to access additional FiPL funding from the DEFRA National Pot.

- The FiPL allocation for 2024/25, currently believed to be the last year of the programme, is £362,384 of which £260,631 has already been allocated, leaving £101,753 remaining.

- The Welsh Government Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £82,961 allocated from the £100,000 available for 2023/24, plus £15,000 from a returned grant leaving £32,038 available. There is also £53,227 already allocated from the £100,000 available for 2024/25, leaving £46,773 available.

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Fund hosted by the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) is currently closed for applications to allow the Endowment Fund to grow.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Development Officer secures external funding bringing in additional resources.

- The National Landscapes Association with DEFRA funding is running training schemes with a view to upskilling people.

We endorsed the allocations of grants under the FiPL programme and SDF to date for 2023/24.

8. <u>National Updates - England and Wales</u>

We received a report regarding issues and updates from DEFRA, Welsh Government and the National Landscapes Association.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- DEFRA published the Government's Response to the Glover Review 'Implementing the Landscapes Review: summary of responses' in November 2023 including an 'Action Plan for Protected Landscapes'.

- Welsh Government, through Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW), offered member training on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and on Tackling the Nature and Climate Emergencies.

- There are two events at the Senedd promoting the Designated Landscsapes in Wales, one in March 2024 organised by Campaign for National Parks and the other in April 2024 by the National Landscapes Assocaition.

- Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) will host a Seminar in Bangor on 16th-17th May 2024 on 'Decarbonising the Welsh Designated Landscapes and working with our communities to achieve Net Zero'.

- The National Landscapes Association hosted the National Landscapes re-branding launch in November, alongside the Chair's Conference and AGM.

- The Investing in Nature team within the National Landscapes Association are providing training on Green finance, along with National Parks Partnership.

- The National Landscapes Conference will be on 5th – 7th July 2024, at Harper Adams, Shropshire.

We noted the report.

9. Partner and National Landscape Team Progress Reports and Updates

We received a report regarding the activity of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners relating to:

- Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Seminar - 19th March 2024.

- Welcome Tintern - Visitor Experience Improvements with MonLife, Monmouthshire County Council.

- River Wye update and collaborations, including the Wye Catchment Partnership.

- Lower Wye Track and Trails consultation & strategy.

- Species Action Plan – Hedgehogs First Response Unit.

- Wye Valley Youth Rangers.

- Wye Valley River Festival 3rd - 12th May 2024.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- DEFRA is funding an initiative with the Youth Hostel Association to encourage schools to access the countryside. Further information is anticipated in due course.

We noted the report.

10. Dates of next meetings:

Monday 1st July 2024 at 2.00pm.
Monday 4th November 2024 at 2.00pm.

The meetings will be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.

The meeting ended at 3.47 pm.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To present the annual report figures for 2023/24 and note the delay in the completion of the tabulated achievements for the Wye Valley AONB Unit/National Landscape Team.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the Annual Report figures and awaits the finalised Annual Report on AONB/National Landscape achievements for 2023/24.

Key Issues

- The 2023/24 summary financial report is outlined below on the delivery of the Work Programme for the AONB Unit, which rebranded as the National Landscape Team during the year.
- There is a delay in completing the full Annual Report tabulating the achievements of the year against the annual Work Programme. This will be presented to the next JAC.
- High levels of achievement were maintained by the National Landscape Team despite the challenges of some staff turn-over and consequent reduced capacity during recruitment periods.
- The AONB Unit/National Landscape Team turnover in 2023/24 was £1,112,852 resulting in the leverage of over nearly £23 for every £1 of local authority contribution.

Reasons

The Annual Work Programme Report for the AONB Unit is usually presented to the July JAC. However the Report is not yet complete due to other work commitments. The Work Programme Report for the AONB Unit 2023/24 will tabulate the achievements of the AONB Unit, which rebranded as the National Landscape Team during the period. The Work Programme Annual Report is also presented to DEFRA and Welsh Government as part National Landscape/AONB Partnership annual grant claims to the two government core funding partners.

Implications

The AONB Unit rebranded as the National Landscape Team following the national rebranding in November. During 2023/24 the Team reached 9.5FTE with the Wye Adapt to Climate Change Programme Officer seconded from Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. Through 2023/24

Team members continued to operate a hybrid working system with some staff predominantly Working from Home with most of the team working more flexibly from the office as needs required. This has helped reduce the Unit's carbon footprint. Extensive use of Microsoft Teams has continued, also contributing to operational efficiency, but hopefully not at the expense of networking and building stakeholder relationships.

However, Staff capacity fluctuated during the year with the new Business Support Assistant settling in after the departure at the end of the previous year of the Finance and Administration Officer. Capacity was further reduced after the Nature Recovery Officer left in September to join the Natur am Byth partnership in Wales and the Lower Wye Project Officer left in November and in due course joined Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as a River Restoration Officer in the Upper Wye Catchment. Successful recruitment of replacements to the two posts was not secured until February due in part to a recruitment moratorium in the host authority. This delay did impact on delivery of some projects. Consequently some grant aid was not maximised, particularly the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places enhancement of a section of the Wye Valley Walk.

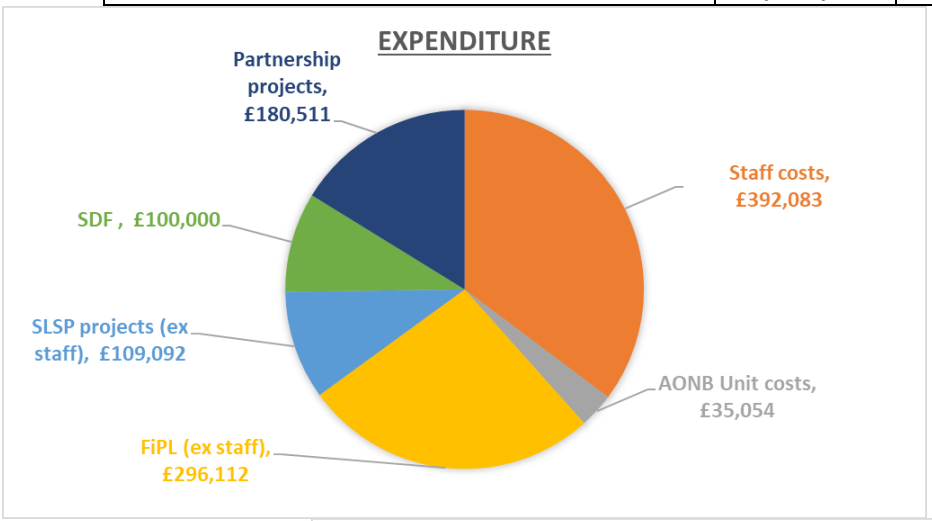
The Annual Report tabulating the achievements of the AONB Unit/National Landscape Team will be presented to the JAC at the next meeting in November. Significant achievements during 2023/24 include: the continued co-ordination of the Wye Invasive Species Programme (WISP) focusing on control of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) namely Japanese Knotweed, American Skunk Cabbage, Himalayan Balsam and Cherry Laurel, with WISP winning a Gloucestershire CRPE Award; the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme went from strength to strength awarding grants and land management advice & guidance to farmers and landowners on the English side; Team members collaborated on the preparation of the successful Wyescapes – food, nature, water Landscape Recovery 2 bid, led by Herefordshire Rural Hub; the Lower Wye Nature Networks project was concluded with the final report submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund; AONB volunteers continued to meet and carry out practical task supervised by the Community Links Officer; the Team hosted a field trip as part of the National AONB Conference, based in Bath; there was a public consultation to inform the Lower Wye Valley Tracks & Trails Strategy; the (shared) AONB Planning Officer worked jointly between the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills National Landscapes responding to planning applications.

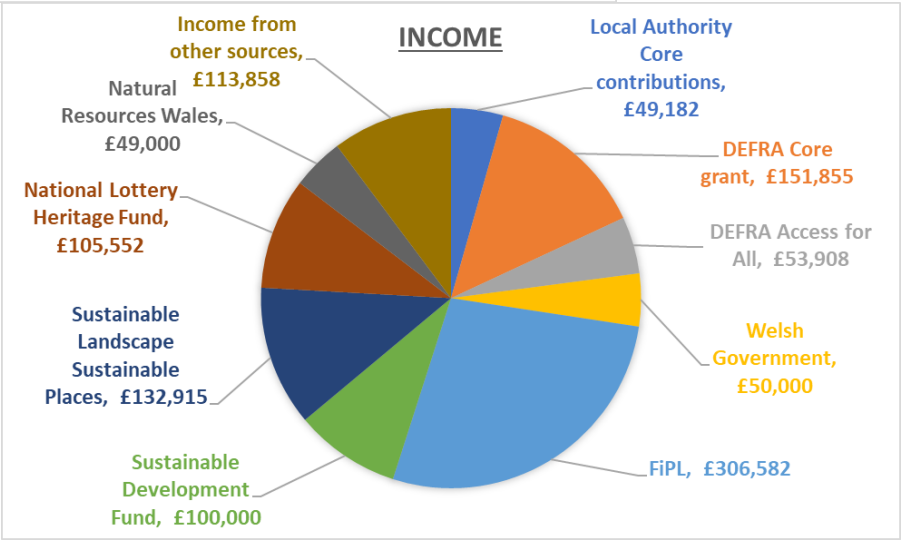
The overall turnover of the AONB Unit increased in 2023/24, mostly accounted for by the income and expenditure of the DEFRA Farming in Protected Landscape programme and the Partnership projects such as the Lower Wye Nature Networks Lottery funded project. Total turnover in 2023/24 was £1,112,852. The leverage of the AONB Partnership means that for every £1 of local authority contribution, the AONB Unit brought in £22.60.

Background

The AONB Unit Work Programme Plan is reviewed by the AONB Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP) and AONB/National Landscape Steering Group.

Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts	*2022/23*	2023/24
Expenditure	**£**	**£**
Staff costs	*298,462*	£392,083
Unit Operating costs	*40,930*	£35,054
Farming in Protected Landscapes	*155,775*	£296,112
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	*221,132*	£109,092
Sustainable Development Fund	*100,000*	£100,000
Partnership projects	*256,722*	£180,511
TOTAL	***1,073,021***	**1,112,852**
Income		
Local Authorities core contributions	*49,182*	49,182
DEFRA Core grant	*151,855*	151,855
DEFRA Access for All	~	53,908
Welsh Government	*50,000*	50,000
Farming in Protected Landscapes	*220,110*	306,582
Sustainable Development Fund	*100,000*	100,000
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	*233,000*	132,915
National Lottery Heritage Fund	~	105,552
Natural Resources Wales Grant	*49,000*	49,000
Income from other sources	*219,874*	113,858
TOTAL	***1,073,021***	**1,112,852**





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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

PLANNING GUIDANCE AND POSITION STATEMENTS

Purpose

To formally endorse two Position Statements which intend to establish the position of the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership on key planning and development issues affecting the area.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

a) Notes the consultation undertaken by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team on the 'Renewable Energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape' and 'Dark Skies & Artificial Light Pollution' draft Position Statements, which took place between 12th April and 14th June 2024, and the subsequent amendments to the Position Statements following consultation feedback;

b) Endorses the 'Renewable Energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting' Position Statement and the 'Dark Skies and Artificial Light Pollution' Position Statement, and their associated Appendices.

Key Issues

- Position Statements help guide the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership and relevant plan-making and decision-making bodies to articulate how the Wye Valley National Landscape, designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), should be protected, conserved and enhanced, helping to uphold and deliver the vision, priorities and Strategic Objectives of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026.
- Position Statements are stand-alone documents, providing context and explain why the Partnership is taking this position.
- Both draft Position Statements have had respective formal public consultation periods, following which comments received have been considered and subsequent amendments made. Shared experience from similar Position Statements and Guidance produced by other protected landscapes has also helped inform both Position Statements.

- Position statements are referred to, where appropriate, in representations submitted by the National Landscape Team on planning consultations.
- The Partnership already has two position statements on Housing and Landscape-led Development, both of which were endorsed by the JAC in November 2023.

Reasons

Position Statements establish the position of the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership on key issues affecting the area, helping guide the Partnership and relevant plan-making and decision-making bodies to articulate how the National Landscape, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), can be protected, conserved and enhanced.

Consultation

At the March 2024 meeting of the JAC, two draft Position Statements on 'Renewable Energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting' and 'Dark Skies & Artificial Light Pollution' were endorsed as consultation drafts to engage with relevant stakeholders and interested parties. It was also agreed that if future 'non-material' amendments are required, as necessary such as changes in planning policy, these can be made by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.

A formal external consultation, led by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, took place between 12th April and 14th June 2024. The draft position statements were published on the Wye Valley National Landscape website for anyone to make representation, with links to the Position Statement consultations also published on the National Landscape social media accounts. Direct email notifications were also sent to the following stakeholders by the National Landscape Planning Officer:

- Elected ward and division members of Forest of Dean District Council, Herefordshire Council, Monmouthshire County Council and Gloucestershire County Council, where the wards or division boundaries were within the Wye Valley National Landscape;
- Town, Parish and Community Councils where administrative boundaries lie within the Wye Valley National Landscape, via the respective Clerks;
- Current members of the Wye Valley National Landscape JAC;
- Various agencies and interested parties including Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Historic England, Cadw, local landscape consultants, local Wildlife Trusts, and Local Nature Partnerships; and
- Local Planning Authority staff who cover respective areas of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

We received responses from seventeen (17) different consultees, grouped as follows:

- Town, Parish and/or Community Councils – 5

- Local Planning Authority departments/individual staff – 3
- Agencies – 3
- Public Representations – 6

Consultation feedback was generally positive on the draft position statements and many interested stakeholders have particularly welcomed the advancement of a position statement on dark skies and reducing artificial light pollution. Some comments did raise instances of a lack of clarity, context, and slight concern of terminology/implications regarding one or two of the recommendations, as well as background and reasoned justification, and inevitably the length of the Position Statements. However whilst the documents may be considered lengthy for some, the National Landscape Planning Officer would be able to highlight within planning consultation responses the specific sections which seek improved public outcomes and are also largely tailored to Local Planning Authorities. In response to the consultation, the format of the position statement has been amended and a stronger narrative and clearer context provide.

Position Statement on Renewable Energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting
This Position Statement seeks to expand on the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan by providing guidance and recommendation on how we can plan positively for renewable energy provision. The Position Statement identifies six main types of renewable energy: heat pumps; biomass; hydropower; solar energy; wind energy; and battery storage.

In summary and in principle, the recommendations advise that the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would be supportive of all of these forms of renewable energy at a micro-scale (i.e. less than 0.5ha), provided relevant considerations have been adequately addressed. Small-scale forms of renewable energy (between 0.5ha-5ha), should be considered on a case-by-case basis with relevant landscape and visual considerations particularly relevant. Large-scale forms of renewable energy are, as a whole, unlikely to be compatible with the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

For renewable energy proposals within the National Landscape classed as 'major development' (as per Paragraph 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Paragraph 6.3.10 of Planning Policy Wales), consideration should be given to whether exceptional circumstances apply that would justify permission being granted for such schemes, particularly in the context of the climate emergency. This would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Consideration is also given to conserving and enhancing the Special Qualities of the Wye Valley National Landscape in terms of general concerns and assessment requirements.

Position Statement on Dark Skies and Artificial Light Pollution
This Position Statement provides more technical content designed to be of practical use to those who live, work and operate within and around the National Landscape, as well as plan-makers

and decision-makers. Recommendations are provided in terms of basic key principles, steps and considerations which can be adopted to reduce unnecessary artificial light pollution.

Additionally, the guidance refers to ambient lighting environment zones (E-zones) in and around the National Landscape in which different levels of obtrusive light might be allowed with reference to (and partly exceeds) the Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance on the reduction of obtrusive light (GN01 ILP: 2021) and instances where a professional lighting designer may be required.

It is also intended to be used to help secure an appropriate planning policy on light pollution specifically in future iterations of new/reviewed Local Plans by local planning authorities covering the Wye Valley National Landscape and will also inform and augment future Wye Valley AONB Management Plans, as well as using it to consider appropriateness in planning applications.

This position statement is especially aimed at three aspects; for people who are using, replacing or installing new lighting in and around the Wye Valley National Landscape, as well as those installing new glazing and windows:

- those seeking to install minor lights, whom need general advice on lighting and glazing;
- non-domestic schemes which may need planning permission and a more thorough design led by professional principles; and
- those with responsibility for setting the framework for development and for decision-
- making about individual planning applications.

Implications

The Position Statements have accommodated all the appropriate comments from the consultation. The only work that is still needed, prior to publication, is some minor editing, for example, numbering paragraphs and a final grammatical check.

Endorsement of position statements will enable the National Landscape Team to refer to them when making representations to both planning application/development management and local plan consultations. They can also be incorporated into training sessions/presentations with elected members as well as local authority Strategic, Neighbourhood Planning and Development Management Officers.

Consideration should be given to how the National Landscape Partnership monitors development management decision-making within the Wye Valley National Landscape, to help demonstrate the effectiveness of the Position Statements and other policy and guidance in supporting Local Planning Authority decision-making.

The National Landscape Team are considering producing a leaflet on the Dark Skies & Artificial Light Pollution statement, particularly in relation to householder/domestic needs and key principles of lighting, as this is felt to have the greatest potential in making a difference. This will be led by the new Planning Officer once they step into the post in September 2024.

Position Statements seek to help to deliver the strategic objectives and policies contained within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan is a statutory document and a material consideration in planning decision-making. However, it is the adopted development plan policies of the relevant local authority that planning decisions are required to be taken in accordance with, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Position Statements have been prepared by the current Planning Officer at the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. Should anyone have any direct questions or queries concerning the content of the draft Position Statements, please contact the National Landscape Manager in the interim until the new Planning Officer steps into post, likely in September 2024.

The Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 amended the duty on relevant authorities (in England only), under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, "*to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty*". In Wales, it remains that a relevant authority "*must have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty*". Guidance on the strengthened Section 85 duty is still awaited from Westminster for 'public bodies' and their requirement to document and report on how they may have sought to further the purposes of AONB designation.

Background

On 22 November 2023, all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty re-branded as National Landscapes. Consequently, the name Wye Valley National Landscape is commonly used throughout both Position Statements. The legal name for the designation is still an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and this term is also used in appropriate places throughout, for example, when referring to the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, when directly quoting from older documents, and when referring to planning policy formally relating to the AONB designation.

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Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol
Wye Valley
National Landscape

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

POSITION STATEMENT: RENEWABLE ENERGY IN THE WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE AND ITS SETTING

A quick note on terminology

On 22 November 2023, the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), was re-branded as the Wye Valley National Landscape. National Landscape is the new name for a designated AONB. Consequently, the name Wye Valley National Landscape is commonly used throughout this document. However, since 'AONB' remains the legal name for the designation, this term is also used in appropriate places, for example, when referring to the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, which is a statutory plan, or when directly quoting from older documents. The name used for the partnership associated with the designation is the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership.

1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 Climate Change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity[1]. Projections show a change towards warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers and an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events which will continue to amplify as climate change intensifies. These changes pose risks to biodiversity; soil health; natural carbon stores and sequestration; crops and livestock; the supply of food, goods and services; the economy; and human health. Collectively, we need to proactively mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

1.2 The Wye Valley National Landscape is a landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty is so outstanding; it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it[2]. The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area[3]. Many defining features and 'Special Qualities'[4] of the AONB designation are threatened by climate change. They are also potentially threatened by responses to

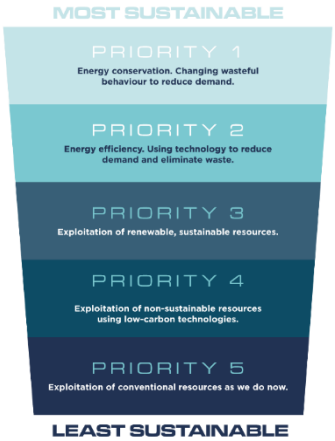
[1] The National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (2019) The Colchester Declaration (https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/colchester-declaration).
[2] Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)
[3] Defra (2019) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: technical support scheme (England) 2019 to 2020.
[4] Page 44 of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2021-2026. AONBs are designated by reason of its special qualities; those aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation and enhancement are based.

climate change, for example, due to the visual impacts of certain types of development. Action is urgent but needs to be well thought out and carefully implemented.

1.3 Within this context, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) committed to ensuring that by 2024, '*all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero*'[5]. The current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan already advocates this approach through several Strategic Objectives, recognising a need to move towards a more energy efficient, low-carbon economy. The forthcoming Wye Valley AONB Management Plan review will introduce further expectation, policies, and guidance to address the challenges of climate change within the National Landscape and its setting, whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of this protected landscape.

1.4 A key component of climate change mitigation is to progress towards a more sustainable energy system by applying the energy hierarchy (Figure 1). The first two priorities aim to reduce the demand for energy and will be addressed in the forthcoming Wye Valley AONB Management Plan review. However, we recognise that there is also a need to generate energy from renewable energy sources towards achieving 'net-zero.' This includes on-site provision of renewable energy in new development and, where appropriate, retrospectively. It is Priority 3, specifically renewable energy, that is the focus of this Position Statement.

Figure 1. Energy Hierarchy[6]



1.5 Renewable energy has an important role to play in mitigating the impacts of climate change and is key to the commitment of reducing reliance on fossil fuels and achieving decarbonisation. There are various technologies available for producing electricity, heat, or both. However, without carefully considering the suitability of location and good design,

[5] Refer to Footnote 1.
[6] https://www.glasgowsciencecentre.org/our-blog/the-energy-hierarchy

their implementation in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting may harm the 'Special Qualities[7]', for instance through scale or the introduction of extraneous elements within the landscape. A key consideration is therefore to deliver aspirations in a way which is compatible with the statutory purpose of AONB designation.

1.6 The level of protection afforded to designated AONBs may mean that some of its renewable energy provision will need to be met outside of the National Landscape, or even its setting[8]. However, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recognises the need to contribute to renewable energy provision where possible as, in addition to powering and heating homes, buildings and businesses, renewable energy brings social and economic benefits including, but not limited to, job creation in manufacturing, construction and maintenance industries.

1.7 To do this, a combination of renewable energy types, at appropriate scales, is needed. A carefully considered multi-functional approach can deliver positive outcomes for natural beauty, climate adaptation and mitigation, nature recovery and related issues, such as food production, in mutually supportive ways.

1.8 This Position Statement focusses on renewable energy as a means of mitigating the impacts of climate change. Measures to adapt to climate change are also important although beyond the scope of this Position Statement. This is a 'live' document, which will be updated to reflect change in national planning and other policy, and renewable energy technology.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THIS POSITION STATEMENT

2.1 Position Statements expand on relevant policies in the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, providing further context, guidance and recommendations concerning specific policies and associated issues. They do not create new policies. They intend to help local authorities, developers, and other relevant stakeholders:

- have regard and positively contribute to the purpose of AONB designation;
- ensure the purpose of AONB designation is not compromised by development and that the natural beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape is conserved and enhanced;
- fulfil the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Policy Wales (PPW), Planning Practice Guidance (or, where relevant, National Policy Statements), and Technical Advice Notes, with regards to the AONB designation and the factors that contribute to natural beauty;
- take account of relevant case law;

[7] Those aspects of the area's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, that make the area distinctive and are valuable, particularly at a national scale.
[8] Refer to Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 in respect of 'The setting of the AONB' (Section 4.5)

- have regard to and be consistent with the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and guidance published by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership;
- emulate best practice in the Wye Valley National Landscape and other protected landscapes; and
- develop a consistent and coordinated approach to relevant issues across the whole of the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting[9].

2.2 Relevant authorities[10] are required by law, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty (England only), or have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty (Wales only)[11]. In fulfilling this, it is important that relevant authorities have regard to guidance published by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership, including its position statements.

2.3 Position statements are supplementary to the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. We consider the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and, by extension, guidance and position statements published by the Partnership should be a material consideration.

2.4 In some instances, guidance and/or recommendations in Wye Valley National Landscape position statements may go further than the policies of current Local Planning Authority (LPA) development plans. As new iterations of LPA development plans are developed, we hope the recommendations will be incorporated into them as we believe they can positively help those who value and care for this area ensure that future development contributes to the local distinctiveness and sense of place.

2.5 It must be acknowledged that in a plan-led planning system, it is the policies of the relevant adopted local authority development plan that have the greatest weight. As such, within this planning system, the hierarchy is as follows[12]:

[9] Four local authority areas overlap with the Wye Valley National Landscape, with each with local authority having its own development plan.
[10] In this context, 'relevant authority' includes any: Minister of the Crown; public body; statutory undertaker; person holding public office – refer to Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).
[11] Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) amended following the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023).
[12] In England, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states: *"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*" The NPPF (2023) is itself a significant material consideration, and it is acknowledged regarding the presumption in favour of sustainable development under Paragraph 11, particularly in relation to plan-making and decision-making. On Wednesday 13th September 2023, the DEFRA Secretary of State tabled a Written Ministerial Statement setting out a package of measures to support nature recovery in Protected Landscapes. The package includes a commitment to new legislation through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023), which will enhance National Park and AONB Management Plans by placing a stronger requirement on partners to contribute to their delivery.

The adopted development plan comprises the Local Planning Authority Development Plan (England and Wales), and any 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plan (in England only, when adopted), and Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Wales only), in which decision-making is to be taken in accordance with, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.
Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, like the National Planning Policy Framework or Technical Advice Notes, are examples of material planning considerations, but do not form part of the adopted development plan. Wye Valley National Landscape Position Statements and guidance documents supplement the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

3.0 LEGISLATION, POLICY, AND GUIDANCE

3.1. Proposals for renewable energy development within the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting should have regard to:

- the statutory purpose of AONB designation, which is to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of the area;
- national planning policy/guidance;
- the relevant local authority development plan, and other relevant local authority guidance and evidence.

3.2 Such proposals should have regard to, and be compatible with Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership publications, including Position Statements.

4.0 PROTECTING THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE – GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Landscape Character

4.1.1 The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan describes the 16 different landscape management zones (LMZs) of the National Landscape, including their 'Features' and links to 'Special Qualities'. For each LMZ, the AONB Management Plan also summarises activity pressures, identifies 'local forces for change' and their potential implications associated with such activities and pressures, setting out guidelines for avoiding or minimising adverse effects from them by way of Strategic Objectives. However, other

In Wales, national planning guidance prepared by the Welsh Government, is taken into account as a material planning consideration. A series of quick guides prepared by the Senedd Cymru provides further guidance to plan-making and decision-making bodies: The planning system – a series of quick guides (senedd.wales)

forces for change may exist that are not yet included in the AONB Management Plan, such as the planting of energy crops or large-scale ground-mounted solar installations[13].

4.1.2 Landscape assessments for renewable energy project proposals should refer to the relevant LMZ as a starting point; and will also need to refer to the county-wide historic landscape characterisation[14]. Assessments should clearly demonstrate how the proposal responds positively to the existing landscape patterns and landforms, and how it seeks to conserve and enhance existing characteristic landscape elements such as vegetation and field boundaries, and important features. Key views should be identified and assessed. These should include identification and assessment of views and viewpoints within, from and to the National Landscape and its setting. Heritage is a component of landscape and landscape setting makes a contribution to the significance of heritage assets. Through recognition of their combined role and effect on each other, we recognise the need to protect, conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment.

4.1.3 Photomontages should be provided. Visualisation/Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) is a powerful tool for communicating the potential effects of new development on views and the character of surrounding landscape. It can assist informed decisions and gives decision makers and stakeholders confidence in the appearance of a scheme and the effectiveness of any proposed mitigation measures. The increased reliance on CGI in many applications means that proposals should also consider aspects that are not shown within CGIs such as, but not limited to, glint and glare[15].

4.1.4 Regard should also be given to national, local authority and neighbourhood landscape character assessments and related evidence. However, it is important that the assessments include independent and more granular character baseline studies to identify localised differences in character which often occur within LCTs. The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Position Statement on Landscape-Led Development is also particularly relevant for consideration. LANDMAP is also available for use across Wales.

4.1.5 Renewable energy projects should prioritise use of previously developed ('brownfield') land, where possible, unless that land can be demonstrated as less suitable for development than other potential sites (for example, by having a high biodiversity value). Where any site is proposed, but particularly any greenfield sites, projects should benefit the local rural economy, be supported, owned and/or benefit local communities, protect, conserve and enhance the landscape, bring net benefits to wildlife,

[13] Whilst the term 'solar farms' is commonly used, recent decisions issued by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities do not use this term as it is not considered a form of 'farming'. The most appropriate wording would be solar development, solar power stations and installations.

[14] https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/gloucs_hlc_2013/

[15] 7 Further guidance on how CGIs and Photomontages could be approached is provided as part of wider guidance by the Landscape Institute on Visualisation , as well as Section 8 of GLVIA3.

avoid/minimise loss of productive agricultural land, and avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity, soils, hydrology, highways, landscape character, visual amenity, social/residential amenity, tranquillity, cultural heritage and the local economy. It would be applicable to ask for appropriate assessment of all proposed sites.

4.2 Other factors that contribute to natural beauty

4.2.1 The extent to which a proposed renewable energy development might affect the landscape and scenic beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting is obviously a key consideration and, in planning terms, these effects should be given great weight[16]. Many factors contribute to the natural beauty of AONB designation, including, but not limited to:

- Natural heritage (including biodiversity);
- Wildlife;
- Cultural heritage (including historic environment); and
- Relative tranquillity[17]:

4.2.2 More information on the factors that contribute to natural beauty is provided in Natural England's 'Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'[18].

4.2.3 The following issues concerning visual effects & tranquillity should be considered:

Siting – one of the 'Special Qualities' identified in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan is the 'Picturesque, extensive and dramatic views'. Therefore, much of the designated AONB, and its setting, could be considered unsuitable for all but micro-scale renewable energy installations, and – potentially – some small-scale renewable energy projects. The conditions whereby there may be opportunity, and the specific considerations that should be assessed for each renewable energy source type, are discussed in later sections of this position statement.

Agricultural Land – normally renewable energy projects should not be located on useable agricultural land, particularly the most productive Grades 1, 2 and 3a land. Nor should

[16] This 'great weight' is a factor in planning decisions when assessing the overall planning balance. In effect, it 'tilts the scales' towards a decision that would avoid harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the affected designated AONB. The significance of applying this great weight partly depends on the significance of any adverse effects on the designated AONB. The overall planning balance will depend on the weight that should be given to other considerations.

[17] For further clarification on the definition and more information on tranquility, refer to the Technical Information Note published by the Landscape Institute - https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstituteorg/2017/02/Tranquillity-An-Overview-1-DH.pdf

[18] Natural England (2011) Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - refer to Table 3 and Appendix 1.

they be on typically low-grade hillside land where their impact would be greatest. The grade should be stated on any application.

Screening – It is important to note that screening cannot reduce levels of adverse effects on landscape character. However, screening (and softening) in the form of hedges or tree belts may be appropriate to help reduce visual effect, providing it is in keeping with the local landscape character, and does not result in the loss of key views, including from footpaths and bridleways crossing/in close proximity to the renewable energy project. It should be borne in mind that a hedge may well take ten years to grow to a height sufficient to provide effective concealment and tree cover longer. In addition, it may not be possible to screen views at all from elevated viewpoints where lower-lying development is seen more in plan-form, or where development is on sloping ground at a similar elevation to the viewer. Also, climate change itself and other factors, such as plant diseases, may have an impact on the long-term health and effectiveness of vegetation cover/screening. Also, climate change itself may have an impact on the long-term viability and health of vegetation cover/screening. Any planting to provide screening must take into account climate change impacts, in terms of a choice of appropriate species mixes (i.e. drought and flood resilience or biodiversity benefits seeking to maximise opportunities to connect / enhance existing habitats).

Assessments – In line with the landscape-led approach, sufficient and appropriate landscape and visual assessment should be employed at the pre-application stage[19] to describe local landform and key views and the likely effects on neighbouring properties, local character of a settlement and public rights of way etc. For example, solar panels, frames/supports, and/or other infrastructure, should not detract from the local character of a settlement. Designated heritage assets should be considered as individual visual receptors within an LVIA/LVA and should be considered when selecting viewpoints.

Materials & additional infrastructure –

a) Measures to minimise glare and visual impact should be included as supporting documents accompanying a planning application.
b) Bases should be easy to remove to permit restoration of the land.
c) Security fences, if required, should be of a design sympathetic to the local landscape character. Any necessary security measures should not give rise to adverse landscape and/or visual effects. Significant security fencing which is inconsistent or incompatible with the local rural environment may render a development unacceptable. Consideration should be given for the minimal

[19] The Partnership recognises that if a proposal is EIA development, then a LVIA is required to establish the effects and whether the effects are significant or not. LVIAs are primarily relevant to EIA development. For other development, LVAs should firstly establish the proposed development's Zone of Theoretical visibility or Zone of Visual Influence. They can also be used at the preapplication stage which can help to understand local landform and key views and the likely effects.

length and height of any necessary security fencing, natural features such as hedgerows should be used to assist in site security and/or screen security fencing, where this is locally appropriate. In some instances, specialist fencing may be necessary to prevent access by deer, whilst appropriate measures should be in place to facilitate continued access by larger mammals, such as badgers and foxes.

d) Where pole mounted CCTV facilities are proposed the location of these facilities should be carefully considered and designed to minimise visual/landscape impact. In exposed landscapes, such structures should be avoided.
e) The use of security lighting should be minimised. Any lighting should utilise passive infra-red (PIR) technology and should be designed and installed in a manner which minimises glare, light pollution and impacts on biodiversity, in particular bats. Planning applications should contain full details and specifications of all security and lighting installations to allow an accurate landscape/visual/ecological assessment of the proposal to be made. Lighting features should be of a sympathetic design and installed to minimise artificial light pollution, which is consistent with the Wye Valley National Landscape Position Statement on Dark Skies & Artificial Light Pollution.
f) Buildings associated with renewable energy projects, such as transformer stations and inverter cabinets, should be unobtrusively sited, sympathetically designed, and suitably shielded to minimise visual impact.
g) Accesses – new roads and tracks should be kept to an absolute minimum, and be sited, designed, and built to minimise impact on the landscape. Existing public rights of way should not be used except in exceptional circumstances, due to the risk to public safety. Existing access by the public to the countryside should not be lost and project proposals should consider preserving the amenity value for users of footpaths and bridleways and demonstrate how this will be achieved in the construction phase and thereafter.
h) Grid connection – a key constraint to local renewable energy production is the connectivity of the location of a proposed renewable energy scheme with the National Grid. Significant upgrading may need to be undertaken to provide this connectivity, which may make a scheme unviable. The consideration of renewable energy schemes, including the assessment of their acceptability, should take account of any necessary associated infrastructure such as access roads, cables (and whether these should be over or below ground) and ancillary buildings.

i) Tranquillity – the impact of all factors affecting tranquillity[20], both in construction and operation, should be carefully considered, especially given that this may be proportionately more disruptive in otherwise quiet rural areas.

4.3 Manufacturing & De-Commissioning

4.3.1 The manufacture and construction of some renewable energy developments, as well as any decommissioning/demolition phase, has its own energy and carbon cost that should be considered when assessing the need for the development, weighing up that cost alongside other impacts against the benefits the project may bring.

4.3.2 Decommissioning of energy sites at the end of their useful life (for solar, quoted as 35 to 40 years but likely to be much less as technology progresses) also poses issues which must be planned for.

4.3.3 As a result of the temporary nature of many of renewable energy technologies, the Partnership would expect local planning authorities to apply appropriate conditions to planning permissions requiring the removal of any buildings and any other structures at the end of the life of the proposed installation or when they become obsolete, whichever is the earlier. In accordance with both the NPPF and PPW, sites granted temporary planning permission should not be considered to constitute brownfield land. An assessment of the potential for decommissioning stage effects, such as harm to archaeological features/assets due to the removal of piles and deep ploughing, should be made at the pre-application stage and consideration should be given to the requirement for an outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) to be submitted within a planning application for renewable energy development, or a DEMP to be secured via a condition of planning permission, where relevant.

4.3.4 In addition, local planning authorities should require proposals to demonstrate how solar panels and batteries will be recycled or how all forms of waste from the development will be disposed of, as part of relevant applications.

4.4 Restoring the site

4.4.1 Planning permission granted for some renewable energy projects, especially wind turbines and large-scale ground mounted solar installations, are generally considered temporary and granted for a restricted time period, after which they can be renewed, as

[20] Refer to Landscape Institute Technical Information Note – Tranquility: An Overview - https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2017/02/Tranquillity-AnOverview-1-DH.pdf

appropriate. Restricting the development lifetime is a mechanism for ensuring that outdated/inefficient/redundant development is removed.

4.4.2 A site Restoration and Reinstatement Strategy in the form of a legal agreement should be sought and agreed with local planning authority officers, in consultation with the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, at pre-application stage, and thence secured by condition, if planning permission is granted, with a monitoring clause to ensure restoration of any relevant land to agricultural (or other) usage once the consent or use has terminated and a condition imposed that all equipment associated with the development is removed. The agreement should demonstrate how and when the site will be returned to a state that is in good landscape and ecological condition and in keeping with local landscape character and Biodiversity Net Gain obligations. New appropriate elements in the landscape may also be considered for inclusion in the Restoration and Reinstatement Strategy, such as a wildlife corridor that could contribute to a local nature recovery strategy or new public right of way.

4.4.3 Food security is relevant given the UK imports 40% of the food it consumes, and this is rising[21]. As global food prices rise, the restoration of agricultural land, even of lower grades, is increasingly important. It should not be misused by change of use to inefficient renewable energy schemes and hence, its restoration at the end of life of a scheme is important.

5. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

5.1 Impacts

5.1.1 The cumulative landscape and visual impact of a proposed renewable energy scheme (and any associated infrastructure) is a key consideration. In considering locations, local planning authorities will need to ensure they take into account the potential impacts on the local environment, including from cumulative impacts[22].

5.1.2 Cumulative landscape impacts and cumulative visual impacts are best considered separately. Cumulative landscape impacts are the effects of a proposed development on the fabric, character, and quality of the landscape. Cumulative visual impacts concern the degree to which proposed renewable energy development will become a feature in particular views (or sequences of views) and the impact this has upon the people

[21] Food Matters: Towards a strategy for the 21st Century: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/food_policy.aspx

[22] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy and PPW Technical Advice Note 8: Renewable Energy

experiencing those views[23]. There is also a need to have regard to all of the other likely cumulative effects, and inter- and/or intra-project.

5.1.3 With regards to cumulative visual impacts, this is particularly important for large-scale wind and ground-mounted solar installations, which can potentially be seen from many miles away. Infrastructure that is likely to result in cumulative effects includes: other wind developments; overhead powerlines; and telecommunications masts and other vertical structures[24].

5.1.4 The ability for a renewable energy project to access the grid will also limit suitable locations and this is likely to lead to the clustering of applications in certain areas, with further associated cumulative impacts.

5.1.5 Proposals should set out suitable assessments of impacts on biodiversity, hydrology, archaeology, built heritage/historic environment, landscape (including historic landscape features), amenity (including of existing public rights of way), and transport assessments should consider access and vehicular movements during all stages of construction, the lifetime of the development and de-commissioning/site restoration.

5.1.6 Renewable energy development should not create a “buffer zone” or ring around the Wye Valley National Landscape, and the potential impact of renewable energy projects close to the boundary will be a material consideration in the planning process.

5.2 Major Development[25]

5.2.1 Consideration should be given to whether a proposed renewable energy development constitutes ‘major development’ in the context of paragraph 183 of the NPPF[26] or Paragraph 6.3.10 of PPW[27], as appropriate to the application site context.

5.2.1.1 Footnote 64 of the NPPF states that ‘*whether a proposal is major development is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated*’. Paragraph 183 of the NPPF states that ‘*permission should be refused*

[23] Further information on this is detailed within National Policy Statements EN1 and EN3. Planning Practice Guidance and Technical Advice Notes also recognise that the cumulative impacts of development on the landscape also need to be considered carefully.
[24] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) talks specifically about cumulative effects and not just about consented and built development. Planning Practice Guidance also goes further on this specific matter.
[25] For the relevance of this position statement, we recognise that Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) or Nationally Significant Projects (NSPs) and Developments of National Significance (DNS) may also need to be factored in, as they could be proposed within the setting of the National Landscape. The relevant NSIP/NSP/DNS process should always be followed in this regard. They constitute a small subset of the number of planning applications that could be considered major but for the purposes of this position statement, all planning applications for renewable energy projects need to be assessed as to whether they constitute major development.
[26] Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework - Paragraph 183 and footnote 64.
[27] Welsh Government – Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 – February 2024

for major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest'.

5.2.1.2 Paragraph 6.3.10 of PPW states that in designated AONBs, '*special considerations apply to major development proposals which are more national[28] than local in character. Major developments should not take place [in AONBs] except in exceptional circumstances. This may arise where, after rigorous examination, there is demonstrated to be an overriding public need, refusal would be severely detrimental to the local economy and there is no potential for locating the development elsewhere or meeting the need in some other way. Any construction and restoration must be carried out to high environmental standards'.*

5.2.2 When assessing 'major development', both the NPPF and PPW require several major development 'tests' to be applied, as outlined below:

5.2.2.1 Major Development Test A – assessing the need for the development

The priority given to climate change, through the declaration of the climate, nature and ecological emergencies, would potentially make it easier to demonstrate 'exceptional need' for renewable energy proposals. Genuine community-led renewable energy schemes[29], which have robust evidence of need specific to the community and which have appropriate funding and administrative mechanisms in place, are more likely to demonstrate 'exceptional need' than schemes that meet a more generic need. It should be noted however that exceptional need does not necessarily equate to *exceptional circumstances*[30]. For example, there may be other, more suitable ways of mitigating the impacts of climate change (or delivering renewable energy) or less harmful locations for the proposed development.

5.2.2.2 Major Development Test B – assessing the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area or meeting the need in some other way:

Case law has stated that '*no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development met a need that could not be addressed elsewhere*'[31]. As such, all other things being equal, it could be argued that if there are areas outside the Wye Valley National Landscape (within a local authority area) that are identified as having equal or lesser landscape sensitivity to the type and scale of renewable energy development being proposed, then preference should be given to locating the development in those locations. Consideration should also be given to whether the

[28] 'National' in this context means UK

[29] Genuine community-led schemes could include proposals included in neighbourhood plans or other projects, such as the Community Visioning schemes being piloted by CPRE and should have undergone appropriate community consultation processes.

[30] This principle is recognised in relevant case law (R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council [2013] EHWC 3684 (Admin), paragraph 52): '*Even if there were an exceptional need … that would not necessarily equate to exceptional circumstances for a particular development, because there may be alternative sites that are more suitable because development there would result in less harm to the AONB landscape*'.

[31] R (Advearse) v Dorset Council v Hallam Land Management Ltd [2020] EWHC 807. Direct quote from paragraph 35.

proposed scheme is the most effective way of mitigating the impacts of climate change or is the most appropriate form of renewable energy. Consideration should be given to whether there are suitable nature-based alternatives for mitigating the impacts of climate change.

5.2.2.3 Major Development Test C – assessing any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated:

In relation to this test, case law has stated that '*no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development … met that need in a way that to the extent possible, moderated detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities*'[32]. As such, renewable energy proposals that constitute major development should be required to demonstrate that they have a) avoided; and b) minimised any potential detrimental effects (to the extent possible) in this regard. The higher the level of landscape sensitivity associated with the scale and type of renewable energy development being proposed, the more this will weigh against permission being granted on the grounds of exceptional circumstances and public interest.

5.2.3 Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 sets out the national development plan context for energy and provides specific policies for heat network and renewable energy development. Planning applications for onshore generating projects in Wales which have an installed generation capacity of between 10MW and 50MW (there is no upper limit for onshore wind generating stations) are made directly to the Welsh Ministers under the Developments of National Significance (DNS) process and considered under policies in Future Wales. Welsh Government makes clear in Policy 17 of Future Wales that "*applications for large scale wind and solar will not be permitted in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*"[33]. Applications for such developments must be determined in accordance with Future Wales, which is the national development plan for Wales. Future Wales therefore restricts large scale wind/solar in designated AONBs but outside of these areas, a positive policy framework exists – particularly within the 'pre-assessed' areas. Outside of designated AONBs, there may still be the potential for impacts on the National Landscape setting which may be deemed unacceptable. Smaller scale schemes will be determined by the Local Planning Authority in accordance with their development plans but PPW 12 (which should guide their plans) makes clear that "major developments should not take place in National Parks or AONBs except in exceptional circumstances" (Paragraph 6.3.10).

5.3 Mitigation Measures

[32] R (Advearse) v Dorset Council v Hallam Land Management Ltd [2020] EWHC 807. Direct quote from paragraph 35.

[33] Large scale is defined in Future Wales as all on shore wind generation of 10 or more megawatts and other energy generation sites with generating power between 10 and 350 megawatts.

5.3.1 Mitigation measures should be considered as an integral part of the development[34]; they should adequately offset any adverse landscape and/or visual effects and be appropriate to the local landscape character. The mitigation and reduction of some adverse impacts can be achieved through considered detailed design.

5.3.2 Mitigation measures to address adverse effects are a minimum; they should also be accompanied with measures to maintain and enhance the value and condition of the landscape and contribute to local distinctiveness, for example, through the creation of appropriate new habitats[35]. Landscape/visual mitigation cannot be double counted as landscape/visual enhancement.

5.3.3 Applicants will be expected to maximise the ecological potential offered by such circumstances by a) avoiding areas of ecological importance or sensitivity, b) encouraging and promoting a diverse range of habitats, such as wildflower meadows, within such facilities, and c) designing and adapting built structures, such as control buildings, to encourage and promote access by nesting, roosting or hibernating animals such as bats.

5.4 Development in the setting of the Wye Valley National Landscape

5.4.1 Renewable energy development in the setting of the Wye Valley National Landscape has the potential to adversely affect the natural beauty of the designated AONB, particularly with regards to impacts on views from and to the Wye Valley National Landscape.

5.4.2 Paragraph 182 of the NPPF and Paragraph 6.3.7 of PPW states that '*great weight'*[36] should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in designated AONBs. Case law has clarified that this great weight should be applied to development outside a designated AONB, as well as to development within it, where the proposed development may adversely affect the landscape and scenic beauty of the designated AONB[37]. Application of this particular case law example would consider effects on views from the designated AONB but not effects on views looking towards the Wye Valley National Landscape.

5.4.3 However, impacts on views towards the Wye Valley National Landscape are still an important material planning consideration, particularly in relation to views looking towards the Wye Valley, with these views being one of the 'special qualities' of the

[34] For avoidance of doubt, notwithstanding the general requirement now for development projects to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) in England only, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership consider that the mitigation measures set out in this section should be in addition to the mandatory BNG requirement.

[35] For the purposes of this position statement, mitigation is a measure proposed to remedy, reduce or avoid adverse effects, whereas enhancement are measures proposed to improve the baseline situation. GLVIA3 further clarifies what is meant by 'enhancement'.

[36] This 'great weight' is a factor in planning decisions when assessing the overall planning balance. In effect, it 'tilts the scales' towards a decision that would avoid harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the affected designated AONB. The significance of applying this great weight partly depends on the significance of any adverse effects on the designated AONB. The overall planning balance will depend on the weight that should be given to other considerations.

[37] Stroud District Council v Secretary of State & Gladman Developments Ltd [2015] EWHC 488. Paragraphs 20-22.

designated AONB. And in terms of the views from the Wye Valley National Landscape, the topography means that a larger area may need to be considered in terms of potential effects on views than in a designated AONB without such elevations. This is especially the case for visual receptors within the Wye Valley themselves. Other relevant considerations include the potential increase in traffic movements through the Wye Valley National Landscape (or along its boundary) that may result from a proposed development.

5.4.4 Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states that '*development within [the setting of AONBs] should be sensitively located and designed in order to minimise adverse impacts on the designated area*'. Paragraph 6.3.5 of PPW states that '*this duty [statutory landscape designation of AONB purposes] applies in relation to all activities....whether those activities lie within, or in the setting of, the designated areas'*. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan provides further relevant information on this.

5.5 EIA

5.5.1 Where renewable energy proposals fall under Schedule 2 of the relevant Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations[38], consideration should be given to whether an EIA is required, particularly if the proposals are above the 'applicable thresholds and criteria' for Schedule 2 development[39].

5.5.2 EIAs are required where it is considered that the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. In such circumstances, it is highly likely that the proposal should also be considered major development, in the context of paragraph 183 and footnote 64 of the NPPF and Paragraph 6.3.10 of PPW.

5.5.3 Consultation with the Local Planning Authority and local community is encouraged at an early stage. The local community should be engaged, by the developer, at the pre-design, conceptual stage, ideally utilising a local exhibition / presentation where community views can be sought and recorded.

5.5.4 As a starting point, the proposal should be assessed against the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations. In general, an EIA is likely to be needed for Schedule 2 developments if the development is in a particularly environmentally sensitive or vulnerable location. In each case it will be necessary to judge whether the likely effects on the environment of that development will be significant in that particular location. In judging whether the effects of a development are likely to be significant it is necessary to have regard in particular to landscape character and visual amenity and the degree to which these will be affected by the installation of the development, and also the possible

[38] Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017

[39] It is worth noting that the 'applicable thresholds and criteria' in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations do not apply in designated AONBs. This is because AONBs are classed as 'sensitive areas,' in this regard. As such, Schedule 2 development within the Wye Valley National Landscape that is smaller than the applicable thresholds and criteria may also need to be screened to assess if an EIA is required.

cumulative effect with any existing or approved development. This should include situations where there is more than one application for development which should be considered together. Any views expressed by consultees should be considered. Advice should be sought from consultees where there is any doubt about the significance of a development's likely effects on a 'sensitive area' as defined in the EIA Regulations, including setting.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that any renewable energy projects in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting should prioritise 'brownfield' land where possible, unless that land can be demonstrated as less suitable for development than other potential sites (for example, by having a high biodiversity value). Greenfield sites should be avoided except in exceptional circumstances, for example if the risk of harm is considered lower than the brownfield site(s) available;**
- **All renewable energy projects should have regard to the considerations and guidance on mitigating impacts set out in this paper and other Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership publications. In this way they will fulfil their obligations to protect, conserve, and enhance the distinctive character and natural beauty of the designated AONB and its setting, including its 'Special Qualities';**
- **The cumulative impacts of a renewable energy development proposal should be assessed in decision making;**
- **Renewable energy proposals should demonstrate they have considered the whole-life impacts of a scheme, including construction and decommissioning phases, and restoration of the site;**
- **Larger projects should benefit the local rural economy, be supported and/or owned by local communities where possible and avoid unjustified loss of productive agricultural land; and**
- **Renewable energy landscape and visual sensitivity assessments, including those commissioned by local authorities, should have regard to relevant guidance published by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership.**

6.0 TYPES OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

6.0.1 This position statement identifies six main types of renewable energy: heat pumps; biomass; hydropower; solar energy; wind energy; and battery storage. These are individually addressed in this section, including relevant considerations and key constraints specific to each type of renewable energy.

6.1 Heat Pumps

6.1.1 There are three main types of heat pump:

- Ground-source heat pumps (GSHP): takes low-level heat, which occurs naturally underground, and converts it to higher-grade heat using an electrically driven or gas-powered heat pump. GSHP systems collect or deliver heat using ground collectors (typically coils or loops of pipe laid in trenches in the ground or vertical boreholes), in which a heat exchange fluid circulates in a closed loop and transfers heat via a heat exchanger to or from the heat pump. Once installed, there are no externally visible features.
- Air-source heat pumps (ASHP): takes low-level heat, which occurs naturally in the air, and converts it to higher-grade heat by using an electrically driven or gas-powered pump. ASHP are typically mounted on an external wall (sometimes under a window). Increasingly, manufacturers are producing internally mounted air source heat pumps which only need louvers and/or roof vents for air supply/exhaust emissions (as in a conventional boiler). Once installed, the only externally visible structure may be the 'air conditioning unit' associated with the heat pump facility. Depending on the manufacturer, ASHP may be no louder than a central heating boiler.
- Water-source heat pumps (WSHP): extracts heat from a body of water and converts it into useful energy to heat the home.

6.1.2 Heat pumps are generally 'permitted development'[40], although rights are restrictive with regards to Article 4 directions, listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, and World Heritage sites. In most cases, proposals are likely to be domestic in scale and, due to relatively limited landscape impact, will normally be acceptable and supported. Any reinstatement of land should be carefully, and sensitively undertaken and historic landscapes should, wherever possible, be avoided.

6.1.3 If buildings are needed to house equipment, this may require planning permission and should be carefully sited and designed, using appropriate materials.

6.1.4 Fitting of heat pumps is likely to be easier for new development than retrofitting. However, retrofitting may be appropriate where there is available space.

6.1.5 Heat pumps use electricity so still potentially contribute to greenhouse gas emissions (depending on the source of the electricity). However, they can offer carbon

[40] Permitted development rights allow the improvement or extension of buildings or uses of such buildings without the need to apply for planning permission, where that would be out of proportion with the impact of the works carried out.

emission savings of at least 20%, rising to 100% when their operation is compared with that of conventional gas boilers[41].

6.1.6 The following checklist should be considered:

- During construction, the laying of pipes linked to GSHP should avoid disturbing ground which would be difficult to restore, such as unimproved grasslands, semi-natural habitats, tree roots and archaeological remains. A Local Planning Authority may require an archaeological survey before construction.
- Underground pipework associated with GSHP should be covered with soft or hard surfaces, which reflect local soils/geology and landscape character type.
- ASHP should be on the least visible elevations, if externally mounted.
- Measures should be taken to minimise impacts on neighbouring land uses.
- Quiet models should be selected, to minimise any impacts on tranquillity and other Special Qualities of the designated AONB.

6.1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership supports the use of heat pumps, in principle, provided relevant considerations have been adequately addressed, including:**
    - **size and siting;**
    - **noise impacts;**
    - **impacts on historic landscapes and archaeology, as well as all heritage asset types; and**
    - **safeguarding existing trees/hedgerows and priority habitats, particularly during construction and operation.**
- **Underground pipework should be covered with soft or hard surfaces which matches local soils and geology where possible; and**
- **Reinstatement of land should be carefully and sensitively undertaken, to avoid compromising the 'Special Qualities' of the designated AONB.**

6.2 Biomass

[41] We accept that data does vary depending on the parameters of a study, the efficiency of the boiler to which the heat pump is being compared to, and the source of the electricity being used to run the heat pump. One research article for example suggests the 30% figure; notably it looks at the whole lifecycle analysis of heat pumps and gas boilers (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378778821001493). Meanwhile Hamworthy Heating (https://hamworthy-heating.com/Knowledge/Articles/Heat-Pumps-Role-in-the-Net-Zero-Goal) cite the Carbon Trust report of "heat pumps used for heating can offer carbon emission savings of around 30% when compared to conventional natural gas boilers but when heat pumps are partnered with a renewable electricity supplier, heat generation is 100% carbon neutral". Carbon Brief (https://www.carbonbrief.org/heat-pumps-are-the-central-technology-for-low-carbon-heatingconcludes-iea/) reports that the International Energy Agency "estimates that heat pumps currently cut emissions by at least 20% compared to a gas boiler even when running on emissions-intensive electricity. This can rise to 80% when running on a cleaner grid.

6.2.1.1 Biomass refers to the use of a wide variety of organic material for the generation of heat, electricity, or motive power. The two primary types of biomass energy are:

- Woody biomass (wood and energy crops).
- Wet biomass (food waste and farm wastes).

6.2.1.2 For electricity production, the heat/steam is used to turn a turbine. There are currently three basic categories of biomass plants:

- Plants designed primarily to produce electricity. These are generally the largest schemes, in the range of 10–40 MW. Excess heat from the process is not utilised. These are major multimillion pound developments and are unlikely to be suitable within the Wye Valley National Landscape or its setting because of their scale and associated traffic movements. They are not considered further and such proposals would not be supported by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership.
- Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plants where the purpose is the generation of electricity, but excess heat is utilised. Size range is 5-30 MW thermal total energy output but smaller 'packaged' schemes of a few hundred KW are possible.
- Plants designed for production of heat. These cover a wide range of applications from domestic wood burning stoves and biomass boilers to boilers of a scale suitable for district heating, commercial and community buildings and industrial process heat. Sizes range from a few KW to above 5 MW of thermal energy.

6.2.2 Wood

6.2.2.1 Use of wood for fuel boilers is not only a renewable energy source but may have additional benefits. For example, it can provide economic incentive to bring woodlands within the Wye Valley National Landscape back into active management. Active management of deciduous woodlands through coppicing, pollarding, ride widening, and other forestry operations helps create warm, sunlit micro-habitats that benefit insects and wildflowers and provide better nesting habitat for many of our rarest woodland birds[42]. Use of wood can have the benefit of recovering, from the waste stream, waste wood that would otherwise go to landfill. Care is needed to ensure management of woodlands does not become unsustainable (e.g. because of over-exploitation), as demand increases. In respect of woodland ownership, it is recognised that the economies of scale required for cost-effective wood production are only occasionally achievable and that, other than in Forestry Commission woodlands, rarely is there adequate access for lorries of the size now commonly used for timber transportation.

6.2.2.2 New and on-going management of woodland will be required to facilitate nature recovery and mitigate impacts of climate change, particularly as woodland is identified as a ‘Special Quality’ within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. Any new

[42] https://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/woodlands/managing-our-woodlands

woodland/SRC would need to undergo an EIA for woodland by the Forestry Commission[43] and be UK Forest Standard compliant[44].

6.2.3 Fuel crops

6.2.3.1 There may be potential for biofuel from other crops (i.e., energy crops) such as miscanthus and short rotation coppice (SRC). Developments are likely to have limited impacts, if undertaken on a small scale. However, careful consideration will need to be given for larger-scale use of land for growing such crops as they are likely to have an adverse impact on landscape character (for example, as a monoculture that is alien to the locally-distinctive farmed landscape), biodiversity, water quality and soil quality (for example, as a result of winter harvesting) and visual amenity due to height and semi-permanent/permanent nature and, in the case of SRC, their long rotation cycle.

6.2.3.2 Large-scale fuel crop schemes would also likely conflict with other land use priorities, including food production, nature recovery and woodland planting.

6.2.3.3 Where fuel crops are being introduced, the potential for impacts on landscape character should be fully assessed, as should any potential impacts on sensitive sites, including permanent grassland, common land, SSSIs, other sites of nature conservation importance, and historic landscapes.

6.2.4 Wood and fuel crops – additional considerations

6.2.4.1 Whilst burning biomass does release CO_2 emissions, CO_2 is absorbed from the atmosphere during the growth of the source material and so the net lifecycle CO_2 emissions are theoretically zero, although the time over which this “carbon debt” is repaid can be long. In addition, all biomass fuels also have an associated CO_2 intensity due to the additional energy required for collection, processing, and distribution, as well as for the construction and maintenance of a biomass facility. Transportation can be a large element of this for raw fuels, whilst heavily processed fuels such as wood pellets will require additional energy input during the process stages.

6.2.4.2 For proposals involving energy production from biomass, consideration should be given to whether such proposals require an EIA, particularly where the development area exceeds 0.5ha[45]. Consideration should also be given to whether a scheme constitutes ‘major development’[46].

6.2.4.3 Biomass boilers are also a potential source of air pollution, particularly with regards to particulates. Appropriate measures would need to be put in place to protect air

[43] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard
[44] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard
[45] Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 - both Development type 3(a).
[46] In the context of paragraph 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and Paragraph 6.3.10 of Planning Policy Wales (2024).

quality. Firewood is now required to have a moisture content of 20% or less, which should help to address this issue, but industry should be encouraged to improve the efficiency of stoves and boilers to reduce harmful emissions. Use of domestic woodburning stoves should not be encouraged, due to potential impacts on air quality.

6.2.4.4 Transport of wood or crops to any energy production plant will increase vehicle movements unless the plant is adjacent to the source of fuel. To avoid unnecessary infrastructure, plants should be as close to the settlements or facilities they serve, so an appropriate locational balance must be struck. For this reason, and to avoid greater visual and other effects likely to be caused by large-scale plants, small-scale plants would be preferable. Suitable schemes could include heating schemes for country estates and small-scale community heating schemes.

6.2.4.5 Priority should be given to using existing buildings to house biomass facilities and to dry or process wood and other biomass. Where new buildings are required, siting, scale, design, colour, and materials used should be carefully considered and be compatible with the AONB designation and its special qualities[47].

6.2.4.6 Biomass provides a relatively small amount of energy per hectare of land used. For example, solar energy can provide over 40 times as much energy per hectare as biomass[48]. A very large area of land would be needed for energy crops to deliver significant levels of renewable energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape. This is likely to adversely affect landscape character and scenic beauty, including tranquillity (due to related traffic movements), and may compromise food production, biodiversity, and nature recovery.

6.2.4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Wood: In principle, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would be supportive of small-scale wood fuel schemes which use locally sourced wood from sustainably managed woodlands within the Wye Valley National Landscape, provided relevant considerations have been clearly addressed.**
- **Fuel crops: In principle, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would be supportive of small-scale fuel crop schemes, provided that relevant considerations have been clearly addressed.**
- **Biomass: Priority should be given to active management and utilisation of woodland (for supplying timber for wood fuel) in the Wye Valley National Landscape over schemes that rely on the planting of energy crops, especially short rotation coppice.**

[47] Having regard to position statements and other guidance produced by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership.

[48] https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2018/biomass-and-land-use/

6.2.5 Wet biomass – anaerobic digesters

6.2.5.1 Anaerobic digestion (AD) is a process in which bacteria break down organic material in the absence of oxygen to produce a methane-rich biogas, which can be combusted to generate electricity and heat. Anaerobic digesters utilise farm and food wastes. They make a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing the quantities of methane released into the atmosphere, and providing a low carbon energy source that substitutes for energy generated from fossil fuels.

6.2.5.2 An AD plant typically consists of a digester tank, buildings to house ancillary equipment, a biogas storage tank, and a flare stack (3–10 metres in height). The digester tank is usually cylindrical or egg-shaped, its size being determined by the projected volume and nature of the waste. It can be part buried in the ground. There are two scales of anaerobic digestion plant:

- Small scale plants dealing with the waste from a single farm (generating in the region of 10kW) with the biogas potentially used to heat the farmhouse and other farm buildings in the winter when farm wastes are available.
- A medium-sized centralised facility dealing with wastes from several farms supplemented by other feedstocks and potentially producing up to 2MW.

6.2.5.3 The effects that may arise from any development in terms of visual intrusion, noise, odour, associated traffic movements and associated infrastructure, including overhead powerlines and pylons or poles, must be carefully considered. AD plants serving a single or small number of local farms may be appropriate within the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting, provided the development can be incorporated within an existing farmstead; uses locally sourced, organic farm waste and/or sewage sludge material; is of an appropriate scale; is not visually intrusive; is constructed using appropriate materials; and is suitably landscaped to ensure the natural beauty of the area is conserved or enhanced, ensuring the ‘Special Qualities’ are not compromised.

6.2.5.4 Where crops are grown specifically as a feedstock for AD plants e.g. maize, this would raise similar issues to the growing of fuel crops in relation to competing land uses, water quality and impact on soils.

6.2.5.5 Associated large new buildings or structures on greenfield sites within the Wye Valley National Landscape or its setting are unlikely to be supported because of the scale of the development and the vehicular movements required to supply feedstock, particularly in tranquil, rural areas where human influence is limited.

6.2.5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **In relation to wet biomass, in principle, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would be supportive of small-scale anaerobic digestion (AD) plant schemes that use locally sourced, organic farm waste and/or sewage**

sludge, provided relevant considerations have been clearly addressed, including:

- **Integrating or locating adjacent to existing buildings or farmsteads; greenfield sites should be avoided;**
- **The digester tank should be part buried in the ground;**
- **Installations should not be in prominent locations or exposed skylines – the flare stack can be prominent;**
- **Installations should not affect the historical value of designated industrial features, historic monuments and archaeological sites and remains, or the ecological value of semi-natural habitats;**
- **Ensuring that the significance of heritage assets are protected, conserved and enhanced, and appropriate assessment is undertaken where harm could occur, which seek to avoid/minimise and mitigate potential harm;**
- **Installations should not adversely affect the character and appearance of any Conservation Areas and listed buildings;**
- **Suitable materials (such as cladding of buildings), and colours should be used that integrate structures with their surroundings;**
- **Tree planting (using native species) that helps filter views of the AD plant should be considered; and**
- **Measures taken to minimise any visual, odour and noise impacts on the amenity of neighbouring land uses associated with the operation of the plant and deliveries of feedstocks.**

- **Large new buildings and structures associated with AD plants within the Wye Valley National Landscape or its setting, and/or schemes that import large quantities of material, are unlikely to be supported, because of the scale of the development and the vehicular movements required to supply feedstock, particularly in tranquil, rural areas where human influence is limited, and in areas of semi-natural habitat and/or historic landscapes.**

6.3 Hydropower

6.3.1 Hydropower uses water flowing through a turbine to drive a generator that produces electricity. It is a highly site-specific technology, dependent on being near a water body that is both flowing and has a sufficient drop in level that can be exploited.

6.3.2 The potential for hydro-electric proposals are therefore very limited within the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting due to geographical and environmental restrictions, although there may be scope for micro- or small-scale projects.

6.3.3 Schemes involving installations for hydroelectric energy production should give consideration to whether they require an EIA, particularly where an installation is designed to produce more than 0.5 megawatts and/or where the area of the development would exceed 0.5 hectares[49]. Consideration should be given to whether a scheme constitutes 'major development'[50]. Consents from the Environment Agency/Natural Resources Wales would also be required. Consideration is also needed to be given to the impacts of infrastructure e.g. cabling required to connect the hydropower development to the grid.

6.3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **In relation to hydropower, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would be supportive of micro- or small-scale schemes, provided that relevant considerations have been adequately addressed. Proposals should:**
    - **Ensure equipment is placed either in existing buildings or new ones of an appropriate scale and design;**
    - **Use the existing head of water from existing impoundments without affecting the river flow[51];**
    - **Ensure noise levels do not adversely affect tranquillity;**
    - **Ensure river life is not detrimentally affected; and,**
    - **Operate without prejudicing progress towards achieving ecological objectives under the Water Framework Directive.**
- **For anything of a larger scale than the above, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would consider this to amount to 'major development', and that prospective applications should be required to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances apply, and the scheme would be in the public interest, having regard to paragraph 183 of the NPPF (2023) or paragraph 6.3.10 of PPW (2024).**

6.4 Solar Energy

6.4.1 Solar Energy – general information

6.4.1.1 There are two types of solar energy:

- Photovoltaic panels or tiles that generate electricity from the sun's energy – these can be used at both domestic and commercial scale.

[49] Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017. Development type 3(h) and 3(a).
[50] In the context of Paragraph 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and Paragraph 6.3.10 of Planning Policy Wales (2024).
[51] The nature of small / micro scale schemes is to abstract water down a pipeline, building energy to drive a turbine for energy production before discharging back to the river. This would leave a depleted reach where the river flow would be affected. Natural Resources Wales Hydropower (HEP) policy includes a Hands off Flow (HoF) on any new HEP licence issued but it would be impossible to have no affect on the river flow.

- Solar panels or 'collectors' (flat plate or evacuated tubes) that use the sun's radiation to heat water – these are used at a domestic and commercial scale.

6.4.1.2 In addition to the considerations for all renewable energy schemes provided in Section 4 above, a checklist of further issues to be considered for solar energy proposals is below:

- Consider views both from and to the Wye Valley, local viewpoints, and from popular tourist and scenic routes.
- Avoid locating solar PV where they could be directly overlooked at close quarters from important or sensitive viewpoints.
- Maintain uninterrupted views from the Wye Valley to the internal landscape to preserve the area's remote and strong cultural and historic sense of place.
- Factor in holistic issues for the historic environment and ensure the protection of the significance of heritage assets and their setting.
- Site freestanding solar PV development on flat landforms or on lower slopes/within folds in gently undulating lowland landscapes.
- Ensure the development does not comprise the distinctive characteristics of different landscape management zones e.g. by it spanning across two contrasting types of landscape character types.
- Although screening by vegetation is not considered to be appropriate or adequate mitigation for landscape and visual adverse effects and cannot be relied upon (see 4.2.3. above), siting developments in landscapes where screening is already provided by woodland, hedgebanks or high hedges may be less harmful than in open countryside and should be considered. Where new screen planting is required, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership should be consulted on the appropriate choice of species.
- Avoid adversely affecting areas of semi-natural habitat and designated and non-designated historic assets and archaeological sites directly or indirectly.
- Protect the character and setting of buildings within Conservation Areas and the elements, as well as buildings which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest.
- Ensure that any PV developments do not detract from prominent landmarks.
- Protect the 'Special Qualities,' as detailed within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.
- Measures should be taken to minimise any visual[52] and noise impacts on the amenity of neighbouring land uses, for instance residential and recreational use.

[52] Further guidance on this can be found within the Landscape Institutes' Technical Guidance Note on Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA).

- Avoid siting PV developments across multiple fields in areas where a small-scale irregular field pattern is important and a particular feature of the landscape character.
- Previous solar development proposals should not set a precedent or justification for further development due to the potential for adverse cumulative effects, and to avoid its landscape character description ending up as a solar landscape.
- Consider how panels and other infrastructure will be transported to site. Installations may require abnormally large delivery vehicles, and/or large fleets and frequency of vehicle deliveries. The impacts of these and the construction route, for example on important landscape and historic features or loss of these and to their users, and any amenity value, should be considered in decision making as well as mitigation measures embedded in any scheme.
- Suitable materials and colour finishes should be used that integrate any new buildings/structures/surfaces with their surroundings. Utilise existing buildings to house inverters wherever possible.

6.4.1.3 Ground-mounted arrays can result in direct habitat loss, habitat changes and disturbance or displacement of species and this should be carefully considered.

6.4.2 Small-scale solar energy – size thresholds

6.4.2.1 When considering size thresholds, the following is relevant in this regard:

- EIA Regulations specify that proposals should be screened for an EIA if the development area exceeds 0.5 hectares[53].
- Permitted development rights cover solar PV or solar thermal equipment on, or within the curtilage of, a dwellinghouse or block of flats.

6.4.2.2 However, it should be noted that these thresholds do not apply within designated AONBs (i.e. permitted development rights do not apply[54] and solar energy proposals that are smaller than 0.5ha could potentially be screened for an EIA[55]).

6.4.2.3 In many landscape sensitivity assessments (LSAs) for renewable energy, ‘small scale’ solar energy development are schemes covering an area of five hectares or less. Nevertheless, it is appreciated that given the often long panoramic views from high vantage points and medium ‘picturesque’ views from the valley floor, the Wye Valley

[53] The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 Schedule 2. Development type 3(a).

[54] The regulations relating to permitted development rights (PDR) for renewable energy specify that these PDR do not apply in ‘Article 2(3)’ land, which includes designated AONBs.

[55] The thresholds and criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations do not apply in ‘sensitive areas’, including designated AONBs.

National Landscape, and its setting, is likely to have high landscape and visual sensitivity to all scales of solar energy development.

6.4.2.4 Based on the above, the following thresholds should be applied for small-scale solar energy development when considering this position statement:

- 0.5ha or less = micro-scale.
- 0.5 ha - 5ha = small/field scale.

6.4.2.5 The Wye Valley National Landscape Team are increasingly receiving queries relating to micro- and small-scale solar PV arrays. There are several types of arrays:

1. Small-/Field-scale solar arrays on greenfield land (undeveloped/agricultural land).
2. Small-/Field-scale solar arrays on brownfield land (developed industrial/ commercial/contaminated land).
3. Micro- and small-scale solar installations over car parks, alongside air strips, and other suitable external areas.
4. Micro- and small-scale solar installations on new or existing industrial/agricultural buildings and other large-scale roofs.

6.4.2.6 Site justification is vital, and identification of alternative sites should be considered. Ultimately, proposed schemes will be judged on their own merits; however, array types 2, 3 and 4 above offer more significant opportunities for the mitigation of potential adverse impacts upon the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting.

6.4.2.7 Proposals on, and within the curtilage of, residential properties not exceeding 0.5 hectares in size would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis where they are not permitted development. However, they are, in principle, likely to be acceptable in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting, if compliant with relevant regulations and the material considerations outlined in this position statement.

6.4.2.8 Proposals for small-scale solar energy schemes larger than 0.5ha but smaller than 5ha are less likely to be acceptable in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting due to the potential visual and/or landscape harm they present. Depending on the nature and siting of the proposed scheme, they also may be considered major development, and if so, they should be assessed as such. Schemes that would constitute major development should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development would be in the public interest, in line with national planning policy. However, in specific circumstances and with adequate mitigation of potential adverse impacts on the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting, a small-scale solar energy proposal may be acceptable.

6.4.2.9 As such, any small-scale solar energy schemes should always be considered on a case-by-case basis against relevant planning policies and with regard to relevant

considerations in Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership publications and robust evidence provided as to how adverse impacts will be avoided or sufficiently mitigated to an acceptable degree.

6.4.3 Micro- and Small-scale solar - relevant considerations

6.4.3.1 This guidance primarily relates to such proposals being sensitively located[56] and sited[57]. Location, siting, and design are also important considerations for schemes that relate to scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and other heritage assets[58].

6.4.3.2 PV panels mounted on buildings are considered more suitable than those that are freestanding as they are likely to have fewer adverse effects, albeit there may be some effects visually that should be considered if located on buildings that can be viewed from above. In a few specific circumstances, ground mounted solar panels therefore may be more preferable, but this should be clearly justified. Ideally, PV panels can be used as a building material, integrated into the roof (or facades) of buildings e.g. using solar shingles, solar slates, solar glass laminates and other solar design solutions, and can be integrated with traditional tiles/slates[59], although it is acknowledged that this may not be viable for householder scale upgrades on existing buildings.

6.4.3.3 Solar collectors or evacuated tubes can be incorporated into the existing roof in the same way. Ideally, these require an angle of 30-40 degrees, facing south.

6.4.3.4 Consideration should be given to the effect of installations on the appearance of the building. It is a good idea to line panels up with existing windows and roof lights, ensuring the size of the panels are complementary to existing features on the building.

6.4.3.5 Consideration should be given to the colour and design of the panels and their frames and mounts/supporting structures. For example, panels with a dull, matt finish with anti-glare options and non-reflective frames/grids are less conspicuous as are panels with dark surfaces which are likely to be acceptable on buildings with darker slate roofs or on new buildings in areas where black slate roofs are characteristic, to integrate into the landscape.

6.4.3.6 Rooftop solar panels can blend well with contemporary, industrial, business park and agricultural buildings. Use of panels on such buildings, including by retrofitting, should be supported where considerations such as those listed in this position statement are followed.

[56] 'Located,' in this context, refers to the placement of the proposed development with regard to the landscape context, including the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Position Statement on Landscape-led Development.

[57] 'Sited,' in this context, refers to the development's placement in relation to its immediate context.

[58] 'Relate to,' in this context, means 'on,' 'in the curtilage of' and / or 'in the setting of.'

[59] The UK Government has estimated that there are currently 250,000 hectares (approx. 625,000 acres) of south-facing commercial roofs in the UK (Part 2 of the Government's UK Solar Photo-Voltaic (PV) Strategy).

6.4.3.7 Small-scale freestanding solar arrays that are well screened in enclosed gardens or closely linked to existing buildings with no or minimal visual impact may be acceptable. There may be circumstances where ground mounted solar arrays to serve groups of properties, community buildings, such as village halls, agricultural properties or other businesses are acceptable, where these are clearly well screened within existing building complexes or by other existing landscape features such as hedgerows, walls or trees, and which do not detract from any architectural or historic/archaeological interest, or compromise protected species.

6.4.3.8 Arrays need to be positioned such that any associated screening does not shade the panels. Where new screening is proposed, care needs to be taken to ensure screening does not adversely affect visual amenity, landscape character or heritage assets. Consideration will also need to be given to the potential impact of paraphernalia associated with the installation and operation of the panels.

6.4.3.9 Retrofitted roof-mounted solar units on buildings can have a 'modernising' effect on their character and appearance, particularly when located on the principal elevation of a property. It is beneficial for panels to:

- Match roof materials;
- Lie/Be 'flush' with the roof and mounted at the same angle, minimising contrast;
- Mounted on an elevation where they are less visible, in the case of retrofitted panels, or incorporated as a garden feature, especially when associated with, for instance, older buildings; and
- Be at a suitable angle to maximize the capture of the sun's energy. The impact on wildlife which may roost, nest or travel under the panels should be considered to ensure suitable measures are taken to protect them.

6.4.3.10 Roof-top panels on buildings have the added benefit of providing generation at the point of use, reducing transmission and distribution losses, and associated infrastructure impacts. Well-designed solar technology should be added as a mandatory part of building regulations for new build houses and all business/industrial development. Local planning authorities should support rooftop PV panels generation through planning conditions to mandate it on new development and refurbishments.

6.4.3.11 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **In principle, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would be supportive of domestic and micro-scale (I.e. less than 0.5ha) solar energy schemes provided relevant considerations have been clearly addressed. They will still need to be considered on a case-by-case basis;**

- **Small-scale solar energy schemes (I.e. between 0.5ha and 5ha) within the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting, have greater potential to adversely affect the Special Qualities of the AONB designation and are unlikely to be supported. Such proposals must be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis and will require robust evidence that relevant considerations have been clearly addressed. This includes having regard to visual effects, including the long panoramic views from high vantage points and medium 'picturesque' views from the valley floor, considering key vantage points within the Wye Valley National Landscape, and consideration of effects upon landscape character. Where such schemes are considered 'major development' proposals, applicants should be required to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances apply and the scheme would be in the public interest, having regard to Paragraph 183 of the NPPF (2023) or Paragraph 6.3.10 of PPW (2024), as applicable;**
- **Building-mounted or roof-top panels on new and existing buildings would be considered more favourably over freestanding solar development proposals, subject to the relevant considerations listed in this position statement;**
- **Local planning authorities should support rooftop PV generation through planning conditions on new development and refurbishment/retrofitting, subject to the relevant considerations in this position statement; and**
- **Solar technology should be introduced as a mandatory part of building regulations for new build development in local plan policies.**

6.4.4 Large-scale solar energy

6.4.4.1 We consider 'large-scale' as over five hectares (5ha) although the Partnership acknowledges that, in the context of landscape sensitivity assessments, for example, a wider range of size thresholds may be used. Main features of large-scale ground-mounted solar PV installations include:

- Panels are often dark in colour although may appear paler depending on light conditions and type of panel. Panel surrounds and electric cable coverings may also reflect light. The relative absorptive properties of a solar panel should be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Panels are visible from behind or the side, influencing how they are perceived.
- Panels are encased in an aluminium frame, supported by aluminium or steel stands mounted and secured either on pre-moulded concrete block 'anchors,' or foundations. Some developments contain panels that can be manually rotated and/or tilted to enable the arrays to track the sun. Technology does exist to allow for automatic tracking.

- Panels are held at a fixed angle between 20-40 degrees from the horizontal, facing south to maximise absorption of energy from the sun.
- Arrays are sited in rows with intervening gaps between them for access, and to ensure the individual panels are not in the shade of panels. The actual arrangement of the arrays varies scheme to scheme.
- The height of the racks of solar panels varies depending on manufacturer and installer but tend to be between 2-4 metres off the ground.
- The installations are usually accompanied by significant additional infrastructure including road access, on-site tracks, hard-standings, construction compounds, security fencing, CCTV, lighting, substations, battery storage, control buildings, control rooms, inverters, transformers, electrical cabling, / underground power cables, and SUDS / attenuation ponds.

6.4.4.2 Commercial-scale solar energy schemes usually require an area of at least five hectares to be viable[60]. Community-led schemes may also require a substantial land area.

6.4.4.3 An important consideration is landscape sensitivity. This is a measure that considers susceptibility to change and also value. It has benefit by being evidence based and adding rigour to assessing development proposals.

6.4.4.4 The local planning authorities that overlap the Wye Valley National Landscape should undertake a landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment (LSCA) for wind and solar energy, as part of their evidence base for development plans (i.e. Local Plans).

6.4.4.5 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) or Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs) will help to identify the levels of landscape and visual effects on a case-by-case basis[61]. Cumulative effects also need to be considered. In terms of landscape value, given the designation as an AONB, the Wye Valley National Landscape should be attributed the highest category possible in such assessment[62]. Agricultural land that is designated, for example for the protection of wildlife, should be avoided. LVIAs should contain a clear description of the site's agricultural classification and all other relevant designations.

6.4.4.6 The Wye Valley National Landscape has the Special Quality of ‘Picturesque, extensive and dramatic views’ throughout the National Landscape. As a result, and for the reasons set out in this position statement, the Partnership is unlikely to support, in principle, solar energy schemes within the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting over 5ha, as it is unlikely that sufficient mitigation would be possible to avoid adverse

[60] Anecdotal evidence provided by consultants involved in commercial-scale solar energy proposals.
[61] EIA development considers significance.
[62] It is also necessary to go beneath the blanket of the designation and identify other value factors. This should be carried out in accordance with the Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note | 02/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations, which is relevant for such studies within nationally-designated landscapes as well as within their settings.

effects to the landscape and visual baseline. Hence, supporting such a scheme would not be consistent with the statutory purpose of AONB designation.

6.4.4.7 Schemes that would constitute major development[63] should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development would be in the public interest, in line with national planning policy.

6.4.4.8 Further guidance and recommendations on landscape sensitivity assessments and how they might be applied to identify 'suitable areas' for renewable energy in local planning authority development plans is provided in Section 6.6. Further guidance on the issue of major development is provided in Section 4.

6.4.4.9 Many considerations outlined in relation to small-scale solar energy schemes are applicable to large-scale schemes, including EIA thresholds. In addition to the impact of the solar panels themselves, consideration should be given to the impacts of any additional infrastructure that is required for the scheme, including road access, on-site tracks, hard-standings, construction compounds, electrical cabling, security fencing, lighting substations, battery storage and / or control buildings, inverters, control rooms, transformers and underground power cables, CCTV, and SUDS/attenuation ponds. Many of these require engineering works, especially where flat platforms are required on sloping ground. Consideration should be given to potential conflicts with other land uses, such as food production (particularly on best and most versatile land given the increasing concerns over food security and food production capability), nature recovery, woodland/wetland creation, and recreation/access.

6.4.4.10 Another consideration is the proximity of the road network, PROWs (public rights of way), and residential areas. The provision of any reflective material used on the panels should not interfere with the line of sight of road users (for public safety reasons). Similarly, the impact of the siting of solar panels, particularly in terms of their reflectivity of both sunlight and moonlight, should be considered in relation to views from the Wye Valley and the impacts that may have on such users, as well as views from PROWs and from residential properties.

6.4.4.11 Large-scale solar PV installations occupy substantial areas of ground which may be highly visible, especially where sites are viewed from adjacent higher ground. Key landscape effects of large-scale solar PV developments are that they may:

- Be highly visible in open landscapes, when looking out from higher ground, and on the upper slopes of hillsides, especially where covering significant areas;
- Lead to a perceived increase in human/industrialising influences on the landscape;
- Result in land use change and the appearance of one or more fields, affecting land cover textures and patterns;

[63] In the context of Paragraph 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) or Paragraph 6.3.10 of Planning Policy Wales (2024).

- Introduce a regular edge (to the panels) that can be particularly conspicuous in more irregular landscapes (especially where the panels do not follow contours);
- 'Overtop' hedgerows where panel heights rise to 3-4 metres, potentially reducing the visual prominence of field boundaries, a particular issue where several adjacent small fields are developed;
- Change the character of enclosure with security fencing and screen planting (including hedges allowed to grow out) around solar PV developments;
- Damage landscape features during construction;
- Result in a significant change in the character of wild or natural landscapes which are valued for their high nature conservation value and qualities of remoteness;
- Introduce ancillary buildings that can be uncharacteristic in the landscape; and
- Result in glint and glare from the panels[64].

6.4.4.12 Vegetation will grow under some large-scale ground-mounted solar installations, and may require management, particularly to avoid the site becoming overgrown with noxious weeds and assist with the eventual restoration of the site, normally to agriculture. Few of the management techniques usually recommended, such as mowing, strimming, spraying or mulching, are regarded as sustainable, particularly on sites up to 15ha[65]. Grazing is a preferred opportunity, where practicable, although has its own complications, with little evidence of its viability that has not been developer led, and anecdotal evidence to the contrary[66]. A common practice for new developments is to include meadow seeding as part of the site construction, which would then be managed through grazing. Grazing is therefore encouraged wherever practicable. Cattle, horses, pigs, and goats are likely to be too 'physical' with solar arrays, but sheep, chickens or geese may be acceptable.

6.4.4.13 It is still the case that large solar PV installations should be considered to have a lifespan of 25-40 years, but improvements in panel technology may mean that repowering of a site by upgrading of panels could take place to extend the lifetime of a site. Nevertheless, developments should normally be regarded as temporary, hence the need for 'reversibility', and the ability for all structures to be removed and the land returned to its original use. A restoration strategy[67] should demonstrate how the site will be returned to a state that is in keeping with local character and in good condition. In order to facilitate grazing, if grazing is planned within the ground-mounted solar installation, it

[64] Currently, there is no formal glint and glare assessment guidance exists, apart from at a very high level, by the Civil Aviation Authority. Informal guidance has been produced by industry consultants, but it is not clear whether this can be relied upon as an appropriate form of guidance.

[65] If the land is arable, it will tend to be of high fertility soil and therefore would be unable to establish wildflower, and furthermore, at the end of the development life, the land is normally proposed to restore to the previous level of fertility, and therefore a proposal should explain how this will be achieved.

[66] For example, the quality of the grass as fodder can decline over time under solar panels and additional feed or supplements may therefore be required. Cattle, horses, pigs, and goats are likely to be too 'physical' with the solar arrays, but sheep, chickens or geese could be acceptable, although the latter would be prey to foxes.

[67] Although it is argued that large scale ground-mounted solar developments are temporary and reversible, there is no precedent to by which to judge this as no UK solar sites have yet been subject to restoration and agricultural reversion. In practice, solar developments are, or can become, more permanent features. Many are planned to operate for 40 years, and/or they extend their operating licence, and the practicality of the effective implementation of a restoration strategy after such an extended period of time is unknown.

is advised that solar panels are positioned at least 700mm above ground level and all cabling etc is suitably protected.

6.4.4.14 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **In relation to large-scale solar energy, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would not be supportive of solar energy schemes within the Wye Valley National Landscape or its setting larger than five hectares (5ha);**
- **Applications for large-scale solar energy schemes above 5ha should be required to robustly demonstrate that the scheme will protect, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape and/or its setting, and will conserve and enhance the historic environment. In addition to the impact of the panels themselves, consideration should also be given to the impacts of any additional infrastructure that is required for the scheme, particularly during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning;**
- **Poorer grades of agricultural land that are designated, for example for the protection of wildlife, should be avoided;**
- **Best and most versatile land should be avoided; and**
- **For 'major development' proposals, applicants should be required to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances apply, and the scheme would be in the public interest, having regard to paragraph 183 of the NPPF (2023) or paragraph 6.3.10 of PPW (2024).**

6.5 Wind Energy

6.5.1.1 Wind turbines use the wind's lift forces to rotate aerodynamic blades that turn a rotor creating a mechanical force that generates electricity. The amount of energy derived from a turbine depends on wind speed and the swept area of the blade.

6.5.1.2 Wind turbines can be deployed singly, small clusters, (2–5 turbines) or larger groups as wind farms.

6.5.1.3 Wind turbines consist of the tower; a hub; blades; a nacelle (which contains the generator and gear boxes); and a transformer that can be housed either inside the nacelle or at the base of the tower. Additional infrastructure is still required such as access and it must be noted that one must ensure that large scheme elements can be delivered to site without damage to / loss of landscape elements / features.

6.5.1.4 Wind energy developments are unique in that they introduce a source of movement into the landscape. In current designs, the turbine blades turn around a horizontal axis but can turn around a vertical axis. Two-bladed turbines are available.

6.5.2 Small-scale wind energy – size thresholds

6.5.2.1 The following height thresholds provide a useful starting point:

- EIA Regulations specify that proposals should be screened for an EIA if the hub height of any turbine (or height of any other structure that forms part of the scheme) exceeds 15 metres and/or the development area exceeds 0.5 hectares[68].
- Permitted development rights cover several restrictions including[69]:
    - Wind turbines on (i.e. attached to) detached houses, which do not exceed 15 metres in height (or protrude more than 3m above the highest part of the roof, excluding the chimney); and
    - Stand-alone wind turbines within the curtilage of houses or blocks of flats that do not exceed 11.1 metres.

6.5.2.2 In England, such thresholds do not apply within National Landscapes (i.e., these permitted development rights do not apply in AONBs[70] and turbines in AONBs that are smaller than 15 metres in height could potentially be screened for an EIA[71]).

6.5.2.3 In Wales, permitted development rights do not allow for a stand-alone wind turbine would be installed on land which is within an AONB.

6.5.2.4 Nevertheless, having regard to the 'Special Quality' of 'picturesque, extensive & dramatic views' across the National Landscape, effectively means that only stand-alone wind turbines within the curtilage of farm or office buildings, houses or blocks of flats may be acceptable in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting. However, they would need to also, to comply with the relevant regulations and accord with guidance, primarily relating to proposals being sensitively located[72] and sited[73].

6.5.2.3 It is noted that the EIA threshold of 15 metres relates to the hub-height of the turbine. The blade tip height can be several metres higher. It is also worth noting that wind turbines with a blade tip height smaller than 25 metres are often classed as 'small' in landscape sensitivity assessments.

6.5.2.4 Based on the above, and for the purposes of this Position Statement, small-scale is viewed as wind turbines that are 25 metres or less, in height, to the blade tip. Wind turbines of this scale are most likely to be used for individual properties or small groups of properties, rather than commercial schemes.

[68] The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017. Schedule 2. Development type 3(i) and / or 3(a). The EIA threshold also relates to wind energy development of any height (including smaller than 15m hub height) where there are more than two turbines.

[69] The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 - Part 14 and The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2012 – Part 40.

[70] The regulations relating to permitted development rights (PDR) for renewable energy specify that these PDR do not apply in 'Article 2(3)' land, which includes designated AONBs.

[71] The thresholds and criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations do not apply in 'sensitive areas', including designated AONBs.

[72] 'Located,' in this context, refers to the placement of the proposed wind development with regard to the landscape context.

[73] 'Sited,' in this context, refers to the development's placement in relation to its immediate context.

6.5.3 Small-scale wind energy – location

6.5.3.1 With regards to 'location,' consideration should be given to landscape sensitivity and capacity. This means having regard to the potential sensitivity and capacity of the landscape character type/area where the development is proposed and to the type of energy generation proposed. This is addressed in more detail in relation to AONB designation considerations in (Section 4 of this position statement and in the identification of 'suitable areas' in Section 6.6).

6.5.4 Small-scale wind energy – siting and design

6.5.4.1 The size of a wind turbine should relate to the scale of its surroundings. Turbines should not dominate existing buildings or landscape features but be in proportion.

6.5.4.2 The relationship between a turbine and the slope of the landform is a key consideration of wind energy development, particularly regarding the degree of landscape and/or visual impact. Ideally, turbines should be located below the skyline and towards lower slopes.

6.5.4.3 Choosing appropriate colours for the turbines (and associated infrastructure) may help reduce visual impact e.g. darker colours may be appropriate when the turbine is likely to be viewed against woodland or against a backdrop that is below the skyline.

6.5.4.4 Consideration should also be given to:

- Impacts on visual receptors: Particularly in relation to impacts on views from publicly accessible locations. Visual receptors in the Wye Valley, on named / promoted walking, cycling or horse-riding routes and at important viewpoints (for example, those marked on OS maps, or identified in NDPs (England only)), are particularly sensitive in this regard. Where there are several potential locations for the wind turbine(s), priority should be given to the least prominent location.
- Ecology: Both large- and small-scale turbines have the potential to adversely affect bird species and habitats. During construction, care should be taken to avoid removal or fragmentation of existing vegetation. Consideration should be given to potential impact on bats.
- Impacts on historic environment and cultural heritage features/designations and their settings: Particularly conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered/unregistered historic parks and gardens.
- Noise and shadow flicker: Wind turbines generate two types of noise – mechanical noise, created by its gearbox, and aerodynamic noise, produced by its moving blades. Shadow flicker occurs when the sun passes behind a turbine's rotating blades and casts a shadow that appears to rapidly flicker on and off. Proximity to neighbouring properties is particularly important in this regard.

- Cumulative impacts: This includes other wind developments, overhead powerlines, and telecommunications masts and other vertical structures.
- Historic environment: the impacts of wind energy development and the historic environment must be factored in. The historic environment will need to be considered and ensure applications are appropriate in the context of planning policy.

6.5.4.5 RECOMMENDATION:

- **In relation to small-scale wind energy, only stand-alone wind turbines within the curtilage of farm or office buildings, houses or blocks of flats are, in principle, likely to be acceptable in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting, provided that relevant material considerations have been clearly addressed. Each proposal should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and should protect, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting.**

6.5.5 Large-scale wind energy

6.5.5.1 'Large-scale' means wind turbines larger than 25 metres in height, to the tip of the turbine (taking account of the definition of 'small scale', provided and defined above). In the context of landscape sensitivity assessments, it is noted that a wider range of size thresholds is likely.

6.5.5.2 As outlined in relation to small-scale wind energy, the issue of visual sensitivity is also an important consideration.

6.5.5.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs) will help to identify the significance of landscape and visual effects on a case-by-case basis.

6.5.5.4 The Wye Valley National Landscape has the Special Quality of 'picturesque, extensive & dramatic views', along with the 'overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness/wildness'. As a result, the Partnership is unlikely to support, in principle, large scale wind energy schemes within the Wye Valley National Landscape, and/or its setting, as it is unlikely that sufficient mitigation would be possible to avoid adverse change to the landscape and visual baseline, and hence supporting such a scheme would not be consistent with the statutory purpose of AONB designation.

6.5.5.5 Wind energy schemes that would constitute 'major development' can only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development would be in the public interest, in line with national planning policy.

6.5.5.6 Further guidance on landscape sensitivity assessments and how they might be applied to identify 'suitable areas' for renewable energy in local planning authority

development plans is provided in Section 6.6. Further guidance on the issue of major development is provided in Section 4 of this position statement.

6.5.5.7 Many of the considerations outlined in relation to small-scale wind energy schemes are also applicable to large-scale schemes, including EIA thresholds. In addition to the impact of the wind turbines themselves, consideration should be given to the impacts of any additional infrastructure that is required for the scheme, such as road access, on-site tracks, turbine foundations, hard standings, anemometer masts, construction compounds, electrical cabling, battery storage, sub-stations, and control buildings. Other relevant considerations are addressed in Section 4.

6.5.5.8 Consideration should be given for the effect of wind development upon landscape designations, geological and nature conservation designations, and historic assets near the development, and the wider landscape context.

6.5.5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **In relation to large-scale wind energy, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would not be supportive of large-scale wind energy schemes within the Wye Valley National Landscape and/or its setting;**
- **Applicants for large-scale wind energy schemes should be required to robustly demonstrate that the scheme could be accommodated without adversely affecting the landscape and/or scenic beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape and/or its setting; and**
- **For major development proposals, applicants should be required to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances apply and that the scheme would be in the public interest, as per Paragraph 183 of the NPPF (2023) or Paragraph 6.3.10 of PPW (2024).**

6.6 Wind & Solar Energy – Identification of 'Suitable Areas' (applies to England only[74][75])

[74] As part of the evidence base for their replacement Local Development Plan, Monmouthshire County Council undertook a 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment' (October 2020), which includes identification of 'suitable areas' - https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/development-of-an-evidence-base/ . Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are identified as an Environmental/Landscape designation and are identified as a Constraint (areas excluded from 'Less Constrained Areas') and can be considered a 'high risk' area for wind and solar development. Identification of 'Suitable Areas' is therefore not considered further in this Position Statement in relation to Wales with the exception of Footnotes.

[75] Welsh Government's Pre-Assessed Areas for wind energy, as seen on page 94 of Future Wales: The National Plan 2040: Tidal Renewable Energy Projects - The potential impact of any tidal renewable energy projects taking place in the Severn Estuary in the future is not considered in this position statement. Tidal stream and tidal lagoon projects would be likely to have little impact on the Wye Valley National Landscape, except possibly in terms of displaced feeding or breeding birds. But if any of the many proposed barrage projects were to come to fruition, this would be likely to have an impact on the River Wye upstream to the point where it is no longer tidal.

In March 2024, the Western Gateway launched the independent Severn Estuary Commission, which is tasked with re-examining the potential of the Severn Estuary to provide renewable tidal energy. So far, they have launched a Call for Information in an attempt to collect together all extant

6.6.1 Paragraph 160 of the NPPF states that to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should '*consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development*'. In practice, identification of 'suitable areas' for renewable energy development in development plans primarily focuses on both wind and solar energy.

6.6.2 There is a strong onus on identifying 'suitable areas' for wind energy in LPA development plans, with the NPPF stating that '*a proposed wind energy development involving one or more turbines should not be considered acceptable unless it is in an area identified as being suitable for wind energy development in the development plan…*'[76]. If LPAs do not identify suitable areas for wind energy in their development plans, then they are effectively ruling out wind energy development in their LPA areas.

6.6.3 The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that the identification of 'suitable areas' should be based on a combination[77] of:

- Landscape sensitivity assessments;
- Constraints mapping; and
- Technical consideration including wind speed and grid connectivity.

6.6.4 As stated in the PPG for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy, 't*here are no hard and fast rules about how suitable areas for renewable energy should be identified, but in considering locations, local planning authorities will need to ensure they take into account* '… *critically, the potential impacts on the local environment, including from cumulative impacts*.' The PPG goes on to state, in relation to the identification of suitable areas, that:

'In considering impacts, assessments can use tools to identify where impacts are likely to be acceptable. For example, landscape character areas could form the basis for considering which technologies at which scale may be appropriate in different types of location.'

6.6.5 It is important to note that the PPG says 'could' rather than 'should,' in this regard. However, in the context of nationally designated protected landscapes, such as designated AONBs and their settings, we consider that it is essential that the identification

data relating to previous project proposals and environmental investigations. There is the possibility that after 2025, when the project reports, one or more of the project proposals could be restarted or progressed (Severn Estuary Commission - Announcement English (severncommission.co.uk)). Summary map showing all previously planned projects involving tidal energy in the Severn Estuary. Source: Severn Estuary Commission - Severn Estuary Commission (severncommission.co.uk)

[76] Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Footnote 58.

[77] In respect also of heritage assets and the appropriate assessments to be able to understand the harm to heritage assets and if harm can be avoided/minimised/mitigated etc. Any identification of 'suitable areas' should be informed by a thorough assessment of the impacts to the historic environment and be undertaken with Historic England/CADW as a consultee.

of suitable areas should be underpinned by a landscape sensitivity assessment. Guidance on this topic has been published by Natural England.

6.6.6 When 'suitable areas' are being identified, regard should be given to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape. Identification of 'suitable areas' should be underpinned by a landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment and by consideration of the constraints that relate to the natural beauty of AONB designation, including nature conservation and historic environment designations (in addition to infrastructure constraints and other technical considerations).

6.6.6.1 Wind and solar energy schemes should be steered towards areas of lower landscape sensitivity and away from key constraints. The UK Government's PPG on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy states, in the context of identifying '*suitable areas*,' that '*there is a methodology*[78] *available from the Department of Energy and Climate Change's website on assessing the capacity for renewable energy development*'[79].

6.6.6.2 The methodology sets out a five-step process for addressing AONB designation:

- Step 1: Identify the purposes of the landscape area (reasons for designation)
- Step 2: Identify which technologies might affect these purposes/integrity of the designation
- Step 3: Identify how each technology might affect the purposes/integrity
- Step 4: Identify the type and level of renewable and low carbon infrastructure that could be accommodated without compromising the purposes/integrity of the designations
- Step 5: Provide guidance on how to integrate renewable/low carbon energy without compromising the purposes/integrity

6.6.6.3 The methodology identifies whether 'constraints,' such as infrastructure and nature conservation and heritage conservation designations, should be excluded from further consideration (i.e., not considered suitable for renewable energy development) and whether there should be a 'buffer zone' around these features. The consideration of relevant constraints and buffer zones is reflected in the evidence base of many current development plan consultations.

6.6.7 Areas that are identified as having 'high' landscape sensitivity to the type and scale of renewable energy being proposed should be excluded from the suitable area mapping.

6.6.7.1 It is recognised that having regard to a number of 'Special Qualities' as identified within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, landscape and visual sensitivity is high across much of the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting. Where landscape

[78] LUC and SQW Energy (2010) Renewable and Low-carbon Energy Capacity Methodology. Methodology for the English Regions. Commissioned by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG).
[79] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy . Paragraph 005.

sensitivity is evaluated or classed as 'High' or 'Very High' (depending on the point scale used), key characteristics and qualities of the landscape will be more vulnerable to change from the proposed scale of wind and solar energy development. Such development is more likely to result in a significant (adverse) change in landscape character. In designated AONBs, such development is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the statutory purpose of AONB designation, which is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The same is true for such development in the setting of designated AONBs in cases where the impact on views from and/or to the designated landscape is an important consideration in landscape sensitivity ranking[80].

6.6.7.2 In order for a landscape sensitivity assessment to have a meaningful role in the identification of suitable areas for wind and solar energy we recommend that areas within designated AONBs that have higher sensitivity to particular scales of wind or solar energy development should not be included within 'suitable area' maps in local authority development plans. The same principle should also apply to higher sensitivity areas in the setting of a designated AONB, where the impact on views from and / or to the designated AONB is an important consideration in the landscape sensitivity ranking.

6.6.8 Consideration will also need to be given to types and scales of renewable energy that are identified as being of higher landscape sensitivity.

6.6.8.1 Development is likely to be 'major development' in the context of paragraph 183 of the NPPF, for which there is, in effect, presumption against granting planning permission, other than in exceptional circumstances.

6.6.8.2 Key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are also vulnerable to change from wind and solar energy development when the landscape sensitivity is moderate. However, there may be some limited opportunity to accommodate wind turbines/ solar panels in such areas without significantly changing landscape character. Ideally, the landscape sensitivity assessment would specify the circumstances, or locations, where this might be the case. Given the fact that there may be opportunity (albeit limited) to accommodate such development without significantly changing landscape character, it might not be appropriate to automatically exclude such areas from 'suitable area' maps in local authority development plans.

6.6.8.3 However, where the scale of wind or solar energy development within a designated AONB (or its setting) is such that the landscape sensitivity would be moderate, such development is still likely to have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty

[80] Case law has clarified that the requirements of what is now paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should apply to the impact of development outside a designated AONB on views from the designated AONB. In other words, great weight should be given to the impact of such development on these views. Although the same principle, clarified in the case law example, does not apply to the impact of such development on views towards a designated AONB, these views may still contribute to the 'special qualities' of the designated AONB. This is especially the case for the Wye Valley, the views towards which are considered one of the 'special qualities' of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

of the AONB designation. Such development is likely to constitute 'major development,' in the context of paragraph 183 and footnote 64 of the NPPF[81].

6.6.9 Renewable energy proposals within a 'suitable area' will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis against relevant policy considerations, factoring in relevant AONB designation considerations.

6.6.10 Renewable energy LSAs that are commissioned by local authorities are normally based on a local authority's own Landscape Character Assessment. However, in fulfilling the statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of AONB designation, they should have regard to relevant documents published by the Partnership, including:

- Landscape Character Assessments;
- AONB Management Plans, with regards to policies and 'special qualities;
- Position Statements;
- Other guidance relating to landscape character and landscape sensitivity e.g. Natural England's National Character Area profiles; and
- the relevant heritage evidence base.

6.6.11 In the case of wind energy, they will also need to demonstrate that they have local community support. Where multiple renewable energy developments would be inter-visible, cumulative impacts are also be a key consideration.

6.6.12 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership supports the identification of suitable areas for wind and solar energy in local planning authority development plans;**
- **Identification of 'suitable areas' should be underpinned by a landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment and by consideration of relevant constraints and technical considerations;**
- **Suitable area maps should exclude areas of high/very high landscape sensitivity (at least within the National Landscape and its setting) and where there are key constraints;**
- **Renewable energy schemes should be targeted towards areas of relatively low landscape sensitivity (preferably low/very low landscape sensitivity) within the LPA area. Renewable energy landscape sensitivity and capacity assessments, commissioned by local authorities, should have regard to relevant guidance published by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership.**

[81] Footnote 64 of the NPPF specifies that 'for the purposes of paragraphs 182 and 183 [of the NPPF], whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purpose for which the area has been designated or defined'.

- **In relation to large-scale solar energy and wind energy, within the highly sensitive context of the designated AONB and its setting, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) should be carried out from pre-application stage and be submitted alongside a planning application. It should be produced to a high standard, follow best practice guidance (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition, 2013), and demonstrate the proposal does not compromise the AONB designation and its primary purposes. The appraisal should identify the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) or Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and assess the development's impact upon key viewpoints both within and towards the designated AONB, and also its setting.**

6.7 Energy Storage

6.7.1 Renewable energy is intermittent in nature. It is important to provide energy storage systems that can be charged during periods of excess renewable energy generation and discharged at times of increased demand. Energy storage can be used to store electricity bought from the grid at cheaper times of the day, with dynamic energy tariffs that vary in price throughout the day.

6.7.2 Energy storage systems include:

- Pumped hydro involves pumping water uphill at times of low demand, storing it in a reservoir and, in high demand periods, releasing it through turbines to create electricity.
- Thermal energy storage involves storing excess energy to be used later for heating, cooling, or power generation; thermal energy can be stored in liquids, such as water, or solids, such as sand or rocks. Chemical reactions or changes in materials can also be used to store and release thermal energy.
- Mechanical energy storage involves harnessing motion or gravity to store electricity. For example, a flywheel is a rotating mechanical device that is used to store rotational energy that can be called up instantaneously.
- Batteries involve converting stored chemical energy into electrical energy. Advances in technology and falling prices mean grid-scale battery facilities that can store increasingly large amounts of energy are becoming common.

6.7.3 For small-scale forms of renewable energy, including householder energy generation, that are advocated in this position statement, the most common form of energy storage is likely to be battery storage. In this context, battery storage solutions could be advantageous although battery size, and therefore consideration of its potential impact, will depend on energy usage and the size of the technologies installed. Some, but not all, battery storage systems can be installed outdoors.

6.7.4 Where planning permission is required, relevant considerations include:

- Location and design of the structure that the batteries are to be stored in (including the potential use of existing buildings, such as barns), or garages for domestic installation;
- Fencing, substation, and other structures/infrastructure associated with the storage system;
- Access and maintenance arrangements;
- Noise impacts;
- Sustainability and environmental impact of materials used (e.g. lithium).
- Risk of fire/explosion;
- Potential impacts on heritage assets and the historic environment.

6.7.5 RECOMMENDATION:

- **In relation to energy storage, in principle, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would be supportive of energy storage schemes that provide effective storage of renewable energy that is generated in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting, providing relevant considerations have been adequately addressed.**

7.0 COMMUNITY-LED RENEWABLE ENERGY SCHEMES

7.1 Account should be taken of the economic and social needs of local communities. An important component of this is how energy and heating requirements of these communities are met.

7.2 Planning policy for England states that '*local planning authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy*'[82], although they will still be required to go through the same processes as non-community led schemes. In the case of wind energy, it also states that a proposed wind energy development involving one or more turbines should not be considered acceptable unless, inter alia, the proposal has the backing of the local community[83]. Planning policy for Wales states that '*the Welsh Government supports renewable and low carbon energy projects which are developed by wholly Wales based organisations, including community groups, or provide proportionate benefit to the host community or Wales as a whole. In February 2020 the Welsh Government published a policy statement on local ownership of energy developments. This set out the Welsh Government's expectation for all new renewable energy projects in Wales to include at least an element of local ownership, to retain wealth and provide*

[82] Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework - Paragraph 161.

[83] Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework - Footnote 58. The revisions to the NPPF in 2023 changed the requirement for community 'backing' to community 'support'. 'Support' is, arguably, a (slightly) lower threshold than 'backing.' However, community backing, or support is likely to remain a requirement for wind energy proposals to be approved.

real benefit to communities. Locally owned generation provides a strong opportunity to retain economic value, contributing to prosperity'[84].

7.3 As such, the extent to which a proposed renewable energy scheme: (i) explicitly helps to meet the energy needs of the individual local community; and/or (ii) is community-led, is an important consideration. Care should be taken that community-led schemes are genuine and not developer-driven. More appropriate schemes are those that may be part of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) or initiatives such as the Community Visioning projects being piloted by CPRE[85].

7.4 Proposals for community-led renewable energy should therefore be supported by evidence of the current carbon footprint/energy use of the community, and the impact that the renewable energy proposal will have on reducing this.

7.5 Renewable energy schemes can support rural diversification and educational opportunities, and community-owned renewable energy projects can provide incentives and ownership, as well as promoting self-sufficiency.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **In relation to community-led renewable energy schemes, in principle, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would support community-led schemes provided that considerations have been clearly addressed.**
- **Renewable energy schemes should demonstrate benefits to the local community.**

[84] Paragraph 5.9.24 of Planning Policy Wales (2024)

[85] https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/climate-change-and-energy/renewable-energy/community-energy-visioning-showcasing-renewables-done-well

Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol
Wye Valley
National Landscape

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

POSITION STATEMENT: DARK SKIES & ARTIFICIAL LIGHT POLLUTION

A quick note on terminology

On 22 November 2023, the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), was re-branded as the Wye Valley National Landscape. National Landscapes are designated AONBs. Consequently, the name Wye Valley National Landscape is commonly used throughout this document. However, since 'AONB' remains the legal designation, this term is also used in appropriate places, for example, when referring to the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, which is a statutory plan, or when quoting directly from older documents. The name used for the organisation associated with the designation is the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership. National Landscapes are designated AONBs, which are protected under the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949. This protection is further enhanced through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 The Wye Valley National Landscape is a landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the national interest to safeguard it[1]. The statutory purpose of the designation of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is to protect the land and to conserve and enhance its natural beauty[2]. As a 'protected landscape', the Wye Valley National Landscape represents some of the finest countryside across the UK, with a distinctive landscape, scenic beauty, and rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage.

1.2 But it is not just the daytime views which are an attraction. The Wye Valley National Landscape also has a significant proportion of dark skies, some of which are amongst the darkest across the UK. Dark skies add to natural beauty, tranquillity and a sense of remoteness of place. Looking up at starry skies or across moonlight landscapes

[1] Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).
[2] Defra (2019) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: technical support scheme (England) 2019 to 2020. Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (2021) - Section 6.3.7.

throughout the National Landscape can be a memorable, magical experience. Dark skies are important for landscape, heritage, wildlife, recreation, tourism, health and well-being.

1.3 Whilst the land has legal protection, the sky above does not in the same manner. The more of us whom experience the magic of dark night skies, the more value we place on it and want to protect. Ensuring the Wye Valley National Landscape remains a place where a sense of remoteness and tranquillity predominates is encouraged, particularly as this is one of the National Landscapes' Special Qualities.

1.4 Many of us rely on light to live our lives. However, wasting light wastes energy, money, and contributes to climate change. Unintended artificial light pollution is taking a silent toll, increasingly eradicating our access to the wonder of beautiful night skies. Excessive artificial light can disrupt sleep, potentially leading to serious health issues. It plays havoc with the feeding and breeding cycles of bats, birds, insects and nocturnal animals. Inappropriate lighting, bad design and incremental development is reducing our ability to appreciate the benefit of dark skies. Lighting on rural roads, village streets, houses and other associated development has the potential to contribute to artificial light pollution. It impacts on our experience of the landscape by altering the naturally changing light levels that occur at dusk and before dawn.

1.5 We recognise there is a genuine need for lighting for the purposes of ensuring safety and security, but such requirements can be met within proactive light management approaches, that are both sensitive and effective, and other means to avoid, minimise and, in many cases, reduce unnecessary artificial light pollution. Lighting needs to be in the right place, the right amount, and the right length of time.

1.6 Unnecessary artificial light pollution is already affecting the quality of our dark skies. Co-ordinated proactive measures are needed to conserve, restore and enhance the dark skies of the Wye Valley National Landscape, through increasing awareness and by following simple key principles.

1.7 This position statement aims to achieve a consistent approach to conserving, restoring and enhancing dark skies using recognised and respected industry standards. This is dovetailed alongside several national resources, including:

- Guidance Note 1 – The reduction of obtrusive light – The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP)[3]
- Good Lighting Guide and Blinded by the Light (updated 2020) – The Commission for Dark Skies (CfDS)[4]

[3] https://theilp.org.uk/resources

[4] https://britastro.org/dark-skies

1.8 With regards to adopting good practice, this Position Statement is informed by approaches undertaken by several other 'Protected Landscapes'[5].

1.9 This position statement provides some background to the importance of dark skies, to those who live and work in the National Landscape, and to those who visit to enjoy its natural beauty. It provides recommendations and good practice on proactive measures to protect, conserve, restore and enhance our dark skies. It is also intended to be used to help secure an appropriate planning policy for future iterations of new/reviewed Local Plans being produced by local planning authorities within the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting and inform future Wye Valley AONB Management Plans.

1.10 This position statement is also aimed at those who are using, replacing or considering the installation of new lighting in and around the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting, as well as those installing new glazing, namely:

- Those seeking to install minor lighting, whom need general advice on lighting and glazing;
- Non-domestic users and schemes which may need planning permission and a more thorough design led by professional principles; and
- Those with responsibility for both plan-making and decision-making.

1.11 Achieving good lighting and glazing design is essential when seeking to protect the landscape. Due to the contrast against a darker landscape setting, the impact of lighting at night will have a larger relative visual impact than daytime views. As such, whilst the Wye Valley National Landscape is largely enclosed in terms of its key and exceptional viewpoints, development that may be some distance from the National Landscape boundary can have considerable adverse visual effects.

1.12 Recommendations:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership acknowledges there is a genuine need for lighting, often for the purposes of ensuring safety and security, but recognises that such needs can be met through proactive light management approaches, that are both sensitive and effective, and other means to avoid, minimise, reduce and remove unnecessary artificial light pollution.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership fully recognises the importance of protecting, conserving, restoring and enhancing dark skies across the Wye Valley

[5] This includes the Cotswolds National Landscape Position Statement on Dark Skies and Artificial Light, the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Dark Skies Project, the South Downs National Park – Dark Skies Technical Advice Note, Cranbourne Chase National Landscape Position Statement on Dark Skies (including Developers' Guide), Mendip Hills National Landscape Position Statement on Dark Skies & Light Pollution, and the Dedham Vale and Coast & Heaths National Landscapes Lighting Design Guide. General dark skies supporting information has also been informed by work undertaken by Howardian Hills, South Devon and Surrey Hills National Landscapes, along with Clwydian Range & Dee Valley National Landscape SPG Planning for the Dark Night Sky.

National Landscape, and proactively encourages recognition of this more widely, including residents, workers and visitors to the National Landscape, and the relevant authorities responsible for its management.

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership will proactively work with stakeholders and relevant authorities across the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting to adopt and promote appropriate and common standards, helping establish practical measures, in reducing artificial light pollution and restoring and enhancing dark skies, which aligns with the Special Quality of "*the overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness/wildness*" of the Wye Valley National Landscape, as identified in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership will work in collaboration with stakeholders and relevant authorities to monitor and protect this aspect of natural beauty.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE POSITION STATEMENT

2.1 The primary purpose of Position Statements is to expand on relevant Strategic Objectives within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. They provide context, guidance and recommendations in relation to key issues. They do not create new policies.

2.2 The recommendations intend to help local authorities, particularly plan-making and decision-making bodies, as well as relevant stakeholders:

- have regard, and positively contribute, to the purposes of AONB designation;
- ensure the purposes of AONB designation are not compromised by development and that the outstanding natural beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape is conserved and enhanced;
- fulfil the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Policy Wales (PPW), Planning Practice Guidance (or, where relevant, National Policy Statements), and Technical Advice Notes, with regards to the AONB designation and the factors that contribute to natural beauty;
- take account of relevant case law;
- to enhance the resilience of ecosystems and take action towards delivering the Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations for nature recovery;
- have regard to and be consistent with the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and guidance/position statements published by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership;
- emulate best practice across the Wye Valley National Landscape and other Protected Landscapes; and

- develop a consistent and coordinated approach to relevant issues across the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting[6].

2.3 The Wye Valley National Landscape derives much of its natural beauty from its tranquillity and rural character. To help protect these special qualities, with regards to dark skies and artificial light pollution, relevant strategic objectives of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan include WV-L1, WV-F1, WV-D1, WV-D2, WV-D3, WV-T2, WV-T3, WV-C2, WV-E2, WV-S4, WV-A1 and WV-P1.

2.4 The purpose of position statements is also to promote good practice in external lighting and internal light spill by fostering behavioural change. Effective design will enable many more of us to experience unpolluted night skies more clearly whilst also saving energy, reducing nuisance, and minimising the impact of lighting on wildlife and people. This will also contribute to protecting the wider Special Qualities, defined landscape character and overall sense of tranquillity across the National Landscape.

2.5 By establishing a proactive dark sky mind-set, this means also looking at the impacts beyond the immediate areas being lit or to be lit, ensuring relevant standards, legislation, landscape assessments and other professional guidance is followed. To protect dark skies appropriately, we all need to expand our mind-set from local need to the wider landscape impact using appropriate guidance and standards that should be referenced at different spatial levels.

3.0 STATUS OF THE POSITION STATEMENT

3.1 Position Statements are supplementary to the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. For development proposals to be compatible with the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, they should also be compatible with the relevant position statement.

3.2 The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan is a material planning consideration in decision-making. However, it must be acknowledged that in a plan-led planning system, it is the policies of the relevant adopted local authority development plan that have greatest weight. As such, within this planning system, the hierarchy is as follows[7]:

[6] Four local authority areas overlap with the Wye Valley National Landscape, with each with local authority having its own development plan.

[7] In England, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states: "If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise." The NPPF (2023) is itself a significant material consideration, although it is acknowledged regarding the presumption in favour of sustainable development under Paragraph 11, particularly in relation to plan-making and decision-making.

On Wednesday 13th September 2023, the DEFRA Secretary of State tabled a Written Ministerial Statement setting out a package of measures to support nature recovery in Protected Landscapes. The package includes a commitment to new legislation through

The adopted development plan comprises the Local Planning Authority Development Plan, 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plans (in England only, when adopted), and Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Wales only), in which decision-making is to be taken in accordance with, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.
The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, like the National Planning Policy Framework and Technical Advice Notes, are material planning considerations, but do not form part of the adopted development plan. Wye Valley National Landscape Position Statements and guidance supplement the AONB Management Plan.

4.0 LIGHT POLLUTION

4.1 Defining Light Pollution

4.1.1 There is increasing pressure in the Wye Valley National Landscape to accommodate:

- All types of development, including the expansion of settlements, within and in the setting of the National Landscape
- Demand for standardised highway lighting, particularly at junctions
- Increased use of 'security' lighting on building exteriors
- Floodlighting of sports pitches and riding arenas
- Architectural designs incorporating extensive areas of glazing
- Illuminated advertisements

4.1.2 Artificial light is relied on by many to live our lives. However, light shining where or when it is not required pollutes our highly valued dark skies. Dark skies are important for health, nature and protecting the natural beauty of the National Landscape and wasting energy will incur unnecessary costs.

4.1.3 Artificial light pollution, also known as obtrusive light, is the presence of unwanted, inappropriate, or excessive artificial lighting. It refers to the adverse effects of any artificial light on the environment. Light pollution takes several forms, including, but not limited to:

- Light trespass – when light enters a neighbouring property;
- Over illumination – where there is excessive light;
- Glare – often from an unshielded light source resulting in contrasting dark shadows and excessively bright areas;

the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023), which will enhance National Park and AONB Management Plans by placing a stronger requirement on partners to contribute to their delivery.

In Wales, national planning guidance prepared by the Welsh Government is taken into account as a material planning consideration, along with policies in the Local Planning Authority development plan for the area, and other material planning considerations.

- Clutter – excessive groupings of lights which can cause confusion and distraction from obstacles intended to be illuminated;
- Sky glow over areas where light is escaping upwards; and
- The possibility of significant residual impacts due to the presence of the lights and the illuminance it provides.

4.1.4 Artificial light pollution is often caused by poorly designed lighting schemes, with inappropriate, excessive or poorly installed lighting equipment. Light pollution is made often made worse by blue-white light which can be found in many Light Emitting Diode (LED) lamps. The blue-white light can penetrate the atmosphere much further than yellow and orange lights. A team of biologists from the University of Exeter recently found that human illumination of the planet is growing in range and intensity at about 2% annually[8]. Yet, human illumination can easily be reduced whilst having enough light for the required task.

4.2 Measuring Sky Quality

4.2.1 A dark sky is a place where the night sky is relatively free of interference from artificial light. Under such conditions, you should be able to see the Milky Way overhead and other astronomical features such as the Andromeda Galaxy with the naked eye.

4.2.2 Sky quality is usually expressed on the 'Bortle Scale', showing the level of stellar visibility measured using naked-eye limiting magnitude (NELM). Under better dark skies the Milky Way will be clearly visible, whereas a suburban sky in the UK will just be dark enough to see the Milky Way. As everyone's eyes varies, we cannot depend on our own perception of sky quality.

4.2.3 To improve the consistency of experience between places, sky quality is normally measured using a hand-held Sky Quality Meter (SQM), a standardised requirement of an International DarkSky Association place application. Most ground measurements use a Sky Quality meter, either with a Unihedron meter, or a TESS photometer (cost around £150). The SQM returns a value of the brightness (magnitudes) of an area (arc second^2) of the sky expressed as a number from 0 to 22 – with the higher the number being the darker the sky. To see the Milky Way, a sky measuring 20.5 and above is needed. 21 and above is rare in the UK although volunteers within the Kerne Bridge Dark Skies Project have measured over 21 in some places in the Wye Valley National Landscape[9]. These measurements indicate that in the skies above the Wye Valley National Landscape, the Milky Way can be clearly visible at 20% contrast to background when overhead. There is no significant variation in Zenith brightness across the National Landscape in the same conditions on the same night. This is because, with few large settlements, the zenith

[8] Home page news - Artificial night lighting has widespread impacts on nature - University of Exeter

[9] http://www.wyevalleysociety.org.uk/events.php

brightness is affected by light pollution from distant cities rather than from local light sources.

4.2.4 Sky Quality can also be measured either by looking down at the Earth from above and measuring the upward light or by measuring the brightness of the sky from the ground. One can get a rough estimation of sky quality by counting the number of stars in the constellation of Orion which can be seen in winter months. Observers can count the number of stars within the rectangle formed by the shoulders and feet. In a city centre you will be lucky to make out 10 stars, whereas under a good Milky Way dark sky in the UK you should be able to see around 25-30. Theoretically, there are 40 stars visible to the naked eye within Orion, but one would need to be in a very dark place and have excellent eyes to see them all.

4.3 Dark Skies across the Wye Valley National Landscape

4.3.1 The sky at night (or by day), together with basic landform are the only physical aspects of the present-day environment of inland Britain that are still fundamentally largely natural in character as vegetation, land use, fields and settlements have been shaped into their present character or created through human influences over the last 12,000 years.

4.3.2 As a typically rural landscape, the skies across the Wye Valley are of regional importance to residents, workers and visitors to and surrounding the National Landscape. Whilst the Wye Valley does not have International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) place status, other UK protected landscapes have achieved such designation. It is important to protect skies that could qualify for such accreditation in future.

4.3.3 The conservation and enhancement of dark night skies brings several benefits:

- Landscape – Dark skies are characteristic of most of the National Landscape and covered by the primary purpose of ‘conserving and enhancing’. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan references dark sky outcomes and Strategic Objectives pertaining to light pollution follow on from this. Recognition of this should encourage local authorities to take dark skies into account when plan-making and decision-making. It provides opportunities for communities, individuals and businesses to take account of dark skies and adopt good practices.
- Enjoyment and understanding – There is increasing public interest in night skies, in part encouraged by television programmes such as Stargazing Live and the Sky at Night. Stargazing events organised by astronomical societies are proving popular. Areas of dark skies are increasingly important for people to experience natural darkness and see a starlit sky.
- Wildlife – Life on earth has evolved with the natural cycle of day and night. Species have evolved to cope with and take advantage of natural darkness. Artificial lighting

has an impact on species and ecosystems interrupting migration patterns, predator-prey relationships and the circadian rhythm of many organisms leading to stress and disruption of breeding patterns.

- Heritage assets – The Wye Valley has a wealth of historic sites for which the night sky together with natural topography are the only largely unchanged aspects of their surroundings. An important characteristic of the Wye Valley is the strong character of historic settlements set within their rural surroundings with (until recent years) little expansion. Dark skies are therefore an important aspect to the setting of many historic monuments and places and how they are experienced and appreciated within the National Landscape.
- Human health and well-being – Humans have also evolved with the natural cycle of light and dark, naturally adhering to a circadian rhythm. Photoreceptors in the human eye regulate the circadian rhythm which controls biological functions including alertness, temperature regulation and melatonin production.
- Economic benefit – Evidence from existing Dark Sky Parks and Reserves show that such designation has led to 'Dark Sky Tourism', particularly in winter months. This is providing businesses and benefiting the local economy in an otherwise quiet time of year, particularly as Dark Sky tourism will often involve overnight stays.

4.3.4 The overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness/wildness is one of the 'Special Qualities[10]' of the Wye Valley National Landscape[11]. Artificial light pollution is recognised as a particular pressure within the National Landscape. In terms of effects upon the National Landscape:

- Poorly designed and/or standardised lighting can degrade landscape character;
- Poorly designed or directed lighting can disrupt biodiversity and disturb species behaviour, particularly bats;
- Poorly located or directed lighting can confuse motorists, degrade landscape character and waste energy;
- Modern architectural designs with large areas of glazing can appear as boxes of light in the countryside at night, and glinting glazing in the daytime; and
- Heritage assets and their significance can be lost.

4.3.5 The Countryside Charity CPRE campaigns to raise awareness about light pollution. In 2015, with support from several AONB Partnerships, they used Land Use Consultants to create a Night Blight map showing the relative darkness of the night sky at an effective resolution down to 500 metres (Figure 1). This scale makes it invaluable at a local level,

[10] Those aspects of the area's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, that make the area distinctive and are valuable, particularly at a national scale.

[11] As identified as SQ12 within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026.

providing a consistent baseline mapping. The mapping was based on satellite images showing light pollution from the sky; not light meter readings taken at ground level.

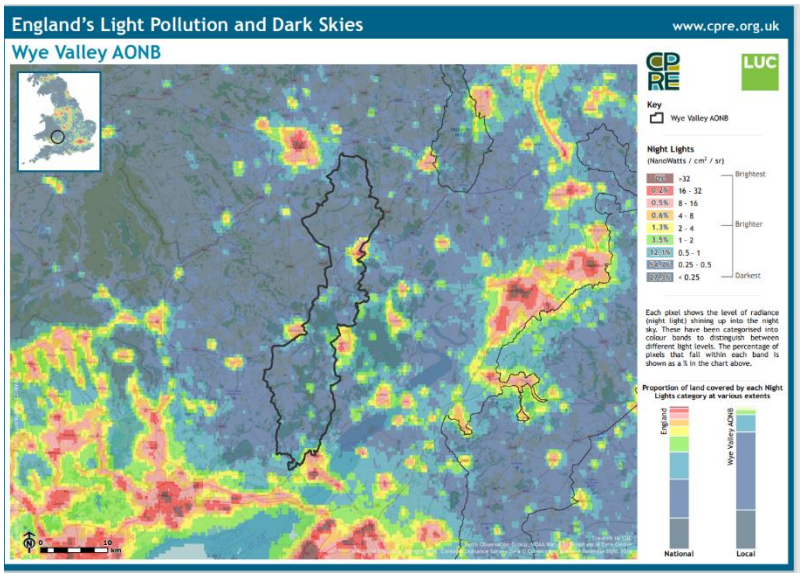


Figure 1 – Light pollution and dark skies in the Wye Valley National Landscape. To expand the map and find out more information about the Night Blight mapping go to: [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies Map (cpre.org.uk)]

4.3.6 The map, along with more recent work undertaken through the Kerne Bridge Dark Skies Project, shows the Wye Valley National Landscape is suffering from artificial light pollution, particularly in some settlements, service stations and economic hubs. Artificial light pollution is also particularly an issue from the surrounding urban areas which form the 'setting' to the National Landscape. Nevertheless, 27.3% of the sky over the Wye National Landscape is as dark as any in the UK, and another 54.7% falls into the next darkest category (there are nine categories altogether). There are clearly significant areas of quality dark skies to protect from excessive artificial light pollution.

4.3.7 Recommendations:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recognises that dark skies can bring benefits to landscape, enjoyment and understanding, wildlife, heritage, human health and well-being, as well as economic gain and tourism.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership acknowledges that there are areas of the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting which suffer from artificial light pollution. However, there are significant areas of quality dark skies to protect, conserve, restore and enhance within the National Landscape from excessive artificial light pollution, to improve the overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness/wildness of the Wye Valley National Landscape.
- In being consistent with the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership considers that lighting should be

reduced where practically possible and only be installed where and when needed, following good practice for intrinsically dark protected landscapes.

5.0 THE EFFECTS OF LIGHT POLLUTION

5.1 Nature and Wildlife

5.1.1 In a paper published in Nature Ecology and Evolution (November 2020[12]), biologists from the University of Exeter concluded that artificial light pollution is impacting the hormone levels, breeding cycles, activity patterns and predator-prey interactions of a broad range of species.

5.1.2 Artificial light pollution impacts wildlife in several ways:

- Songbirds – lighting at night triggers a dawn response, so they become exhausted, affecting feeding and breeding cycles.
- Frogs and toads – having artificial lights where amphibians live can disrupt nocturnal activity, interfering with reproduction and reducing populations.
- Bats – artificial light on a bat roost disturbs bats and may lead them to desert it. Light falling on the access point of a roost delays bats from emerging, shortening the time they have for feeding and, in turn, reducing their reproductive rates. Light on the flightpath of bats can also lead to them deserting their roost[13].
- Insects – it is estimated that a third of insects attracted to artificial lights will die because of such encounters. Reflected light can also be a problem because illuminated shiny surfaces look like water. This attracts aquatic insects, such as egg-laying female dragonflies, leading to unsuccessful breeding.
- Trees – trees have evolved with a regular, predictable transition from day to night, following the natural patterns of the sun and moon. Artificial light extends the natural day, changing the flowering patterns of trees, promoting continued growth. This however prevents them from having dormant periods, which trees need to thrive.

5.1.3 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the principal mechanism for the protection of wildlife in Great Britain. Under the Act, it is illegal to disturb certain species, including bats, and artificial lighting can constitute an offence. All wildlife and their habitats can be disrupted by artificial light. The Institution of Lighting Professionals and the Bat Conservation Trust recently updated their guidance note on ‘Bats and artificial lighting’ in the UK to help guide lighting assessments of bat species[14].

[12] Volume 4 Issue 11, November 2020 (nature.com)

[13] Because artificial light is a particular issue for bats, the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) and Bat Conservation Trust have produced Guidance Note 8 Bats and artificial lighting https://theilp.org.uk/resources/

[14] Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting | Institution of Lighting Professionals (theilp.org.uk)

5.1.4 Unnecessary lighting also contributes to climate change via energy generation and carbon emissions. Moreover, disruption to habitats via artificial lighting contributes to biodiversity decline which in turn has climate (and wider environmental) implications. For instance, declining pollinator and other animal populations may lead to degradation of plant biodiversity in the area, which in turn may be linked to carbon sequestration potential of the ecosystem.

5.2 Health and Well-being

5.2.1 Lights shining directly into windows can cause disruption such as finding it difficult to get to sleep. However, there are other less obvious health issues artificial light pollution can cause.

5.2.2 Humans have evolved with the natural cycle of light and dark that comes from the sun, so adhere to a circadian rhythm or body clock. Artificial light at the wrong time disrupts the production of a hormone called melatonin. Melatonin is important as it induces sleep, boosts the immune system, lowers cholesterol, and helps with the function of the thyroid and pancreas, amongst other things. When our natural cycle is disrupted, it can lower immunity, increase risk of diseases, mood instability and risk mental illness. It is important to maintain bright natural light during the day and relative darkness at night[15].

5.3 Safety

5.3.1 To road users, glare can be highly dangerous. Glare and insensitive artificial lighting can cause accidents when motorists are distracted or blinded by artificial light spilling out onto the road.

5.4 Crime

5.4.1 It is not a complete given that installing lighting for ‘security’ deters crime. There is no proven link between lighting levels and crime rates. In trials where street lighting has been switched off, there has been no increase in crime rates. In fact, bright exterior lights may create contrasting dark spots that criminals can hide in.

5.5 Cost

5.5.1 It costs considerable money to power the grid system to provide lighting. Wasted power through badly designed, installed or used lighting presents an unnecessary cost to businesses, homes and public utilities.

5.6 Energy and carbon emissions

5.6.1 Wasted energy from power used for excessive lighting contributes to carbon emissions and climate change. LED lighting can reduce energy consumption significantly

[15] http://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/Briefing%20papers/Lighting-and-health-infographic2.pdf

and, therefore, the amount of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emitted. However, low-energy bright light is often achieved by using a blue-white LED which can be very damaging to human and wildlife health.

5.7 Landscape, cultural value and science

5.7.1 Artificial lighting is degrading the character of rural landscape, eroding and destroying tranquility and a sense of remoteness. As the number of places we can appreciate dark skies reduces, it makes it increasingly difficult to view the sky at night. These differences are clearly shown in the Bortle Dark-Sky Scale[16]. Light pollution is also seriously undermining the ability of British-based astronomers, both professional and amateur, to lead on this expanding field of science.

5.8 Heritage assets

5.8.1 Historic buildings are increasingly jostling for space and acknowledgment in the National Landscape against increasing development. It has been established that lighting a historic building, such as a church for example, will elevate its presence in the community. It should be remembered that external lighting can not only augment the view of a historic building but when done badly it produces the opposite effects by enhancing the negative aspects.

5.8.2 Because a building is listed or scheduled is not necessarily a good enough reason to proceed with installing artificial lighting. A scheme must not only illuminate but make the building or place more interesting, assist in making visitors feel safe by putting people back at the centre of all public spaces, help tell a story, boost the building or area's identity and assist visitors in appreciating the night by only using light where needed.

5.9 Recommendation:

- The Partnership acknowledges that artificial light pollution throughout the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting is undermining and adversely affecting wildlife and nature, health and well-being, safety, crime, energy and carbon emissions, as well as landscape and visual amenity, cultural value and science, and heritage assets.

6.0 LIGHT POLLUTION CONTROL IN THE UK

6.1 Light Pollution and the Law

6.1.1 There are limited laws dealing with light pollution. In 2005, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – Statutory Nuisance (para 79-fb) was

[16] The Bortle Dark-Sky Scale (umt.edu)

extended to include light nuisance, *"fb – artificial light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance"*

6.1.2 Local authorities must take reasonable steps to investigate complaints of artificial light nuisances. If a nuisance exists or occurs, an abatement notice to cease will be issued. Lights shining into neighbouring properties can be considered a 'statutory nuisance' under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

6.1.3 It is important to note that the threshold and process for nuisance lighting is different from the planning regime. A nuisance requires a 'victim' who can show that they are being negatively impacted by lighting that has probably not received any obtrusive light reduction design. The harm is quantified by directly measuring obtrusive light spill metrics that fall into internal spaces by Environmental Health Officers. In contrast, planning controls requires that light spill is reduced, ideally before lighting is installed, and to comply with obtrusive light requirements.

6.1.4 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the principal mechanism for the protection of wildlife in Great Britain. Under the Act, it is illegal to disturb certain species, including bats, and artificial light can constitute an offence. Under the Act, it is illegal to disturb certain species, including bats, and artificial light can constitute an offence.

6.2 Light Pollution and the Planning Framework

6.2.1 It is accepted that some lighting can be installed without requiring planning permission, under permitted development rights. Lighting that does require explicit permission includes for instance:

- Lighting installations which materially alters the external appearance of a building
- Lighting installations on Listed Buildings which affects their character or fabric
- Illumination of outdoor advertisements
- Most forms of lighting on columns [e.g. sports, arena, street, security lighting].

6.2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for England provides the baseline for local authorities when developing planning policy, including light pollution:

"*191. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should: a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life; b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and c) limit the impact of light pollution*

from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation."

6.2.3 The NPPF also references the importance of conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty (Section 15), which would include dark skies, and in respect of the historic environment (Section 16). Paragraph 182 requires that 'great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing' designated AONBs which, along with National Parks, have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty issues. Paragraph 182 also requires that development is limited and sensitively designed to 'avoid or minimise adverse effects' when considering development in the setting of the designated AONB. This would include well designed lighting and understanding the full effects on dark skies. Paragraph 183 also note that permission for major development in designated AONBs should be refused other than in exceptional circumstances.

6.2.4 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) provides further baseline for Welsh local authorities in terms of plan-making:

"*6.8.3 Lighting to provide security can be particularly important in rural areas or for specific purposes such as defence or to create calming environments. Where this is the case, planning authorities should adopt policies for lighting, including the control of light pollution, in their development plans. 6.8.4 Planning authorities can attach conditions to planning permissions for new developments that include the design and operation of lighting systems, for example, requiring energy-efficient design and to prevent light pollution.*" (Planning Policy Wales). This also applies to development affecting the historic environment (see Section 6.1 of Planning Policy Wales).

6.2.5 Going further, PPW recognises the importance of designated AONBs, stating that planning authorities should give great weight to conserving and enhancing natural beauty (6.3.7), and should have regard to the wildlife, cultural heritage and social and economic well-being of these areas. At 6.3.8, along with National Parks, designated AONBs are of equal status in terms of landscape and scenic beauty and must be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate developments. The special qualities of designated areas should be given weight in plan-making and the decision-making process. Proposals in designated AONBs must be carefully assessed to ensure that their effects on those features which the designation is intended to protect are acceptable. The contribution that development makes to the sustainable management of the designated area must be considered (6.3.9, PPW).

6.2.6 Section 85 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 places a requirement of a general duty of public bodies on land in a designated AONB in England, which should include the impact of light pollution. "*In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant*

authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty".

6.2.7 Section 85 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 places a requirement of a general duty of public bodies on land in a designated AONB in Wales, which should include the impact of light pollution. "*In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a devolved Welsh authority must have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty*".

7.0 MEASURING LIGHT

7.0.1 Light is composed of individual wavelengths across the electromagnetic spectrum that give lamps their colour and strength. To ensure lighting designs are effective in reducing light pollution, it is useful to understand the different measurements of light and how they impact on artificial light pollution. Any manufacturer/supplier reference to fittings being 'Dark-Sky friendly', or similar wording, should not be taken as an assumption of acceptability.

7.0.2 To specify appropriate lighting according to the need and situation, it is helpful to understand the different measures of light – Lumens, Kelvins, Lux and Candela:

- Lumens measures how much light is emitted from a light source in all directions.
- Kelvins measures the colour correlated temperature of the light.
- Lux measures the amount of light that falls on a surface.
- Candela is the intensity of light as visible to the human eye in a specific direction.

7.1 Lumens

7.1.1 Bulbs used to be sold according to 'watts', which is the amount of energy input to the bulb or light fitting. The light output however is now categorised by their lumens. Figure 2 shows the approximate levels of lumen output from different types of bulbs, and the amount of energy that can be saved in comparison to a standard bulb.

7.1.2 Figure 2 also provides power wattages for different types of bulb brightness that can be found in most retailers. For most minor domestic purposes, 500 lumens are more than enough. For lighting greater than 500 lumens, one should use shielding or luminaires that direct all light downward, although this should be a last resort.

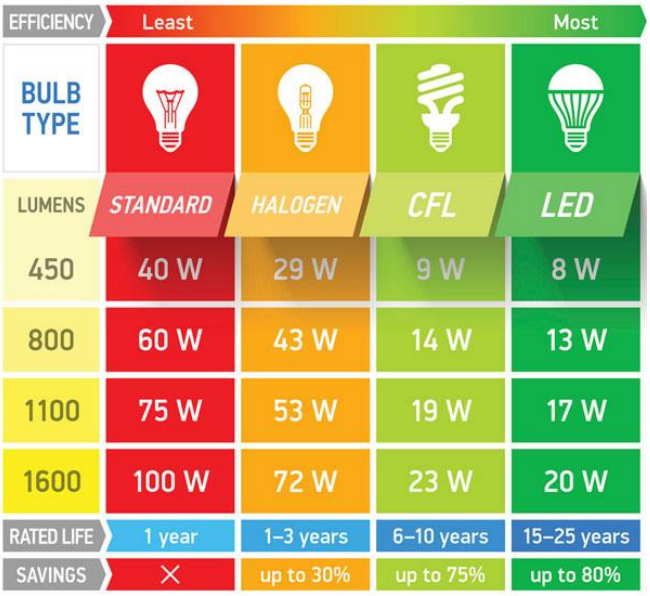


Figure 2 – Bulb output in lumens[17]

7.2 Kelvins

7.2.1 Manufacturers describe light bulbs using phrases such as 'cool white' and 'warm light'. A temperature measure known as the Kelvin scale (K) is used to determine the colour of the light. Colour Correlated Temperature (CCT), which is also measured in K, describes the colour appearance of light. The higher the colour temperature, the bluer the light will appear. It is blue-white light that is particularly damaging to dark skies and should be avoided. Many lamps will state their colour temperature with some abbreviating as 'cool' (5000K or more) or 'warm' white (3000-4000K).

7.2.2 It is regarded that 3000K and less is appropriate for dark skies, ideally 2700k. For lighting near key ecological receptors such as wildlife sites, further reductions are recommended, ideally <2200K. Figure 3 shows the CCT in more detail.

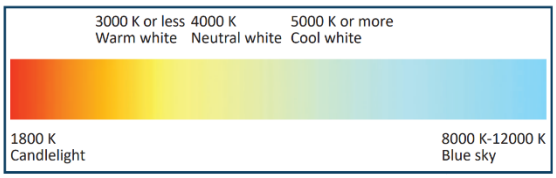


Figure 3 – Colour Correlated Temperature diagram

7.3 Lux

[17] What Are Lumens And Why Do They Matter - Universal Lighting (universal-lighting.co.uk)

7.3.1 Lux is a measurement of illuminance (E_m) – the amount of light on a surface to do a particular task. A single lux is equal to one lumen per square metre. Lux level will change with changes in distance or bulb type.

7.3.2 For comparison, a sunny day can be 10000 lux, a cloudy day 1000 lux and a full moon 0.3 lux. 15 lux is more than sufficient for a rural car park, with 5 lux for rural domestic lighting, although lighting should only be installed where clearly justifiable.

7.4 Candela

7.4.1 Candela is a base measurement for describing luminous intensity. It states how bright a light source is and, therefore, how far away an object can still be seen. It is the light intensity from any point in a single direction from the light source.

7.4.2 High levels of intensity in any direction can contribute to obtrusion and glare issues. The internal optics and lenses of the whole light – the luminaire – will direct lamp light into a beam direction.

7.5 Watts and Lumens

7.5.1 To achieve the appropriate illumination (lux), Table 1 recommends LED wattages (W) and lumen values (lm) to achieve approximate levels of illuminance for certain standardised tasks. Whilst some may be more relevant to non-domestic installations, any householder should aim to purchase LEDs at the lowest recommended level to achieve the necessary lighting footprints required.

Table 1 - Approximate Target illumination levels

	Approximate Target illumination levels (Typical levels as listed in BSI and HSE documents)				
Area to be lit m^2	(5 lux) DOMESTIC areas, walkways	(10 lux) DOMESTIC driveways, small car parks, traffic areas for slow moving vehicles	(20 lux) Farmyards, clearance and excavation	(50 lux) Loading and unloading, vehicle turning, construction areas, equipment sheds	(100 lux) Sports, fine detail and precision work
25	**3w 400lm**	**6w 500lm**	**11w 1000lm**	30w 3000lm	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST

50	**5w 500lm**	**11w 1000lm**	23w 2500lm	60w 6500lm	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST
100	**11w 1000lm**	23w 2300lm	50w 5000lm	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST
250	30w 3000lm	60w 6500lm	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST
500+	60w 6500lm	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST	CONSULT LIGHTING SPECIALIST

7.5.2 As a general guide, lighting using 11W or 1000 lumens or less is generally a low risk (Green cells). Lighting above 11W and 1000 lumens but less than 60W and 6500 lumens is considered a medium risk (Orange cells). Lighting above 60W and 6500 lumens is considered high risk (Red Cells) and that the lighting installation in such instances should be properly designed, in consultation with a lighting specialist.

7.6 Recommendations:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recognises that to specify appropriate lighting according to the need and situation, t is helpful to understand the different measures of light – Lumens, Kelvins, Lux and Candela.
- Colour Correlated Temperature (CCT), which is measured in K, describes the colour appearance of light. It is regarded that 3000K and less is appropriate for dark skies, ideally 2700k, although should be around 2200k when nearby key ecological receptors.
- To achieve the right illumination, Table 1 is advised by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership for recommended LED wattages and lumen values to achieve approximate levels of illuminance for certain standardised tasks. Users should aim to purchase LEDs at the recommended low-risk level to achieve necessary lighting footprints. For most minor domestic purposes, 500 lumens are normally more than enough. For lamps greater than 500 lumens, one should use shielding or luminaires that directs all light downward, although should be considered a last resort after other options have been considered.

8.0 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD LIGHTING

8.1 To minimise light pollution, the following good practice design principles should be followed to ensure good lighting reduces artificial light pollution. With all installations, the aim should be **the right light, in the right place, for the right time:**

- **Principle 1 – Useful** – Any light should be justified with a clear purpose and benefit. The overall lighting impact should be appropriate for both task and local setting, regardless of design.
- **Principle 2 – Targeted** – Light should be directed to where it is needed and not spill into neighbouring spaces. All light above the horizontal should be avoided. Zero upward light is essential. Asymmetric lights should be used where possible to reduce light spill, lower mounting heights, improving efficiency and eliminating upward light.
- **Principle 3 – Low light** – Lights should provide the right illuminance referenced against design standards where appropriate. Do not use needlessly over-bright lights as there will be more pollution and unnecessary glare. Use 500 lumens and less for domestic lighting. Lights should be installed at their lowest practical height.
- **Principle 4 – Controlled** – Turn off when not needed with manual switches, timers or proximity (PIR) sensors. Ensure lights are dimmed or selectively activated when activity is low, to reduce light and energy use.
- **Principle 5 – Designed** – For larger non-domestic installations, professional designers should be consulted to ensure illuminance, and control of spill light and glare, are appropriate for the task. Use the minimum possible number of lights and adhere to relevant standards.
- **Principle 6 – Colour** – Lamps should be 3000K or less and ideally 2700K. These are sometimes described as ‘warm white’. Lamps above 4000K described as ‘neutral’ and ‘cool’ should be avoided as they generally have more blue light within the spectrum.

8.2 Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership have a helpful factsheet giving examples of appropriate dark-sky light fittings, along with manufacturers and distributors[18], including fittings for use on new builds and refurbishments[19].

8.3 A well-designed and installed dark-sky friendly lighting unit will not need any shielding. In certain circumstances, however, a shield may be useful, such as when lights can be seen from surrounding key viewpoints or when up-lights cannot be avoided. Shielding usually takes the form of cowls, louvres (or baffles), and/or shields.

8.4 When selecting a shield, choose types that are sympathetically designed to their surroundings. In situations where lights will be seen from surrounding key viewpoints, it may be possible to add a physical barrier, such as planting a hedge or tree line to soften the impact of lighting. Existing woodland or wildlife areas should not be used as a barrier, as light shining into these can be harmful. New planting should be of native species and

[18] Good Lighting Advice - Chasing Stars Cranborne Chase AONB Dark Skies Bid

[19] Feb-22-Good-Practice-7b1-DNS-fittings.pdf (cranbornechase.org.uk)

in accordance with the relevant landscape management zone, as identified within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

8.5 Other lighting considerations

- Low-level pathway lighting – Paths do not always need bright lights. In fact, bright lights can often be uncomfortable or dazzle. Low-level bollards with shielded lights can be considered, but should not shine upwards or sideways.
- Upgrading existing lighting – Replacement lighting may provide an opportunity to reduce artificial light pollution. Relocating, adjusting direction, and installing sensors are all ways to improve upon the existing situation.
- Surfaces – Different surfaces reflect light differently, so the type of surface required for an installation should be considered. Darker colours, such as dark greens or asphalt greys and blacks will reflect less light, cause less glare, and reduce the visibility of the installation. White or mirrored surfaces will reflect more light which can be a problem for some wildlife, who often mistake reflected surface for water.
- Garden Lighting – Decorative garden lights also add to the overall impact of lighting. The same principles as for light fittings should be considered.
- Visual impact of lighting equipment – During the day, the visual impact of lighting equipment including poles, brackets and cabling, should be considered, especially in protected and/or historic landscapes. Tall columns may give less glare at night because floodlights may have a steeper downward angle, but they will be more intrusive by day because of their visual effects.
- New technology – Innovations are constantly and becoming increasingly commercially viable although must be assessed to ensure that by solving one problem, it is not creating another.
- Windows and internal lights – Allowing daylight into a building is crucial for our circadian rhythm as, with our busy lives, most of us do not get enough daylight. However, internal light overspilling from buildings can add significantly to artificial light pollution. In general, internal lights shine horizontally and, in the case of sky/roof lights, directly upwards. To reduce light pollution from buildings:
  - Ensure windows have curtains/blinds that stop light spilling out and are used.
  - Use electronically timed lighting and blinds/shutters linked to ‘smart home’ systems to allow flexible operation.
  - Face glazing into courtyards or associated buildings, rather than towards green spaces or neighbours.
  - Try ‘smart glass’, which is made by passing electrical current through the material to change its transparency.

8.6 **Recommendations:**

- To minimise light pollution, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership advocates following the following best practice design principles when considering new lighting to ensure the right light, in the right place and for the right time (refer to Section 8.1):
    - Useful
    - Targeted
    - Low light
    - Controlled
    - Designed
    - Colour
- Shielding may be useful, when lighting can be seen from surrounding key viewpoints, but should be sympathetically designed to their surroundings and have regard to material planning considerations which avoid creating a persistent and dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the National Landscape, and/or damage Special Qualities in the National Landscape. Shielding should be a last resort, and only used, if necessary, in the interests of landscape and visual effects and consideration of other lighting considerations should be factored in.

9.0 PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

9.0.1 The following section provides advice for different users and types of situations.

9.1 Domestic/Householder

9.1.1 Light should be avoided unless it has a clear, necessary purpose. As minor fittings are not generally subject to planning control or need a lighting designer, it is important that those installing domestic lights understand the difference between good and bad lighting. What may seem an enticing deal at the retailer can turn out to be inappropriate, a nuisance to neighbours and overly polluting. Following these simple steps can ensure good domestic/householder lighting that protects dark skies. Figure 4 also provides a useful visual illustration.

9.1.2 Minor Lights Specifications:

- Lamps of less than 500 lumens (~5W LED) is fine for navigating a garden path, and 1,000 lumens (11W LED) is acceptable for those requiring a little extra light for most uses, like car parking.
- Homeowners do not need lighting greater than 1,500 lumens (~15w LED) for domestic use.
- Anything above 500 lumens, where justified, should be fully shielded so all light goes downwards with no upward light ratio. LEDs are best to achieve downward light.

- Proximity sensors such as infra-red (PIR) should be used to light only when needed. Separate sensors can also angle the light without comprising its function.
- Check light does not overspill into surrounding vegetation/natural areas or neighbours.

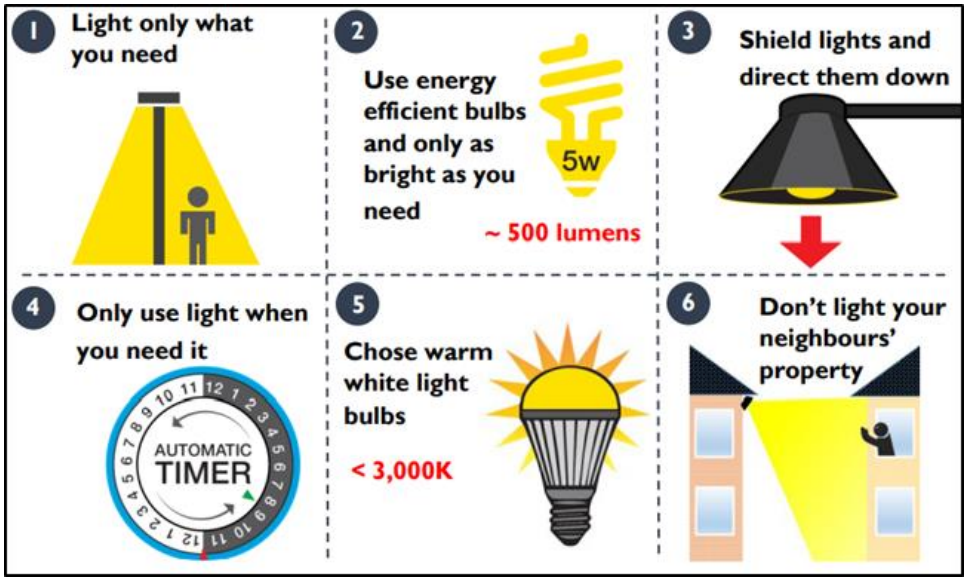


Figure 4 – Best principles for minor and domestic lighting – International Dark-Sky Association and South Downs National Park Authority

9.1.3 Domestic lighting and internal light spill can be relatively unobtrusive provided they are low powered and installed correctly. In addition to the above, the Institution of Lighting Professionals has produced further domestic guidance. ILP - GN09: Domestic exterior lighting: getting it right!. This short leaflet advises on appropriate lighting for the task in hand, providing the level of illumination required but not becoming a cause for concern to adjacent residents or affecting the natural environment. Figure 5 shows how applying such principles can improve dark skies across the Wye Valley National Landscape.

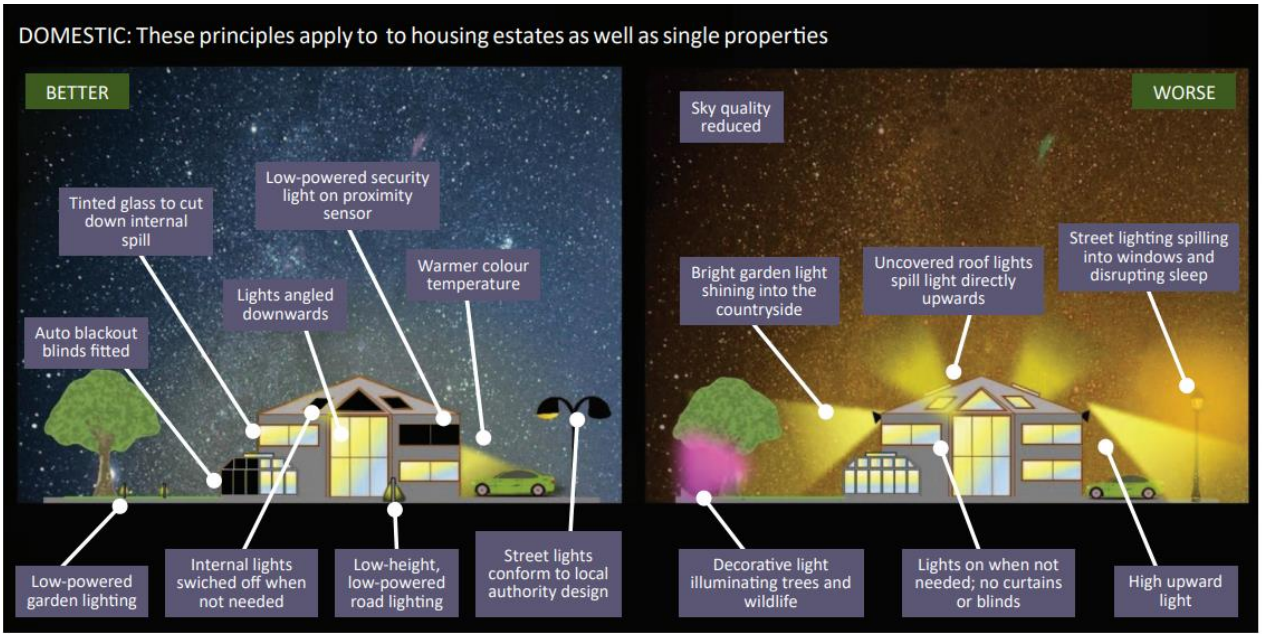


Figure 5: Minimising light pollution from domestic lighting (from South Downs National Park Authority: Dark Skies Technical Advice Note 2018)

9.1.4 Key considerations for external householder lighting includes:

- Nuisance to neighbours – Badly installed lighting will almost always annoy neighbours. Ensure lighting is 500 lumens or less, pointed downwards and away from other properties, and use proximity sensors to turn off when not needed. Install at the lowest practical height to reduce nuisance. If too powerful and proven to be disruptive, one may risk breaching environmental nuisance laws.
- Over lighting in domestic luminaires – While tempting to get value for money, many domestic options are over bright and too powerful for domestic purposes. 500-1000 lumens will be sufficient for most domestic uses and aesthetics. Overbright and badly directed light can also be a hazard to oncoming drivers as the glare could be dangerous. If needing more light to illuminate an area, it is better to use more lower powered lights rather than one over-bright luminaire.
- Using minor domestic style lights for small commercial needs – Commercial lighting needs are often guided by illuminance standards and often require a lighting designer but there may be circumstances where domestic and minor lights installed by the owner without using a lighting designer are more appropriate. For example, office doors, a shed entrance or a small pathway may require one single luminaire rather than a complex design. In these circumstances, this section on minor lighting and the section on commercial lighting should provide sufficient guidance to install the right lighting.
- Aesthetic lights – Whilst exterior lights do change the look and feel of a building or garden, it is important to do this with the ‘less-is-more’ adage in mind. Mood lighting

has a better impact when it can be clearly perceived and appreciated and not lost in unnecessary clutter. Garden wildlife and up lighting of trees should be avoided to benefit wildlife, especially with lighting over 500 lumens. However, using red colours will also help as it disrupts wildlife less and ensure to turn off when not needed.

9.1.5 Internal light spill through domestic glazing can also have a great impact on the night sky quality and the integrity of a dark landscape, particularly as architecture increasingly moves towards full height glazed elevations. If glazing is excessive, of poor quality or points upwards such as rooflights, internal light will present obtrusive light sources, reducing dark skies and disrupting the continuity of the landscape.

9.1.6 Figure 5 taken together with the following can help reduce visual landscape effects:

- Avoid sky lanterns.
- Appropriate visual light transmission (VLT) should be considered to reduce amount of light passing through glazing.
- Louvres can limit the glazing extent.
- Internal lights installed further away from glazing.
- Curtain and blinds used.
- Glazing extent meets thermal efficiency building regulations.
- Interior lighting should be compliant with BS workplace standards.
- High gable glazing should be avoided.
- Automated black out blinds used.
- Reduce number of rooflights.

9.1.7 Key considerations for internal light spill include:

- Visible Light Transmission (VLT) is the amount of light that passes through glazing. The VLT level can be selected to reduce the amount of internal spill. For domestic glazing, a VLT of 0.65 is preferred with 0.5 for roof lights.
- The use of automated black out blinds can considerably reduce the amount of internal light spill from rooflights. Some manufacturers produce smart systems that trigger on the onset of darkness and can be controlled from mobile devices. There is a need to ensure that the fabric eliminates all internal spill. Exterior louvres can be used and may be preferred for walled glazing rather than rooflights.
- Excessive glazing can cause thermal issues as large extents of glazing that let in a large amount of solar radiation can cause houses to overheat. Building regulations require that glazing should not exceed 25% of the floor area to meet energy efficiency building regulations (depending on thermal properties of the glass). This can be avoided by reducing the glazing extent or using external shielding/blinds to reduce

solar input. Modern glazing is improving thermal regulation, but limits to the glazing should be considered.

- Large continuous areas of glazing can cause obtrusive landscape impacts. The modern 'grand design' to have large glass walls and gable ends to new dwellings and barn conversions means there is considerable potential for internal domestic light to 'spill out'. Linear extents with high levels of internal lighting can be highly visible within a landscape, especially from view tops. Consideration should be given to reduce this impact by adopting a more characteristic design process, reducing the glazing extent or using external louvres or shielding to reduce the landscape impact.
- Turn off internal lights when not needed.
- For new development or when considering alterations/extensions, design internal lighting away from windows.

9.1.8 **Recommendations**:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership advises that whilst domestic lighting may not normally require planning permission, consideration in plan-making and decision-making should have regard to Section 9.1 of this position statement and the following specific material lighting considerations:
    - Lighting of 500 lumens or less is only needed for most domestic uses, with shielding above 500 lumens.
    - Downward pointing luminaires is required with no upward light ratio.
    - Less than or equal to 3000K Colour Correlated Temperature (warm white) though ideally 2700K should be secured.
    - Have a clear purpose and illumination area.
    - Switch lighting off when not needed.
- Within any planning application, applicants should ensure to include and make clear:
    - Justification for the lighting describing the relevant task areas.
    - Lumen and Colour Correlated Temperature levels are provided.
    - Pictures/details of the proposed luminaires are provided.
    - Any deviation from best practice, e.g. using heritage style lanterns on listed buildings, is given and clearly justified.
    - Lighting is not obtrusive under ILP GN01 guidance to neighbours.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recognises that internal light can also lead to significant landscape and visual effects through glazing and other transparent surfaces. Users can reduce the impact of internal light spill by:
    - Using an appropriate visible light transmission (VLT) solution.
    - Limiting the scale, continuity and size of the glazing.
    - Using automated black-out blinds on rooflights.
    - Using curtains and blinds to reduce internal spill.
    - Switch lighting off when not needed.

9.2 **Commercial and Industrial**

9.2.1 Many of the key points for reducing light pollution from domestic/householder (Section 9.1) applies to both commercial and industrial uses but there are some differences. Commercial developments present some of the largest challenges to a dark landscape. Owners tend to install their own lighting, assuming more is better and offering a competitive advantage. However, due to these assumptions, commercial properties often install over bright artificial lighting, generating numerous sources of artificial light pollution. Common problems include festoon lighting, overbright and upward light, floodlighting over bright and badly installed, building luminance not directed, façade high level aesthetic lighting, trees up-lit, excessive clutter and up-lights above 500 lumens.

9.2.2 It is considered that applying these key points for small business lighting can still achieve intended outcomes without adversely contributing to artificial light pollution:

- Shielding lights above 500 lumens;
- Use proximity sensors or timers;
- Angle lights downwards;
- Turn off at close of business;
- Avoid uncontrolled decorative lighting

9.2.3 It would also be appropriate to apply these key considerations for industrial lighting:

- Design scheme in accordance with best standards;
- Turn off when not needed;
- Angle lights downwards;
- Situate further away from rural locations;
- Avoid tall lighting columns in open areas

9.2.4 Figures 6 and 7 visually show how light pollution could be minimised for both commercial and industrial lighting.

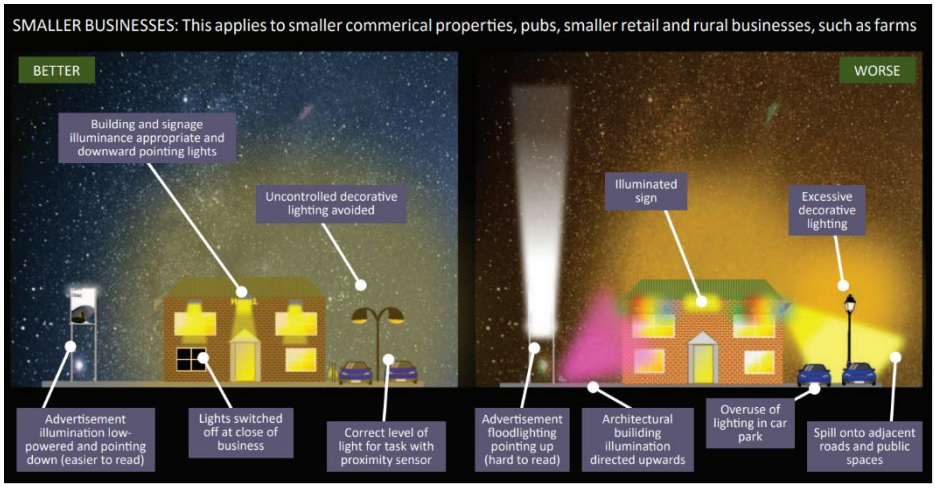


Figure 6 – Minimising light pollution from commercial lighting (from South Downs National Park Authority: Dark Skies Technical Note 2018)

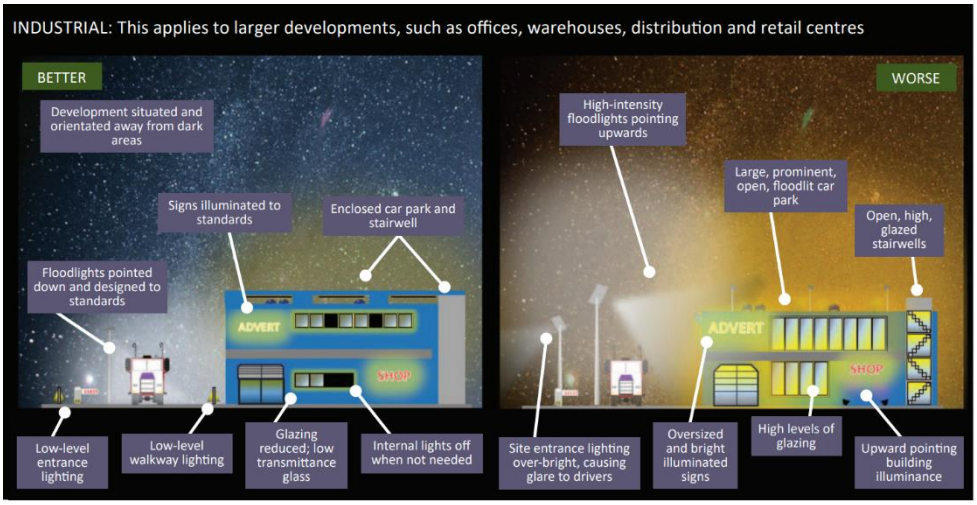


Figure 7 – Minimising light pollution from industrial lighting (from South Downs National Park Authority: Dark Skies Technical Note 2018)

9.2.5 Commercial lighting is different from normal domestic lighting because it tends to have a greater impact and owners may be obligated under a ‘duty of care’ or insurance needs to provide lights for other users. It is also often on a larger scale, using multiple light sources and more complex. This means that they should consider a professionally led design because they may need to achieve more precise levels of illuminance, reduce pollution and light to meet the needs of users, seeking the professional input from a qualified lighting designer.

9.2.6 There are also important principles to consider on non-domestic lighting and luminaires. Whilst the advice for domestic users is still applicable to non-domestic uses, there are additional principles that should be followed:

- Upward light ratio – Under ILP GN01/23, designs should calculate the upward flux ratio, which allows the effect of both direct and reflected components of the whole installation to be considered. It accounts for the contribution of the reflectance from the illuminated area and spill areas and ensures that the overall level of upward light aims to reduce the impact of sky glow.
- Asymmetric luminaries – Asymmetric luminaires are very useful in controlling lighting, particularly in non-domestic settings. These luminaires have optics that internally bend the emitted light from the lamp and direct it to specific areas reducing waste light, for example long thin paths. Symmetric luminaires have no directing optical controls which means that the light is distributed more evenly over wider angles, usually 120 degrees. The benefit of asymmetric lights is that they can be installed flat so upward light and spill is reduced. They can also be installed at a lower height as the light is more efficient in illuminating the right area. Many new LEDs in streetlights and floodlights have asymmetric beams to achieve more efficient illuminance standards.
- Illuminance appropriate and visual impact – Higher levels of illuminance will be more prominent in darker landscapes, introducing more adverse levels of visual effect. Regardless of the efficiency of the lighting scheme to reduce obtrusive light, the residual level of luminance (the light coming from a surface) which cannot be avoided, may still present an inappropriate visual impact. Generally, illuminances levels (light shining on a surface) of over 10 lux will begin to create a noticeable luminous landscape impact. While much depends on the size, extent and intensity of a lighting scheme, illuminances requirements over 10 lux may need to be avoided due to the inherent harm.

9.2.7 To aid the assessment of non-domestic planning applications, it is encouraged that applications ensure that key information is clearly expressed in any lighting design. Equally, decision-makers should be able to understand and access the same metrics to make an assessment.

9.2.8 Larger scale commercial lighting can have a large impact due to scale, use and requirement. A lighting designer is needed in nearly all cases. The range of luminaires used can be complex to meet the needs of illuminance standards for different work and public areas. Bulkhead, street, floodlight, bollards and advertisements are all typically used, all requiring a specific purpose and need. Luminaires are often mounted at increased height (up to 15 metres) and will be more powerful to ensure illuminance levels under British Standards BS EN 12464-2 2014 Light and Lighting of workplaces, are met. The levels of illuminance can be higher than most single commercial designs and over wider areas. This means that the generated sky glow is larger and more intense, and the visual intrusion of lights can have wider landscape impacts. Larger, glazed buildings and industrial complexes can generate significant internal spill, particularly if larger single elevations are used that appear as linear blocks of light in the landscape. There may also

be additional impacts from increased traffic flow, particularly if the development is new. The light of headlights can create noticeable landscape impacts even though the effect is temporary.

9.2.9 **Recommendations:**

- In respect of commercial and industrial lighting, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that consideration in plan-making and decision-making should have regard to Sections 9.1 and particularly 9.2 of this position statement and the following considerations:
    - Shielding of lights should be used above 500 lumens;
    - Use proximity sensors or timers;
    - Angle lights downwards;
    - Turn off lighting at close of business;
    - Avoid uncontrolled decorative lighting;
    - Situate further away from rural locations;
    - Avoid tall lighting columns in open areas.
    - Upward light ration, asymmetric luminaries and illuminance appropriate.
- Within any planning application, applicants should ensure to include and make clear, in consultation with a lighting designer as appropriate:
    - Justification for the lighting describing the relevant task areas
    - Lumen and Colour Correlated Temperature levels are shown.
    - Pictures/details of the luminaires are provided.
    - Any deviation from best practice, e.g., using heritage style lanterns on listed buildings, is given and clearly justified.
    - The design scheme to be in accordance with best standards, ensuring that upward light is zero, consideration of asymmetric luminaries and visual impacts.

9.3 Car Parking, roads and paths

9.3.1 Car parks may need lighting as they either need to provide adequate light for workers or for the public pedestrians walking to and from their vehicles. The level of illumination depends on the location of the parking and level of use, although only if lighting is justified in the first instance.

9.3.2 If lighting is justified, small, quiet car parks in rural areas should have a recommended 5 lux-maintained average with larger car urban parks receiving 15 lux preferably using bollard lighting rather than column mounted luminaires. Proximity sensors should also be used. For illuminance levels, refer to BS EN 12464-2:2014. Road or path lighting may also be required which needs to comply with design requirements of

road lighting, covered in BS 5489-1-2020 – TC and BS EN 13201-2: 2015 - TC – Road Lighting Performance requirements.

9.3.3 In addition to the considerations identified under the domestic, commercial and industrial lighting sections in 9.1 and 9.2 of this position statement, specific key considerations for car park lighting includes:

- Over lighting – glare-intense luminaires installed badly can create glare issues for users. This can be a particular issue when lights point directly towards entrances where oncoming vehicles users may suffer glare, increasing the potential of harm to other users and amounting to a statutory nuisance.
- Over illuminance – Many non-designer led car parks tend to use lights that are over bright for the appropriate illuminance and situation. This will increase the surface luminosity and sky glow impact. Luminaire power should be appropriate for the level of illuminance (refer to Table 1).
- Asymmetric Luminaires: Upward light – As car park floodlighting typically uses higher strength luminaires, there is more availability to use asymmetric luminaires than symmetric. Asymmetric luminaires will direct the light better and avoid the potential for creating upward light.
- Bollards or poles – Low level bollards are also useful as they reduce the height of luminaires, reducing intensity. However, bollards can be susceptible to damage and don't spread the light as effectively over larger areas than pole mounted lights. Care should be taken to use bollards in appropriate spaces, or as navigation aids around the parking area.
- Ecological and Landscape Visual Impact – Car parks can be quite large, well-used and require high pole mounted luminaires. The visual impact on the landscape and ecology can be high and often adverse. Although car park lighting can comply with standards, the overall presence of the lighting can produce significant residual impacts that may be difficult to overcome. Additional mitigations should include using a CCT of 3000K and under to reduce sky glow, shielding prominent and potentially obtrusive luminaires from view and – importantly – using timers or sensors to ensure that lights are off when not needed.
- Upward Flux – ILP GN01 21 assumes that amenity lighting is not expected in the National Landscape. While this may be difficult in practice, as there is a legislative driver to provide lighting for public car parks, every effort should be made to use low reflectance surfaces for new car parks to reduce the creation of sky glow and the upward flux ratio. The overall landscape impact, including the residual impact will also determine the acceptability of amenity lighting in these zones.
- Architectural Façade Lighting – The intentional illumination of building facades should be avoided, especially in rural areas where the luminance of buildings can be very

prominent in the landscape. Modern alternatives such as low powered unobtrusive window lighting, should be considered.

- Walkways and bulkheads – Avoid circular or other “window” shaped bulkhead lights that emit light upward. Use bulkhead lights that direct light downwards or have shielding. Ensure that emergency luminaires on batteries follow these principles.
- Historic environment – Any successful lighting design scheme must involve artistry as well as technical expertise. The main objectives of a good external lighting scheme should be to create the desired aesthetic presentation of the building and its surroundings; to give a building an added dimension and greater night time presence and which enhances its key architectural features as well as its social and heritage significance; to elevate the ‘after darkness’ experience and promote a more inclusive and safe night-time local economy with more people enjoying a vibrant cultural life; to improve and promote the observation and experience of the heritage building or setting against the night sky; to ensure that the right quality, quantity and colour of light is used to give the best lighting experience; to ensure that the daytime view of the building or space is not marred by poorly located electric light units (which are technically called ‘luminaires’); and that sufficient protection against potential vandalism to the installation has been taken.

9.3.4 **Recommendations:**

- In respect of car parking lighting, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that consideration in plan-making and decision-making should have regard to Section 9.3 of this position statement and the following considerations:
    - Lux should be the following, depending on usage:
        - High usage: 20 lux,
        - Medium: 10 lux
        - Low: 5 lux
    - Over lighting – glare and illuminance;
    - Asymmetric luminaires – upward light;
    - Bollards and poles;
    - Ecological and Landscape Visual Impact; and
    - Upward Flux – Amenity Light.
- Within any planning application, applicants should therefore ensure to include and make clear, in consultation with a lighting designer:
    - Justification for the lighting describing the relevant task areas
    - Lumen and Colour Temperature levels are shown.
    - Pictures of the luminaires are provided.
    - Any deviation from best practice, e.g., using heritage style lanterns on listed buildings, is given.

- Design scheme in accordance with best standards, ensuring that upward light is zero, asymmetric luminaries and consideration of visual impacts.

- Within any planning application, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would expect to see the following specific details provided:
  - Location of supporting columns
  - Mounting height of luminaire
  - Tile angle of luminaire – 0-degree tilt with luminaire parallel to ground
  - Detail of precise type of luminaire
  - Wattage or colour correlated temperature (degrees kelvin) of luminaire
  - Colour of supporting columns
  - Any cowling to prevent back-spill or upward spill (although not required if tilt angle is 0 degrees).

9.4 Farms

9.4.1 Farms have some permitted development rights for lighting on existing buildings, which means that luminaires could be installed that have little consideration for design. Due to their rural location, the contrast between a dark landscape and lighting means that the visual impact can often appear relatively higher than urban settings. Principles of good lighting should be followed to avoid landscape impacts.

9.4.2 As a farm is a place of business, owners must be careful to illuminate different areas of the farm properly. According to HSE Lighting at work HSG38 and British Standards BS EN 12464-2 2014 *Light and Lighting of workplaces*, farmyards have two general areas of varying illuminance:

- Farm-yards: with moving vehicle, machines and people – require 20 lux average
- Equipment sheds and Animal sorting pens: with movement in hazardous area – require 50 lux average.

9.4.3 Other lighting criteria such as uniformity, glare and CRI values are also recommended in BS EN 12464-2 2014. This provides some LED purchasing recommendations for achieving different illuminance levels for simple applications. Larger, complex and more hazardous areas may need a lighting designer.

9.4.4 Specific key considerations for farms also includes:

- Farmyard Floodlighting – Lighting of farmyards is usually achieved with area floodlights. It is important to consider asymmetric luminaires to reduce upward light and ensure glare is not an issue. Badly installed bright lights can cause glare issues where unwanted visitors and workers can become hidden – this is also a safety, security and crime issue. They can also cause significant visual intrusion in a dark landscape, which can be detrimental to wildlife and visual intrusion. Areas that are

more hazardous or have more conflicted uses with people and machinery should receive greater attention. Floodlights should be installed at the lowest practical height to achieve the illumination (refer to Table 1).

- Farm Building Roof Lights and Greenhouses – Greenhouses, open barns, polytunnels or sheds with large amounts of glazing and roof-lights can introduce significant visual impacts. Whilst natural light and artificial light is important to operate in all hours, internally installed luminaires should be lower than roof lights to avoid direct upward light spill. For new buildings and improvements, black out blinds should be considered to activate upon the onset of darkness. This is particularly important for greenhouses as the internal light spill can reduce sky quality for many miles. Operational open barn elevations may be more difficult to shield due to the need for natural light during the daytime. External louvres can be used in addition to turning off lights at night when they are not needed, all of which can benefit farm animals.
- Wildlife – The rural location of farms means that they will be surrounded by wildlife and darkness where even the smallest lights can be more visually obtrusive than urban settings, even having effects on farmers' own animals. As a growing amount of evidence is showing, light pollution disrupts wildlife just as much as people. As such, it is important that lights do not unnecessarily illuminate or shine into wildlife area, waterways and the open countryside.
- Ecological and Landscape Impact Assessment – Due to the location of farms in the rural landscape, an ecological and landscape impact assessment such as the Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance on undertaking environmental lighting impact assessments should be undertaken. For more remote farms away from the urban fringe, consideration to the wider environment should be made and should include an assessment of the impact through ecological receptors and the view from the surrounding landscape. More consideration of the illumination levels, hours of use and intensity should be considered.
- Lighting for Security – Security is undoubtedly an important consideration for a farm. The document 'Secured By Design – Lighting Guide' by the Police gives general advice for security lighting. However, such lighting should be considered carefully and complemented by supplementary systems, e.g., smart alarms. Any lighting should still be of the right brightness, colour to avoid upward light spill.
- Other Considerations – Farms may also require lighting for car parking, roads, advertisements, small business premises or ménage lighting. Other good and bad practices chapter should be referenced when considering such lighting schemes. Likely references will include small commercial lighting, parking and roads/paths.

9.4.5 Luminaire Advice

- Area Floodlights – Avoid symmetrical halogen security lights with high colour temperatures and a fixed PIR Sensor. Use tiltable warm white LED lights with a separate PIR sensor. You can position PIR sensors to trigger for people not wildlife.
- Temporary Floodlights – Lights on mobile generators should follow good practice. Care should be made to ensure that the lights are pointing downward, and the minimum amount of light is used to perform the task. Temporary lights can be capable of producing very high brightness to cover many different tasks. Try and use as few individual lamps as possible.

9.4.6 **Recommendations:**

- In respect of farm lighting, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that consideration in plan-making and decision-making should have regard to Section 9.4 of this position statement and the following considerations:
    - For farm-yards with moving vehicle, machines and people, this requires a 20 lux average
    - For equipment sheds and animal sorting pens or with movement in hazardous area, this requires a 50 lux average.
    - Over lighting – glare and illuminance;
    - Asymmetric luminaires – upward light;
    - Farm building rooflights and greenhouses;
    - Ecological and Landscape Visual Impact;
    - Lighting for security; and
    - Upward Flux – Amenity Light.
- Within any planning application, applicants should therefore ensure to include and make clear, in consultation with a lighting designer:
    - Justification for the lighting describing the relevant task areas
    - Lumen and Colour Temperature levels are shown.
    - Pictures of the luminaires are provided.
    - Any deviation from best practice, e.g. area and temporary floodlight luminaire advice, is given.
    - Design scheme in accordance with best standards, ensuring that upward light is zero, asymmetric luminaries and consideration of visual impacts.

9.5 Sports

9.5.1 Amenity floodlighting, particularly sports pitches, are one of the biggest threats to dark skies. Such lighting has a very high impact in dark sky places and a lighting designer is needed. These developments often reduce sky quality and can be seen for miles in the surrounding landscape. This is due to the high illuminance and colour needs to enable users to play safely. Luminaires are often installed at high levels to ensure correct illuminance even with asymmetric lights, which means the lamps can be very bright and

visible. As such, the lowest practical mounting height should be used in achieving the designed illuminance. Different sports require different levels of illuminance and colour depending on the skill level, intensity and ability to see play. Community level sports, such as football tennis and hockey, will require illuminance levels of 300 lux with appropriate uniformity of around 0.7. Lighting requirements can be found in the Sports England Artificial Lighting Guide 2012.

9.5.2 Horse arenas and equestrian ménages can also have a significant impact on the dark rural landscape. The illuminances needed can range from 100 to 500 lux (BS EN 12193) and can be very prominent even if low reflectance material is used. A lighting designer should be used to ensure that luminaires are installed correctly, and suitable curfews are used. Luminaires should not be erected 'ad-hoc' on existing structures as they will probably not achieve appropriate illuminances and limit obtrusive light. Using trees as fixing points should also be avoided. Temporary lighting should not be used as the luminaires are general in purpose and will not be appropriate for this type of activity. Within any planning application, the following details should be provided:

- Location of supporting columns
- Mounting height of luminaire
- Tile angle of luminaire – 0-degree tilt with luminaire parallel to ground
- Detail of precise type of luminaire
- Wattage or colour correlated temperature (degrees kelvin) of luminaire
- Colour of supporting columns
- Any cowling to prevent back-spill or upward spill (not required if tilt angle 0 degrees).

9.5.3 Further specific key considerations in respect of sports and arena lighting include:

- Nuisance – Sports lighting near residential areas can cause nuisance due to intensity and glare. Designs should reference ILP GN01 (2021) 'The reduction of obtrusive light' which recommends levels of intrusion into windows and boundaries.
- Sky Glow: Asymmetric Sports Lights – High powered symmetric lights can cause significant sky glow, particularly if the main beam points to the middle of the playing surface. Modern asymmetric LEDs should be used to direct light more efficiently without causing upward light. They are designed to be installed flat and at the correct lowest height to reduce intensity and upward light.
- Colour in Sports Lighting – Sports illuminance needs a high level of colour rendition index (CRI) to allow players to sight the play properly and pick a ball out from the background. This means that higher colour temperature LED (5000K+) are often used to achieve higher colour rendition which exacerbates the impact of skyglow as the light penetrates further into the atmosphere. This effect can be avoided as modern

LEDs have much better range of colour rendition with lower colour temperatures which is stated on the product specification. CRI levels of 60 are normally required for most community levels of play. The spectral range should also be checked to avoid blue colours with higher colour temperature needs.

- Landscape Visual Impact on Special Qualities – Due to the higher levels of illuminance, sports pitches can have a significant impact on the National Landscape and the Special Qualities even if the design of the lights is compliant with standards. For example, a pitch may have compliant lighting in terms of illuminance, colour rendition and colour temperature but due to the light presence of the illuminated surface, it can create a significant visual landscape impact. The residual impact could be of such significance that it may present a threat to dark skies and may need to be reconsidered or avoided.
- Upward Flux – ILP GN 01/21 assumes that sports lighting is not expected in National Landscapes such as the Wye Valley. Whilst this may be difficult in practice, every effort should be made to use low reflectance surfaces to reduce the creation of sky glow and the upward flux ratio. The overall landscape impact, including the residual impact, will also determine the acceptability of sports lighting in these zones. It is always preferable to site sports lighting in urban areas where it is accessible and has a much-reduced impact due to the high ambient lighting level.

9.5.4 **Recommendations**:

- In respect of sports lighting, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that consideration in plan-making and decision-making should have regard to Section 9.5 of this position statement and the following considerations:
    - Over lighting – glare and illuminance;
    - Nuisance;
    - Sky Glow;
    - Asymmetric luminaires – upward light;
    - Ecological and Landscape Visual Impact, particularly on Special Qualities;
    - Colour Temperature; and
    - Upward Flux – Amenity Light.
- Within any planning application, applicants should therefore ensure to include and make clear, in consultation with a lighting designer:
    - Justification for the lighting describing the relevant task areas
    - Lumen and Colour Temperature levels are shown.
    - Pictures of the luminaires are provided.
    - Any deviation from best practice, is given.
- Design scheme in accordance with best standards, ensuring that upward light is zero, asymmetric luminaries, smart switches, and consideration of visual impacts and cultural heritage and the historic environment.

- Within any planning application, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would expect the following details to be provided:
  - Location of supporting columns
  - Mounting height of luminaire
  - Tile angle of luminaire – 0-degree tilt with luminaire parallel to ground
  - Detail of precise type of luminaire
  - Wattage or colour correlated temperature (degrees kelvin) of luminaire
  - Colour of supporting columns
  - Any cowling to prevent back-spill or upward spill (although not required if tilt angle is 0-degrees).

9.6 Illuminated advertisements

9.6.1 Although subject to separate regulations, steps should be taken to illuminate advertisements only when needed, using low powered downward lights, such as LED strips. If you wish to install an illuminated advertisement, it is likely to need advertisement consent and possibly Listed Building Consent (if property is listed). Nevertheless, illuminated advertisements would be discouraged throughout all areas of the Wye Valley National Landscape, particularly in Conservation Areas or if it relating to a designated heritage asset.

9.6.2 If the local planning authority considers the advertisement necessary, then it should: be no higher than the property; not face towards areas of darkness; use lights that point down; use low-powered lights; and be switched off at the close of business.

9.6.3 Where an advertisement sign does not need illuminating, the local planning authority may make this a condition of the consent, so that lighting cannot be added later on. The luminance of lights is addressed in ILP PLG 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements.

9.6.4 **Recommendations**:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership does not recommend illuminated advertisements be installed in the National Landscape.
- If a local planning authority considers an advertisement necessary, then it should:
  - All illuminated advertisements installed on properties should be switched off on close of business.
  - Any installations on properties should not exceed the height of the property.
  - Any peripheral sites with installations should not face towards areas of darkness or lower environmental zones.
  - Up lighters should not be used.

- Where advertisement consents are granted that do not need illumination, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that decision-makers make this a condition of any such consent.
- There is a need to also consider heritage implications, particularly where a (non-)designated asset and its setting is being considered as part of an advertisement both directly and indirectly.

9.7 Temporary Lighting

9.7.1 Temporary lighting impacts should be part of the core planning for any project. Users should apply the following good practice to minimise light pollution and potential nuisance to others:

- Ensure that the power and installation of the equipment are appropriate for the task.
- Use lights with 3000K or less.
- Switch off the lighting when not in use.
- Avoid temporary lighting in the winter months when the impact is greatest due to the longer, darker nights, and the lack of deciduous vegetation acting as a barrier.
- Avoid using sources of light that penetrate deep into the sky, such as scanners or lasers.
- Where possible, use existing lit access routes to reduce the need for additional lighting.
- Keep light festivals to urban areas where there is already a high level of sky glow.

9.7.2 Other key considerations in respect of temporary lighting:

- Illuminance levels – The illuminance of areas should be appropriate for the task with reference to British Standards BS EN 12464- 2 lighting of outdoor workplaces. Care should be taken to ensure that the minimum amount of light is provided to workers, but it is not over illuminated. The choice of LEDs power should reflect this.
- Upward Light – All lights should be pointing downwards to avoid the generation of sky glow. Fixtures that cannot be adjusted downwards should be avoided.
- Colour Temperature – High colour correlated temperatures above 3000K should be avoided. LEDs with 3000K should have sufficient CRI to achieve lighting requirements for CCTV.
- Security and night lights – Care should be taken to ensure that any security lights are on suitable timers and sensors to trigger on the detection of movement. Construction tasks lights should be off at close of work leaving only essential security lighting that should comply with lighting requirements on upward light and colour temperature.
- Using a lighting designer – A lighting designer can produce an appropriate lighting plan that achieves illuminance levels but does not necessarily pollute the sky. The

construction lighting should be considered within a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) or landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) and within the lighting plan luminaire details.

9.7.3 **Recommendations**:

- In respect of temporary lighting, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that consideration in plan-making and decision-making should have regard to Section 9.7 of this position statement and the following considerations:
    - Over lighting – glare and illuminance;
    - Illuminance levels;
    - Asymmetric luminaires – upward light;
    - Ecological and Landscape Visual Impact, particularly on Special Qualities;
    - Colour Temperature of 3000k or less; and
    - Security and night lights.
- Design scheme in accordance with best standards, ensuring that upward light is zero, asymmetric luminaries, smart switches, and consideration of visual impacts, along with cultural heritage and the historic environment.
- Lighting designs should be in accordance with the British Standards for exterior lighting (BS5489).

9.8 Street Lighting

9.8.1 Illumination of residential roads is generally the responsibility of the Local Highways Authority (usually the County Council) or the relevant National Highways Agency for larger/strategic roads. Lighting that is in the public domain has been receiving close attention and scrutiny in recent years.

9.8.2 New developments that require street lighting should comply with the Local Authority's Lighting design guidance for ongoing maintenance. The installation of street lighting for roads is not a legal requirement and you don't have to provide lighting unless there is a clear safety need, and it is justified. However, if lighting is installed, there is a legal responsibility for the owners to maintain it according to British Standards. As such, a lighting designer should be consulted.

9.8.3 The design requirements of road lighting are covered in BS 5489-1-2020: Design of road lighting and BS EN 13201-2:2015 – Road Lighting Performance requirements. Lighting of roads and public amenity areas - Code of practice. The illuminance of roads depends on the traffic use and the mix of pedestrian needs, (road class). Both standards should be used to determine road class.

9.8.4 Key considerations in respect of street lighting include:

- Justification – Streetlights are a key determinant of sky quality, so it is important that there a clear, essential need for the lighting. Adding streetlights is often an ‘expectation’ but this should be assessed for actual need. The need for lighting could be avoided with effective consideration at the initial development design phase.
- Low Mounting Height: Bollards – For quiet residential access roads or pathways, low bollards could be used instead of higher column mounted streetlights. Bollards will help reduce the source intensity and visibility whilst keeping illuminance levels. Spill can also be limited using asymmetric optics. Bollards also reduce the generation of sky glow as the lamp is relatively less bright than pole/column mounted lights. Bollards should be used in areas where the risk of vehicular damage or vandalism is low. The Secured by Design guide provides more information.
- Illuminance Curfews – Modern LEDs can be dimmed down to achieve different levels of illuminance. As roads and paths will have a mixed level of usage, it is recommended that LEDs be dimmed to different road classes that reflect the changing use. Lights can also be subject to a part-night lighting regime where some lights are switched off when usage is low. Whilst consultation is needed to achieve this, it will reduce the night-time impact, saving money and energy.
- Colour Correlated Temperature – Some LEDs will have high colour correlated temperature and a blue-white spectrum. They should be avoided as they contribute to the sky glow effect. The British Standards refer only to Colour Rendition levels (CRI) rather than colour correlated temperature, as colour rendition can be achieved with different levels of colour correlated temperature. In this respect it is recommended that colour temperatures of 3000K and 2700K, with low blue-light should be used in achieving British Standard CRI levels.
- Low reflectance surfaces – Road and path materials reflect light differently. To reduce the indirect scatter of lights, low reflectance road and path surfaces should be used to reduce the light scattering into the atmosphere. Black and dark grey asphalt has a much lower reflectance compared to grey cement concrete.
- Lighting for wildlife corridors – In some places, road lighting may need to be installed close to highly sensitive wildlife routes, where priority species, such as bats, may be disrupted by lighting. Following examples from other places in the UK, such as Worcestershire, red luminaires could be used.
- Upward Flux – ILP GN01/21 assumes that road lighting is not expected in the Wye Valley National Landscape. Whilst this is difficult in practice, accounting for the strategic position of the Wye Valley in proximity to strategic towns and cities, every effort should be made to use low reflectance surfaces to reduce the creation of sky glow and the upward flux ratio. The overall landscape impact, including the residual impact will also determine the acceptability of road lighting in these zones.

- Street lighting designs – to include equipment specifications and a set of lighting intensity calculations, including lighting level contours, but not necessarily beam orientation.

9.8.5 It is not always necessary to have street lighting in a development. Where larger developments require street lighting, it can be designed to minimise artificial light pollution including features like dimming or part-night schemes. In some situations, the use of full cut-off, low-level bollards may be more appropriate than tall, brighter columns. This will limit the total lumens output and possible glare, scattering and reduce the impact of lighting on the surrounding area. The ILP Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light references British Standards on road lighting.

9.8.6 The ever-increasing cost of electricity has caused many councils to reconsider keeping inefficient streetlights on all night, and many are now turning them off. Large amounts of money and energy have been saved, and councils' carbon footprints have partly been reduced. Trials have shown that energy-saving dimming (to over 30%) is hardly noticed by residents[20]. Concerns are often expressed that turning off streetlights could lead to an increase in crime. However, a study published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health in 2015 found little evidence of harmful effects of switch-off, part night lighting, dimming or reducing the colour temperature (kelvin) on road collisions or crime in England and Wales[21].

9.8.7 Technology also enables lighting to be off or dimmed until movement is registered and the brighter light needed. Low-energy LED lights should be 3000K or below (warm white) to prevent any adverse effects on animals and humans[22].

9.8.8 **Recommendations**:

- In respect of street lighting, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership recommends that consideration in plan-making and decision-making should have regard to Section 9.8 of this position statement and the following considerations:
    - The installation of street lighting for roads not a legal requirement and should only be installed unless there is a clear safety need. However, if lighting is installed, there is a legal responsibility for the owners to maintain it according to British Standards.
    - Potential use of low mounting height bollards in preference to tall columns.
    - Illuminance Curfews and dimming/switching off streetlights.
    - Colour Correlated Temperature of 3000K and 2700K, with low blue-light should be used in achieving British Standard CRI levels.

[20] https://britastro.org/dark-skies/pdfs/CfDS1703_E5_Good_Lighting_Guide.pdf

[21] https://jech.bmj.com/content/69/11/1118

[22] Worcestershire County Council recently installed bat-friendly, red streetlights along a 60 metre stretch of the A4440, near to Warndon Wood. The road is a flight path for bats and white streetlights disrupt their feeding, especially the rarer, slower-flying species. Yet, red lights are proving to have little or no adverse impact on them.

  - Low Reflectance surfaces – black and dark grey asphalt has a much lower reflectance compared to grey cement concrete.
  - Lighting for Wildlife Corridors – where road lighting may need to be installed close to highly sensitive wildlife routes, where priority species, such as bats, may be disrupted by lighting.
  - Upward Flux.
  - Consideration of both cultural heritage and the historic environment.
  - Street lighting designs – to include equipment specifications and a set of lighting intensity calculations, including lighting level contours, but not necessarily beam orientation.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would encourage the de-lighting and subsequent removal of street lighting, in instances where it is no longer justified.

9.9 Telecommunications

9.9.1 Tall structures like telecommunications masts can have more significant impacts in views as they are discernible at considerable distances in favourable weather conditions, typically project above the skyline, and can stand out in their colour in the otherwise muted earth tones of the landscape. Such manmade features and vertical elements are rare and can have consequences for the perceptions of the landscape as wild and remote which are fundamental to the purposes of the AONB designation, which can be further undermined by the introduction of lighting.

9.9.2 Considering the design of the network means being able to choose options that have the lowest overall impact. Advances in technology or developments in the network have been able to rationalise equipment: remove redundant, prominent or intrusive elements. The advancement of share masts unless this leads to unacceptable levels of clutter on an individual mast, has been increasingly considered.

9.9.3 Consider whether lighting is necessary at all on telecommunication masts, and if it is, where it is needed and why.

10. WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE AMBIENT LIGHTING ZONES

10.1 Light Control Zones

10.1.1 Whilst the guidance of Section 9 should be adhered to, appropriate lighting will differ according to the context of the scheme. The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) recommends using ‘light control zones’ to determine the appropriateness of proposed lighting schemes within different surroundings. ILP guidance sets out zones and the limitations of light parameters for each zone.

10.1.2 The standard practice in external lighting design is to apply ambient lighting environment zones (E-zones) to set different lighting requirements under different sky conditions. Due to differences in ambient lighting between urban and rural settings, different levels of obtrusive light are allowed though zero upward light is preferred in all zones. The Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance on the reduction of obtrusive light (GN01 ILP: 2021) recommends lighting specifications based on these ambient zones. They state different levels of upward light, intensity, glare and building luminance for these zones should be followed in any lighting design.

10.1.3 ILP Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light[23] recommends the following light control zones in Table 2. The National Landscape is either a rural zone, incorporating E0/E1, or an urban zone E3, with an additional caveat on upward light.

Table 2 – ILP Light Control Zones

Zone	Surrounding	Lighting Environment	Examples	Sky Quality
E0	Protected	Dark	Designated Dark Sky Reserves and astronomical observable dark skies	20.5+ (*)
E1	**Natural**	**Dark**	**Rural areas, National Landscapes (AONBs) and National Parks**	**20 to 20.5 (*)**
E2	Rural	Low district brightness	Rural settlements or relatively dark outer suburban locations	15 to 20
E3	Suburban	Medium district brightness	Small town centres/suburban locations	<15
E4	Urban	High district brightness	Town centres with high levels of night-time activity	<15

(*) - This table references ILP GN01 2021 and the sky quality relating to ambient lighting zones. To be consistent with IDA places minimum sky quality for Parks and Places (2018 guidelines), a lower value of 21.2 is required. ILP GN01 2021 has a lower limit of 20.5 reflecting earlier IDA guidelines.

10.1.4 Refer to the ILP guidance note to see tables with the recommended limitations or maximum values of light parameters in each zone for:

- The illumination on surrounding properties
- Brightness of luminaires (light fittings)
- The effects on transport systems
- Sky glow
- The effect of over-lit building façades and signs

[23] Resources | Institution of Lighting Professionals (theilp.org.uk)

- Upward light ratio (ULR) of luminaires

10.1.5 By identifying ambient lighting zones, this will aim to help:

- Prevent unnecessary artificial light pollution from surrounding towns in the setting of the National Landscape encroaching on and into the National Landscape.
- Minimise artificial light pollution from rural settlements, economic hubs and infrastructure within and surrounding the National Landscape.
- Reduce existing light pollution from sources within the National Landscape by:
    - removal of lighting where possible;
    - reduction of lighting (e.g. of intensity or duration, using sensors and timers where practical); and
    - improvement of existing lighting (e.g. better designed and installed luminaires and warmer lights).

10.1.6 Using Table 2, the Wye Valley National Landscape can be categorised into two main rural and urban zones based upon the use of County Council and Authority owned road street lighting. Street lighting has a clear, measurable impact on sky quality and a useful demarcation between ambient lighting environments. The environment zones are set as follows:

- A rural zone which includes areas of the National Landscape that has sky quality measurements satisfying:
    - E0 – Rural landscape, open countryside, very little lighting, isolated buildings
    - E1 – Rural landscape, small villages, very little street lighting
- An urban zone to include:
    - E3 – Urban/Suburban settlements, towns, villages using street lighting.

10.1.7 For all lighting development within the rural setting (not within urban areas using Local Authority streetlighting) it is expected that plans will aim to achieve E0 compliance under ILP GN01 2021 as a matter of principle. Use of E1 criteria instead of E0 should be made clear in the design justification.

10.1.8 The need for E0 compliance is particularly relevant to road, amenity, and sports lighting where residual effects are likely to cause significant adverse landscape impacts. E1 areas are expected to reside between the urban fringe boundaries and the darker rural setting. The E0 zone and 20.5+ measurements are likely to begin within 2km of the edge of the street-lit urban fringe (E3) boundary. If in doubt, you should consult the Wye Valley National Landscape Team to determine zone compliance requirements.

10.1.9 In all zones, an installed upward light level of zero is sought in all cases, irrespective of ambient lighting zone. Whilst this contrasts with the ILP GN 01 guidance which allows positive values of ULR in E3/4, the Wye Valley National Landscape

Partnership seeks zero upward lighting in all cases and supersedes the ILP guidance on this technical respect.

10.2 The Setting of the Wye Valley National Landscape

10.2.1 The setting of the National Landscape is not formally defined[24]. Consideration should be given to the impact any lighting will have on the National Landscape itself and the AONB designation. Proposals for changes in the setting of the National Landscape should consider the relationship of the setting with the protected landscape, its landscape character and the National Landscapes' special qualities for why the Wye Valley National Landscape is designated an AONB. The setting is not a delineated geographical boundary, but it is defined by the area surrounding the National Landscape where proposed development could negatively impact on the natural beauty and special qualities.

10.2.2 With regards to lighting, the impact upon the National Landscape will vary in each case but will particularly depend on topography and the design and use of the lighting.

10.3 **Recommendations**:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership supports The Institution of Lighting Professionals 'Light Control Zones' guide namely ambient lighting environment zones (E-zones), as per Table 2 and 10.1.6 within this Position Statement to determine the appropriateness of proposed lighting schemes within different surroundings to inform lighting specifications based on these ambient zones for lighting assessments to support planning applications.
- Upward Light Ratio (ULR) in all zones an installed upward light level of ZERO should be sought in all cases, irrespective of the ambient lighting zone.
- Lighting proposals in the setting of the Wye Valley National Landscape should consider the relationship of the setting with the protected landscape of the National Landscape, its landscape character and its special qualities. To accord with this aim, no external lights should be erected or installed in, or within the setting of, the National Landscape unless:
    - They can be shown to be essential for security or safety, and the minimum necessary to achieve it;
    - They are directed downwards and designed or shielded to prevent upward, sideways, and outward spillage;
    - They give a light whose colour and intensity are appropriate for the wider setting and for wildlife;
    - They do not highlight a structure or feature that would have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding landscape; and

[24] Further guidance on the 'Setting' of the Wye Valley National Landscape can be found within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026.

  - They utilise the most energy- and pollution-efficient equipment that is reasonably available.
- Where existing lighting is identified as having an adverse effect on the character of the National Landscape, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership would encourage the removal or modification of the lighting units.
- Plan-makers and decision-makers should address tranquillity to ensure development, either individually or cumulatively, does not degrade the tranquillity of the National Landscape. Local plans should require developments in the National Landscape to be designed to prevent impacts of light pollution from artificial light on intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation interests. Decision-takers should ensure that development either individually, collectively and cumulatively, does not degrade the tranquillity of the National Landscape.
- Plan-makers and decision makers should also consider the effects upon cultural heritage and impacts on the historic environment and associated considerations.

11.0 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

11.1 The historical use of a landscape will have been shaped by its fields, woods, tracks, lanes, villages and hamlets, defining its present-day character. It is important to consider both the impact of light pollution and the design of light fittings on historic landscape character, as well as on Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, and other sites of historical interest, including Scheduled Monuments. Conservation Areas are designated for their special architectural or historic interest and are given a broader protection than Listed Buildings. Conservation Area designation requires planning decisions to address the quality of the landscape in its broadest sense, including protection from light pollution.

11.2 Any lighting proposal should ensure that the historic environment and heritage assets within the National Landscape and its setting are fully considered and protected, conserved and enhanced. Through considering the impacts for the historic environment and appropriate measures to reduce any potential harm, the Partnership recognises the idea of heritage as a component of landscape as well as referencing the contribution that landscape setting makes to the significance of heritage assets, recognising their combined role and effect on each other.

12.0 DARK SKY STATUSES

12.1 The International Dark Skies Association (IDA) is the recognised authority globally for night sky protection and is dedicated to protecting the night skies for present and future generations. There are three international Dark Sky Place designations: Dark Sky Sanctuary, Dark Sky Park and Dark Sky Reserve. Designation is by the IDA follows a rigorous application process supported by survey evidence, a lighting inventory and a

Lighting Management Plan. There is growing interest in Dark Sky Place designation in the UK with several Dark Skies Parks and Dark Skies Reserves already and further applications currently being prepared.

12.2 The IDA defines an International Dark Sky Reserve as "*a public or private land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and nocturnal environment*." It awards areas Dark Sky status based on scientific, natural, educational, cultural or heritage value, and/or their value to public enjoyment. It is an area recognised as having exceptionally high-quality starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural and cultural heritage as well as public enjoyment.

12.3 Achieving such statuses consist of a core area meeting minimum criteria for sky quality and natural darkness, and a peripheral area that supports dark-sky preservation in the core. They set higher standards and planning requirements for preventing light pollution and place a 'duty of regard' on everyone to protect them. The IDA also awards other types of Dark Sky Place designations, such as a Dark Sky Community/Town. Currently, there are no Dark Sky Reserves in the Wye Valley National Landscape, but there are Reserves nearby in Cranborne Chase National Landscape and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority.

12.4 To achieve a consistent approach to managing dark skies across the Wye Valley National Landscape, it is desirable that recognised standards should be strived for and applied. In the long term, this could be defined in an area specific dark skies management plan (e.g. as part of the requirements for a possible future Dark Skies Reserve). For current purposes, the widely respected sets of standards developed by the Institute of Lighting Professionals and Commission for Dark Skies should be used, unless otherwise superseded in this Position Statement.

12.5 The aspiration for the Wye Valley National Landscape to achieve International Dark Sky Status could be considered and be a realistic aspiration.

12.5 **Recommendation:**

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership aspires for the Wye Valley National Landscape to achieve International Dark Sky Status by way of becoming a Dark Sky Sanctuary, Dark Sky Park and/or Dark Sky Reserve and would support settlements within the Wye Valley National Landscape to become an IDA Dark Sky Community/Town.

13.0 LIGHTING POLICY FOR LPAS

13.1 Justification for a Lighting Policy

13.1.1 This position statement can also be used to develop policy for new/reviewed Local Plans and Neighbourhood Development Plans. There is a potential mismatch between the proactive policies to cut light pollution and enhance dark skies at national level, and more cautious policies to control unnecessary light intrusion at a more local level, which allow, but do not promote proactive management to enhance dark skies. Local planning and highways authorities and other decision-makers are actively aware of and interested in proactive management of dark skies, but in the absence of proactive co-ordination of effort, it has proved difficult to do much more than control new light pollution on a case-by-case basis.

13.1.2 It is only when light is obtrusive, by finding its way into areas not intended to be lit, that it starts to have an adverse and unreasonable impact.

13.1.3 All relevant authorities down to town/parish/community council level have their duty to consider the AONB designation in any land use/environment decisions, referring to Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

13.1.4 Local authorities have a responsibility to support the protection of human health, nocturnal wildlife habitats, public enjoyment of the night sky and its heritage, and/or areas ideal for professional and amateur astronomy. Local planning authorities should have a lighting policy with the aim of preventing or minimising light pollution to the area.

13.1.5 Suggested wording for a new Local planning authority lighting policy and conditions in support of a Lighting Policy is identified in recommendation 13.1.6. When determining planning applications, the local planning authority may seek to minimise light pollution through planning ‘conditions’, such as limiting the hours of illumination. Planning authorities should also be aware that giving permission for certain uses, such as sports facilities, community halls, or the reuse of farm buildings, can give rise to lighting demands later on. It is important to therefore note that a planning authority cannot influence existing lighting unless there is a planning variation and they can add a condition, especially if policy has changed since the original lights were installed. Planning conditions can help ensure policy is adhered to, good lighting design is used, and light pollution is minimised from a lighting scheme on a new development or when there is a planning variation to an existing scheme. The need to apply conditions and the precise wording will depend on the proposed development, such as location and intended use.

13.1.6 **Recommendation**:
The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership supports the following suggested wording for a Lighting Policy to be incorporated into future new or reviewed Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and planning application decision-making:

Light Pollution and Promoting Dark Skies

"*Proposals for lighting schemes will be permitted where it is demonstrated that the development could not proceed without lighting, and the scheme is appropriate to its surroundings by ensuring, as a minimum:*

- *it is the minimum necessary for its intended purpose;*
- *the measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not reduced;*
- *lighting is not unnecessarily visible in nearby designated and key habitats;*
- *the visibility of lighting from surrounding landscape is avoided;*
- *building design avoids increased light spill from internal lighting;*
- *it will have no significant adverse effects (individually or cumulatively) to the character of the area, the safety of vehicle users and pedestrians, the amenity of local residents, or the diurnal/seasonal rhythms of the biodiversity, and;*
- *any adverse impacts that cannot be avoided are mitigate with suitable measures.*

The correlated colour temperature (CCT) of outdoor lighting (including street lighting) should not exceed 2700 Kelvins in order to limit the effects of known environmental hazards associated with short-wavelength visible light.

Proposals where external lighting is required should include a full lighting scheme that provides information about its purpose, hours of use, layout and beam orientation, and a schedule of the light equipment proposed including luminaire type, mounting height, aiming angles and lumen unit levels.

Schemes must meet or exceed the level of protection appropriate to the environmental light control zones of the Wye Valley National Landscape in which an application is proposed. Specifications for the zones are contained in the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) GN01 Guidance note for the reduction of obtrusive light."

Further suggested conditions in support of a Lighting Policy

"No building or use herby permitted shall be occupied or use commenced until a report detailing the lighting scheme and predicted light levels has been submitted to, and been approved in writing, by the local planning authority. Artificial lighting to the development must conform to requirements to meet the obtrusive light limitations for exterior lighting installations for environmental zones – E0/E1/E2 [delete as appropriate] and the ILP GN01 Guidance note for the reduction of obtrusive light. Reason: In order to preserve the special qualities of the Wye Valley National Landscape including dark skies and tranquillity.

No external lighting shall be installed on site unless details of such lighting, including the intensity of illumination and predicted lighting contours [insert extra requirements],

have been first submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority prior to first occupation/use of the site. Any external lighting that is installed shall accord with the details so approved. Reason: In order to preserve the special qualities of the Wye Valley National Landscape including dark skies and tranquillity.

No development shall take place until a Construction Environmental Management Plan has been submitted to, and been approved in writing, by the local planning authority. The plan must demonstrate the adoption and use of the best practicable means to reduce the effects of noise, vibration, dust and site lighting. Reason: In order to minimise light pollution and other disturbance to people and wildlife during the construction."

Other suggested conditions might also include:

- "*Not permitting any form of external lighting. Especially appropriate to developments in environmental light control zone E0 areas.*
- *Specifying the hours of illumination.*
- *Requiring non-domestic facilities to install electronically controlled blackout blinds that operate automatically to prevent internal light spilling outside at night.*
- *Specifying the height and/or number of lighting columns.*"
- *External lighting to operate on a sensor system and limit the length of time before the light turns off.*

14.0 EXTERNAL LIGHTING DESIGNERS

14.1 It is acknowledged that a lighting designer is not normally needed for most minor and single use external lights for homes or small businesses. The domestic lighting advice in this position statement should be sufficient to follow and adopt. A qualified lighting designer is generally needed when lighting needs are complex, and where it is essential to meet a specified level of illuminance. Designers will ensure that the luminaires achieve all the necessary requirements to satisfy both lighting needs and dark sky compliance. Larger scale sports, commercial, industrial, road lighting or public realm lighting should employ the services of a competent lighting designer.

14.2 A lighting designer should:

- Undertake an environmental lighting impact assessment that covers the lighting needs within its setting, and any residual impacts on the landscape. It should identify the quality of dark skies over the development, the ambient lighting level (E-zone) and any sensitive receptors that surround it.
- Produce a lighting plan and luminaire schedule that clearly shows how the lighting complies with relevant guidance's and standards, such as British Standards for roads or workplaces or Sports England guidance for sports lighting.

- Show that key obtrusive lighting metrics comply with the Institution of Lighting Guidance on the reduction of Obtrusive light GN01-21[25] for the location. Care should be taken to clearly show planners who should then be able to assess key dark sky metrics that include:
- Upward Light Ratio of luminaires and the overall scheme should be zero.
- Colour Temperature (K). It should be less than or equal to 3000 kelvins, although bat advice (GN/23) states colour temperature should be ideally 2700 kelvins.
- Task Illuminance (Lux). It should meet the relevant illuminance standards.
- Light Spill and intensity on human and natural receptors.
- Building Luminance.
- Show any mitigations that have been used to reduce the impact. This would include proximity controls, reduced illuminance levels throughout the night or additional shielding.

14.3 Designers may also wish to refer to the ILP Guidance Note 9 on 'Domestic Exterior Lighting: Getting it right (GN 09/19). ILP consultant register, SLL or LIA, is generally needed when lighting needs are more complex, and where there is a need to achieve a specified level of illuminance. Designers will ensure that the luminaires achieve all the necessary requirements to satisfy both lighting needs and dark sky compliance. Larger scale sports, commercial, industrial, road lighting or public realm lighting should employ the services of a competent lighting designer. It is noted that occasionally, it may be necessary to carry out a separate technical assessment of the effects of lighting on both landscape character and views/visual amenity. In such circumstances, a qualified landscape architect with experience in the subject should be engaged to work in close collaboration with the lighting designer/effects assessor in accordance with the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)[26]

14.4 It is recommended that lighting installations that are close to or within key receptor sites should also consult with specialist ecologists to ensure that biodiversity concerns are integrated into the design. Ecological Constraints and Opportunity Plans should be created to identify key and supporting species and priority habitats.

15.0 LIGHTING PURCHASING RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 Minor lamps: brightness and approximate power

15.1.1 Table 3 provides the power wattages for different types of bulb brightness that you will find in most retailers. As a reminder, for most minor domestic purposes, 500 lumens

[25] Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light 2021 | Institution of Lighting Professionals (theilp.org.uk)

[26] See Paragraph 6.12 of GLVIA3

are normally more than enough. For lamps greater than 500 lumens, you should use shielding or luminaires that direct all the light downward.

Table 3 – Power wattages for different types of bulb brightness

BULB BRIGHTNESS (lumens)	220+	400+		700+	900+	1300+
Incandescent	25W	40W		60W	75W	100W
Halogen	18W	28W		42W	53W	70W
CFL	6W	9W		12W	15W	20W
LED	4W	6W		10W	14W	18W
LED GU10	3W	5W		8W	10W	12W

16.0 USING VISIBLE LIGHT TRANSMISSION (VLT)

16.1 Not all glazing is the same. Depending on internal space requirements, glazing will use different methods to control the transmission of visible light through the glass. This 'VLT' value of glass can be selected to minimise glazing impact while providing sufficient visible light for the purpose (tints provide a similar function). From a distance in a dark landscape, the impact from glazing spill can be similar to light emitted from an appropriately designed illuminated advertisement. Glazing should aim to meet the 'target VLT' for typical glazing types shown below, especially remote dark landscapes.

16.2 Visible Light Transmission (VLT) is a ratio/percentage that indicates the proportion of light passing through. It is usually expressed as a number between 0 and 1 where the higher the value, the more light passes through**.**

16.3 Glazing manufacturers provide a range of VLT and tint options for a variety of needs. The recommendations above have been cross-referenced against retail options for their intended purposes to ensure optimal function.

16.4 All glazing has a potential landscape impact either by disrupting the dark landscape with point sources, or through the spill of light into the air. Generally, smaller glazing with lower internal illuminance levels will disrupt the landscape less and have a low impact. Larger glazed elevations with brighter internal illuminance will stand out and pollute more.

16.5 Black out blinds should also be used where the lowest VLT targets are not available or practical. This will be more relevant to larger and more commercial uses of glazing where other considerations such as natural daylight or heating is important.

16.6 Table 4 helps to identify VLT targets for several glazing types.

Table 4 – Visible Light Transmission (VLT) targets by glazing type including potential landscape impact and Target VLT.

Glazing Type	**Potential Landscape Impact**	**Target VLT**
Normal Domestic Glazing	Low impact	~0.65
Large, continuous open domestic glazing	Medium impact	0.4 to 0.65
Domestic roof lights, conservatories and lanterns	Medium impact	0.4 to 0.5
Commercial sky lights	High Impact	~0.3
Small office and shop fronts	Low Impact	~0.65
Structural glazing	Very high impact	~0.4

*Note: For practical considerations of product options, the acceptable target and range is the **target VLT +/- 0.05**. The landscape impact of glazing will also depend upon the urban or rural setting which should be taken into account.*

17.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

17.1 This position statement is also supported by several appendices which provide:

- Example Lighting Assessment (Appendix 1).
- Planning Officer checklist (Appendix 2).
- Publicly available evidence base provided by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for Wales only (Appendix 3).
- Links to other useful websites:
    - The Commission for Dark Skies provides information and advice on light pollution and how to minimise it.
    - The International Dark-Sky Association works to protect the night skies for present and future generations. Website has lots of information and resources.

- Institute of Lighting Professionals aimed mainly at lighting professionals, but has a lot of useful articles, free and charged resources relating to lighting its impact and minimising pollution.
- (CPRE) Night Blight for interactive maps of England's light pollution and dark skies from the countryside charity.
- Chasing Stars Cranborne Chase AONB International Dark Sky Reserve.
- Dark Night Skies – South Downs National Park Authority South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve.
- APPG for Dark Skies Follow the work of the UK Parliament's only all-party group dedicated to reducing light pollution including the 'Ten Dark Sky Policies for the Government' publication (external link) Policy Plan — APPG for Dark Skies (appgdarkskies.co.uk)
- British Astronomical Association (BAA): workshops, tutorials, and information – britastro.org
- CIBSE: SLL: LG06: The Exterior Environment (2016): This guide provides a firm foundation from which to approach exterior lighting design.
- Discovery in the Dark Wales: Night Time Adventures, a Toolkit for the Trade Discovery in the Dark - National Parks Wales.

Appendix 1 – Lighting Assessment and Plans

Regardless of whether a lighting scheme requires planning permission, it may need a lighting assessment and/or plan. These are created by professional lighting engineers and/or designers. When choosing an engineer or designer, it is good to ask them about their experience of lighting schemes that minimise light pollution. ILP Guidance Note 1 For the Reduction of Obtrusive Light lists the relevant British Standards and publications from The International Commission on Illumination (CIE). BRE, who provide standards for the built environment, also have a download available[27].

Local planning authorities may require lighting assessments to be carried out as part of a planning application proposing to install lighting. Information can also be found in the ILP Professional Lighting Guide 04: Guidance on Undertaking Environmental Lighting Impact Assessments[28] and in Appendixes 1 and 3 of the Commission for Dark Skies' Blinded by the Lights[29].

A lighting assessment focuses on the lighting aspects of new development and includes design and assessment methodology. Light control zones should be adhered to, and light parameters (see ILP Guidance Note 1) given. In addition to light parameters, a lighting

[27] https://www.brebookshop.com/details.jsp?id=327145
[28] https://theilp.org.uk/resources
[29] https://britastro.org/dark-skies/pdfs/HANDBOOKTEXT.pdf

assessment needs to evaluate the spectral power distributions (the amount of blue light) and the polar intensity (the light distribution), to ensure that the scheme is not emitting unnecessary harmful light nor light beyond the area intended. Planners need to quickly but clearly understand how a lighting plan complies with relevant standards and how it will not cause harm to the landscape through unnecessary artificial light pollution. The more clearly one can show this information, the better. A lighting assessment should include and make clear the following to planning officers.

1	Site Description	A summary of visual impact assessment description adapted for lighting, including indication of applicable environmental zone.
2	Assessment Method	A description of the methodology for site visits, design and evaluation.
3	Baseline Assessment	An assessment of the current lighting at site, identification of sensitive ecological receptors, special qualities, viewpoints and general dark sky conditions.
4	Proposed Development	This is the main technical part of the plan. It should include: • Design objectives • Task requirements • Relevant guidance, standards and legislation that relate from local to landscape • Task calculations • Obtrusive light calculations • Luminaire schedules and installation plans • Luminaire specifications (lumens, CCT, CRI, spectral distribution)
5	Residual Effects	Assessment of the changes caused by the lighting, including during the construction and operational phases. This should also include effects to the dark landscape and wildlife and overall visibility after installation and mitigations.
6	Potential Mitigation	A description of any potential mitigations used, including curfews, reduced illuminances, or shielding.
7	Conclusions	A summary of the report covering installation and operational phases. This should summarise the main technical requirements and be clearly presented to a planner.

The ILP Professional Lighting Guide 04[30] – Guidance on undertaking environmental lighting impact assessments, has additional information on these elements.

[30] PLG04 GUIDANCE ON UNDERTAKING ENVIRONMENTAL LIGHTING IMPACT ASSESSMENTS | Institution of Lighting Professionals (theilp.org.uk)

CIBSE LG06: The exterior environment (2016[31]) has further general guidance for lighting the exterior environment.

Appendix 2 – Planning Officer Checklist

The following flow charts aim to provide designers and planners with the basic steps to develop and assess lighting installations and internal glazing.

External Lighting

JUSTIFIED LIGHTING • There must be a clear justification for lighting with full consideration to mitigate at the design phase. It should serve a beneficial purpose and be necessary. • The need for planning permission should be checked.

DETERMING LIGHTING TASKS NEEDS
• Ensure that lighting conforms to recommend illuminance, spill and glare levels in appropriate key documents, e.g. BS 5489 – 12464 using lowest illuminance levels as necessary.
• Ensure that critical dark skies criteria are included
  ○ Upward Light Ratio = zero
  ○ <3000K CCT or less, aiming for <500lum spectrum

ASSESS LOCAL IMPACT • Nearby locations where lighting could be a direct or indirect visual nuisance for both humans and wildlife are identified. • Lighting has regard to obtrusion and nuisance in key documents, ILP GN01, Building Regulations
ASSESS LANDSCAPE IMPACT • Sensitive receptor sites and dark area have been assessed and identified. • Use a lighting impact assessment.

APPLY MITIGATIONS
• Appropriate mitigations have been considered.
  ○ Curfews and dimming regimes
  ○ Proximity sensors
  ○ Additional shielding and louvres

CHECK THE PRESENCE AND RESIDUAL IMPACT • Does the residual lighting impact still represent a significant intrusion into the landscape even if lighting complies with obtrusion and illuminance standards? • Is there a reduction in sky quality and an increase in sky glow domes?

[31] Lighting Guide 06: The exterior environment (2016) | CIBSE

Internal Lighting

DETERMINE THE GLAZING TYPE • What is the intended purpose of the glazing? Domestic/Commercial? • Are there alternatives?

ASSESS THE GLAZING EXTENT
• Is the amount of glazing appropriate for the use and location?
• The decision should be based on analysis of the development in the landscape taking to account:
  ○ Landscape impact
  ○ Disruption to dark landscapes
  ○ Visible intrusion
  ○ Urban/rural density and remoteness
  ○ Shielding by vegetation and buildings

SET RECOMMENDATONS FOR VLT • Use the table to set recommended factors for visible light transmission
APPLY MITIGATIONS • Determine and set additional mitigations (e.g. blackout blinds, hours of use)

Appendix 3 - Publicly available evidence base provided by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for Wales only

In relation to development in Wales, Natural Resources Wales have advised the following publicly available evidence base to support planning applications, which includes:

- LANDMAP. Natural Resources Wales / LANDMAP - the Welsh landscape baseline
- Evidence on tranquillity and place: Tranquillity and Place (arcgis.com)
- Evidence on dark skies: Wales Dark Skies (arcgis.com)
- Evidence on visible settings of designated landscapes: Natural Resources Wales / Considering the visible setting when choosing your development site
- Evidence in relation to the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources within the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) for Wales. Natural Resources Wales / State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) for Wales 2020
- Natural Resources Wales / Area Statements and Designated Landscapes

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

LOWER WYE TRACKS AND TRAILS STRATEGY

Purpose

To receive and endorse the Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Strategy, an Integrated Recreational Access Strategy for the Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley National Landscape, and the associated Action Plan.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

A. Welcomes the Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Strategy, as an Integrated Recreational Access Strategy for the Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

B. Endorses the Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Strategy, including the Action Plan as an iterative document to be overseen by a sub-group of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum, with regular reports back to the JAC.

Key Issues

- The Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley is home to an extensive network of tracks and trails that allow residents and visitors wide-ranging access to explore the natural beauty and Special Qualities of the National Landscape.
- The tracks & trails network, forming part of Monmouthshire's Highways and Public Rights of Way, are an evolution of historic transport routes in the lower Wye Valley.
- The Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy and Action Plan is appended and was commissioned by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, with the support of Monmouthshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales and a range of other stakeholders and interested parties.
- The preparation of the Strategy included in-depth research on the extent and type of tracks and trails and the nature of visitor and users, backed up with a widespread consultation of both public and professional interests.
- The vision is for the Lower Wye Valley's Tracks & Trails to be a resilient, well managed and welcoming network for all responsible users, with the Strategy and Action Plan outlining how these routes should be looked after, enhanced for a wider audience and conserved for the longer term.
- Generally the Strategy recognises that for the vast majority of the Tracks and Trails the appropriate response is to maintain the status quo on how they are managed, whilst

recognising that certain routes need more intensive management and new solutions putting in place.
- The associated Action Plan will be an evolving document overseen by a sub-group of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum, with subsequent iterations and updates reported back to the JAC, and other groups as appropriate.

Reasons

The aim of this initiative was to produce a widely supported Integrated Recreational Access Strategy for the Tracks & Trails of the Lower Wye Valley. The Terms of Reference were to:

- better understand the benefits, pressures and issues relating to the network;
- provide a means for people to have their say on key issues and opportunities;
- strengthen working relationships between partners;
- design solutions to resolve current conflicts and help the network to thrive; and,
- provide a clear plan of action to address the key issues identified.

This was facilitated by commissioning consultants, Tomorrow's Tourism and bringing together stakeholders through an inclusive consultation that prioritised recreation access issues and sought ideas and solutions to include in the Action Plan.

A public consultation ran from 8th November 2023 to 12th January 2024 and included two open drop-in events. The questionnaire provided for the consultation generated 356 responses. Concerns from respondents to the survey included; conflicts between different users and/or residents; the behaviour of some users; impacts on the landscape / ecology; repairs and maintenance issues; flooding and erosion; a lack of information; and worries about the actions of some landowners. However, there were relatively few places where major problems were reported and also relatively few places impacted by very high numbers of visitors, unlike some other National Parks and National Landscapes.

Implications

The Lower Wye Valley Tracks & Trails Strategy and Action Plan, attached in Appendix 1, sets out how these routes will be looked after, improved, enjoyed, enhanced for a wider audience and conserved for the longer term.

Respondents to the consultation exercise confirmed that the appeal of the Tracks & Trails is the natural beauty and the access to it that the network provides, together with the wider landscape, scenery and wildlife and the uniqueness of the environment. Not surprisingly, walking is identified as the most prevalent activity undertaken by residents and visitors in the Lower Wye Valley. In terms of improvements, access to the area was mentioned by many, along with the need for regular maintenance and good signage.

A frequently raised issue during the consultation was the topic of trail / enduro motorcycles using the Tracks & Trails and creating problems for other users and residents, and damaging the landscape. Legal use of Unsealed / Unclassified County Roads, where most of these issues originate, represent 21 kilometres of the Tracks & Trails that totals over 550 kilometres, so less than 4% of the network. The Strategy recognises that these routes are suffering from environmental degradation due to current usage, exacerbated by climate change, and need investment to address these issues. It recommends that on this small

number of routes a mixture of active and collaborative management, voluntary zoning, route modification and other measures could play a part in addressing concerns. Resources are needed for clear signage, robust monitoring, awareness raising and, where necessary, co-ordinated enforcement.

When asked to comment on future priorities, 89% of respondents in the consultation agreed that it was important to encourage responsible behaviours among all users and discourage any undesirable behaviours, with 68% of this group identifying this as very important. In relation to this, 86% of respondents noted the importance of the authorities creating an environment, through resources, facilities and education that would enable all user groups to harmoniously enjoy the Tracks & Trails.

A fundamental principle of the Strategy is to work collaboratively with all interested parties, including residents, volunteers, user associations and visitors alongside professional stakeholders and other interested organisations to develop solutions. These must work well for the majority while also ensuring due regard is paid to the need to reverse the decline in biodiversity, reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and meet other core criteria, notably encouraging least restrictive access. The Strategy aims to be ambitious and innovative in its delivery. It identifies a range of key themes and actions which need to be delivered in close collaboration with a wide range of interests. It also recognises that current users may need to accept some change in the way they currently enjoy the Tracks & Trails. This reflects the necessity of much of society needing to mitigate and adapt in the face of climate change and the ecological emergency.

The Strategy focuses on five objectives. These work together, provide the foundations for a range of activities outlined in the document and follow through into the associated Action Plan. These core priorities enabling and supporting delivery are:

1. Boosting Awareness
2. Wye for All
3. Robust Management
4. Better Data
5. Making it Happen

It is recommended that the Strategy is led by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership and the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum, with the on-going support of Monmouthshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales. A steering group constituted as a sub-group of Monmouthshire's Local Access Forum (LAF) should oversee delivery with representatives from the LAF, the National Landscape Team and other statutory agencies and key delivery partners. The JAC should also have an overview of the development and implementation of the Action Plan. Monmouthshire Councillors and the local Community Councils with the majority of the Tracks & Trails (Devauden, St Arvans, Trellech United & Wye Valley) should also be engaged through reports and feedback to the Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group.

Funding bids will need to be developed to deliver much of this Strategy and Action Plan. Therefore the priority short-term actions will be to build the partnerships to enable implementation and to prepare funding proposals to aid its delivery. The Wye Valley National Landscape Team and Monmouthshire County Council have considerable experience is securing strategic funding.

Background

The Strategy refers to “Tracks & Trails” as a collective term for all the routes in the study area. There are a number of different types of routes including Public Rights of Way (footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic); highways (Unclassified County Roads and unsealed roads) as well as other tracks that may have been agreed as Permissive Paths (such as the section of the Wye Valley Walk through Piercefield Woods) or be access land by virtue of public or benevolent 3rd Sector ownership.

The different types of routes, and the users that are permitted to enjoy them, are not always understood either by users or the general population. Routes on the ground can occasionally differ from the historical record and signage depicting route type can be inaccurate, particularly if it is many years old. The legal differences are important from a management perspective and also for users and residents to appreciate and follow, as permitted activities differ on the different types of routes.

The work on this Integrated Recreational Access Strategy has been enabled by funding from the Welsh Government’s Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places programme.

THE TRACKS & TRAILS OF THE LOWER WYE VALLEY

INTEGRATED ACCESS STRATEGY

Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol
Wye Valley
National Landscape

monmouthshire
sir fynwy

MonLife
AWYR AGORED OUTDOOR

Contents

Executive Summary

The Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley is home to an extensive network of tracks and trails that allow wide-ranging access to one of Britain's finest lowland landscapes.

This recreation Strategy and Action Plan was commissioned by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership. It sets out how these routes will be looked after, improved, enjoyed, enhanced for a wider audience and conserved for the longer term. It responds to Terms of Reference that set out to:

- better understand the benefits, pressures and issues relating to the network;
- provide a means for people to have their say on key issues and opportunities;
- strengthen working relationships between partners;
- design solutions to resolve current conflicts and help the network to thrive; and,
- provide a clear plan of action to address the key issues identified.

The methodology included extensive research on the nature and type of tracks and trails and the landscape in which they are placed; the extent and importance of the visitor economy; together with a widespread consultation with both public and professional audiences. These findings are reported in a detailed appendix to this document.

Our vision is for the Lower Wye Valley's Tracks & Trails to be a resilient, well-managed and welcoming place for all responsible users.

The Strategy identifies a range of key themes and actions which need to be delivered in close collaboration with a wide range of groups including residents, volunteers and visitors alongside professional stakeholders and other interested organisations. A high level of partnership is envisaged to support delivery.

The Welsh Government's current polices on well-being inclusion, landscape, heritage and tourism provide a highly relevant context within which this Strategy closely aligns and can be supported. Key objectives include encouraging much greater awareness of what the area has to offer as well as inspiring many different types of people to visit and supporting these audiences to do so responsibly. The Strategy also identifies the need for the development of specific management measures that can effectively respond to current concerns between different user groups and, in some cases, between specific user groups and residential communities.

This Strategy is to be endorsed by the Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and overseen by the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (LAF). Monmouthshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales, along with many others, will play an important role in helping take the recommendations forward.

We would like to thank all those who offered insight and participated in the development of this work. The core partners welcome the continued support and involvement of many interests to ensure that this framework can now make a real difference, improving the tracks and trails for the benefit of existing users and for those yet to come.

Wye Valley National Landscape Team
June 2024

About this Strategy

1. This Strategy and the related Action Plan sets out the way in which the Tracks & Trails of the Wye Valley National Landscape will be enjoyed, maintained and managed over the next six years to 2030. The work has been enabled by the Welsh Government's *Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places* fund.

2. The valley of the River Wye between Hereford and Chepstow is one of the most significant landscapes in lowland Britain. A rich combination of breath-taking views, impressive geology, historic legacies and diverse wildlife led to its designation as the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1971. It has recently been rebranded as a National Landscape.

3. The Lower Wye Valley covers 117 km^2 of the lower reaches of the River Wye, all of which is in Monmouthshire, Wales. This represents 36% of the total area of the National Landscape, the rest is in England which also makes it unique. The study area represents 13% of Monmouthshire and has a population of 16,394. Part of the area is within the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales (Cadw 1998).

4. The aim of this project was to produce a widely supported Integrated Strategy for the Tracks & Trails of the Lower Wye Valley. This has been facilitated by bringing together stakeholders through an inclusive consultation that prioritised recreation access issues and sought ideas and solutions to include in the Action Plan.

5. This Strategy has been supported and informed by an asset audit along with the consultation exercise. The former examined the Tracks & Trails as well as the assets that support their use, including accommodation, visitor attractions, pubs and restaurants, and festivals and events. The audit also assessed the policy framework and examined the type and origin of visitors. The consultation process took place from 8 November 2023 to 12 January 2024 with a total of 350 responses, many from individuals but also 50 from organisations with an interest in the subject matter.

6. This document first describes the policy context and the evidence base before setting out the key objectives to boost information and awareness; encourage greater participation and inclusion; provide robust management measures and deliver better data. The last section identifies the principal actions agreed, which are also contained in a more detailed Action Plan that should be read in association with the Strategy.

The Policy Context

7. Alongside the Wye Valley's designation as a National Landscape (an area of outstanding natural beauty), a comprehensive set of Wales-based legislation has guided this work. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 both embed the principle of the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) to maximise the contribution to well-being goals, emphasising long-term thinking, collaboration and integration. This overarching legislation sets the tone for this Strategy, supporting a holistic approach to the management of the place.

8. 8. The Welsh Government's Priorities for the country's designated landscapes published in 2018 [1] set out four goals:

- *Valued Places* - reach out beyond traditional audiences and engage a more diverse cross section of Welsh society to feel they have a stake in these national landscapes.
- *Resilient Environments* - action to halt the decline in biodiversity to ensure the value of nature is enhanced.
- *Resilient Communities* - develop understanding of local economic resilience and opportunities, create employment and provide fit for purpose places and facilities for outdoor recreation.
- *Resilient Ways of Working* - champion collaborative approaches to maximise the benefits and tackle the challenges faced in these landscapes.

9. 9. The strategy reflects these headings and also adheres to the principle of *Least Restrictive Access* which aims to facilitate public access for as many people as possible. This principle requires that all work undertaken to improve access and create recreational opportunities also meets the highest access standards, while also aiding wider conservation and land management objectives.

10. UK-wide legislation also affects the policy context. Of particular note is the Equality Act 2010 and the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW). The Equality Act brought together previous legislation to legally protect people from discrimination in employment and wider society. It protects individuals from unfair treatment in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are referred to as 'protected characteristics'. This impacts this Strategy, for example, where road improvements are planned, highway authorities need to consider the requirements of the Equality Act to make any improvements as accessible as possible.

[1] Welsh Government (2018) Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks available here

11. 1The CRoW Act grants the public greater access to the countryside including open access land and requires local authorities to publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan every ten years. This strategy is aligned to Monmouthshire County Council's current Countryside Access (Rights of Way) Improvement Plan[2] and also to the related Public Rights of Way Biodiversity Action Plan.[3]

12. Broader reviews on nationally designated landscapes, namely National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) have also been undertaken in both Wales and England, with the Marsden and Glover Reviews (2015 and 2019 respectively) making a range of recommendations in relation to statutory purposes, protecting nationally important landscapes and making connections between protected landscapes of different types. The rebranding of AONBs to National Landscapes in 2023 was part of the response to these Reviews.

13. This strategy is also developed within the context of Monmouthshire County Council's Local Development Plan which has policies on promoting tourism as part of encouraging a sustainable economy and ensuring the environment is valued, particularly in relation to high quality landscapes:

- *To protect, enhance and manage Monmouthshire's natural heritage, including the Wye Valley AONB, the County's other high quality and distinctive landscapes, protected sites, protected species and other biodiversity interests and the ecological connectivity between them, for their own sake, and to maximise benefits for the economy, tourism and social well-being.*

14. The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership is dedicated to conserving and enhancing the nationally designated national landscape, guided by the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026. The National Landscape Partnership is led by a Joint Advisory Committee established under agreement by the Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council.

15. The current AONB Management Plan, prepared as a requirement of the CRoW Act, runs from 2021–2026. A summary of the Management Plan objectives relating to Recreation & Access and Sustainable Tourism are given below and form another important underpinning for this Strategy.

[2] Monmouthshire County Council (2020) Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020-2030 available at this link

[3] Monmouthshire County Council (2011) Monmouthshire Public Rights of Way Biodiversity Action Plan available at this link

16. **Recreation & Access**

- *Encourage and promote recreational pursuits and responsible access compatible with the AONB purposes, particularly linking sustainable transport and town and village facilities; (R1)*
- *Assist the resolving of conflicts, real and perceived, between recreation, conservation and local interests… in relation to the purposes of the AONB designation; (R2)*
- *Support appropriate levels of sustainable design, repair, signage and maintenance on public rights of way, recreational trails and sites; (R3)*
- *Assist in identifying gaps in access and recreational provision, including for under-represented and minority groups, and… support and promote access enhancements and improved access for all, where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs. (R4)*

17. **Sustainable Tourism**

- *Encourage and promote the AONB as a sustainable tourism destination; (S1)*
- *Promote the improvement of the visitor experience… and facilitate the opportunity for visitors to explore and discover other… less used locations; (S2)*
- *Ensure adequate provision of co-ordinated tourism data and visitor engagement… enhancing the Special Qualities of the AONB; (S3)*
- *Encourage the mitigation and/or reduction of the adverse impacts of existing tourism activity and attractions… (S4)*

The Evidence Base

The Lower Wye Valley's Tracks & Trails

18. This document uses 'Tracks & Trails' as a collective term for all the routes in the study area. There are a number of different types of routes including public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic); highways (unclassified county roads and unsealed roads) as well as other tracks that may have been agreed as permissive paths (such as the section of the Wye Valley Walk through Piercefield Woods) or be access land by virtue of public or benevolent 3rd Sector ownership.

19. The different types of routes, and the users that are permitted to enjoy them, are not always understood either by users or the general population. Routes on the ground can occasionally differ from the historical record, and signage depicting route type can be inaccurate, particularly if it is many years old.

20. The legal differences are important from a management perspective and also for users and residents to appreciate and follow as permitted activities differ on the different types of routes.

21. A map of the Tracks & Trails is shown at Annex I. Over half of the network in terms of length is defined as footpaths, with a further 13% suitable for cycling and riding as well as walking. Unclassified county roads, normally minor roads with a tarmac surface, make up 31% of the network with only 4% of the network being unsealed roads, or Green Lanes as they are often known. These lanes can be used by appropriately licenced motor vehicles.

22. Table 1 overleaf shows the Public Rights of Way network (PROW) in the study area with over 90% of the network in five Community Council areas.[4] Some 80% of the PROW is made up of footpaths, 9% are Bridleways and 10% Restricted Byways. Total length is 360 km.

[4] It should be noted that there are many public rights of way in the other Community Council areas but they are not within the boundary of the National Landscape

Table 1

Public Rights of Way in the Lower Wye Valley - By Type and Community Council				
Community Council	**Footpath Sections**	**Bridleway Sections**	**Restricted Byway**	**Byway open to all traffic**
Trellech United	285	49	35	1
Devauden	116	14	14	0
Wye Valley	100	15	18	1
Mitchel Troy	104	4	8	0
Monmouth	112	4	23	0
St. Arvans	59	1	5	0
Mathern	12	0	0	0
Shirenewton	4	0	1	0
Chepstow	1	0	0	0
	793	**87**	**104**	**2**

23. Some 190 miles of the PROW network is promoted but this also includes permissive paths / permissive bridleways. Table 2 below shows the Unclassified County Roads network with a similar proportion of routes across five main Community Councils, but with this route type St. Arvans switches places with Monmouth. Total length is 192 km. Unsealed Roads number just 15 with a total length of 21.1 km. All are concentrated in the five Community Councils with the most in Trellech United and other clusters in Wye Valley and St. Arvans.

Table 2

Unclassified County Roads & Unsealed Roads				
Community Council	**UCR # Sections**	**UCR Length (km)**	**Unsealed Roads # Sec.**	**Unsealed Roads (km)**
Trellech United	17	84.5	6	12.9
Devauden	12	24.7	2	0.7
Mitchel Troy	6	23.6	3	1.5
Wye Valley	6	16.5	3	2.8
St. Arvans	4	8.0	1	3.1
Monmouth	8	7.6	0	0.0
Mathern	1	4.8	0	0.0
Shirenewton	1	1.1	0	0.0
Chepstow	3	0.4	0	0.0
Total	**58**	**171.1**	**15**	**21.1**

24. The Highways and Rights of Way network is an evolution of historic transport infrastructure. Many of the Tracks & Trails are bounded by drystone walls; some walls are in a derelict state, others, though visible, support extensive plant coverage. The Lower Wye Valley is an area with its own distinctive style of drystone walls. There are several extensive networks of drystone walls concentrated around Penallt, Whitebrook, The Narth and Catbrook and above Llandogo. Their physical nature, extent and history have not undergone detailed investigation and their existence is rarely noted in published accounts of drystone walls in Britain. The age of the walls ranges from a very few, perhaps being prehistoric, through to occasional medieval structures, probably linked to Tintern Abbey, and as infrastructure to the industrialisation of the lower Wye Valley, followed by more systematic enclosure walls of the 18th & 19th century.

Visitor Economy Assets

25. The Lower Wye Valley has an important visitor economy that is generating income, supporting jobs, 2,700 FTE in total[5] and encouraging a local supply chain. An estimated 550 jobs in the area are created by the accommodation sector alone. Table 3 below shows the extent of the supply side within the project area (noting this excludes most of Monmouth and Chepstow towns); there are over 500 assets in total, i.e.:

- Up to 400 places to stay;
- 47 visitor attractions (including promoted routes, nature reserves, churches, parks and gardens);
- 24 food and beverage businesses;
- 24 annual events.

Table 3

Visitor Economy Assets in the Lower Wye Valley

Community	Accommodation		Visitor Attractions		Restaurants, Café's, Pubs & Clubs		Festivals & Events	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Trellech United	160	39%	13	28%	8	33%	11	46%
Wye Valley	93	23%	13	28%	11	46%	11	46%
Mitchel Troy	61	15%	6	13%	1	4%	0	0%
Monmouth	46	11%	7	15%	0	0%	1	4%
St. Arvans	19	5%	5	11%	1	4%	0	0%
Devauden	16	4%	2	4%	0	0%	1	4%
Chepstow	9	2%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%
Shirenewton	2	0%	0	0%	3	13%	0	0%
Mathern	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total - *(Project Area only)*	**407**		**47**		**24**		**24**	

[5] Derived from Global Tourism Solutions 'STEAM' model (2015) included in Monmouthshire Destination Management Plan 2017-20

26. A good understanding of the assets that visitors and residents enjoy provides important context for the Strategy. The vast majority of accommodation is non-serviced, with Airbnb properties making up 50% of the total. Some of these will open irregularly. There are just 16 B&Bs, inns and hotels making up the serviced offer which is relatively low when compared to similar destinations. However, it is important to note that there are numerous accommodation options nearby in the towns of Monmouth and Chepstow, just outside the project area.

27. As a broad overall estimate, at least 20% of spending in restaurants and cafés is likely to be related to visitor spending, but some cafés and pubs will be much more reliant on visitor income, subject to their location. The food and drink offer is well distributed between pubs and restaurants with some pubs with rooms helping to underpin the serviced accommodation offer. Restaurants and cafés in general are of high quality with 84% in the top quartile in terms of quality.[6]

28. Festivals and events are almost entirely concentrated in Trellech United and Wye Valley areas, though again significantly more events take place in Monmouth and Chepstow, just outside the project area. There are likely to be opportunities to develop an events programme based on the natural assets in the area, potentially complementing or in support of the Wye Valley River Festival.

29. As can be expected, experiences based around walking and nature are popular, although equally important is the area's heritage. The Wye Valley has a rich heritage that has been host to many activities that have been instrumental in laying the foundations to the cultural identity of Britain. Its historic properties and industrial past are nationally important assets. It is clear that much of what attracts both residents and visitors are these natural and cultural assets.

30. From a management perspective any negative impact is likely to be increased in places that attract high quantities of visitors, that see numerous different user types, or have a topography that makes it prone to being affected by natural phenomena, such as flooding. These circumstances are particularly prevalent in the Lower Wye valley.

[6] Quality scores derived from Trip Advisor and calculated by adding 'Excellent' and 'Very Good' together and dividing by the total number of reviews received. These are then sorted into four Quartiles.

The Users of the Tracks & Trails

31. This strategy was underpinned by independent consultation that ran from 8 November 2023 to 12 January 2024, generating 356 responses.

32. Table 4 shows the frequency of use by type and whether users are local or not:

- Two thirds of respondents who live locally use the paths and tracks at least weekly;
- Those who volunteer are a broad spread from very frequent users through to infrequent users;
- Among frequent visitors to the area, many are actually relatively infrequent. Occasional visitors typically only use the Tracks & Trails a few times a year at most.

Table 4

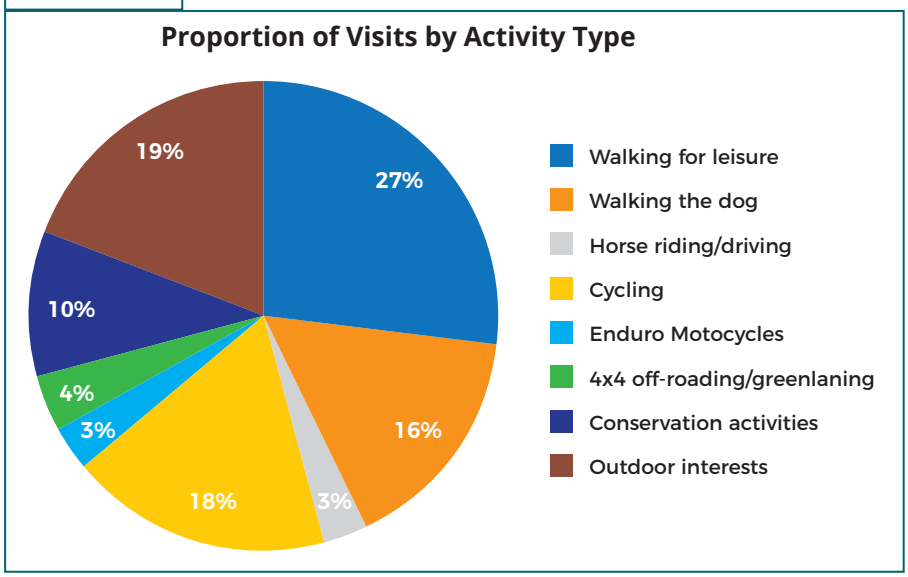
Frequency of Use and Origin of Visitors to Lower Wye Valley's Tracks & Trails

	Live here	Work here	Visit here frequently	Visit here occasion-ally	Work for organisation with an interest in the area	Volunteer with an organisation with interest/involvement in the area
At least weekly	68%	51%	9%	0%	18%	37%
Monthly	28%	43%	48%	5%	45%	39%
A few times a year	3%	6%	43%	95%	36%	24%

At least weekly includes 'daily or almost daily' and 'several times a week'
Monthly = 'several times a month'
A few times a year includes 'a few times a year' and 'once a year or less often'
Base: 350 online responses

33. Considering all the people taking part in the consultation, circa 92,600 individual visits are represented. Chart 1 breaks these down into the types of activity showing relative proportions. Those who walk, cycle and horse ride in the Lower Wye Valley, do so with much greater frequency than those who visit with vehicles (enduro motorcycles and 4x4's). Those who engage with the environment (wildlife/bird watching and conservation) also do so with greater frequency than those that use vehicles.

Chart 1



This analysis is indicative only. Some people may do more than one activity so there is some double counting. Pie chart does not account for multiple responses from membership organisations which may increase the proportion.

34. Annex II shows this breakdown in more detail. Among the activities taken part in the Lower Wye Valley, as would be expected, walking is the most prevalent.

35. Respondents confirmed that the appeal of the Tracks & Trails is the natural beauty and the access to it that they provide, together with the wider landscape, scenery and wildlife and the uniqueness of the environment. In terms of improvements, access to the area was mentioned by many, along with the need for regular maintenance and good signage.

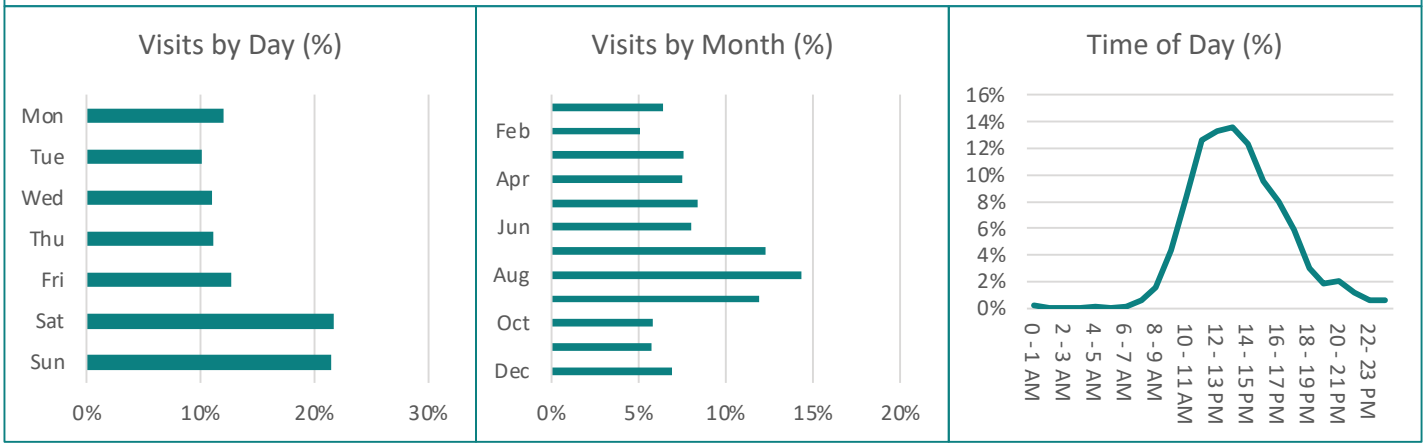
36. When asked to comment on future priorities, 89% agreed that it was important *to encourage responsible behaviours among all users and discourage any undesirable behaviours, with 68% of this group identifying this as very important. In relation to this point, 86% of respondents noted the importance of the authorities creating an environment, through resources, facilities and education that enables all user groups to harmoniously enjoy the Tracks & Trails*. This sentiment is felt particularly strongly by motorised users with more than 9 out of 10 thinking this is important.

37. To augment the consultation results, a sample of visitors to six different Tracks & Trails together with Tintern Abbey were reviewed using mobile data, reporting aspects of their visit as well as home location.

38. Among the seven study areas, the largest sample (44% of the total), and by inference the most visited site, is Tintern Abbey. The least visited sites are Peckett Stone Car Park by Trellech Common and Upper Wyndcliff Car Park. Considering all seven destinations together some 54% of visitors live within 20 miles and most trips are day visits with relatively few staying overnight.

Chart 2

Typical Distribution of Visitors to the Lower Wye Valley Tracks & Trails



39. Chart 2 indicates, as expected, a leisure-oriented visitor profile that enjoys the Lower Wye Valley in the summer, at weekends and across a relatively narrow time band from 10:00 to 15:00. This may cause traffic and visitor management issues at some of the more visited sites. There is variation between the sites. Whitestone Car Park for example, having a very clear spike in visitors on Saturdays, while Tintern Abbey and Lower Wyndcliff are somewhat more evenly spread throughout the week. Trellech Common sees more of a year-round spread and receives the highest proportion of residents and local visitors at 94% of the total.

40. Of the visitors coming from further afield, the majority come from larger population centres, as is to be expected. The Tracks & Trails have wide appeal and draw from a wide catchment including South East England and the West Midlands as well as significant numbers of regional visitors from Wales. Some 15% of all visitors travel from more than 100 miles away; often these visitors will stay either with friends & relatives or in commercial accommodation. See Annex III for a related map.

Case Study – Responsible Tourism

The Picos de Europa National Park, located in northern Spain, is renowned for its breath-taking landscapes, diverse flora and fauna and rich cultural heritage. The park has embraced various Responsible Tourism schemes to better balance environmental conservation with visitor enjoyment.
Five streams of activity included:

1. Visitor Education and Awareness: The Park, working with local authorities and NGOs, developed educational programmes and informational materials to raise awareness among visitors about the park's fragile ecosystems.

2. Waste Management: To tackle the issue of litter and waste, the Park has introduced recycling facilities and initiatives encouraging visitors to dispose of their waste responsibly.

3. Local Community Involvement: The Park engages with local communities, promoting their involvement in tourism-related activities, ensuring that economic benefits are distributed locally where possible.

4. Infrastructure Development: investment in sustainable infrastructure, including eco-friendly accommodation and well-marked trails, helps minimises the impact of tourism on the natural environment.

5. Carrying Capacity: visitor management system to monitor and control the number of visitors in specific areas, is in place. This helps prevent overcrowding and minimises environmental impact.

Impacts of this programme have included a reduction in environmental degradation and damage, greater economic opportunities for local businesses and more positive visitor feedback. Striking the right balance between conservation efforts and tourism development remains an ongoing challenge, requiring regular monitoring of impacts and adapting strategies based on feedback and dynamic conditions.

The Strategy

41. This Strategy aims to contribute to the primary purpose of the National Landscape, that is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. It will help reverse the depletion of nature and biodiversity, an imperative now regrettably all too common across protected landscapes, and the wider countryside, in both Wales and England.[7]

42. The Strategy also aims to provide the framework and impetus to protect the renowned natural and cultural heritage of the Wye Valley and make it accessible in the least restrictive way possible. Some visitors will become loyal ambassadors for a well-managed and sought-after destination. A supplementary aim is to contribute to renewing the area, making it more resilient in social, economic and ecological terms.

43. The Strategy is ambitious in its aims and will be innovative in its delivery so that its beneficial impact will be felt well beyond the immediate area. It also demands that current users may need to accept some change in the way they currently enjoy the Tracks & Trails. As referenced earlier, it draws on other policy threads that will shape our common future and builds these into a plan that takes account of the views of a widespread sample of users, aiming to join the dots so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This is designed to make the Wye Valley National Landscape team and its partners:

- Experts on broadening participation to recreation and making the area more accessible to benefit many types of people;
- A motivator and convener to help both local communities and visitors get involved, helping to ensure the area remains one of the finest lowland landscapes;
- A leader in delivering regenerative recreation and responsible tourism;
- A pathfinder for the rest of the Wye Valley National Landscape and a route that potentially others can also follow.

44. Concerns from respondents to the survey about the network include conflicts between different users and/or residents; the behaviour of some users; impacts on the landscape / ecology; repairs and maintenance issues; flooding; a lack of information; and worries about the actions of some landowners. However, on the positive side, there are relatively few places where major problems are reported and likewise relatively few places which are seeing very high numbers of visitors, unlike some other national landscapes.

[7] The 2020 State of Natural Resources Report shows that currently no ecosystems in Wales are showing all the attributes of resilience. Overall, biological diversity is declining.

45. Generally for the vast majority of the Tracks & Trails the appropriate response is to maintain the status quo on how they are managed, whilst recognising that certain routes need more intensive management and new solutions putting in place. The Strategy is designed to support the whole network, with additional action relating specifically to identified 'problem' areas.

Vision

46. Our vision is for the Wye Valley's Tracks & Trails to be a resilient, well managed and welcoming place for all responsible users. The principal aim is to open up recreational opportunities for all types of people to enjoy many different activities. Closely reflecting wider Welsh government policy on equality and inclusion, this Strategy seeks a *"Just Nature Transition"* which will benefit all diverse communities who may not think to currently visit the area but could benefit from doing so.

47. While a central aim is to open up recreational opportunities for all, the plan also reflects other policy pillars including improving health and well-being, expanding biodiversity, action on net zero and the encouragement of active travel. The Tracks & Trails of the Lower Wye Valley can contribute solutions to these policy areas. By doing so the Strategy becomes more relevant and important as a framework for action, offering a way to progress a range of important and interlinked policy priorities. So, this plan is not just about the users or the routes they enjoy, but encompasses a wider canvas.

48. The impact of climate change, habitat change and unequal access to landscapes and nature affects marginalised communities to a greater extent than most current visitors. These cohorts find it hard to visit for many different reasons. The Strategy builds the evidence base to better understand how to reach, connect and encourage different types of visitors to come and enjoy the landscape. Action will require the development of a number of new partnerships, with for example health, housing and probation services, to help facilitate and widen access. However, while this strategy points the way to action, implementation will need funding and support from other public authorities.

49. There is an expectation that all those that visit the area will respect its nature, the landscape and the people that live here. In general terms, this Strategy demands a level of responsibility from all those that use the Tracks & Trails wherever they live and whatever they come to do. It also sets out a way of regenerating the area, turning users into curators and visitors into explorers. The Vision reflects the fact that to successfully restore the landscape more needs to be put back in than is taken out.

50. The framework guiding this strategy recognises there are four principal responses to managing and improving the network.[8] In summary these are:

- Increasing the durability of the Tracks & Trails and surrounding landscape;
- Increasing the supply of the Tracks & Trails or providing similar alternative leisure resources;
- Reducing the impacts of use / users on the Tracks & Trails;
- Limiting the use of the Tracks & Trails by, for example, season or user type.

51. There are various management measures that can be employed in relation to these responses including improving and hardening routes, seeking voluntary restraints from particular types of users, placing legal restrictions on routes, limiting numbers over time or in certain locations. These and other measures are all appropriate for certain circumstances and this Strategy gives some direction on how these issues can be considered further.

52. A fundamental principle of this plan is to work collaboratively with all interested parties, user associations and others to develop solutions that can work well for the majority while also ensuring due regard is paid to the need to reverse the decline in biodiversity, reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and meet other core criteria, notably encouraging least restrictive access. We note also the importance of the local community in terms of the contribution from residents to the upkeep of the Tracks & Trails and this Strategy sets out ways in which current issues raised by residents can be resolved.

53. The Wye Valley already welcomes significant numbers of visitors and this plan supports and develops a more regenerative form of tourism that can ensure visitors have the opportunity to discover new opportunities and give something back, rather than simply arriving, enjoying and departing. Allied to this notion of a new form of tourism is the theme of responsibility, another important aspect applicable to all users, the surrounding businesses, residents and agencies involved in delivery. To take forward these foundations the plan needs robust partnerships, built on mutual trust, not to mention adequate resources to deliver the priorities in a timely manner.

54. In general terms this plan sees a significant change and innovation in the way the Tracks & Trails are looked after. This does not mean that current policy or management activity has been wrong, but rather that the plan offers the opportunity for a major reset rather than just an update – reflecting contemporary and foreseeable policy, taking into account the needs and views of users and the people that live locally, driving innovation through technology, and drawing on and developing contemporary management practices.

[8] Adapted from Robert Manning (2017) Managing Outdoor Recreation 2nd Edition CABI

Case Study – Managing User Conflict

Cannock Chase National Landscape in Staffordshire, is a popular recreation area attracting many different types of visitors. The forest, heathland and lakes provide a picturesque setting for various outdoor activities, including walking, cycling, horse riding and wildlife observation. However, increasing number of visitors led to a rise in user conflicts, pitting different interest groups against each other. The area experienced a 15% surge in visitors over 4 years, drawn by its natural beauty, diverse ecosystems, and recreational opportunities. (This was prior to the COVID pandemic). The rise resulted in heightened competition for space and resources among different user groups.

User Groups include Mountain Bikers, Walkers, Horse Riders and Conservationists and conflicts manifested in various incidents included near misses between mountain bikers and pedestrians, disputes over trail usage and damage to sensitive habitats caused by off-trail activities. Local authorities recorded a rise in complaints related to noise, trail erosion and perceived territorial disputes among user groups.

The following measures were agreed by local authorities to resolve these issues:

1. Trail Management Plans: The AONB Partnership collaborated with local councils and user groups to develop Trail Management Plans. These aimed to designate specific trails for different activities, minimising overlap and reducing user conflicts.

2. Education and Outreach Programmes: Initiatives were launched to educate visitors about responsible recreation and the importance of respecting designated areas. This included investment in signage, information campaigns and workshops.

3. Community Engagement: Stakeholder meetings involving representatives from different user groups were organised to foster dialogue and find common ground. This approach aimed to include diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.

55. All the evidence gathered is pointing to the inescapable conclusion that in the context of the nature and climate emergency there needs to be greater efforts made in the way this extraordinary landscape is valued, looked after and enjoyed in the future. The primary purpose of the National Landscape, to conserve and enhance natural beauty, is embedded in this Strategy which will harness the resources and efforts of volunteers, visitors and stakeholders to improve biodiversity, reduce invasive species and aid habitat recovery.

56. All this needs to happen within a context where the optimal number of users can enjoy the widest possible number of activities, while also protecting the social fabric of the place, its communities and businesses.

Objectives

57. We propose five objectives. These work together, provide the foundations for a range of activities explained below and identified and prioritised in greater detail in the associated Action Plan. The first three are core priorities, with points four and five focussed on enabling and supporting delivery:
    1. Boosting Awareness
    2. Wye for All
    3. Robust Management
    4. Better Data
    5. Making it Happen

58. There is an existing plan for the development of the countryside access network in the county. Monmouthshire's Countryside Access (Rights of Way) Improvement Plan (CAIP) published in 2020 sets out a clear approach to managing access and maintaining the county's public rights of way and countryside access network. This Strategy is focussed on a relatively small part of the county and is justified because it is one of the most significant landscapes in lowland Britain with a range of specific challenges that need focus and resolution. A number of the priorities outlined below will be taken forward in close collaboration with the Council's countryside access and highways teams and with support from other partners. Both sets of activity will be coordinated with the activity set out here being additional.

59. The Strategy reflects and will assist the delivery of the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan which outlines the following recreation and access objectives:

- Encouraging recreational pursuits and responsible access;
- Assisting the resolution of conflicts between recreation, conservation and local interests;
- Support appropriate levels of design, repair, signage and maintenance on public rights of way, recreational trails and sites to conserve and enhance character and natural beauty;
- Assist in identifying gaps in access and recreational provision, including for under-represented and minority groups.

60. The Strategy will be led by the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership and the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum, with the support of Monmouthshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales, and the local Community Councils through the Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group. All stakeholder groups with an interest, such as residents, landowners and other relevant partners will be encouraged to be involved. Funding bids will need to be developed to deliver much of this Strategy and Action Plan. The Wye Valley National Landscape Team and Monmouthshire County Council have considerable experience in securing strategic funding. Based on the success of this Strategy a strong case can and will be made to attract funding and roll-out of this approach across the border into England.

Boosting Information & Awareness

61. There are gaps in the understanding and knowledge of users about the network; what can be done where, how to behave responsibly and how to react when encountering other users. Walkers do not necessarily perceive the different circumstances or perspectives of motorcycle riders, for example, and in some cases, behaviour can be (or perceived to be) intimidatory. Dog walkers may not give cyclists enough room, while large 4x4 vehicles and horses do not mix well on narrow lanes. Nature can take a back seat with all these visitors and routes can become eroded, more susceptible to run off and flooding, with the consequence that the understory and terrain are damaged and biodiversity reduced. This is typically a vicious cycle that diminishes natural resources over time.

62. So, the fragility of the landscape is not always valued, individual rights and responsibilities are not always fully understood, nor are the rights of different groups of users on parts of the network always appreciated. Signage and other trail 'furniture' such as gates and stiles may be in need of investment and will not necessarily show the route designation. The consultation revealed differing views on the extent to which the network should support users with information and advice. There are also differing views on the extent to which the landscape should be maintained or 'left alone' and the type of measures that are most appropriate.

63. The Strategy adopts the principle of *Least Restrictive Access*, explained below, as a guide underpinning the management and maintenance of the area.

Types of Information

64. Users can benefit from information on a variety of topics and typically content includes:

- What to see and do;
- The ecology, landscape and heritage and why it is special;
- Tracks & Trails maps, routes and directions;
- Tracks & Trails etiquette, how to behave and react when meeting others;
- User specific information to encourage and provide confidence for different groups of visitors to the area.

65. The list above is in ascending order, with information on 1 and 2 widely available, information on point 3 harder to find and little to be found relating to points 4 and 5. Knowledge of the Countryside Code for visitors and the version for landowners may be patchy and other codes, such as the Dog Walking Code, may not be widely known. In general the consultation revealed that there is a strong case for looking closely at the type and availability of information to raise the awareness of responsible use by different user groups, particularly those using wheeled vehicles, as their effect and impact locally can be higher than other users.

66. Growing the general awareness of the area's Tracks & Trails and encouraging their responsible use by all types of visitors and residents can be assisted by a marketing plan that delivers targeted messages to key users. This is not just the responsibility of the Wye Valley National Landscape team but should be shared across a range of agencies and departments including Monmouthshire County Council, Visit Monmouthshire, Visit Wye Valley & Forest of Dean, Natural Resources Wales, the business sector, user groups and residents' groups. Coordination across a range of partners is vital to ensure that the right messages are developed and to ensure that they can be delivered effectively. It is recommended that key stakeholders collaborate to audit what is currently communicated and look at how it can be improved, recognising the twin objectives to enable a more diverse audience to access the landscape and help people understand their individual responsibilities.

67. The current offer could be better integrated and positioned. This arises because the base resources are considered differently, some elements defined as PROW, others defined as Highways, swathes of publicly accessible land, principally part of the Welsh Government Woodland estate dedicated as Access Land, while other important areas are historic parks and gardens and historic landscape. These latter categories make up 30% of the land areas of the Lower Wye Valley. Typically, some of the resources and channels that could be developed to bring the whole area together include:

- The integration and common branding of UCRs, unsealed roads and public rights of way with consistent branding and signage across the network;
- Publication of *Wye Etiquette* – a code of practice which could include maps and other links;
- Greater integration of the local bus routes through the area between Monmouth and Chepstow (the 65 via Trellech and 69 via Tintern) as a way of experiencing and connecting to the Tracks & Trails across a wider geography and providing a more diverse range of experiences for visitors;
- Volunteer Ranger services to offer support and advice to users;
- A website incorporating the entire area for users and associated Web App for directions and updates to existing software to make it easier to report issues;
- Ways to help get people around – *Trampers* and e-bike hire facilities for example – as part of a renewed offer;
- Reinvestment in the offer, through new signage, visitor information and common branding across the network.

Wye for All

68. This Strategy provides a blueprint to encourage greater access. The Wye Valley National Landscape is for everyone and previous work to widen access opportunities and encourage more people from different backgrounds to visit should be refreshed with further investment made. Studies have consistently shown that underrepresented groups to the countryside include older people, members of black, Asian and minority ethnic populations and residents living in deprived areas.[9]

69. We will learn from previous initiatives, such as the MOSAIC project in the Peak District, to attract and offer a warm welcome to different groups of people that can gain transformative personal benefit by spending time in one of the UK's finest lowland landscapes.

70. These opportunities will draw on best practice already produced by NRW in collaboration with the Sensory Trust, notably *By All Reasonable Means* where the aim should be for everyone to have an equally high-quality experience, but recognising that universal access to all experiences is not always possible. The principle of *Least Restrictive Access* underpins this Strategy and the related action plan.[10] The existing promoted routes are a useful asset but should be reviewed and rationalised where necessary to further enhance their accessibility to a wider audience.

Green Social Prescribing

71. This Strategy will encourage green and blue social prescribing, 'connecting citizens to community support to better manage their health and well-being' developing clear pathways that link GPs and charities to group-based leisure and recreation providers to benefit the health and wellbeing of individuals who might be unwell, recovering, have less means, need a new start or are suffering from concerns like eco-anxiety, something that increasing numbers of young people are reporting.[11] Increases in life expectancy reversed in 2010 with obesity on the rise and poor diet, lack of exercise and deprivation all contributory factors. The ONS calculates that recreation in Wales has an asset value of £22.6 bn in health benefits alone.[12] The therapeutic effects of a programme that immerses individuals in a National Landscape can undoubtedly help reverse poor health outcomes.

[9] For example see Natural England (2019) Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment available at this link

[10] The principle of Least Restrictive Access requires that all work meets the highest possible access standards for that piece of work. It is an approach that helps raise the overall standard of access of a site, route or facility over time. See NRW (2017) By All Reasonable Means

[11] For more on the importance of this approach see the Public Health Wales link here

[12] Office for National Statistics (2023) UK natural capital accounts – Asset Values

72. The Marsden Review recommended that *the National Landscapes of Wales undertake more health and well-being related experiments in developing and reaching challenged urban and rural communities and sections of the population. These could be delivered jointly with local health boards*. The related funding will be sought as part of the implementation of the Action Plan.

73. Opening up access to less involved visitor groups is not without its challenges and the work required is resource and partnership intensive. The Traverse Review, looking at *Increasing Children's Engagement with Protected Landscapes*, identified eight key issues which are set out in Annex IV.[13] Work to address this will need considered planning, the application of long-term and multi-year revenue funding and strong partnerships with the appropriate charities and agencies. Projects like *Generation Green* led by the YHA, inspired more than 115,000 young people to connect to nature and reveals the scale of the opportunity.

74. Work on social prescribing, such as that previously undertaken in Caerphilly, has shown that translating the concept into successful delivery needs the support of a range of non-countryside partners. The Gwent Public Service Board will be an ideal partner to help identify the opportunities and challenges. The current countryside partners do not have the resources to carry such a project forward on their own but an early action will begin to map out the optimum partners and resources needed and look at other examples of current practice.

75. Such a focus on health will be in addition to continuing a range of work to encourage access for people with impairments and health conditions: for example, by using Trampers to provide fuller access to the Tracks & Trails and encouraging neighbouring tourism attractions to become more accessible. This activity could include provision for sensory and quiet trails for those with visual impairments or neurodiverse conditions.

Volunteering

76. It is recommended that a plan is developed that can encourage visitors to get more deeply involved in the management of the Tracks & Trails network. This could draw on a network of willing volunteers from different backgrounds contributing to the upkeep of the place and supporting the National Landscape and Council teams with vital conservation, maintenance and educational work. This longer-term aim would complement a revitalised local volunteer network, covered later.

[13] Traverse (2022) Increasing children's engagement with protected landscapes - BE0181 Available from this link

77. A Wye for All programme would also consider opportunities for group leisure in some areas that are off the beaten track, like the NRW managed woodland which could unlock new experiences for new visitors including a night under the stars, wildlife watching or cultural and arts events, perhaps linked to the Wye Valley River Festival.[14] The educational and youth markets represent a strong growth opportunity and this may justify investment in new facilities to tie into updates to the Curriculum for Wales which may stimulate the frequency of school trips.

78. A new online portal, 'Tirlun' being delivered by Wales designated landscapes,[15] will provide educational resources for Wales and will be an important element linked to the new Curriculum for Wales. The site will provide free resources for teachers and families to encourage access to the outdoors with packaged learning activities. These and other opportunities will also bring further benefits for both the partners and the area's tourism businesses.

79. It is recommended that management measures be considered to help spread the volume of visitors away from Tintern towards other less visited areas where carrying capacity allows. Such a dispersal strategy should be developed as part of the Action Plan. The Tracks & Trails represent an important resource to spread the load with an offer that will have appeal to many different visitor segments from both the UK and further afield. The network represents a unique canvas which can be sensitively interpreted and developed to provide an innovative set of natural experiences to cater for different and growing market segments.

80. Research undertaken for this project indicates there is the potential for the visitor economy to contribute greater economic impact to the area, particularly if investment in serviced hotels can be encouraged in neighbouring towns, local supply chains are developed and quirky small accommodation businesses are supported. Alongside this plan, a set of Tracks & Trails experiences should be developed. Examples could include digitising popular existing walks, such as the Tread and Trot series to work on mobile devices, linkage with public transport routes (65 and 69 buses), Nordic walking experience, hire e-bikes, a trials motorcycle challenge, tramper tracks for less mobile visitors and climbing experiences. To ensure that the primary purpose of the National Landscape is upheld, the opportunity to develop the visitor economy should not be 'just left to happen'. Ideally opportunities should be subject to concept development, evaluation of carrying capacity and master-planning in close collaboration with local businesses and communities, led by the partnership delivering this Strategy.

[14] 'A night under the stars for every child' was a recommendation made by Julian Glover in his Landscapes Review to Government. Most of the Lower Wye Valley has the darkest skies available in Wales.

[15] Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) is a partnership of the eight designated landscapes of Wales that supports structured joint working to unlock the potential of designated landscapes to deliver for climate, nature and people.

81. There is an opportunity for the Lower Wye valley to be an exemplar for both responsible recreation and regenerative tourism. This includes ensuring local businesses are supported to step up to the net zero challenge, setting measurable goals to minimise impact, involving local people, having visitors contribute financially to conservation efforts, developing opportunities for visitors to learn about the place and its history, and to contribute to its upkeep. Such activities can create a strong and meaningful bond between visitors, the landscape and the people that live there, creating authentic and longer lasting experiences of benefit to both hosts and guests, nature and culture.

Case Study – Volunteering

The Cairngorms National Park has implemented volunteering schemes to engage local communities and enthusiasts in the preservation of this unique natural area. Objectives typically include Biodiversity Conservation; Community Engagement; and Education & Awareness.

- **The Cairngorms Connect Volunteering Programme is a collaboration between landowners and conservation organisations, offers a volunteering programme that focuses on habitat restoration and monitoring. Volunteers actively contribute to rewilding by planting native trees, removing invasive species, and collecting valuable data on wildlife populations.**

- **The Mountain Bothies Association organises regular maintenance to care for bothies (shelters). Volunteers ensure that these remote shelters are in good condition, supporting sustainable recreational use while minimising environmental impact.**

These programmes have resulted in:

- **Enhanced resilience of the ecosystem: particularly via habitat restoration increasing resilience to environmental changes and the re-establishment of native species.**

- **Empowered communities: A network of individuals passionate about the park's conservation. This has led to increased vigilance against illegal activities and a stronger commitment to sustainable practices.**

- **Clear Educational Outcomes: The educational component of volunteering has resulted in a more informed and environmentally conscious community. This awareness has translated into greater public support for conservation initiatives and policies.**

Challenges include limited funding and ensuring that the programmes can be accessible for a wider range of participants including and reflecting the wider population. Other typical volunteering programmes include trail maintenance and wildlife monitoring.

Robust Management

82. A range of issues around the current management of the Tracks & Trails were identified by consultees and discussed further at Drop-in sessions. Overall, the need to encourage responsible behaviour among all users and discourage undesirable behaviour was identified as a priority for this Strategy, seen as important by 89% of all respondents. Allied to this view, 86% of respondents said it was important that groups of users are able to harmoniously enjoy the Lower Wye Valley by creating an environment supported and enhanced through resources, facilities and education.

83. Such widespread agreement provides a strong basis for a revised approach to the management of the area and its assets. It also reflects a major issue - user/resident conflict. Currently such issues often remain unresolved, exacerbated by the complexity of the network, the differing legal status of the various Tracks & Trails, their topography and remote location, ignorance on the part of many users, and a lack of wayfinding and enforcement resources 'on the ground'. These factors then combine with illegal use, anti-social behaviour, fractured management, limited communications and relatively few resources. Against such a background it is not surprising that complex problems go unresolved. Some of these issues will need engagement of other agencies such as Gwent Police. A new approach is needed.

By far the most common issue raised during the consultation was the topic of trail / enduro motorcycles using the Tracks & Trails and creating problems for other users and residents, and damaging the landscape. The number of off-road motorcycle riders has increased significantly over the past decade with reportedly, on some trails, groups of up to ten motorcycles at a frequency of six times a day. Impacts can include noise pollution, air pollution, erosion on routes, damage to nature, conflicts with other users / residents, illegal use of the PROW, development of route spurs from legal routes, and reportedly, aggressive or intimidatory behaviour to other users and residents.

A New Approach

84. The new approach sees a greater sophistication in the management of the asset base and users. It is evident that the issues that were widely reported in the consultation only affect a very small number of routes where a mixture of active management, voluntary zoning, route modification and other measures can play a part in addressing concerns. Unsealed roads, where most of these issues occur, represent 21 kilometres of a network that totals over 550 kilometres, so less than 4% of the network. On the basis of all the evidence submitted it is proposed that five of these routes could be subject to more robust management measures. It should be noted that all these routes are suffering from environmental degradation due to current usage, exacerbated by climate change, and need investment to stem these issues. See Annex V for a map showing these routes.

Case Study – Reducing Illegal Use

One of the objectives set out in the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan is to maintain the area's Green Lanes, or unsealed routes. This policy is set out in *Special Qualities, Special Experiences*, the Recreation & Tourism strategy, one of six thematic strategies that also cover biodiversity, woodland, historic environment, volunteering and learning and engagement.

The management of the Dales' Green Lanes has been formally set out in a framework which considers relevant legislation and a range of factors that are applied. These include ecological sensitivity; heritage and landscape features; the durability and surface of the route; its current condition; the degree of conflict; and concerns from local residents or landowners. In evaluating the impact of recreational motor vehicles, detailed consideration of these factors ensures an evidence- based approach. On the basis of the evidence, a range of management options are considered including in summary:

- Do nothing;
- Repair the route;
- Maintain the route;
- Seek voluntary restraint on use of the route from specified users; and
- Place legal restriction (Traffic Regulation Order – TRO) on use of route from specified users.

Management solutions may include:

- Limit the use of particular unsealed routes to a specified number of users each month (a permit system such as used at Gatescarth Pass in the Lake District National Park);
- Seasonal restriction preventing use at specified times of year (such as the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order agreed for the Ridgeway National Trail in Wiltshire);
- Other partial restriction (for example, preventing use for certain number of days or at certain times of day);
- All year-round restriction on use;
- Working with all different users and their representative associations.

The methodological underpinning is a Sensitivity Assessment which uses four 'Trigger Factors': Nature Conservation, Heritage, Route Surface and Tranquillity scored as either Green, Amber or Red. This produces an assessment of overall sensitivity which can then be subject to the management solutions above.

85. The case study from the Yorkshire Dales recognises the over-riding importance of securing a more resilient ecosystem using a structured and transparent process. It is recommended that all the problematic Tracks & Trails be assessed against an agreed set of Trigger Factors with a view that some are likely to need safeguards to ensure biodiversity net gain, heritage value, local flood risk and other relevant local criteria. Elements of both the public rights of way and the highways network are likely to be the subject of this review.

86. This review should be undertaken in two stages – an examination of routes' natural and cultural resources, along with an analysis of the extent and nature of usage, and its impact on the ecosystem and its heritage value. This work will provide robust and objective evidence based on the impact of current usage and, subject to the evidence, may present the case for 'carefully targeted local action to protect sensitive areas.'[16] It is likely that the review will prioritise unsealed roads, the BOAT and bridleways shown in Annex V as these routes are generally subject to a greater level of impact given the wheeled traffic that use them.

87. A range of options will then need to be developed and subject to consultation, with potential changes ranging from voluntary agreements, trail management plans or other measures including modifications to designations or experimental Traffic Regulation Orders. The process of stopping up any highway as a result will be subject to a further statutory process. Short term operations will also be considered, such as enforcement action in partnership with Gwent Police.

88. It should be noted that the stopping up of any unsealed road will not necessarily result in compliance and may also have the effect of moving demand to other unsealed roads nearby. The widespread availability of maps online, which show detailed (sometimes incorrect) routes around the area's unsealed roads / BOAT network and can be download to mobile phones, has transformed the visibility and 'rideability' of this sub-set of the Tracks & Trails.

89. Over the last decade, this has resulted in additional pressures on the natural landscape of a completely different magnitude to those seen previously, because of the additional numbers of riders/drivers, other unauthorised off-trail activity and the size of groups. While technological change, such as electric motorcycles and 4x4s, will reduce the noise and air pollution elements in due course, their extra weight will mean potentially even greater impact on the Tracks & Trails. This is not just an issue with motorised vehicles as high numbers of mountain bikes, feet and hooves can also create impact, especially with wetter winters and dryer summers due to climate change. There is also a significant management challenge to reduce irresponsible 'off-path' trail building by some mountain bikers.

[16] See HM Government Response to Q14-17 (2023) Implementing the Landscapes Review available at this link

90. A variety of solutions, working in close partnership with associations such as the Trails Riders Federation, Green Lanes Association, The Ramblers and British Mountain Bike Orienteering should be part of this Strategy's early work. These groups could be invited into formal partnerships to help align purposes and priorities. A range of innovations could be trialled – for example, a system of voucher ticketing to regulate frequency of motorised use with agreed quotas for all groups emanating from outside the local area.

91. Other options may include:
- the promotion of less ecologically vulnerable unsealed roads nearby;
- partnerships with other alternative sites within 50 miles of the project area such as Walters Arena in Neath or Taff's Well in Caerphilly; and
- the examination of self-contained sites such as quarries near the Lower Wye Valley that could be developed into a managed facility.

92. The consultation also identified the separate issue of anti-social behaviour that occurs on relatively few Tracks & Trails but is a live issue for focus due to impacts on residents. Instances of illegal trespass with enduro motorcycles in areas adjacent to unsealed roads also threaten the natural capital of the area. Better understanding of the extent and nature of trespass and anti-social behaviour will need to be sought with multi-agency collaboration. Subsequent action could include enforcement options such as public space protection orders that can include restrictions to the highway by installation of barriers for the duration of the order.[17]

93. Another important management aspect remains path erosion and surface degradation, control of water run-off and risks of flooding. The topography of the valley and the historic nature of many of the Tracks & Trails means it is important to provide ongoing resources to address the issue of flooding, using natural flood management techniques such as those piloted in Chapel Hill Road. Unsealed roads affected include Horse Way, Robins Way (both Whitebrook), Tintern Road and Glynwood Road. The options include the development of cross-drains, bunds, tree felling and path reconstruction or resurfacing.

[17] HM Government (2014) Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act – Section 64, 7-9

Better Data & Insight

94. Monmouthshire County Council's Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) has a structured approach to managing and maintaining the County's entire PROW network. This Strategy reflects the themes of CAIP and will not affect the way that maintenance across the wider network is prioritised. It aims to add value to the CAIP with actions that can be regarded as a test-bed for new ideas to be considered and possibly rolled out across the wider area in due course.

95. To successfully boost awareness, increase accessibility and create greater accountability, the partnership needs to know significantly more about the value of the asset base, understand what is happening on the ground and measure the effectiveness of management measures. This work can only be achieved with significant increases in resources and improvements in data to provide a comprehensive evidence base on ecological value; user types, trends, visitor volumes and impacts.

96. There is a need for a much more forensic understanding of what is happening on the ground, the impact on landscape, ecology and heritage of different users and the ways in which user groups, landowners and individuals can be nudged, encouraged and influenced to modify behaviour. It is recommended that surveys of the heritage assets be undertaken, potentially by local volunteers, along with the roll-out of counters to monitor user numbers on specific routes. Other technologies may be worth investigating such as soundscape monitoring and camera-traps. This could be advanced through linkages with local universities.

97. As well as a greater understanding of the asset base, it is as important to have a better understanding of how different visitors may currently be impeded from visiting. New partnerships should be developed and a suite of tactics pursued that can help marginalised groups enjoy the landscape. The reasons why some people are unable to visit the countryside are complex and varied and depend on individual circumstances and, to some on extent, wider cultural factors such as a perceived lack of welcome. This objective will seek to build the evidence and utilise good practice from other areas to enable a positive and considered approach to attracting different types of visitors and users to the Lower Wye Valley.

98. There is a complementary need to be more innovative in the use of this data and modify existing technologies and build new solutions to transform collection and analysis across the visitor journey, ensure that existing systems such as Monmouthshire Council's Countryside Access Management System and Fix My Street apps are upgraded to offer greater functionality for visitors and residents and provide the usable data that practitioners need to monitor and evaluate delivery.

99. Qualitative data will be needed, for example, to support evaluation of habitat degradation and assess flood risk mitigation, with quantitative data gathered on user volumes, trends, state of the network and user incidents. Mapping and other systems need to be developed to express the results and produce regular status reports on defined areas for review by the Steering Group.

100. Gathering research and insight will need to be an early priority to provide the evidence and baseline data for funding bids and to delivery key projects. This will include:

- Assessment of Tracks & Trails against ecological criteria;
- Assessment of heritage features along Tracks & Trails and their condition and any impacts of route usage;
- Collation and audit of self-guided / promoted routes and promotional literature & information on the area, including websites and on-line material;
- Condition survey of current state of priority unsealed roads;
- Analysis of legal processes and management options;
- Development of the evidence base to support hard to reach visitors;
- Review of visitor & user monitoring systems, including counters and other technologies;
- Assessment of requirements for a visitor survey, along with methodologies and questionnaire formats, for funding bids and subsequent implementation;
- Assessment of technologies to improve management practice;
- Mapping and identification of freeholders / leaseholders and access agreements (voluntary and/or statutory).

Making it Happen

Asset Management

101. The Tracks & Trails of the Lower Wye Valley are rooted in the historic infrastructure of Tintern Abbey and its Granges followed by the industrial revolution that began over 450 years ago. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the Company of Mineral and Battery Works was established in 1566 and chose the Angidy Valley in Tintern to produce wire and build what became the largest business in Wales. The Tracks & Trails, along with the abundant charcoal from local woodlands, water power from the steep tributaries and the River Wye as the main transport corridor, were the means by which this industry was developed. By the time that the industry declined in the late 19th century, overtaken by coal power and railways, enclosure acts and farming had created a further network of other routes across the Lower Wye Valley. Some of these then became public highways and Public Rights of Way, others part of the national forestry estate.

102. It is no surprise then that the management of the Tracks & Trails is somewhat piecemeal today with multiple designations and different departments and agencies responsible for various parts. All these Tracks & Trails however hold an appeal for the local community and visitors, who do not generally perceive any practical difference between, for example, an unsealed road and a bridleway. In addition, there are large tracts of land under public ownership that can be enjoyed off the beaten track.

103. It would be strategically very beneficial to be able to consider all the Tracks & Trails as one set of assets - as this would allow for more robust assessment, management, development, maintenance and ultimately collaborative branding and promotion. This could also include the Tracks & Trails in nearby open access land. While the different routes would remain legally distinct, they would be connected in management terms which would underpin and improve their long-term stewardship. The audit suggested in Section 4 above would help provide the management information to facilitate this collaborative and strategic approach. Taking account of the lessons learnt through this approach in Wales, a similar approach could be followed in the English part of the National Landscape.

Leadership

104. This Strategy seeks to integrate a range of actions and consider them in a systems-based manner. It combines measures to support biodiversity, improve the landscape, encourage responsible recreation, manage tourism growth and open access to a wider variety of people who would not normally visit. It closely relates to Wales Government legislation including the Environment Act 2016, the Well-Being Future Generations Act 2015 and the Equality Act 2010. It closely aligns to and delivers Goal 10 of the UK Government's 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan.

105. It is recommended that the Strategy be overseen by a small steering group constituted as a sub-group of Monmouthshire's Local Access Forum (LAF). The Steering Group should potentially have representatives from the LAF, the National Landscape team and other statutory agencies and key delivery partners.

106. The Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) should also have an overview of the Strategy and its implementation. Monmouthshire Councillors and the local Community Councils with the majority of the Tracks & Trails (Devauden, St Arvans, Trellech United & Wye Valley) should also be engaged through reports and feedback to the Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group.

107. The focus will be on implementation rather than policy development. It is recommended that a project officer post be secured to deliver the agreed priorities. Additional resources will need to be bid for to augment the existing resources from the Wye Valley National Landscape, Monmouthshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales as well as other partners, stakeholder organisations, user groups and the Community Councils.

108. It is recommended that regular communications be available to all partners and other interests and workshops and other events be held to advance discussions and activity relating to the Strategy. For example, an invitation could also be extended to a representative from Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) to ensure that best practice can be exchanged from other National Landscapes and National Parks in Wales. Other UK wide volunteer groups should be engaged in this work such as Trash Free Trails and Adventure Smart.

109. The current range of volunteer groups should be supported to a greater degree and, as resources become available, new volunteer groups could be established and work pursued to widen access to less involved audiences. The volunteer network will need both investment and leadership from members of the community. The local Pathcare volunteers and other groups supporting conservation and enhancement of the Tracks & Trails should connect to the work of the Strategy. Each Community Council could nominate a formal Tracks & Trails lead if they are not already engaged through Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) and/or the Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group.

110. This Strategy is ambitious in its aims and innovative in its delivery. As such it can be considered as a national prototype initiative, with the potential to inform the delivery of wider government plans. A priority short-term action will be to prepare funding proposals to aid its implementation and build the partnerships to enable its delivery.

ACTION PLAN

Actions, their prioritisation and matters related to implementation will be agreed by the Local Access Forum.

1. Boosting Awareness	Implementation Activities
1.1a Undertake an audit of formal / official promotional material relating to use of the Tracks & Trails	A structured audit of official current and online information along with a survey of its use, promotion and distribution
1.1b Investigate and Audit other promotional and marketing material from private and third sector organisations	For example, check all online GPS derived routes of the Unsealed roads network. Seek updates from providers where inaccurate
1.1c Develop a coordinated promotional framework to inform the Visitor Management Plan (See Action 4.3)	To include various elements informed by Action 1.1a and 1.1b potentially to include presence on partners' websites, promotion of open access routes etc.
1.2 Prepare, write and publish the Wye Etiquette guide	A guide produced on the basis of broad consensus and made widely available in digital and print form that influences behaviours and includes insight from the marketing review
1.3a Review current Tracks & Trails signage and trial new options	Review state and nature of current signage. Learning from the NRW pilot project in Caerphilly, identify trials to inform users about the routes and permitted use. The Objective is to ultimately have an inclusive and standardised / Wye valley branded approach across all PROW and UCRs
1.3b Implement rebranded signage across the network	Subject to 1.1c and 4.3, seek investment over the period of the Strategy, prioritising those areas which are most in need on the basis of the audit, other ROWIP and Highways selection criteria, health and safety considerations etc.

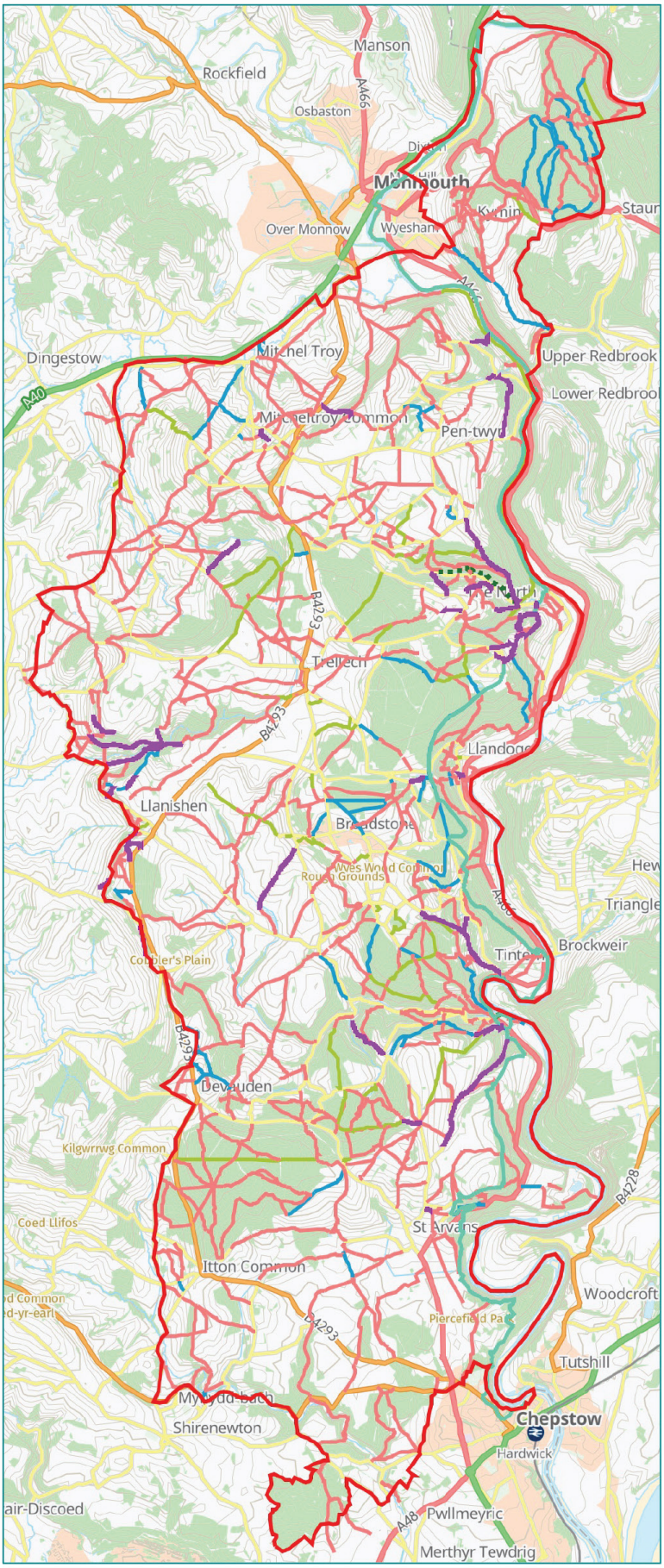
2. Wye For All	Implementation Activities
2.1a Desk research and assessment of current Green and Blue social prescribing models and current health inclusion projects	In-house activity would be usefully supported by specialist consultants in this field
2.1b Undertake best practice research on previous and current projects e.g. Peak District National Park MOSAIC project	Interview on the successes and challenges relating to Inclusion projects to examine the success of projects that aim to encourage more deprived audiences, BAME, school age children, young people 16-24 and ex-offenders
2.2 Review and report on current best practice on accessibility, potential funding sources, constraints and opportunities for the Lower Wye Valley	Develop appropriate proposals with a view to ensuring funding is secured for favoured options that are applicable are rolled out (linked to 2.5)
2.3 Review current local and national volunteer networks and develop a revised and enlarged volunteer programme	Examine operation, performance and best practice to support and potentially enlarge the volunteer base over the period of the Strategy. May include, for example, the development of the LANECARE concept with partners
2.4 Examine the scale and nature of NRW and other open access land in the area, and map the related Tracks & Trails and related resources	Undertake a condition audit of these routes and potential routes using the methodology developed in Action 3.1 below
2.5 With partners such as the Gwent Public Service Board, design and deliver a new generation Inclusion programme aimed at widening access	Using the research phase actions (2.1 and 2.2), design a programme aimed at widening access to the lower Wye Valley of non-typical user groups. Consider funding sources for a related proposal to the Welsh Government and/or Lottery
2.6 Meet with group operators in the educational sector with a view to encouraging trips from school age against the national curriculum	Connect to operators such as YHA and Rock UK who can advise on outdoor leisure concepts and may be interested in the development of partnerships to assist a collective mission such as a Generation Green project tailored to schools in Wales
2.7 Review the opportunity for new activities and events that draw on nature and landscape and encourage people to visit and enjoy the area	A selection of new events rooted in the special qualities of the place can raise the profile of the Tracks & Trails and shift perceptions of activities to be enjoyed. Identify and approach commercial, third sector or community interests to identify activities, venues, infrastructure and support requirements
2.8 Examine opportunities for new ways to increase inclusion including, for example trampers and electrically assisted pedal cycles, with potential investment and engagement by interested stakeholders	Consider securing grants and other incentives to enable partnerships with WVNL

3. Robust Management	Implementation Activities
3.1a Develop a methodology to enable the structured assessment of the value of the Tracks & Trails for landscape, ecology and heritage	Assessment of historic context, type, condition, value, issues and also options for accessibility - with a link to the volunteer programmes envisaged in Action 2.3
3.1b Pilot the assessment system developed at Action 3.1a on current routes that have identified management issues (Strategy Annex V)	This will assess key routes with current management challenges and enable the grading of each route against its inherent value
3.1c Using best practice developed elsewhere, examine the solutions for the management of the routes under particular pressure and prioritise	This will include the examination of alternative sites both within the Lower Wye Valley and nearby
3.2 Examine legal options of Tracks & Trails for maintenance and management, working closely with landowners to identify hotspots	Examine the options relating to the key Tracks & Trails including the impact of Welsh Government access reform measures
3.3 Develop and undertake a user survey of key identified routes	Design and deploy a survey that will identify user types, frequency, incidence of issues / conflicts etc. This should complement 3.1 and 3.2
3.4 Run a high profile and jointly funded operation with partners, user associations, landowners and Gwent Police	Subject to the evidence gathered in activity 3.1 run an (ideally) annual operation
3.5 Assess the Chapel Hill Road NFM pilot, and seek funding to undertake other similar capital projects	This type of investment will be important in other areas where Natural Flood Management can alleviate issues on other Tracks & Trails

4. Better Data & Insight	Implementation Activities
4.1 Review existing and if required develop a data sharing agreement between the core project partners including MCC and NRW and other partners	Strengthen mechanisms by which the partners can better share existing data, for example footfall and traffic counters. Other partners, such as Gwent Health Board, will be invited to share relevant data relating to Action 2.1
4.2 Drawing on Actions 1.2, 2.4 and 3.1, provide a map of the entire network including the identification of heritage feature, their condition and ownership	Include NRW Forest trails, permissive paths, open access land as well as PROW, UCRs and unsealed roads. Working with landowners, grade the importance of tangible / intangible heritage features
4.3 Develop a Visitor Management Plan to include dispersal and other strategies (informed by earlier actions)	This may include a visitor survey to help inform the development of management solutions and e.g. low carbon transport, dispersal to lesser used routes, flattening peaks via promotions, online vouchers to reduce use on overused paths etc.
4.4 Audit all current reporting tools designed for the wider public and consider how these tools work together in favour of the management of the LWV	Audit customer and professional usage of e.g. CAMS and Fix My Street etc. with a view to a collaborative user-friendly upgrade and increasing take-up as a reporting tool for all types of incidents

5. Making It Happen	Implementation Activities
5.1a Establish a cross-organisational team from the core partners to support the delivery of the Strategy and formalise partnerships with the Ramblers, GLASS, the TRF, BHS and other national user groups	Executive group will oversee delivery. These partnerships will be instrumental to enable the agreement of subsequent management plans for pressurised unsealed routes and the Byway Open to all traffic
5.1b Provide resources for the cross-organisational team	Bid for resources to appoint a project manager to enable the agreed actions to be advanced more rapidly and coherently
5.2 Integrate the management of all the different types of Tracks & Trails into one operation. Reflect these arrangements in the Visitor Management Plan	Identify how the entire network could be managed as one asset, branded as one area (and how best related departments and bodies can facilitate and benefit from such an integrated approach)
5.3 Develop organisational MoUs with key partners	MoUs to be agreed by core partners. This will include associations and other interest groups. Related to action 3.2
5.4 Stimulate collaboration and partnership through related workshops, seminars and other events	Hold regular sessions to advance discussion and delivery. These actions can be reviewed and revised over time by the LAF sub-group and JAC

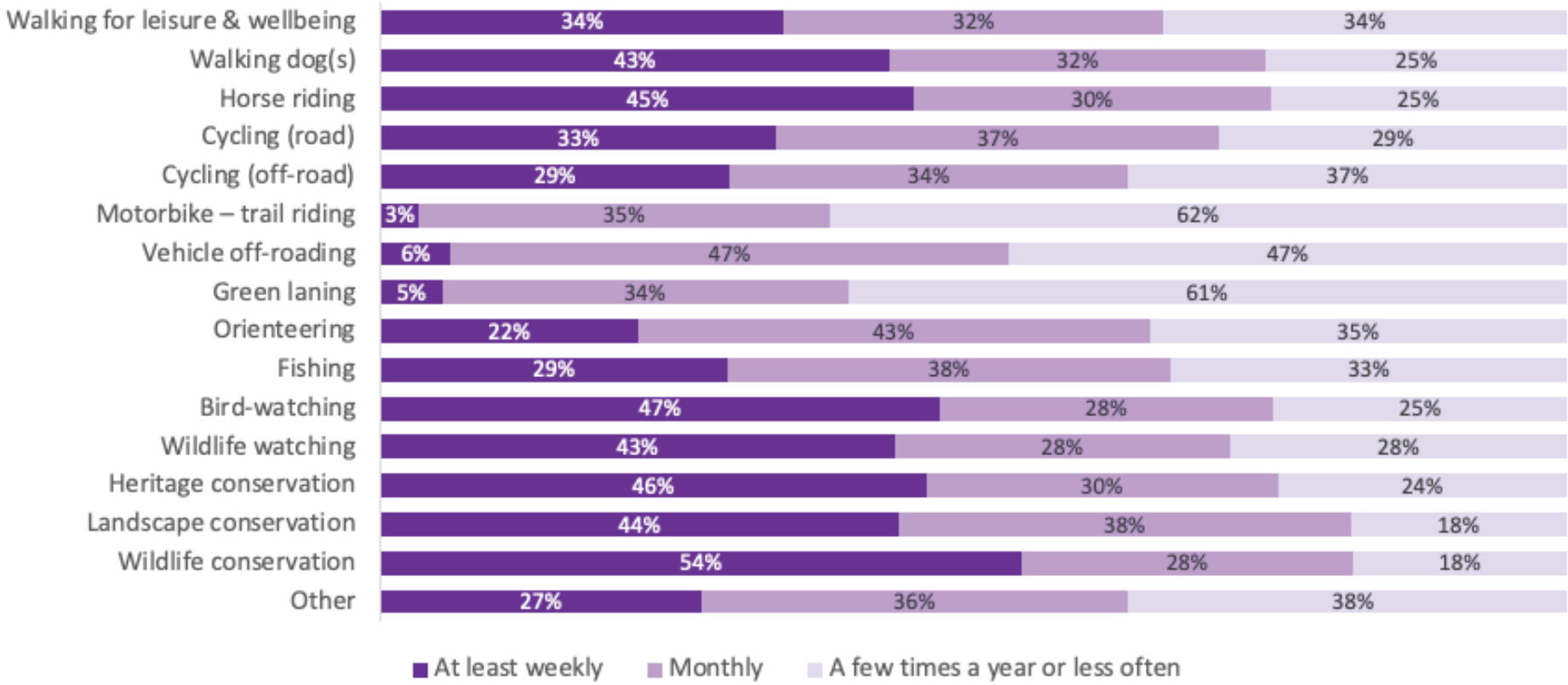
Annex I The Tracks & Trails



- Footpath
- Restricted Byway
- Bridleway
- Byway Open to All Traffic
- Unclassified County Road
- Unsealed Road
- 'B' Road
- Wye Valley Walk

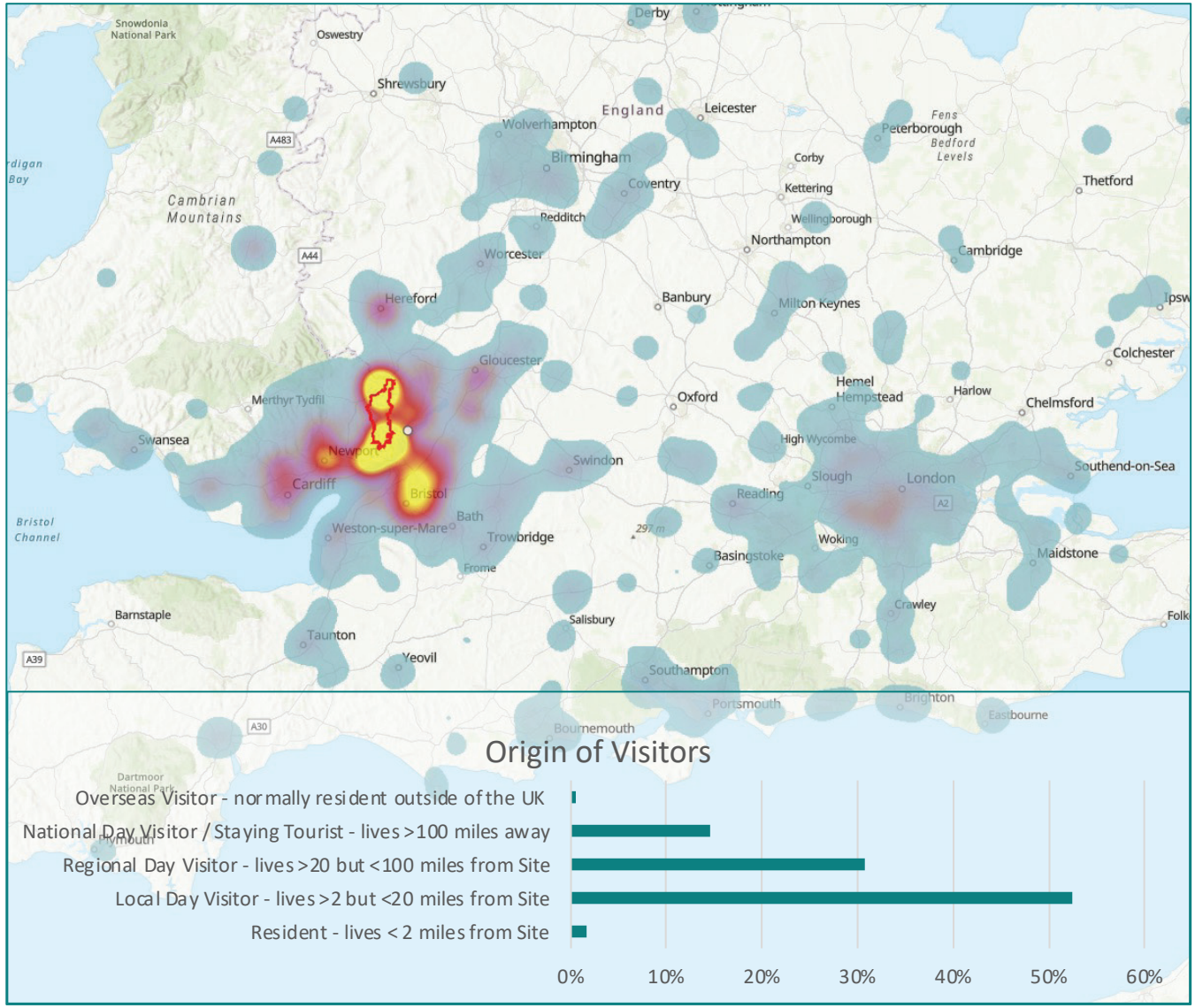
Annex II Frequency of use by user type and locality

- The frequency of use data shows how those who walk, cycle and horse ride in the Lower Wye Valley tracks and trails, do so with much greater frequency than those who visit with vehicles (trail bikes and 4x4's). Those who engage with the environment (wildlife/bird watching and conservation) also do so with greater frequency.



At least weekly includes 'daily or almost daily' and 'several times a week'
Monthly = 'several times a month'
A few times a year or less often includes 'a few times a year' and 'once a year or less often'
Base: 350 online responses

Annex III Origin of Visitors



Annex IV Increasing children's engagement with protected landscape

Key Findings

1. Financial constraints present a significant barrier to engagement for families from underrepresented backgrounds as well as schools and other enabling organisations. Providing free or subsidised activities for families and schools is crucial, whilst increased sustainable funding options would help other organisations deliver their work more effectively.

2. Lack of facilities and accessibility can limit engagement, particularly for disabled children. Comprehensive information in advance as well as organisations providing equipment and trained staff can support families to engage.

3. Transport can be a key barrier to engagement for families and schools. This includes cost, travel distance and availability of transport in rural areas. Free or subsidised travel can help families and schools engage and funding for enabling organisations to provide transport is key.

4. Reaching underrepresented communities can be challenging, so partnerships with community organisations are important. Working via referral systems reduces bureaucratic barriers and can also help reach communities.

5. Children's engagement can be deeply affected by family and cultural factors like lack of experience or knowledge, or negative perceptions of nature. Stakeholders stressed the importance of accommodating different needs, which can help children and families feel supported to engage with protected landscapes.

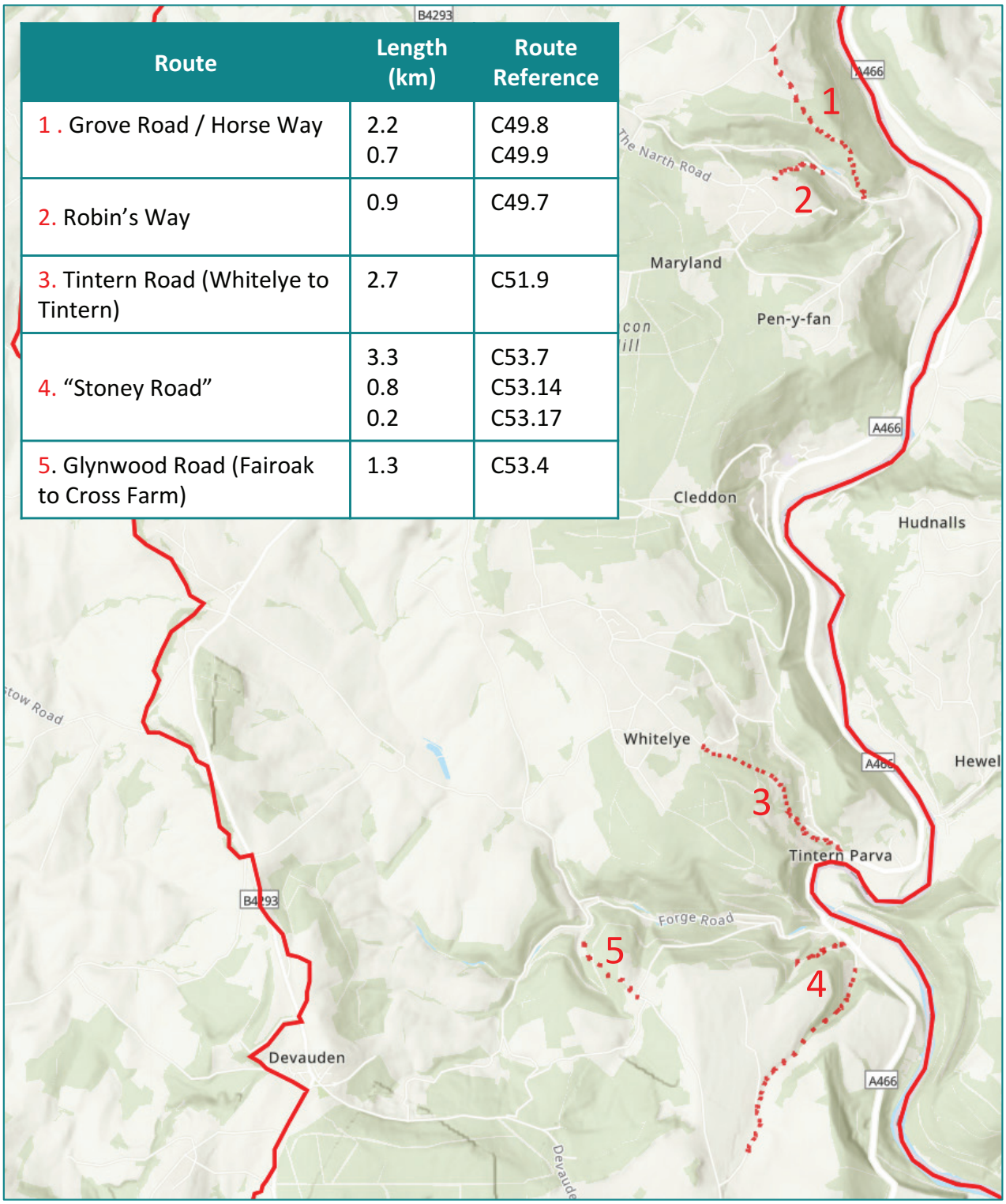
6. Schools are a vital means through which to engage young people with protected landscapes. The curriculum can be a barrier to this; stakeholders felt that if the curriculum required engagement with protected landscapes, they would be more able to focus resources into delivering these activities.

7. Organisational partnerships that cut across stakeholder groups are key to ensuring that children can have a broad range of experiences, and this means that they are more likely to find the right activities and support.

8. The ability to engage with protected landscapes in a safe, inclusive space was important to young people and central to their enjoyment of activities.

Annex V Unsealed Roads highlighted in the Consultation

Route	Length (km)	Route Reference
1 . Grove Road / Horse Way	2.2 0.7	C49.8 C49.9
2. Robin's Way	0.9	C49.7
3. Tintern Road (Whitelye to Tintern)	2.7	C51.9
4. "Stoney Road"	3.3 0.8 0.2	C53.7 C53.14 C53.17
5. Glynwood Road (Fairoak to Cross Farm)	1.3	C53.4



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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

AONB SPECIES ACTION PLAN

Purpose

To present members with the second of the 5 National Landscape Species Action Plans, for the Hedgehog, under the Colchester Declaration.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the Hedgehog Species Action Plan and welcomes the on-going work on the preparation of the remaining Species Action Plans.

Key Issues

- The Colchester Declaration – a 'declaration for nature' was produced by the National Association for AONBS (NAAONB) and supported by all the AONB partnerships in 2019.
- Five species, or assemblage of species, were chosen as representative of the Wye Valley National Landscape Special Qualities.
- The second Species Action Plan, for the Hedgehog, as a locally iconic species and relating to boundary habitat diversity & connectivity, has been published and is appended below.
- The National Landscape team is working on the production of the remaining Species Action Plans and an accompanying Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan.

Reasons

In July 2019 the Colchester Declaration was produced by the NAAONB and supported by AONB partnerships. The Declaration demonstrated the readiness of AONB partnerships to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change. The ambition was pledged for every AONB to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan and deliver Species Action Plans to reverse the decline of threatened species identified on the IUCN Red List, see: https://national-landscapes.org.uk/the-colchester-declaration.

The AONB Unit worked with local wildlife and conservation experts to choose 5 species, or assemblage of species, that: are representative of the AONB Special Qualities [SQ], as identified in the AONB Management Plan, and; will benefit from positive landscape scale management. The species chosen are: Noble Chafer beetle in relation to orchard habitats & Veteran Trees [SQ27, SQ18]; Hedgehog as a locally iconic species [SQ1, SQ4, SQ5, SQ26]; Water Crowfoot as an indicator for river water quality [SQ3, SQ10]; Woodland butterfly assemblage with special interest in the Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary in relation to woodlands [SQ2], and Bumblebee assemblage with particular focus on Shrill Carder, Brown-banded Carder, and Red-shanked Carder in relation to grassland sites [SQ4].

Implications

Hedgehog – Boundary habitat & connectivity and community engagement

The second of the 5 Wye Valley National Landscape Species Action Plans, has been produced and is appended below.

Progress to date on delivering the Hedgehog Species Action Plan (SAP), led by Celyn Davies, Nature Recovery Officer, and Lucinda James, Community Links Officer, includes the following:-

- A partnership has been developed with local hedgehog champion Dylan Allman, and continued support for his work.
- PTES shared their records with the AONB Unit, establishing baseline data for hedgehog distribution across the National Landscape.
- Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding for Nature Recovery in Wales has been secured, which has funded the restoration of two hedgerows in the 24/25 financial year, with further hedgehog work to be initiated for the delivery of this SAP.
- The National Landscape Species Action Plan for the hedgehog has now been written and sent out to project partners for feedback.

Work is also progressing on the other Species Actions Plans.

Bumblebee Assemblage - Grassland species

- A partnership has been developed with Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Bees for Development.
- The National Landscape Species Action Plan for bumblebees has been started, but needs further development and action in 2024.

Water Crowfoot – River species

- This Species Action Plan has not yet been started but will be developed over the 24/25 FY. The revitalizing of water crowfoot beds in the river is also a consideration in the Wyescapes Landscape Recovery project, as well as being part of the overall concern for river restoration concern of the Wye Catchment Partnership.

Woodland butterfly assemblage – Woodland species

- A partnership has been established with Butterfly Conservation and work is underway for the development of this Species Action Plan.

Background

In 2019 the annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference took place at the University of Essex, Colchester. The conference concluded with The Colchester Declaration – a Declaration for Nature. This was developed through a series of pre-conference discussion fora and workshop sessions during the conference. The Declaration is the pledge for nature of the AONB network: to protect what remains and restore what has been lost.

Wye Valley National Landscape

Hedgehog

Erinaceus europaeus

Species Action Plan 2022 – 2027

To Accompany the

Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan

Dyffryn Gwy Tirwedd Cenedlaethol

Wye Valley National Landscape

Cover photo by Paul Genge (Source – PTES)

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1. Background

In 2019, set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) set in motion plans to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's). The Wye Valley AONB Partnership, along with AONB's across the UK, signed up to the Colchester Declaration. This is an ambitious plan to recover nature in and beyond protected landscapes, build climate resilience and enhance engagement with people. Rebranding has since taken place and AONBs are now known as National Landscapes.

As part of this effort, each National Landscape has committed to adopting an IUCN threatened, or locally threatened, species and preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, in the hope that by 2030 at least 30 species relevant to AONB's can be removed from the threatened list (NAAONB, 2019). The Wye Valley National Landscape has committed to adopting 5 locally significant species, each of which represent one of the AONB's special qualities, and/or indicate the health of a well-connected landscape. Threatened in both rural and urban environments across the UK, the hedgehog has been chosen as a species with which the general public can engage and actively contribute towards conservation work.

2. Introduction

Well recognised as one of the UK's favourite wild animals, the hedgehog is our only native spiny mammal. They are 22-28cm long and covered on their back and flanks by around 6000 banded spines; their face and underside are covered with coarse greyish brown fur. When threatened, the spines are raised, brought over the head and feet, and the hedgehog rolls up. Hedgehogs have a 'skirt' of skin bounded by an orbicularis muscle that acts like a drawstring bag pulling the hedgehog into a tight ball.

They have a wide range of habitats in both urban and rural situations, though they are absent from large conifer plantations, marshes & moorlands. Suburban and urban gardens appear to be increasingly important as habitat. Hedgehogs are found throughout western Europe, including mainland Britain and Ireland, but are absent from some Scottish Islands and have been introduced to others. Their diet consists of ground-dwelling invertebrates, especially beetles, caterpillars, millipedes and earwigs. Whilst hedgehogs can and do eat slugs and worms, these are shown in large amounts to cause parasitic infections, and are usually only consumed when they are unable to find alternatives. They will also readily eat meaty cat food or dog food and should reach a healthy weight of over 600 g to survive hibernation. Hedgehogs breed between April and September, with peak activity in May and June, although increasingly they are having litters late into September. Hoglets can emerge anytime from late April/early May, are weaned at around five weeks and are independent from then on. Females can attempt two litters in a year, but generally cannot rear more than one successfully. During the winter (usually November through to March when there are 5 consecutive nights at 5°C or below) they hibernate, although research shows that they will still make an appearance on warmer, drier days for water and food.

Hedgehogs are generally solitary, non-territorial, and nocturnal. They are mobile and wide-ranging, and are able to travel 1-2km a night in urban locations and up to 3km a night in rural locations.

Hedgerows are a particularly important feature for hedgehogs (hence the name) as they tend to follow linear features when foraging.

Although hedgehogs are still relatively widespread, there is now considerable evidence of a dramatic decline in recent years, with around a third of the national population being lost since the millennium. They are declining in both rural and urban habitats, but at a much faster rate in urban areas due to a wide range of factors.

The list of areas associated with hedgehogs is a long one. The hedgehog is the symbol of Ross-on-Wye and the ancient kingdom of 'Ergyng' (Archenfield) which is partly within the National Landscape boundary, means 'Land of Hedgehogs'.


Figure 1: Hedgehogs (Source – Ali Taylor & Hannah Bamber, Peoples Trust for Endangered Species)

3. Current Status

3.1 Ecology and habitat requirements

Timings of many hedgehog behaviours are dependent on temperature, gender and the body condition of the individual hedgehog. Actions at particular times of year can, however, help reduce hazards and help hedgehogs thrive. Hedgehogs have three main habitat requirements: a range of nesting opportunities, high quality feeding areas, and varied habitats which are well-connected.

- Nesting: Hedgehogs nest year-round and produce different types of nest for day-time resting, breeding and hibernation. Day-time nests are a retreat during the active season, and are often temporary, flimsy and found in areas of rough grassland, loose leaf piles or garden vegetation. Breeding nests are made by females and are used to raise young. These nests are more robust, like hibernation nests, and are often found in garden sheds or in overgrown gardens. Winter nests can be used for several months to hibernate through periods of cold weather and low food availability. The sturdiest nests rely on medium-sized deciduous leaves and a structure to hold the leaves in place. Bramble patches, log piles and open compost heaps are common locations for breeding nests and hibernacula.

- Feeding: Hedgehogs are omnivorous, opportunistic feeders, but the bulk of their diet consists of macro invertebrates such as beetles, earwigs, caterpillars and millipedes. In urban areas, supplementary food in the form of cat, dog or formulated hedgehog food can make up a significant part of their diet if natural sources are low. Hedgehogs will balance their diet to

mitigate risk, choosing food sources that provide the necessary nutrients while avoiding excessive exposure to harmful parasites e.g. through slugs and worms. Access to water on a daily basis is also very important.

- Habitat: Hedgehogs are highly active and range widely. They need to be able to move freely through a well-connected range of habitats to find food, mates and areas to nest. Radio-tracking studies show that hedgehogs can travel around 2km in a night in urban areas, and up to 3km a night in rural landscapes, though distances differ between the sexes. A viable population of urban hedgehogs is thought to need around 0.9km² of well-connected habitat.

3.2 Population and distribution

Hedgehogs are nocturnal and solitary creatures, so counting numbers in the field is difficult. Only two reliable estimates of the population size exist and both acknowledge a lot of uncertainty in the figures. In 1995, and more recently in 2017, researchers have suggested a figure of about 1.5 million hedgehogs across England, Scotland and Wales collectively (see figure 2). However, more recent figures from the Mammal Society in 2018, suggest that the population may be as low as 879,000.

In the early 1990s, Dr Pat Morris, at Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL), recruited volunteers to record hedgehog road casualties as a way of monitoring the population in the wider landscape. Ten years on, PTES relaunched the survey, part-funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). These surveys showed regional differences in counts of hedgehogs and indicated an ongoing decline in the population since Morris' original work. Other surveys indicated similar findings and in 2007 hedgehogs were made a priority conservation species in Britain under the then UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).

In 2022, the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) analysed three surveys that have regularly collected records of hedgehogs for the last two decades for their 'The State of Britain's Hedgehogs Report 2022'. All record other species as well. PTES' Mammals on Roads survey covers primarily rural areas (outside towns and cities); while the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Garden BirdWatch and PTES' Living with Mammals are garden-based, or predominantly so, and are more representative of the built environment. Differences in the way data are collected mean that trends aren't directly comparable, but together they give a good indication of the direction of change and an idea of its size.

- Rural populations: Between 2002 (the baseline year) and 2022, counts of hedgehog road casualties recorded in PTES' Mammals on Roads survey fell by between a third and three-quarters across Great Britain (Figure 2). Estimating changes in the size of the national population is difficult. Changes in the way the survey is carried out mean that the results should be interpreted with care. Annual estimates vary a lot and more records are needed each year to get a better idea of how the rural population is changing. The trend, which evens out year-to-year differences, has been level over the last few years, but it's still possible that the population has increased over this period or continued to fall. To be more confident, more data is essential. Another survey, the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey, also shows a decline across rural areas, in this case, in sightings of live animals.

- Urban populations: Across urban sites, a different picture is emerging. While hedgehogs remain widespread, fewer places record them today than did twenty years ago. This may be changing however and the last few years has seen an increase in the number of hedgehogs where they are still present. Between 2004 and 2012, the proportion of sites recording

hedgehogs in Living with Mammals (either from sightings or signs) fell sharply; since then, however, the decline has levelled off and average weekly counts of hedgehogs show an upturn. A broadly similar pattern, changing little between 2008 and 2013 and increasing in the last few years, is shown by the proportion of sites recording hedgehogs in the BTO's Garden BirdWatch. These records can be difficult to interpret because participants aren't necessarily recording mammals or hedgehogs, but along with Living with Mammals, the two surveys suggest an improving situation (steadying of numbers rather than a decline) for hedgehogs in urban areas. Hedgehogs are not disappearing from sites as rapidly as they were fifteen years ago and might even be returning.

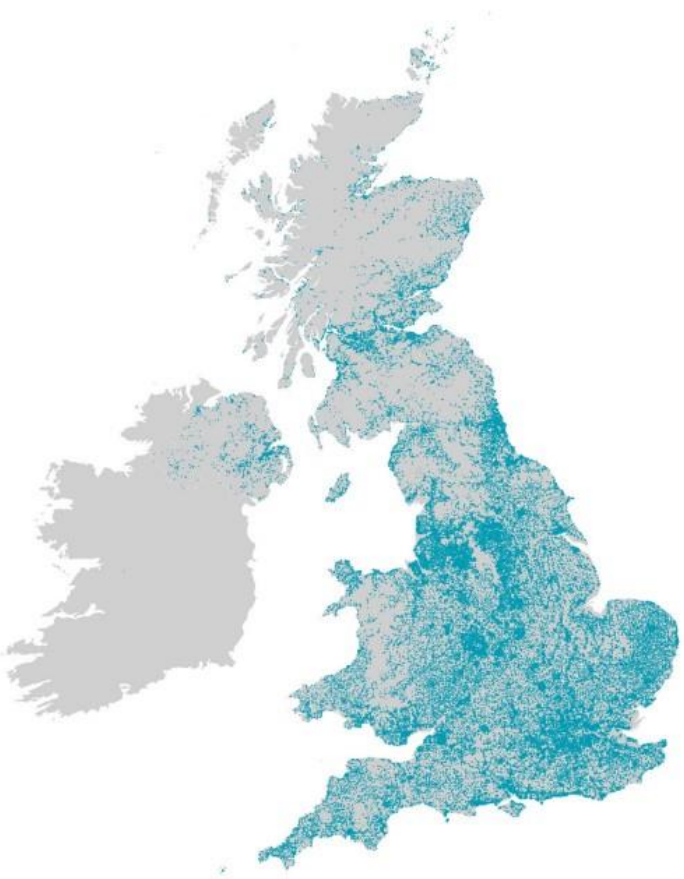

Figure 2: The distribution of hedgehog sightings in PTES and other surveys between 2012 and 2017. Most records are from urban areas, reflecting the distribution of recorders as well as that of hedgehogs (Data provided from the State of Britain's Hedgehogs 2018 Report, PTES).

In 2015, Hedgehog Street, a joint campaign between PTES and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society, launched the BIG Hedgehog Map[1], the only real-time map that shows hedgehog distribution UK wide. It's an online resource to record hedgehog sightings, dead or alive, and maps 'Hedgehog Highways' through gardens. So far over 19,000 hedgehog sightings and over 4500 'Hedgehog Highways' have been mapped, linking over 9000 gardens across the UK.

[1] https://bighedgehogmap.org/

3.3 Legislation

In 2020, hedgehogs were put on the IUCN Red List as vulnerable to extinction in Great Britain. Hedgehogs are listed as a Priority Species in both the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (2007) and under S41 of the NERC Act (2006). They also have limited protection under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, which means they cannot be caught or trapped without a licence and under Appendix III of the 'Bern' Convention. The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act (1996) prohibits cruel activities and mistreating of hedgehogs. Hedgehogs are identified as vulnerable in the Mammal Society Red List.

No legislation currently addresses the causes of decline in hedgehog populations.

3.4 Summary of important sites

Hedgehogs are known to inhabit both rural and urban areas, including woodlands, hedgerows, meadows, gardens and parks. Their habitat is widespread, as long as there is adequate cover and food sources available. This makes it difficult to determine important sites across the Wye Valley National Landscape.

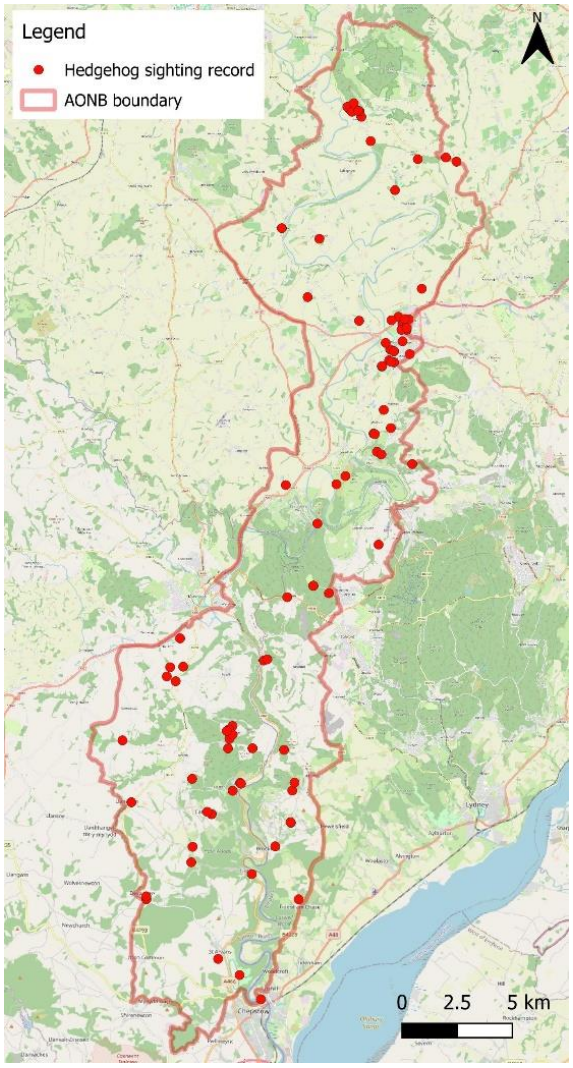

Figure 3: Current Hedgehog records in the Wye Valley Landscape (Source – Wye Valley National Landscape with data from PTES, 2022)

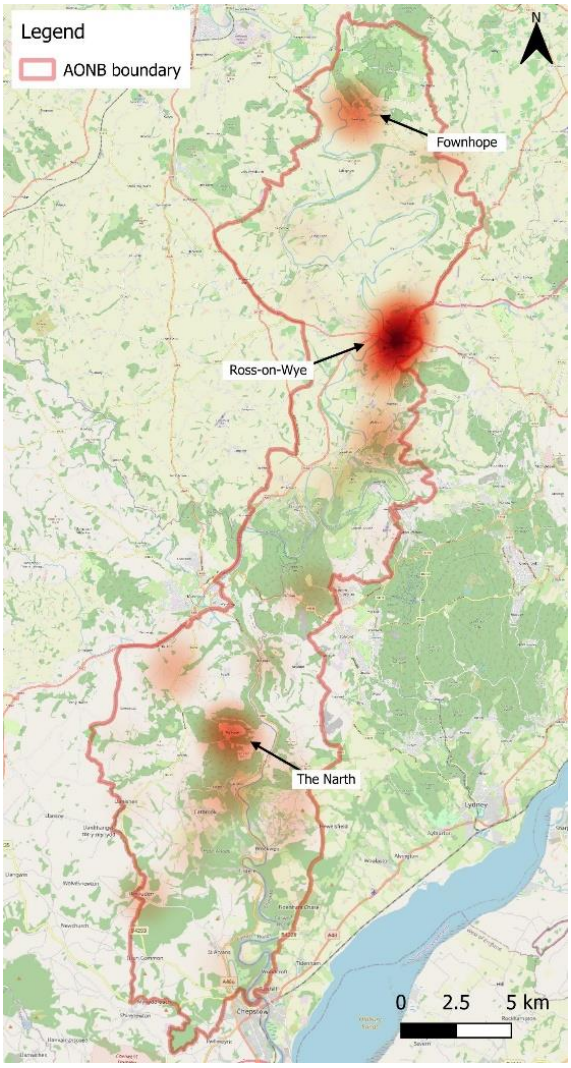

Figure 4: Heatmap of current Hedgehog records in the Wye Valley Landscape (Source – Wye Valley National Landscape with data from PTES, 2022)

Data from the BIG Hedgehog map was shared by PTES in 2022 including all records received within the Wye Valley National Landscape (a total of 94 records), combined with a small number of reports (7) received directly by the Wye Valley National Landscape team. Figures 3 & 4 help to identify the distribution of hedgehogs across the National Landscape. As previously discussed within Section 3.2, most records are from urban areas, reflecting the distribution of recorders as well as that of hedgehogs.

The heatmap generated from these records identifies the main hotspot at Ross-on-Wye with 23% of records concentrated in this area. Fownhope and The Narth were also identified as secondary hotspots for hedgehog sightings.

4. Current factors affecting the species

Hedgehogs face a multitude of natural and anthropogenic threats, many of which act together and some of which are still being understood. Whilst habitat loss and fragmentation are major issues across both urban and rural habitats, the reasons differ between the two landscapes. But many of the threats are man-made and can be reduced through simple changes in land management, providing an opportunity for green-space managers to make a real difference for local hedgehogs. It can be helpful to consider urban and rural areas separately, though there are certainly crossovers between the two.

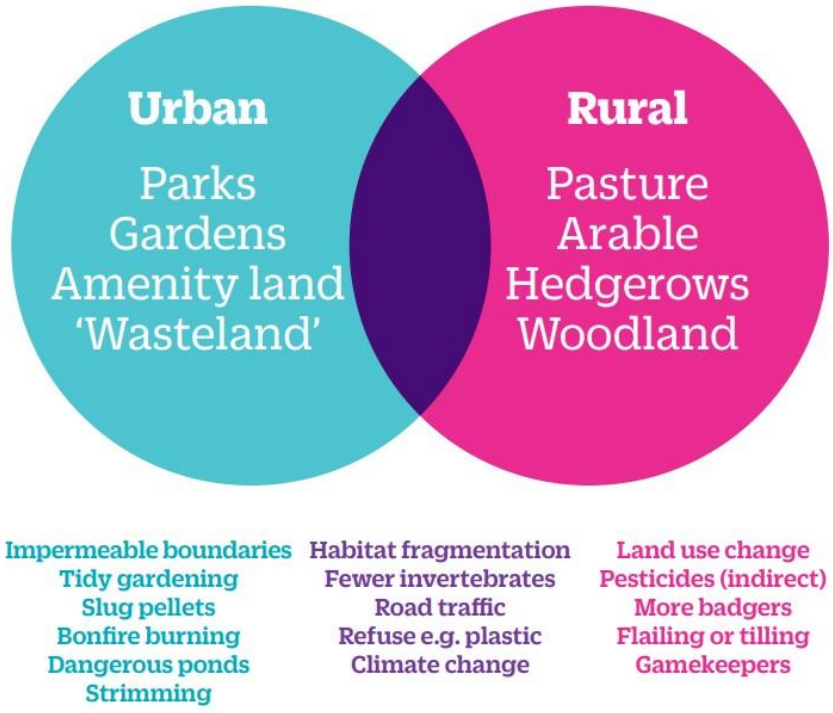

Figure 5: Threats to hedgehogs (Sourced from 'Hedgehog Ecology and Land Management', Peoples Trust for Endangered Species and British Hedgehog Preservation Society)

4.1 Rural threats

- Use of herbicides can directly reduce earthworm density and reduce the varied ground cover needed for foraging.
- Loss of hedgerows leads to habitat fragmentation.
- Larger field sizes make it difficult for hedgehogs to move around the landscape.
- Hedgerow management by flailing now leads to hedges with gappy bases which are poor for nesting.
- Limited areas of scrub, decaying wood or nectar rich planting.
- Increases in badger populations, the hedgehog's main natural predator, may have an effect where habitat is already degraded. It's thought that the two species can coexist as they have for thousands of years, so long as there's enough feeding and nesting habitat for them both.
- Loss of permanent pasture.

4.2 Urban threats

- Roads can act as barriers to hedgehog movement, may have genetic impacts on populations and are a large source of mortality. It has been estimated that between 167,000 – 335,000 are killed on our roads in Great Britain every year.
- Impermeable garden fencing and walls limits the area of connected land available.
- Gardens lost to car parking or decking directly reduces foraging area.
- Habitat loss from new developments.
- New developments usually lack any connectivity between gardens.
- Over-tidy gardening can remove dead wood, leaves, replace foraging areas with drives and decking and clear away overgrown corners.
- Slug pellets are potentially lethal if directly ingested and also reduce important prey sources.

4.3 General threats

- Thousands of hedgehogs are admitted to vets and rescue centres across the country every year. Hedgehogs are well known for their association with host specific ticks and fleas, but can also carry and suffer from diseases such as salmonella, lungworm and ringworm. The population-level impact of these diseases on wild hedgehogs is still being researched.
- Litter, wire fencing and loose or fine vegetable netting poses a risk to hedgehogs. Cricket nets and football goals are also common places for entrapment.
- Hedgehogs have no flight reflex and nest year round, making them vulnerable to machine injury e.g. strimmers, mowers
- Risk of drowning: ponds and lakes are excellent habitat and provide an important water source for hedgehogs in times of drought. Hedgehogs are good swimmers, but even small ponds are a hazard if they can't climb back out
- Hibernation habitat, typically scrubby or brambly areas, are frequently lost through over management or development
- Bonfires and compost heaps are attractive nesting sites for wildlife but can be particularly hazardous to hedgehogs who lack a flight mechanism
- Use of pesticides, herbicides and rodenticides that can be highly toxic and can impact non-target species.

- Foxes and dogs can cause hedgehog injuries and mortality, particularly during hoglet season, but there's no available research to indicate that they impact hedgehog populations as a whole. Small populations may be more vulnerable.

4.4 Barriers to conservation

- Hedgehogs are nocturnal and solitary creatures, so counting numbers in the field and estimating population is difficult.
- Hedgehogs are generalists; they are widespread throughout the UK, occupy a wide range of habitat types and feed on a range of different foods. As a result of this, the factors affecting them vary across the range.
- In the Wye Valley National Landscape we are lacking knowledge about the range, population and distribution of hedgehogs.

5. Current Initiatives

5.1 Local protection

Despite a wealth of UK-wide hedgehog conservation schemes, within the Wye Valley National Landscape there is a lack of localised action for hedgehogs. The closest rescue centre for hedgehogs is New Newent (Samantha's Little Prickles) and the Vale Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre in Tewkesbury, who treat over 1,000 hedgehogs every year, with 250+ typically being treated in their care throughout the winter. In 2023, 1,960 hedgehog causalities were admitted to the centre with numbers increasing year on year. They offer advice on their website for hedgehog rescue, care and warning signs which can indicate ill health.

Our local 'Hedgehog Hero' Dylan Allman leads the 'Be Hedgehog Aware' campaign which aims to reduce the number of injuries suffered by hedgehogs from gardening related activities such as strimming and mowing. The campaign has gained support from local authorities and equipment manufacturers including Hyundai and STIGA. These manufacturers now attach a 'Be Hedgehog Aware' sticker to all of their strimmers, mowers and brushcutters.

Figure 6: Hyundai products with the 'Be Hedgehog Aware' sticker (Source – Dylan Allman, Hedgehog Aware)

Raising awareness within the local community has been one of the main objectives of this campaign and Dylan has spoken at numerous events engaging with schools and the public throughout

Monmouthshire and the Wye Valley, including organising the 'Let's Talk Hedgehogs' community event in March 2023.

As a result of this campaign, the 'Volunteer Hedgehog First Response Unit' was established in December 2023 for the Monmouth and Chepstow areas, providing advice and support for members of the public who find injured hedgehogs, and acting as a first line of response for anyone who discovers an injured or out in the day hedgehog. This group is made up of the 'Hedgehog First Responders' comprising volunteers who have been trained in the first aid and care of injured hedgehogs and issued with a comprehensive hedgehog rescue kit. Since launching, they have taken 29 calls on their hotline (at 22/6/24), have helped 19 hedgehogs, along with building an online community of nearly 150 followers. The Ross-on-Wye Hedgehog Care & Advice group also aims to raise awareness and share advice via social media.

The Lower Wye Valley Nature Networks Project (2021-23), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the Wye Valley National Landscapes Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), SDF Landscape and Biodiversity enhancement grants, and other schemes have facilitated some hedgerow planting and restoration primarily across the Monmouthshire part of Wye Valley National Landscape. These hedgerows improve habitat connectivity for the hedgehogs to support their populations.

5.2 Programmes of action

The British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) was founded in 1982 and was one of the first charities to address hedgehog decline in the UK, offering help and advice to those with sick, injured or orphaned hedgehogs, and raising money to fund vital research into the behavioural habits of hedgehogs to ascertain the best methods of assisting their survival.

The BHPS has partnered up with the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) on many campaigns and initiatives for hedgehogs, including their 'Hedgehog Street' campaign. Hedgehog Street encourages communities to make small changes which can make a big difference for hedgehogs in urban environments. This includes actions such as pledging to make a hedgehog hole in your garden fence or wall, learning more about hedgehogs and how you can help them, and registering on Hedgehog Street to become a 'Hedgehog Champion' to encourage your local community to take action. There are now over 100,000 people currently taking part in the UK. Aside from Hedgehog Street, PTES and BHPS run the UKs only training course on hedgehog-friendly land management, surveying and mitigation for professionals.

Most wildlife conservation organisations provide online guidance materials and advice for how to support hedgehogs in your local area, including the RSPB, The Woodland Trust and the Wildlife Trusts. This encourages actions such as making hedgehog houses and holes, making your garden more hedgehog-friendly, and seasonal advice such as checking bonfires for hedgehogs and providing them with food throughout the winter. In addition, The Wildlife Trusts run a campaign with the Royal Horticultural Society called 'Wild About Gardens', which was set up to celebrate wildlife gardening and to encourage people to use their gardens to take action to help support nature, with a particular focus on common garden visitors who are under threat, such as hedgehogs, house sparrows and starlings.

5.3 Survey, research and monitoring

The BIG Hedgehog map is one of the largest databases of hedgehog records within the UK, including information on hedgehog sightings, rescue efforts, conservation initiatives and research findings. However, the lack of a consistent and reliable survey technique makes it difficult to determine how hedgehog populations are being affected by certain factors. The PTES & BHPS have been working in collaboration with the University of Reading and Nottingham Trent University on a separate 'National Hedgehog Survey' which aims to provide a better insight into these factors. A minimum of 400 sites were chosen across England and Wales in 2014 & 2015 where footprint-tunnels (as seen in Figure 7) were setup to record the presence/absence of hedgehogs in rural habitats (PTES, 2024).

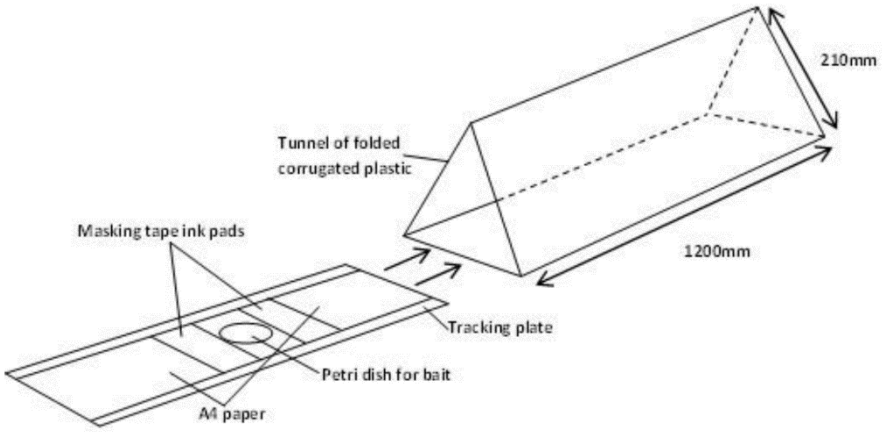

Figure 7: Footprint tunnel design as featured within the PTES footprint tracking tunnels guide (Source – PTES 2016)

This data is currently being processed but will provide a national baseline measure of hedgehog populations against which future changes can be measured, and direct urgent action to where it is most needed.

This approach could be replicated across the Wye Valley National Landscape and the results compared against the national baseline to determine current population and future actions. A PTES guide to making a footprint-tunnel is available online via the Hedgehog Street Website[2].

[2] https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/footprint-tunnels/

6. Conservation Visions

To enhance opportunities for hedgehogs across the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Working with partners and landowners to ensure that hedgehog habitat is considered within all management decision making.

More potential habitat to be created and connected to enhance opportunities for hedgehogs within the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Working with partners and stakeholders to expand and join up new habitats in the Wye Valley National Landscape including hedgerows, in private gardens and on agricultural land.

To see a sustainable increase in hedgehog population across the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Encouraging stakeholders to undertake surveys to determine hedgehog populations and monitor the progress of conservation efforts.

7. Conservation Actions

ACTION	HOW
Raise awareness of the decline of hedgehogs and the potential for a recovery in their numbers through appropriate action.	- Organise school visits and talks. - Host events and workshops with the general public. - Work with hedgehog champions and groups to spread the message. - Promote good practices relating to habitat management for hedgehogs.
Monitor the population of hedgehogs.	- Encourage partners, volunteers and the general public to carry out surveys (at known established sites and potential new sites) using methods such as the footprint tunnel. - Record signs and sightings of hedgehogs, and submit records to the relevant local environmental records centre. - Continued support of the Volunteer First Response Unit, sharing information on what to do if a poorly or injured hedgehog is seen out in the day, and recording rescues and outcomes
Nurture and encourage hedgehog action groups.	- Develop hedgehog champions. - Provide support through funding. - Assist with funding applications. - Facilitate meetings and promote the work of groups.
Encourage habitat connection through restoring and planting new hedgerows.	- Encourage farmers to manage and restore existing, and planting new hedgerows, promoting and assisting with applications for funding. - Work with farmers and landowners to encourage good land management practices to improve habitat, connectivity and reduce the risks of injury to hedgehogs.
Encourage the general public to better manage their gardens and urban areas for hedgehogs.	- Produce and distribute promotional material about hedgehogs. - Signpost the general public to information sources. - Promote Hedgehog Street and other sources of information

8. Roles

- Support, advise, facilitate and co-ordinate conservation action for hedgehogs, both leading on and through partnership with the National Landscape.
- Engage with landowners and managers, encouraging best practice in managing hedgehog habitat to enhance opportunities for hedgehog populations.
- Promote hedgehog conservation within other wildlife conservation organisations and encourage the provision of advice to the general public and practical support for landowners.
- Through the planning process, where suitable, encourage developers to include provision for hedgehogs e.g. gaps in fencing to facilitate the movement of hedgehogs.
- Enthuse the general public to take part in surveying and providing records of hedgehog sightings.

9. Marking Progress

We will mark progress through:

- Hedgehog records: When there are more records of hedgehogs in the National Landscape, indicating a population increase or an improvement in survey efforts.

- Hedgehog habitat: When there is more available habitat and better connectivity in the National Landscape where hedgehogs are being recorded, indicating a population increase, an expansion in range or an improvement in survey efforts.

- Hedgehog measures: When new measures are successfully implemented to support hedgehogs e.g. more hedgerows restored and created, hedgehog houses and hedgehog highways set up.

- Hedgehog understanding and conservation efforts: When information about hedgehogs is widely available to everybody, and hedgehog habitat in the National Landscape is being enhanced.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL STUDY TOUR

Purpose

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

Recommendations

That the JAC

A. Note the date of Friday 20th September 2024 for the Study Tour, with a focus on Farming in Protected Landscapes projects, and encourage a good attendance.

B. Invite representatives from our neighbouring Shropshire Hills and Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnerships and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority and other appropriate partners.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Annual Tour will be held on Friday 20th September.
- The programme is still being finalised but will focus predominantly on projects supported through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and land management issues in the south Herefordshire part of the National Landscape.
- Initial invitations for expressions of interest to attend will be sent out shortly.
- Invitations should be extended to representatives from our neighbouring Designated Landscapes and other appropriate partner organisations in the interest of sharing good practice and broadening collaboration.

Reasons

The Annual Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Tour is hosted by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and has a good reputation as both an information exchange and networking opportunity, with good attendance from the wider National Landscape Partnership. The invitation to attend the Tour is extended to all members of the JAC, to Senior Officers and County and District Councillors whose wards fall within the Wye Valley National Landscape along with representatives from all the constituent Town/Parish/Community Councils. It is thus a key tool in the transfer of information to the wider partners and interested parties in and around the National Landscape.

Implications

The date of 20th September is proposed for the 2024 Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Tour because there appear to be no conflicting council meetings of the four constituent local authorities. In the interests of wider collaboration invitations will be made to other appropriate partner organisations and neighbouring Designated Landscapes; including the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority, the Malvern Hills and Shropshire Hills National Landscape Partnerships, the National Landscapes Association, Welsh Government and DEFRA. In most recent years the Tour comprised of 2 mini-buses, driven by National Landscape Team staff, and there is the capacity to provide a 3rd mini-bus.

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

The event reaches a wide audience of National Landscape partners and interested parties and always proves to be very popular and informative for those who attend. Lunch and transport will be included in the modest charge to attendees.

Background

Each year the JAC hosts the Annual Study Tour.

In 2023 the Tour was focused around the lower Wye Valley between Monmouth and Tintern. The tour visited a range of sites and initiatives associated with visitor, social and/or land-use management, supported in various ways by the AONB Unit and designation, including Tintern Visitor Experience signage, a One Planet Development, a decarbonising Village Hall, 2 farms - one a Nature Reserve and the other a youth farm charity, and Old Station Tintern.

The 2022 Tour visited a variety of sites associated with land-use and land management and various AONB projects and initiatives, with regenerative farming and recreation, including variously football, fishing and hostel accommodation, in and around Ross-on-Wye, Brampton Abbots, Lydbrook & Welsh Bicknor in the south Herefordshire and Gloucestershire parts of the AONB.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES (FIPL) SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND (SDF) AND HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (HCF) WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSAPE FUND

Purpose

To update members on the progress of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

Recommendation

That the JAC endorse the allocations of grants under the FiPL programme, SDF and HCF National Landscape Fund to date for 2024/25.

Key Issues

- The DEFRA funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in England has an allocation of £362,384 for 2024/25, which is currently the final year of the programme.
- The FiPL Assessment Panel has approved grants totalling £303,675 in 2023/24 with £35,387 remaining. For 2024/5, £157,270 has already been allocated, leaving £205,113 remaining in what is understood to be the last year of the programme.
- Guidance and assistance to farmers and land managers applying to the FiPL programme is provided by Anna Stankiewicz, National Landscape Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer, along with Farm Advisors from the Wye & Usk Foundation and Herefordshire Meadows.
- The Welsh Government Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £80,103.50 allocated from the £100,000 available for 202/25, leaving £19,896.50 available. This is the final year of the current funding allocation.
- Community groups, local organisations and individuals wishing to apply for the SDF can get assistance from Lucinda James, National Landscape Community Links Officer.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Fund hosted by the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) is currently closed for applications and opportunities to grow the Fund need to be sought.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

The Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) programme currently terminates until March 2025. Wye Valley National Landscape allocation of FiPL for 24/25 was £362,384. This includes an allowance for the employment of the FiPL Officer, further Advice & Guidance

and overhead & administration costs. If these Advice & Admin allocations are not fully required they can be transferred to the FiPL grant budget.

The FiPL Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on each application over £5,000. Application under £5,000 are determined by the National Landscape Manager. FiPL applications approved to date in 2024/5 are as follows:

Code	Applicant	Project	year	Grant £
WV012	Wye & Usk Foundation	INNS	3 of 3	5,532.98
WV014	AONB Unit	noble chafer project	3 of 3	155.00
WV016	The Dingle, Checkley	grassland & tree management	3 of 3	608.40
WV020	Bicknor Court Farm	water and habitat management	3 of 3	768.30
WV021	LEAF education	Increasing farm educational access	3 of 3	6,230.00
WV034	Lower Witherstone	Wood pasture & hedgerows creation	2 of 2	4,852.48
WV036	Fownhope PC	Coronation Walk	2 of 2	900.00
WV041	Townsend Farm	Flour & Grain	2 of 2	5,630.79
WV044	Pasture for Profit	Protected Landscapes scheme	2 of 2	28,344.80
WV047	Bearse Farm	Educational Visits	2 of 2	2,678.00
WV053	WV AONB	Willow Walk	1 of 1	14,277.00
WV055	Severn Treescapes	Orchards	2 of 2	4,738.20
WV056	Herefordshire Meadows	Grasslands	1 of 1	19,450.00
WV057	Caswell Farm	Water Capture & Resilience Improvement	1 of 1	1,244.30
WV059	Bryants Court	Companion cropping	2 of 2	6,788.62
WV060	Caradoc Estate	River Meadows	1 of 1	4,828.78
WV061	The Dingle	Veteran Trees	2 of 2	976.00
WV062	Wye and Usk Foundation	Farm Advice	1 of 1	35,000.00
WV063	Weir End	Moor Meadow	1 of 1	6,879.15
WV064	Underhill Farm	Companion cropping	2 of 2	1,987.40
WV065	Upper Pengethley Farm	Optimal Shelter Belts	2 of 2	533.00
WV066	British Canoeing	Meadow & riverbank conservation	2 of 2	2,420.00
WV067	Coxbury Farm	Optimal Shelter Belts	2 of 2	447.00
WV068	Staunton Parish Council	Staunton Meend	1 of 1	6,722.00
WV070	Wye & Usk Foundation	INNS 2	1 of 1	15,308.00
WV071	Rectory Orchard	Orchard management	1 of 1	747.12
WV072	Dryslade Farm	Educational Events	2 of 2	1,452.00

WV074	Tudor Farmhouse	Orchard management	1 of 1	832.36
WV075	Grazing Management Ltd.	LoRaWan Agri-Tech stock monitoring	1 of 1	9,588.00
WV076	Caradoc Estate	Equine grazing enhancements	1 of 1	9,117.64
WV077	Hancocks Meadow	Meadow restoration	1 of 1	8,058.28
WV078	Herefordshire Rural Hub	AG-vocates	1 of 1	14,988.52
WV079	Kilforge Farm	Undersowing	1 of 1	533.52
WV080	Townsend Farm	Information Signs	1 of 1	3,864.00
WV081	Lower Penalt	Undersowing - 2nd year	1 of 1	595.27
WV082	*Townsend Farm [FiPL Access Fund]*	*The Yield Centre*	*1 of 1*	*TBC*
WV083	Woolhope PC	Broadmoor Common	1 of 1	13,389.00
WV084	Kilforge Farm	Wetland	1 of 1	8,250.00
WV085	Wye Organic	Butchery	1 of 1	21,250.00
WVHBRG01	Lower Witherstone	Restoration of 2 barns	1 of 1	271,122.41
WVHBRG02	Ballingham Court	Reroofing of 2 barns	1 of 1	71,077.60
			Projects running total	**612,165.92**
	Advice & Guidance (A&G)			55,093.00
	Admin			30,879.00
	A&G: Historic Building Restoration Grant (HBRG)			27,376.00
			Total expenditure	**698,137.92**
		Total FiPL budget		362,384.00
		Total HBRG budget		369,576.01
		Total budget remaining		*33,822.09*

DEFRA have not confirmed whether the FiPL programme will be extended beyond March 2025. However, DEFRA does recognise the positive feedback and outcomes delivered by the FiPL programme, which would be well placed to promote and encourage take up of the full Environmental Land Management (ELM) agri-environment scheme when it becomes active.

For further advice or to discuss any project ideas, please contact Anna Stankiewicz, FiPL Officer on farming@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

Welsh Government have allocated £100,000 of SDF for 2024/25 for the Welsh part of the National Landscape. The current funding allocation also ends in March 2025. Welsh Government appreciate that renewed medium to long term security of funding provides

enhanced opportunities for organisations, individuals and community groups to properly plan for innovative, sustainable, environmental projects, which benefit nature recovery and the well-being of future generations.

The SDF Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on each application over £3,000. Application under £3,000 are determined by the National Landscape Manager. The list of approved grants to date during 2024/25, totalling £80,103.50 is in the table below.

Code	Applicant	Project Title	years		Total Project	SDF
			This	Total	value	Grant
WV00 YR23W	Wye Valley National Landscape Unit	Admin 10%	~	~	NA	10,000.00
WV01 YR24W	Wye Coppice CIC	Wye Coppice Training 23/24	2	2	£20,000.00	£7,226.10
WV02 YR24W	Gwent Wildlife Trust	Restoring The Wern	2	2	£6,000.00	£3,502.50
WV03 YR24W	Coed Lleol-Small Woods	Nature based wellbeing	2	2	£10,000.00	£6,285.00
WV04 YR24W	ACE Monmouth	Regen Farming Monitoring project	2	2	£18,186.00	£1,213.40
WV05 YR24W	Wye Valley River Festival CIC	The Earth Beneath Our Feet	2	2	£187,000.00	£25,000.00
WV06 YR24W	Bees for Development	Bees of Monmouthshire	2	2	£19,145.15	£5,966.97
WV07 YR24W	Wye Coppice CIC	Coppice Training & Community Outreach 24/25	1	2	£39,500.00	£19,750.00
WY08 YR24W	New House Farm	Meadow Restoration	1	1	£2,319.05	£1,159.53
		TOTALS (to date)			**£302,150.20**	**£80,103.50**
		Average grant rate:			*39%*	
		Remaining grant from £100,000				***£19,896.50***

Lucinda James, National Landscape Community Links Officer, assists applicants with projects and application development for presented to the Assessment Panel. If you are interested in applying please contact Lucinda on community@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk.

Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF)

The Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) was established with a £50,000 Endowment Fund. Project grants are awarded from the interest and any growth or donations above that base Fund. There is currently £10,000 also donated specifically for the Youth Rangers programme.

The HCF Wye Valley National Landscape Fund had a balance of £67,930 as of the last statement dated 31st March 2024. The fund is currently restricted to allow the value to grow. Opportunities need to be sought to augment the National Landscape Fund further. When funds allow, the National Landscape Unit &/or SDF Assessment Panel, as appropriate, reviews and comments on applications to the National Landscape Fund to advise HCF on grant funding.

Background

For more details on grants and the application process see https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/ .

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN WALES

Purpose

To update members on activity with the Designated Landscapes in Wales.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Following appointment of the new Welsh Government First Minister and the subsequent Cabinet reshuffle, Huw Irranca-Davies MS became the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs with responsibility for National Landscapes and Julie James MS became Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning, with responsibility for National Parks.
- The National Landscapes Association (NLA) hosted an event in April 'Celebrating Wales' National Landscapes' at the Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay that was attended by both Cabinet Secretaries Julie James MS and Huw Irranca-Davies MS.
- Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW), held a seminar in Bangor in May on 'Decarbonising the Designated Landscapes of Wales; working with our communities to achieve net zero'.
- Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager, took over the chair of TCLW at the seminar.
- The Biodiversity Deep Dive Designated Landscapes Subgroup presented its final report to Welsh Government and has continued to meet to address how Designated Landscapes can contribute to the 30 by 30 target.
- Welsh Government have been working with National Landscape lead officers and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on future funding options.

Reasons

National Landscape partnerships and lead officers in Wales work co-operatively through the National Landscapes Association (NLA) and with the National Parks through Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW). Both Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are also closely engaged with both organisations. The independently chaired Biodiversity Deep Dive Designated Landscapes Subgroup is another collaborative forum that helps progress policy development and delivery.

Implications

'Celebrating Wales' National Landscapes' was a special event hosted by the National Landscapes Association on 24th April at the Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay. The purpose of the event was to celebrate the beauty and significance of Wales' National Landscapes and the dedicated work of their respective teams. The event was sponsored by Julie James, MS for Swansea West (including Gower National Landscape) and Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning. Huw Irranca-Davies MS also attended in his new

role Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs with responsibility for National Landscapes. Both spoke of their passion for areas of outstanding natural beauty and in support of the rebranding to National Landscapes. They also applauded the dedication and efforts of the teams who work tirelessly to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Wales's our national landscapes. Cllr Mrs Ann Webb, chair of the Wye Valley National Landscape JAC attended along with several staff members from the National Landscape Team and Monmouthshire County Council.

The Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) Seminar, held on 16th-17th May in Bangor provided an opportunity to take a closer look into Decarbonising the Designated Landscapes of Wales, following the work by Small World Consulting carried out for each of the eight Designated Landscapes in 2022. Delegates explored the role of Designated Landscapes in the climate emergency, and how working with local communities can help achieve net zero. For more information see https://landscapeswales.org.uk/tclw-seminar-2024-working-with-our-communities-to-achieve-net-zero/

Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager, became Chair Elect of TCLW at the Seminar. Catherine Mealing Jones, CEO of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority was nominated Vice Chair. For further information see https://landscapeswales.org.uk/new-chair-and-vice-chair-for-tirweddau-cymru/

The Biodiversity Deep Dive Final Report has been presented to Welsh Government. The Designated Landscapes Subgroup has continued to meet to address some critical questions about the role of Designated Landscapes and how they can contribute to the 30 by 30 target.

Welsh Government are reviewing the funding streams currently provided to Designated Landscape bodies (National Park Authorities and National Landscape partnerships) to assess if the funding could be more streamlined and better targeted at WG priorities. The current funding allocations end in March 2025. It is intended that any revision are implemented for April 2025, subject to the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Background

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) is the partnership of the Designated Landscapes in Wales: three National Parks and five National Landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), who are working together to address key shared challenges, including action on the climate change and nature emergencies. TCLW combines the strengths of its partners, working together for the benefit of Wales and its people, securing the long-term resilience of the landscapes and their communities. TCLW includes the lead officers from National Landscapes and National Park, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the National Landscapes Association.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
8th July 2024

PARTNER AND NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM PROGRESS REPORTS AND UPDATES

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners.

FOR INFORMATION

Below are update reports on the following National Landscape Team & partner initiatives: -

a. National Landscapes Conference 3rd - 5th July.
b. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) bid
c. Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects
d. Cleddon Bog & NRW Peatland funding
e. Wye Valley Walk
f. Wye Adapt to Climate Change project
g. National Landscape Partnership Seminar
h. Planning Update
i. Powerline undergrounding
j. Volunteers
k. Wye Valley Adventurers
l. Wye Valley River Festival

a. National Landscapes Conference 3rd - 5th July.

The National Landscapes Annual Conference 2024 is at Harper Adams University, Shropshire. The theme is 'Changing Landscapes: Changing Minds'. A high proportion of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team are attending and will report back to JAC verbally. Two fundamental questions this conference will explore are: What role is there for natural beauty and landscape designation in ever-changing landscapes? What are the different ways of working and resilience needed if natural beauty is to prevail in the contested debate on the value and use of

land and sea? The programme is available here: https://www.national-landscapes-conference.org.uk/programme

b. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) bid

An application has been submitted to the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI). Working in partnership with Herefordshire Meadows and landowners within a 3km buffer of the National Grid high voltage powerlines between Walford and Marstow, the National Landscape Team have recently submitted the first of three anticipated application to the National Grid LEI scheme. The project, entitled 'Wye Valley Magnificent Meadows, Tremendous Trees and Wonderful Wetlands', will over the next six years, if approved: deliver pond restoration and management; natural flood management work; small woodland planting; standard and orchard tree planting and species rich grassland creation.

The National Landscape partnership can have three schemes running at any one time, up to a value of £300,000 funding in each. Two further expressions of interest for hedgerow and boundary projects will be submitted in the coming months. All work has been developed through consultation with landowners carried out by Herefordshire Meadows and National Landscape officers, with the aim of enhancing landscape quality, mitigating the visual impact of the high voltage electricity infrastructure and provide habitat enhancement.

It is anticipated a decision on grant funding for this project will be received at the end of 2024.

c. Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) projects

Two applications have been submitted through the Woodland Trust's MoreHedges scheme to plant two new hedgerows at Porthcasseg Farm, Chepstow. These hedges will provide improved habitat connectivity across the farm between woodlands.

During a farm visit for the Wye Adapt to Climate Change project, an opportunity was identified to restore species-rich grassland at a smallholding near Penallt. The SLSP fund contributed £302.40 to the purchase of a species-rich grassland seed mix. Once established this will hopefully help to improve the wildlife value of the grassland and increase carbon sequestration through deep-rooting wildflowers.

Village Hall Decarbonisation- Itton Village Hall had a successful energy audit completed and now the committee is selecting which of the recommendation in the report they should implement with the help from Andrew David from South East Energy Agency. Once decided they will apply for a grant thought the SLSP.

d. Cleddon Bog & NRW Peatland funding

The grazing season for 2024 is underway, managed by Grazing Management Ltd and the local voluntary Livestock Checkers. There are 8 cattle grazing at Cleddon, all of which seem to have adapted well to the no-fence system that's in use. In addition to the charismatic belted Galloways, this year the beautiful Ancient Cattle of Wales have also been introduced, helping to bring back this very rare native breed. The cattle are already exploring the whole site and have already started to make tracks through the denser overgrowth.

The stem-boring treatment of the more dispersed birch and willow saplings growing across the site has started. This should mean that there will be no need for any herbicide to be used when the volunteer work parties clear areas of scrub on the bog in November.

e. Wye Valley Walk

The final proof of the new Wye Valley Walk Official Route Guide has been send to Cicerone for printing and publications. This has been updated by Ruth Waycott, National Landscape Information Officer, to enable walkers to follow the route from 'Source to Sea'. The old Route Guide started in Chepstow leading walkers up to finish on Plynlimon, where there are no services (and barely any mobile reception). The new Route Guide will be ready for the 50th Anniversary of the route in 2025.

An Audit of the furniture and waymarking along the Wye Valley Walk from Hereford to the Monmouthshire boarder has now been completed. It was organised and carried out team of volunteers from the Ross Walkers are Welcome group and the Parish Footpath officers. They have done a fantastic job in a very short space of time and have highlighted that there are 13 stiles in need of replacing, 3 of which are particularly bad (borderline dangerous) in the Parish of Walford and that most of the waymarking is either missing or in need of replacing/updating.

We hope to engage Herefordshire Council PROW team in plans and ways to improve the Walk for the 50th Anniversary of the route in 2025. The next stage will be to replace the waymarking where needed though local Parish volunteers and encourage them to liaise with landowners for the replacement of stiles with gates. The DEFRA Access for All funding can be used to supply and install new gates.

The next challenge will be to replicate this audit for the section of the walk beyond the National Landscape boundary, from Hereford to the Powys boarder. We are hopeful that with Herefordshire PROW team we can engage with the Parish Footpath officers in that area to help with the surveying and waymaking the route.

f. Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Project

Our Wye Adapt to Climate Change (WACC) Project Officer, Holly Williams, has visited nearly 20 local landholdings and farms since the project began in October 2023 to provide advice on implementing Nature-Based Solutions to help tackle climate change and biodiversity loss. This has included advice on wetland creation, tree and hedge planting, herbal ley seeding, Natural Flood Management and grassland management. Holly is now working with some of these landholders and farmers to secure funding for the work from sources like SLSP, SFI, Woodland Trust, FiPL.

The WACC project team have put together a Recovering our Rivers toolkit which rounds up all the ways to take action to help recover our rivers. From citizen science and practical tasks, to supporting campaigns, there are a range of actions suiting different interests and levels of commitment: Recovering our Rivers: Take Action | Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (herefordshirewt.org)

g. National Landscape Partnership Seminar

The annual Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Winter Seminar took place on Tuesday 19th March at the Old Court Hotel, Whitchurch. The theme of this year's annual seminar was 'The National Landscape and its function in the Planning System'.

The seminar covered: the National Landscape re-brand; the implications of the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 and other legislation in England and Wales; a general introduction to the AONB designation; planning and the role of the National Landscape Team; which was all provided by members of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. Several external speakers discussed Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the climate and ecological emergencies, Special Qualities in their own protected landscapes or local authorities, and an introduction to the Wye Adapt To Climate Change? Project.

The invitation was sent to all JAC members, local elected Ward/Division members and Town, Parish and Community Councils, as well as LPA Officers. The seminar had 38 attendees on the day plus the National Landscape Team staff. The National Landscape Team extends its thanks to all those who attended on the day as well as to all speakers and those who contributed.

h. Planning Update

On Friday 28th June, the Wye Valley National Landscape Team Manager, the Wye Valley & Malvern Hills National Landscape Planning Officer (shared), and the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership Manager delivered planning training to officers in the Planning service at Herefordshire Council. Topics covered an introduction to both the Wye Valley National Landscape and Malvern Hills National Landscape, the new strengthened Section 85 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 duty, along with a general discussion of planning issues concerning development management across both National Landscapes, including guidance and position

statements which have been developed by the National Landscape Team. This was attended by 17 officers either in person or remotely, which included a mixture of planning officers, development managers and officers from the Built & Natural Environment Team.

Josh Bailey, the (shared) National Landscape Planning Officer, leaves the post to return to Herefordshire Council as a Senior Planning Officer. A replacement has been recruited and is intended to start in September. We wish Josh well in the future and look forward to continue working with in him in his new role, fortified with his knowledge and experience gained working with National Landscape teams locally and nationally.

i. Powerline Undergrounding

A 400 meter section of low voltage powerline and poles has recently been placed underground by National Grid, as part of the Protected Landscapes programme of undergrounding. The lines and poles previously on the river Wye floodplain in front of Bishopswood Village Hall, have been removed from view and undergrounded. The electricity infrastructure was intrusive in views and the public enjoyment of the landscape from the Village Hall, Wye Valley Walk and to river users, but with their removal now allow for an unobstructed view of the floodplain, river and woodland beyond, all important and distinctive features of the National Landscape. Proposed for undergrounding by the National Landscape team and approved by the West Midlands steering group of Protected Landscapes, local Western Power Distribution and subsequently National Grid staff have worked with landowners to plan and arrange the removal of the lines and poles.

j. Volunteers

We've held 5 volunteer days, 1 community volunteer day and a tour of the beaver enclosure near Lydbrook since March. Activities include scything, Balsam Bashing, vegetation clearance along the Offa's Dyke and drystone walling. We have also had a corporate volunteer group from the HP Monmouth office, out with us Drystone walling and have another 2 sessions over the coming months organised for them to join us. This equates to 390 volunteer hours on conservation in the Wye Valley National Landscape.

k. Wye Valley Adventurers

The new programme was successfully launch in March with 19 young people attending the event on the 23rd March at The Narth Village Hall and around manor wood. We ran 3 activities simultaneously- Foraging, Bird ID walk and whittling whistles. Feedback from the sessions was fantastic with everyone excited for more in the future. We used this event to ask what activities we should include in the programme going forward.

Since the launch we have held 2 further sessions, the first was a Bush craft and mindfulness at Devauden village hall where children learnt about survival skills like lighting a fire, making shelter using pegs they whittled themselves and cooked their own tasty lunch on an open fire. The second event we joined Ciaran from the SDF funded Recording Bees of Monmouth Project for a Bee ID and habitat walk then made bee Hotels at the Monmouth Bee festival.
The next event will be Woodland Management and Charcoal making with another SDF funded project with Wye Coppice CIC.

l. Wye Valley River Festival

The 10th anniversary Wye Valley River Festival ran from 3rd-12th May 2024, with the theme of 'The Earth Beneath Our Feet.' As ever there was a packed programme of fun events and creative activities ranging across the Wye Valley between Chepstow and Hereford, Beechenhurst and Caldicot. There was a world premiere of NoFitState Circus' Bamboo, the themed and anarchic antics of the Ensemble, plenty of street theatre, creatively impressive sound installations, inspiring sculptural woven camps in the woods, dance, singing and street parades. Congratulations to the Wye Valley River Festival CIC and all the artists and production teams, ecologists, workshop hosts & Creative Community Champions, working with schools and communities to create work shared throughout the Festival.