

WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

Purpose

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

Recommendations

That the JAC

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

Key Issues

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

Reasons

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

Implications

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

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

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

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

Background

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

Five Tests

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

The Five tests are as follows:

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

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

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

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2022.

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

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

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

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2020.

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

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