

AONB PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL STUDY TOUR

Purpose

To endorse the proposal to hold an Annual AONB Partnership Study Tour, if Covid restrictions allow.

Recommendations

That members determine whether to host the Annual Study Tour on the proposed date of Friday 17th September 2021, subject to clarification of any restrictions and logistics nearer the time.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour was cancelled last year due to the Pandemic.
- It is proposed that, subject to restrictions allowing, the AONB Partnership Tour be held on Friday 17th September.
- The programme will be finalised nearer the time but will focus on using individuals' private vehicles to reach sites and may only be for half a day instead of a full day, depending on logistics.

Reasons

The Annual Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour is hosted by the JAC and has had a good reputation for networking through attendance from the wider AONB Partnership. The invitation to join the Tour is extended to all members of the Joint Advisory Committee, to Senior Officers and County and District Councillors whose wards fall within the Wye Valley AONB and all Town/Parish/Community Councils that lie within the AONB. It is thus a key tool in the transfer of information to the wider partners and interested parties in the AONB. However last year's Annual Study Tour was cancelled due to the Pandemic.

Implications

The date of 17th September has been chosen for the 2021 Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour because there appear to be no conflicting council meetings of the four constituent local authorities. It is hoped that Covid restrictions will ease sufficiently to allow the Study Tour to take place. In recent years the Tour has comprised of 2 or 3 mini-buses, driven by AONB staff, visiting a number of sites throughout the day with lunch at a suitable hostelry.

However this year it is proposed that individuals use their own vehicles to reach programmed sites. This will reduce undue crowding in mini-buses. But it also severely constrains the logistics as sites will have to be chosen based on close proximity to suitable parking. Consequently it may be determined that a viable programme can only be created for half a day rather than a full day.

Officer will prepare a programme and send out invitations in due course.

Background

Until 2020 the JAC had hosted an Annual Study Tour each year.

The 2019 tour visited a range of sites primarily associated with the Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) Project predominantly in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB. Sites included Chapel Lane, Tintern, with flooding & erosion of the Unclassified County Road associated with the Lime Kiln Brook; the A466 Road stabilisation works; Natural Flood Management (NFM) works at Penterry Farm and Lower Meend Farm; and a photo-opportunity at Bigsweir Bridge in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

The 2018 AONB Partnership Tour focused on a selection of land management projects and issues in the Herefordshire part of the AONB north of Ross-on-Wye. The Tour visited Hurstans' Coronation Meadow, Sollers Hope; the Canwood Gallery & Sculpture Park, Checkley; Haugh Wood; Ballingham Court Farm - AONB Farming Award winners in 2008, 2012 & 2018; Tresseck Campsite, Hoarwithy and the Harewood Park Estate.

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