



Annual report 2021 – 2022 including financial summary

AONB Unit Work Programme <i>AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives</i> AONB Unit Initiatives		Activities & Outcomes 2021-2022
WV-L1 WV-P3	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise design of adopted Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Publicise and promote Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Monitor use of Management Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries and by stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise Plan adopted by Local Authorities Publicity and promotion of Plan, available at https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/ AONB Management Plan referred to in planning application responses and reports.
WV-F1 WV-F2 WV-F3 WV-F4 WV-F5 WV-E2	Farming in Protected Landscapes Support, as directed by DEFRA, farmers and other land managers to help them diversify their income streams and lay the groundwork for Environmental Land Management (ELM) uptake. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to farmers to help grow businesses, create green jobs, enhance biodiversity and invest in infrastructure to attract more diverse visitors to support local economies Through (A) farm level projects and (B) wider infrastructure and projects on farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme established and Panel selected Programme promoted nationally by DEFRA, NAAONB, NFU etc and locally through Farm Herefordshire, NFU, Herefordshire Rural Hub & https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/farming-in-protected-landscapes/ Advice & support given by DO to farmers & landowners to help with applications. FiPL Panel met & fully allocated funds to 8 projects. Allocations renegotiated with DEFRA and subsequently additional funds applied for and secured from DEFRA. Admin completed with farmers & landowners over claims. FiPL Officer recruitment commenced through Herefordshire Council
WV-L5 WV-F1 WV-F5 WV-C2 WV-E2	AONB Farming Awards Promote & publicise 13th Awards for farmers, landowners and land managers that make an outstanding contribution to conserving &/or enhancing the features, special qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Awards and handle entries Site visits of all farm entries for short-listing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awards were cancelled due to Covid restrictions, as was Monmouthshire Show, where Awards are announced. Considerations to incorporate into Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judging Present the prizes at the Monmouthshire Show <i>(if held)</i> Involve winner in Open Farm Sunday event. 	
WV-L1 WV-B3 WV-C1	Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of SDF to potential applicants Assist potential applicants with application process and project development Collate SDF project applications for the SDF Assessment Panel Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating SDF funds. Training for SDF Assessment Panel members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLO liaised with project proposers and advised applicants. SDF Panel met in August 2021 via Zoom. 14 projects approved with full allocation of £100,000
WV-L1 WV-B3 WV-C1	Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) to potential applicants Assist potential applicants with application process and project development Collate HCF AONB Fund project applications for the SDF Assessment Panel and liaise with HCF Service SDF Assessment Panel recommending allocations to HCF. Training for SDF Assessment Panel members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of Fund: https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/aonb-fund/ Assisted potential applicants with application process and project development Serviced SDF Assessment Panel recommending allocations to HCF. Discussed fundraising campaign with HCF for AONB Fund CLO left in December reducing capacity to progress training or applicant support.
WV-L2 WV-L4 WV-B2 WV-B4 WV-F4 WV-W3 WV-W4	Landscape & Habitat Conservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise monthly volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves Continue Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) and Natural Flood Management (NFM) initiatives working with local land owners, managers & stakeholders Manage control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) particularly identified stands of Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Skunk Cabbage Liaise over national roadside verge & B-Line initiatives with local authorities, Highways Agency & other stakeholders Continue collaboration with Ross Town Council over management of Ross Riverside. <p>Develop initiatives focused on Orchards (Noble Chafer), River (Water Crowfoot), Woodland (Woodland Butterfly assemblage), Grassland (Bumblebee assemblage), General (Hedgehog)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful recruitment and appointment of new Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer who commenced in July. Organised monthly volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves until CLO left in December, impacting AONB staff capacity and delivery. AONB Volunteer activity was put on hold while recruitment of new CLO underway Continued Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Riparian Tree initiatives working with local land owners, managers & stakeholders, with 11 schemes progressed. Monitored NFM pilot interventions on Chapel Hill Lane, Tintern. Managed control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) particularly 140 identified stands of Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and American Skunk Cabbage across 78 landownerships, with 5 contractors & 4 public/volunteers events Preparatory work for 2022 management & control of INNS and development of Community Pack in liaison with WaREN.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued collaboration with Ross Town Council over management of Ross Riverside. Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) plans progressed and discussed at Monmouthshire Local Access Forum. AONB Nature Recovery Plan & Species Action Plans drafted in line with Colchester Declaration by DO & LWNRO.
WV-C2 WV-A1	Website, Public Relations and social media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular press & social media releases and magazine articles / advertorial On-going updating and management of www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk and social media sites e.g. Facebook, Instagram and twitter. Maintenance of www.wyevalleywalk.org and hosting of websites www.overlookingthewye.org.uk & www.wyevalleyriverfestival.org.uk Re-establishing 'Picturesque' as a regular on-line AONB newsletter, to provide information and interpretation to increase awareness and appreciation of the AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website continued to be refined & updated IO co-ordinated regular social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & LinkedIn with frequent social media take-overs Maintenance of www.wyevalleywalk.org and hosting of www.overlookingthewye.org.uk & www.wyevalleyriverfestival.org.uk websites. AONB 50th Anniversary promotion through 50walks@50 Digital 50th Anniversary edition of Pictureque published https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Picturesque-Newsletter-50th-Anniversary-Edition-1.pdf
WV-P1 WV-P6 WV-P7	AONB Partnership events For JAC members, AONB Ward members, representatives from partner organisations and local Town/Parish/Community Councils and stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run AONB Partnership Seminar/forum for 50th Anniversary of designation of Wye Valley AONB Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues in late September 2021 Promote & disseminate JAC contacts & processes for other organisations & individuals to feed into JAC & AONB Partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour cancelled due to Covid issues. AONB Partnership on-line winter event cancelled due to Covid & staff capacity issues. AONB Unit Annual Report 2020/21 presented to JAC in November. 'What is Natural Beauty?' national on-line symposium in December, hosted by the UK's Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA), and co-hosted by AONBM and The PLACE Collective; 100 people attended with a cross-sectorial range of speakers from landscape management and conservation, arts and academia; https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/media/WINB-Report-FINAL-PDF.pdf and: https://bit.ly/3H1ljt2 .
WV-C2 WV-E4 WV-A1	Exhibitions, Activities & Outreach Promote the AONB through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks/presentations to local groups Stands at the Monmouthshire Show and other relevant shows. Gilpin2020+ events, local exhibitions and other local appropriate / prestigious events. AONB 50th Anniversary programme of events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Stand at the Monmouth Climate Futures Festival. AONB 50th Anniversary promotion through 50walks@50 https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/50-walks50/ Regular social media 'take-overs' by partners AONB team promoted & led guided walks in and around the AONB Hosted Wales Dark Sky Week talk

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	Promote & lead guided walks, events, children's activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB	
WV-F4 WV-C2 WV-P6	Youth Rangers – Foresters' Forest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue structured programme of activity for 5th Cohort of young people (14-16 year olds) that will increase their skill set in landscape and heritage conservation and management. Develop the next phase of the scheme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage Train new Leaders and scope for next Cohort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued programme of activity for 5th Cohort both on-line and resumed activities in the landscape, when covid restrictions allowed Training of new volunteer Leaders commenced for next Cohort CLO left in December impacting AONB staff capacity and delivery. Youth Rangers activity put on hold until while new CLO recruited
WV-D1 WV-D2 WV-D3	AONB Strategy & Development Advisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew contract for year to support AONB Manager with planning advice. Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 716 planning applications received across the Wye Valley AONB. AONBM & FAO monitored and reviewed development trends that affect the AONB. Contract renewed with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Planning Department, shared with Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. AONBM provided comments on 8 significant planning applications; 4 in Herefordshire, 3 in Monmouthshire and 1 in Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire and also provided advice on the 'setting of the AONB' to Herefordshire Council and local residents. Liaison with NAAONB over development issues and national strategy
WV-A1 WV-L5 WV-C2	Wye Valley River Festival 2022? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate future prospects & governance for Festival. Help establish CIC to take forward Festival Support Research & Development for next Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped establish CIC & governance to take forward Festival, with AONBM on CIC Advisory Board. Supported CIC with preparations for 2022 Festival.
WV-W5 WV-C2 WV-P9	MindSCAPE Initiative enabling people living with dementia to reconnect with the landscape, through arts and creative environmental activities, both in Care homes & established activity group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage project and submit reports & claims to Foresters' Forest LPS for HLF Supervise contractor, Artspace Cinderford, organising regular creative sessions, workshops and social activities for participants. Develop opportunities to expand project Share good practice with other AONBs & stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO managed reports & claims to Foresters' Forest LPS for HLF Artspace Cinderford organised regular creative sessions, workshops and social activities for participants, both on-line and some face-to-face.
WV-F1 WV-F2 WV-F5 WV-B6	Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Support Catchment Advisors (CAs) working in AONB & wider Wye catchment in partnership with Wye & Usk Foundation through Water Environment Grant (WEG) funded project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported Catchment Advisor working in AONB & wider Wye catchment in partnership with Wye & Usk Foundation Engaged farmers & land managers with tailored advice and Farm Plans

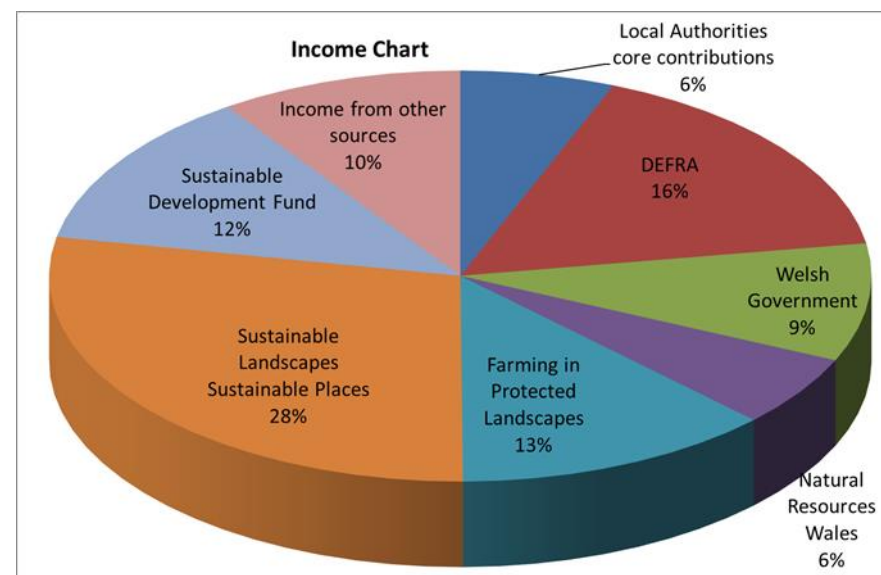
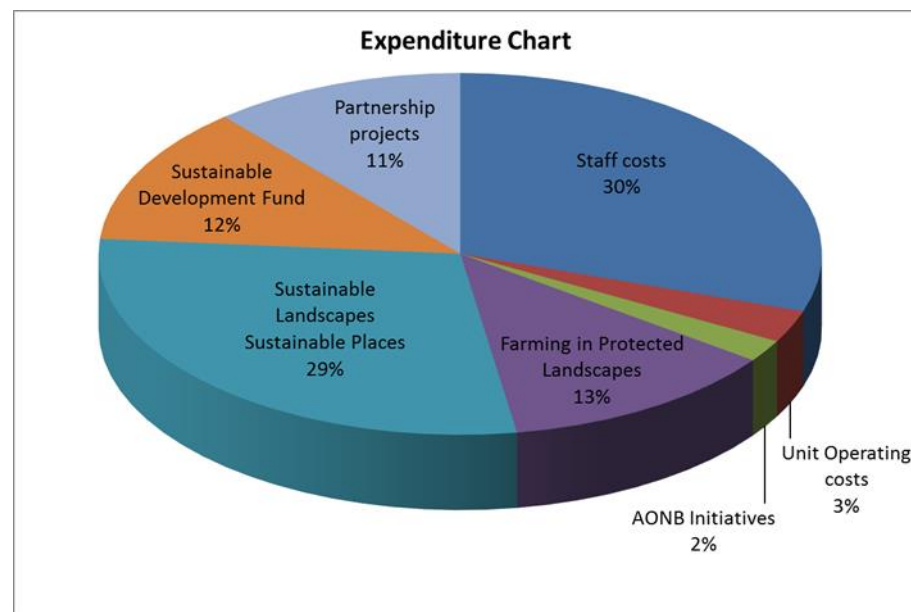
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage farmers & land managers with tailored advice and produce Farm Plans Promote land management practices to reduce impacts in the Wye catchment. Improve understanding and acceptance amongst Farmers, land managers & stakeholders Host demonstrations of effective working practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ROAR project ended in December along with Ben Nott's secondment to the AONB team, however he was retained as a WUF Catchment Advisor and continued to work in the and around the AONB, alongside other WUF Advisors, as resources allowed.
WV-U2 WV-P4	Undergrounding Continue working with Western Power & local communities to identify power-lines within the AONB suitable for undergrounding, via Western Power South Wales Protected Landscape Undergrounding group and the West Midlands Undergrounding group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO worked with Western Power & local communities to identify power-lines within the AONB suitable for undergrounding with 4 schemes approved. Liaison & attendance of Western Power South Wales Protected Landscape Undergrounding group and the West Midlands Undergrounding group.
WV-L1 WV-L2 WV-B3 WV-P3 WV-P4	Landscape scale conservation Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB. Potential target area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Woolhope Dome workshop and collaborate over outputs and outcomes Support landscape connectivity initiatives including Wentwood to Wye 'Forests without Frontiers' and collaborative projects with orchards, veteran & riverine trees. National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & others Continue work with Herefordshire Meadows Network, Monmouthshire Meadows and Parish Grassland Project. Pursue roll-out of Natural Flood Management & Riparian Trees initiatives throughout the AONB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DO developed partnership projects to deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB, including On-going work Herefordshire Meadows Network, Monmouthshire Meadows and Parish Grassland Project. Continuing roll-out of Natural Flood Management & Riparian Trees initiatives throughout the AONB, with 11 grant aided projects being taken forward. Submitted successful application to National Lottery Heritage Fund for £278,400 Lower Wye Valley Nature Networks project until March 2023 DO managed Lower Wye Valley Nature Networks partnership & project work with Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust. Managed projects under NRW Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience Fund (BERF) and Peatland Restoration Fund
WV-S1 WV-S2 WV-R1 WV-P5	Wye Valley Walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage replacement of Passport scheme Launch new website www.wyevalleywalk.org Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership Audit & co-ordinate refreshing of way-marking Collate counter data along route Review Cicerone Route Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IO & FAO dispatched Passports & information as requested. Tendered for new website design for www.wyevalleywalk.org and IO managed successful contractors Supported Wye Valley Walk Partnership. Reviewed future options for Lydbrook Bridge, Redbrook Bridge and Tintern Wireworks Bridge. Progressed surveys for Monmouth riverbank erosion scheme. Worked with HC/Balfour Beatty on Wyastone landslip solutions.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge, Redbrook Bridge and Tintern Wireworks Bridge. Progress Monmouth riverbank erosion solutions Work with HC/Balfour Beatty on Wyastone landslip solutions Review & republish 'Easy Access' walks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commenced review of options for revised Cicerone Route Guide.
WV-R2 WV-P3 WV-P5 WV-P6 WV-P7	Partnership Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Wye Catchment Partnership Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire, Visit Herefordshire and Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire Wye Valley AONB Woodland Projects group others as necessary 	Attended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Wye Catchment Partnership Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) South East Wales Tourism Forum Visit Herefordshire meetings
WV-P5 WV-P9	Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and Europarc seminars & events Work with Welsh Government and National Designated Landscapes Partnership (NDLP) in Wales Work with DEFRA and others in progressing Proposals in Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended NAAONB on-line national conference, Lead Officers meeting and training events, including on Government Response to Glover Review Worked with Welsh Government and Wales National Designated Landscapes Partnership (NDLP) - Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales, consisting of the 8 AONBS & National Parks in Wales AONBM assisted with Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales on-line seminar in October promoting SLSP project work & outcomes. Worked with NAAONB and others in progressing Proposals in Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England
WV-P5 WV-P9	Work placements Support the needs of student placements/group projects. Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to host or support due to Covid restrictions and office refurbishment.
WV-L4 WV-B5 WV-H2 WV-S3 WV-P8	Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS and State of the AONB data, Complete Phase 1 Habitat Survey mapping & digitising Progress Nature Recovery Network map & Plan Investigate opportunities to update heritage, tourism and recreation monitoring. Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State of the AONB Report published https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/State-of-the-AONB-Report-2021-final.pdf Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS including ongoing Phase 1 Habitat Survey mapping & digitising Received AONB Nature Recovery Network Map & commenced ground-truthing

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake Fixed point photography across the AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued annual Fixed point photography across the AONB
WV-P1 WV-P2	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group Prepare grant bids and claims for Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and DEFRA, and other funding bodies as required. Continue implementation of recommendations from AONB Good Governance Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Work Programme for 2021/22 was risk assessed in relation to Covid-19 impacts reviewed by AONB Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP). TOWP meeting held in June on-line, also in October & February. Relevant JAC agenda items prepared by TOWP and AONBM and distributed by Monmouthshire County Council as JAC Clerk Steering Group met in October to progress AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2021-2024 and scrutinise 2021-22 spend profile. JAC met on-line in July, November & March
WV-P1 WV-P2 WV-P3	Funding and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue pursuing funding and develop opportunities for external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects Develop fundraising campaign for Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley AONB Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The unanticipated reduction in the NRW core contribution and the similarly unanticipated addition of the BERF, along with the much delayed confirmation of the funding offer put AONB staff and the AONB Partnership under considerable stress in resolving the tensions in delivering the agreed AONB Work Programme. Continued pursuing funding and developing opportunities for external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects The decarbonisation and refurbishment of the poorly insulated AONB Office was completed and AONB staff returned to the refurbished office as Covid restrictions allowed from September.
WV-C1 WV-S2 WV-S4 WV-R4	Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places Welsh Government capital investment scheme for Designated Landscapes focussed on decarbonisation, Nature-based solutions and nature recovery, Supporting more sustainable tourism and more resilient & healthy rural economies that promote a Green Recovery. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refurbishment of Old Station Tintern Cleddon Falls & Wordsworth Walk enhancements Piercefield Walk enhancements Wye Valley Villages Travel & Transport Plan implementation Engagement in small number of high impact, collaborative projects across multiple Designated Landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressed delivery of Welsh Government capital investment programme at: Refurbishment of Old Station Tintern, with MCC Cleddon Falls SSSI & Wordsworth Walk enhancements; with permissive path private landowner & contractors iBEX & Ross Smith of Anvil Forge Blacksmithing re-establishing path & steps by falls. Piercefield Walk enhancements with Gwent Wildlife Trust Wye Valley Villages Travel & Transport Plan implementation; with Arup and delivery through MCC & Wye Valley Villages Steering Group of 4 Community Councils Carbon Audit across 6 Designated Landscapes of both AONB Unit operations and AONB landscape (including residents, business, land use & tourism/visitors)

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WV-H1	Offa's Dyke Collaboratory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for future cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological research and investigation into the landscape significance of the 8th century monument Participate in Collaboratory conferences, meetings and events Support community based research and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributed to Convenors meeting & Offa's Dyke Journal Editorial Board.
WV-H1 WV-H3 WV-P5	Overlooking the Wye legacy Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilpin2020+ Support & promote the collaborative programme of events to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Gilpin and the Wye Tour, including walks; talks; exhibitions; and Big Draw event in October 2020. Review & reprint of Walks leaflets Audit and repair / maintenance of Overlooking the Wye infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive review of interpretation & infrastructure postponed due the staff capacity issues. Gilpin2020 events and exhibitions cancelled and unlikely to be resurrected in 2021. Consideration of which 'good ideas' could be carried forward.

Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts		2020/21	2021/22			2020/21	2021/22
	Expenditure	£	£		Income	£	£
	Staff costs	206,732	243,843		Local Authorities core contributions	49,002	49,182
	Unit Operating costs	20,623	23,260		Defra AONB grant	137,645	132,443
	AONB Initiatives	18,055	15,970		Welsh Government	~	75,000
	Farming in Protected Landscapes	~	96,525		Natural Resources Wales Grant	49,600	45,500
	Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	194,700	233,000		Farming in Protected Landscapes	~	96,525
	Sustainable Development Fund	100,000	100,000		Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	194,700	227,500
	Partnership projects	56,162	91,525		Sustainable Development Fund	100,000	100,000
	TOTAL	596,272	804,123		Income from other sources	65,324	77,973
					TOTAL	596,272	804,123



The Wye Valley AONB Unit is the lead delivery agent for the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership dedicated to conserving & enhancing the nationally designated Wye Valley AONB, guided by the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and staffed by employees of the representative local authorities; Forest of Dean District Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council. The AONB Partnership is led by the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) with the key funding partners, being DEFRA, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council, making up the AONB Steering Group. The Host Authority responsible for the AONB Unit's finances is Herefordshire Council. The AONB Steering Group annually review and agree the budgets for the AONB Unit, endorsed by the JAC. The audited accounts of the Host Authority are available from: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/2228/council-accounts-202122>