

## **NATIONAL LANDSCAPE FUNDING AND MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING 2025 - 2028**

### ***Purpose***

To inform of confirmed and indicative funding awards, allocations and bids for the future management and duties of the Wye Valley National Landscape and request the existing contributions from the four constituent local authorities to the core budget for the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership are continued in the Memorandum of Understanding between the four local authorities for 2025-2028.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Endorse the acceptance of the confirmed and indicative funding awards, allocations and bids from National Grid, DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.
  
- B. Request the constituent local authorities commit to the agreed financial contributions in a renewed Memorandum of Understanding for 2025-2028.

### ***Key Issues***

- A number of confirmed and indicative funding awards, allocations and bids are being made from National Grid, DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales for the future management and duties of the Wye Valley National Landscape.
- Herefordshire Council acts as treasurer for the budgets managed by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and will accept these awards, allocations and grants as and when confirmed on behalf of the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the continued effective operation, management and governance of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, with the next MoU proposed to run until 2028.
- The contributions from the local authorities form the foundation to the Wye Valley National Landscape budgets which lever in and match-fund the various awards, allocations and grants where necessary.
- On average in recent years, for every £1 of Local Authority contribution to the National Landscape, the Team has levered in over £20 for the area.

### ***Reasons***

DEFRA and Welsh Government provide the core funding allocations for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. Under the 25 Year Environment Plan, DEFRA have been providing enhanced resources for the management of National Landscapes across England, including through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and Capital uplift

allocations. Welsh Government have also consolidated funding through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscape Sustainable Places (SLSP) and are investigating establishing a Designated Landscapes Farming programme. Both governments' current funding agreements end in March 2025 and fresh awards are waiting to be confirmed for the new financial year. Renewal of project funding from Natural Resources Wales is also anticipated. Meanwhile the Wye Valley National Landscape Team augments operational and project funding through the pursuit of external grants and income as and when appropriate.

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was extended by 12 months from 2021-2024, to March 2025. The MoU provides a framework for the delivery of duties and obligations in the Wye Valley National Landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), arising from Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 including the operation and management of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. The MoU is intended to give medium term security to the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership and sets out a shared vision for, and commitment to, AONB management by the funding local authority partners. The MoU helps mitigate shared risks between the local authorities including jointly delegating the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan to the National Landscape Team. The MoU complements the JAC Agreement, which constitutes the JAC, signed between the four local authorities.

### ***Implications***

DEFRA are making new allocations to the National Landscapes for continuation of core funding and the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme along with Capital uplift and Access for All funding. Current indications are that allocations will be based on 2024/25 offers. Therefore indicative figures are outlined in the table below subject to the outcome of the Spending Review and confirmation of Departmental budgets. DEFRA have confirmed that resources for the FiPL Officer post, for advice & guidance to farmers and land managers is extended for 2 years. However, it is not yet known whether or to what extent the FiPL grant programme will be extended.

Similarly, Welsh Government will also be making new revenue and capital allocations, anticipated to be at or below current year offers. The indicative figures below are based on 2024/25 including for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscape Sustainable Places (SLSP). Welsh Government are also considering establishing a Designated Landscapes Farming grants programme. Again these are subject the Spending Review, but potential indicative figures are outlined in the table below

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is believed to be intending to renew their Strategic Allocated Funding for the National Landscape. Continuation of the National Peatland Action Plan funding is also anticipated. These are both currently indicative.

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team have submitted bids to the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) for 3 projects, one award is confirmed and two are at Expression of Interest stage. The LEI is part of National Grid's Visual Impact Provision (VIP) targeted at reducing the impact of National Grid's existing electricity transmission lines in National Landscapes/AONBs and National Parks. The LEI offers each National Landscape or National Park a maximum of £900,000 worth of live grants at any one time for projects that enhance the quality of the impacted Designated Landscapes.

The table below outlines the awarded, bid and indicative funding that the Wye Valley National Landscape Team may be eligible for, should currently anticipated or indicative allocations be confirmed.

Grant scheme	Funder	Summary	Value	Initial Duration	Status
LEI	National Grid	'Magnificent Meadows, Tremendous Trees and Wonderful Wetlands' project	£296,246	2025-30	Award
LEI	National Grid	'Marstow and Penraig Landscape Connections' project	£290,000	2025-31	Bid
LEI	National Grid	'Whitchurch to Howle Hill Landscape Enhancements' project	£272,000	2025-31	Bid
National Landscape core funding	DEFRA	Core contribution to the National Landscape Team budgets and delivery of the AONB Management Plan through agreed annual Work Programme.	c£210,000	2025-26	Indicative
Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)	DEFRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FiPL Officer post for advice &amp; guidance to farmers and land managers has been extended for 2 years</li> </ul>	£110,000	2025-27	Award
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delegated grant programme administered through the Local Assessment Panel to deliver outcomes on nature, climate, people and place.</li> </ul>	c£400,000	2025-26	Indicative
Capital and Access for All funding	DEFRA	To deliver National Landscape priorities in the AONB Management Plan through agreed annual Work Programme	c£110,000	2025-26	Indicative
National Landscape core funding	Welsh Government	Core contribution to the National Landscape Team budgets and delivery of the AONB Management Plan through agreed annual Work Programme.	c£60,000	2025-26	Indicative
SDF	Welsh Government	Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) delegated grant	c£100,000	2025-26	Indicative
SLSP	Welsh Government	Sustainable Landscape Sustainable Places (SLSP)	c£200,000	2025-26	Indicative
Ffermio Bro	Welsh Government	funding for Designated Landscapes Farming grants programme	c£250,000	2025-27	Indicative
Strategic Allocated	Natural Resource	Strategic Allocated Funding contributing to delivery of the AONB Management Plan through	c£100,000	2025-27	Indicative

Funding (SAF)	s Wales (NRW)	an agreed annual Work Programme.			
NPAP	NRW	National Peatland Action Plan	c£35,000	2025-27	Indicative

The following Local Authority partner contributions are proposed for the MoU 2025-2028, with a 0% flat rate. They are based on land area in the AONB in an established historical formula. The local authorities retain the discretion to index link contributions, if or when appropriate.

<b>Funding Partner</b>	<i>2024/25</i>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>
Herefordshire Council	<i>£23,860</i>	£23,860	£23,860	£23,860
Monmouthshire County Council	<i>£15,716</i>	£15,716	£15,716	£15,716
Forest of Dean District Council	<i>£5,826</i>	£5,826	£5,826	£5,826
Gloucestershire County Council	<i>£4,158</i>	£4,158	£4,158	£4,158
<b>Total LA contributions</b>	<i>£49,560</i>	<b>£49,560</b>	<b>£49,560</b>	<b>£49,560</b>

The DEFRA Core Funding Agreement stipulates that the constituent local authorities provide match funding towards the core grant allocation. The local authority contribution is also used to match other funding streams as appropriate. It is therefore fundamental to the leverage of the National Landscape Partnership.

### **Background**

Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000:-

- in Wales a Local Authority has a statutory Duty of Regard towards the purpose conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB)
- in England, as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 Part 12 s245 (5-10), each Local Authority has the following powers and duties:  
 “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...must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.”
- Under s89 of the CRoW Act, with a cross-border, multi-authority AONB, the relevant local authorities must act jointly.

A considerable amount of the National Landscape Team’s core and project work (planning / promotion / advice / preparation & delivery of the Management Plan etc.) goes towards supporting each Local Authority in fulfilling its s85 Duty of Regard. Through project delivery the National Landscape Team also supports the Local Authorities’ Statutory ‘biodiversity duty’ under the Environment Act 2021 in England and the enhanced ‘biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty’ in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.