



Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol
Wye Valley
National Landscape

Annual report 2023 – 2024 including financial summary

| National Landscape / AONB Unit Work Programme AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives National Landscape Team / AONB Unit Initiatives | | National Landscape Team / AONB Unit Achievements & Outcomes 2023-24 |
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| | Nature | |
| WV-L1 WV-L2 WV-L4 WV-B2 WV-B3 WV-B4 WV-F4 WV-W3 WV-W4 WV-P3 WV-P4 | Nature Recovery & Landscape connectivity 1. Develop AONB Nature Recovery Plan to focus priority areas for habitat creation and connectivity particularly between woodland, species-rich grassland, riparian habitats, orchards and veteran trees. 2. Complete Species Action Plans for Orchards (Noble Chafer), River (Water Crowfoot), Woodland (Woodland Butterfly assemblage), Grassland (Bumblebee assemblage), and Hedgehogs. 3. Manage final period the Lower Wye Nature Networks Project with National Lottery Heritage Fund and Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust. 4. Manage control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) particularly Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and American Skunk Cabbage through Wye Invasive Species Programme (WISP) 5. Promotion of Natural Flood Management (NFM), Green Infrastructure (GI) & Riparian Trees | 1. Nature Recovery Plan in development (DO) 2. Species Action Plan for Noble Chafer complete and good progress made on Hedgehog Plan. Commenced drafting Butterfly and Bumblebee Plans. Proposals for Riparian Habitats included in Wyescapes bid. (NRO/DO) 3. Lower Wye Valley Nature Networks Project fully spent and complete. Project work took place across 7 SSSI sites, 2 Nature Reserves and 11 farms/small holdings, investing £250,000 into protected sites and habitat connectivity between October 2021- September 2023. (DO) The project has enabled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a significant amount of work to take place to improve SSSI/SAC condition and habitat connectivity, ensuring the sites involved are in better condition. • Greater and safer access for their public enjoyment. • Farmers and landowners are more engagement as a result of project work. • On farm habitats have been enhanced and restored. • Project work is a catalyst for continued engagement in the future. 4. INNS programme (PO): Cherry Laurel: Nature Networks Funding augmented control work in Cleddon Shoots SSSI. American Skunk Cabbage: 52 sites (up by 12 from last year), over 16 landholdings (up by 3), approx. 2330 plants present and treated/removed in Brockweir, Cleddon & Whitebrook catchments. Japanese Knotweed: liaised with over 200 landowners, gaining written consent to access their land and treat their knotweed in early September with 2 main contractors. Himalayan Balsam: Balsam Action Toolkit launched (in Welsh and English) providing all the support individuals and local communities might need in controlling Himalayan balsam growing in their locality. 2 local community training days & Balsam Bashes held. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two short call-to-action films & online Report it! page added to website. • WISP awarded CPRE Gloucestershire Award “for providing a model for taking positive action to stop invasive non-native species”. |

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| | <p>initiatives working with local landowners, managers & stakeholders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Organise regular volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves 7. Collaborate over outputs and outcomes of Woolhope Dome workshop 8. Collaborate and support landscape connectivity initiatives including Wye to Wyre - Severn Treescapes. 9. Investigate opportunities for the National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & landowners 10. Continue liaison with Herefordshire Meadows Network, Monmouthshire Meadows and Parish Grassland Project. 11. Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB particularly those linked to improving water quality in the Wye. | <p>5. WO has delivered advice on Natural Flooding Management to eight landholdings within the Wye Valley National Landscape since the project started in October 2023. This has included advice on interventions such as leaky dams, re-wetting, and pond creation with a number of landowners being interested in applying for funding to carry out the work.</p> <p>6. Wye Valley Volunteers (CLO): During 2023/24 there were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 Volunteer task days • 5 volunteer training days • 44 new WVNL volunteers engaged (plus 28 corporate volunteers) • 1 corporate Army challenge • 11 gates installed • 172 volunteers • 860 volunteer hours • 28 corporate volunteers • 4 days on partner sites (GWT & Monmouthshire Meadows) <p>7. Woolhope Dome collaboration continued on orchard sites through Noble Chafer project work, including orchard management and orchard wildlife events. (NRO/DO)</p> <p>8. Several landowners visited by the WO were referred to Severn Treescapes for assistance with tree planting and woodland management advice.</p> <p>9. In partnership with Herefordshire Meadows and through FiPL funding, landowners in the LEI corridor were engaged. An initial application for LEI funding, focusing on wetland, woodland and meadows, was prepared as an Expression of Interest (EOI) submission before Full Application. Two more potential applications were identified through the FiPL funded engagement (DO).</p> <p>10. WO liaised with Monmouthshire Meadows (MM) on meadow management & restoration. MM surveyed a field at the request of WO, which may be good enough to become a Local Wildlife Site. WO has also been in contact with the Parish Grassland Project and referred several farms to Herefordshire Meadows, including signposting and steering landowner engagement as part of the LEI EOI.</p> <p>11. Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Project (WACC), WO appointed and seconded to AONB Unit from Herefordshire Wildlife Trust.</p> <p>AM, DO & FO worked with Herefordshire Rural Hub, Herefordshire Meadows, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and other stakeholders on the successful development of Wyescapes - food, nature, water – Landscape Recovery 2 bid to DEFRA covering 36 landholdings and 4500 hectare in the middle reaches of the Rivers Wye & Lugg including about 30% of the AONB.</p> |
| Climate | | |
| <p>WV-L1 WV-L2 WV-L4 WV-B2 WV-B3 WV-P3 WV-P5</p> | <p>Climate Emergency Action</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare & implement action plan from Carbon Neutral Designated Landscapes Organisation assessment 2. Develop action plan from Wales Designated Landscapes Carbon Footprint Programme | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 / 2. Plans in development (DO) 3. Cleddon Bog work continued: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer stem boring trial of a ¼ acre of willow and birch saplings along the southern edge of SSSI. • 3 winter work parties cleared and stump treated willow and birch saplings along the southern edge of the Bog. • Cattle holding pen constructed on edge of SSSI, enabling introduction of 4 Hereford cattle with NoFence collars to graze on the Bog for 60 days. 4. Workshop and training hosted by Herefordshire Meadows and Floodplain Meadows Partnership. |

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|---|---|---|
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Continue Peatland Restoration initiatives particularly at Cleddon Bog SSSI 4. Support grassland sequestration investigations with Herefordshire Meadows and Floodplain Meadows Partnership | |
| WV-U2 WV-P4 | <p>Undergrounding</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undergrounding at Bishopswood village Hall (400m) complete. Communications open with new National Grid regional lead. (DO) |
| People | | |
| WV-S1 WV-S2 WV-R1 WV-P5 | <p>Wye Valley Walk</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership 2. Maintain new website www.wyevallywalk.org 3. Manage new on-line Passport scheme 4. Continue Piercefield Walk enhancements with Gwent Wildlife Trust, MCC PRoW and landowner 5. Pursue creation of Friends of Wye Valley Walk 6. Audit & co-ordinate refresh of way-marking 7. Collate route counter data & review options 8. Review Cicerone Route Guide 9. Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge and Redbrook Bridge. 10. Progress Wyesham riverbank revetment 11. Review & republish 'Easy Access' walks. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnership meeting facilitated 19th September 2023. Individual meetings/ site visits with partners re waymarking audit/improvements, responding to enquiries & complaints (AM, IO). 2. 43,000 visits to website April 2023 to March 2024 (IO). 3. 300 walkers signed up on digital passport scheme (IO) 4. Liaison continued with Gwent Wildlife Trust & MCC PRoW over Piercefield Walk enhancements (IO). 5. Focus of work & liaison with Ross Walkers are Welcome and Monmouthshire Pathcare volunteers, rather than creating new group (IO, CLO). 6. Ross Walkers are Welcome audited waymarking between Hereford and Biblins Bridge. Worked with Herefordshire PRoW and Parish Footpath Officers (PFOs) to replace/install new waymarking along the Herefordshire section. Monmouthshire WVV Pathcare Volunteers fully engaged and Powys PRoW team, as/when their resources allow (IO). 7. New counters at Piercefield records over 8000 users in first 6 months. 8. Summer 2023, IO walked whole WVV route and prepared new route instructions and content for new 'source to sea' Cicerone publication, to be published July 2024. |
| WV-H1 WV-H3 WV-P5 | <p>Overlooking the Wye legacy</p> <p>Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continuing Cleddon Falls & Wordsworth Walk enhancements with landowner(s) 2. Review & reprint of Walks leaflets 3. Audit and repair & maintenance of Overlooking the Wye infrastructure | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liaison with landowner on-going over public access & INNS/Cherry laurel treatment (PO). 2. Content reviewed and drafts progressed (IO) 3. Audit of infrastructure in progress (DO) |
| WV-H1 | Offa's Dyke Collaboratory | |

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| WV-H3 WV-P5 | <ol 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. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> limited activity during this period due to other pressures in the Collaboratory (AM) AM attended 2 Collaboratory Conveners meetings |
| WV-C2 WV-A1 | Communications & social media <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Regular social media (SM) posts e.g. Facebook, Instagram and twitter On-going updating and management of https://www.wyevalleyaonb-nl.org.uk/ Regular publication of on-line AONB newsletter 'Picturesque' Revise and publish AONB Map & Guide | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Social media audiences have grown, with the addition of new LinkedIn channel (IO) Website updated www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk to www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk to reflect new National Landscapes branding (IO). Two newsletters issued Spring & Winter (IO) Map & Guide prepared but final design held back to line up with rebrand introduction and use up all old stock (IO). |
| WV-C2 WV-E4 WV-A1 | Outreach Activities Promote the AONB through <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Talks/presentations to local groups Stands at relevant shows. Promote, sponsor &/or lead guided walks, events, activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB Support the Wye Valley River Festival CIC | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Talks and presentations to local groups including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Conversation event Pentwyn Jan 24 (WO/DO) Goodrich LEI promotion landowner consultation Oct 23 (DO) Presentation with Hedgehog Champion Dylan Allman at the Weobley Branch of the HWT Feb 24 (CLO) Talk at Monmouth School (Jan 24) Stands at relevant shows including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 23 – Friends of the Lower Wye 'Wye July' event (sPO, FO, PO & NRO) Guided walks, events and activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dark Skies Wales Feb 2024: Planetarium x 2 Llandogo Village Hall 80 participants; Biofluorescent Walks x 2 Whitestone 33 participants (IO) Chepstow Walking Festival 2024 St Arvans Walk 15 participants, River Friendly Farm Walk 18 participants (IO, FO) Orchard management and wildlife events in conjunction with Colwall orchard, summer 23 (NRO) Hosted meetings of WVRF CIC team throughout year. |
| WV-F4 WV-C2 WV-P6 | Youth Rangers <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review programme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage Train new Leaders as required/appropriate | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley Adventurers Launch event on Saturday 23rd March 2024 at the Narth Village Hall and Manor Wood. 3 different activities organised:- a foraging walk with tea/drink making back at the hall with plants that were found; a bird ID walk and; whistle whittling & fire making with marshmallow toasting. 19 children attended the event and were asked about what activities they would like to see in the future. This event was supported by Gwent Green Grid Team and WVNL Team & Volunteers. Feedback from the children on the event was very positive and encouraging (CLO). 1 volunteer trained and DBS checked to support future events. |
| WV-P1 WV-P2 | Governance | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Steering Groups, 3 TOWPs & 3 JAC's serviced (AM) |

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| <p>WV-P6 WV-P7</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group 2. Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues in late September 2023 3. Run AONB Partnership Seminar/forum in winter 4. Continue implementation of recommendations from AONB Good Governance Review | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. AONB Partnership Tour attended by 37 people on 22nd September. Tour focused around lower Wye Valley between Monmouth and Tintern with range of sites linked with social and/or land-use management initiatives supported in various ways by the AONB, including a One Planet Development, a Village Hall decarbonisation, 2 farms - one a Nature Reserve and other a youth farm charity, and Old Station Tintern. 3. Winter Seminar on 19th March 2024 at Old Court Hotel, Whitchurch on 'National Landscape and its Function in the Planning System' 41 attendees. Speakers & topics included Josh Bailey and Andrew Blake (Wye Valley National Landscape), Chris McFarling (Forest of Dean District Council & JAC Vice-Chairman), Holly Williams (Herefordshire Wildlife Trust/Wye Valley National Landscape), Helen Lucocq (Bannau Brycheiniog National Park), Liz Duberley (Herefordshire Council) & Q&As. |
| <p>WV-R2 WV-P1 WV-P3 WV-P4 WV-P5 WV-P6 WV-P7</p> <p>Local Partnerships & Collaboration Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire 2. Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) 3. Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) 4. Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire and Visit Herefordshire 5. Wye Valley River Festival CIC Advisory Board 6. Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership 7. Gwent Green Grid Partnership 8. Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (LAF) 9. Monmouthshire Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group 10. Support Town, Parish & Community Councils with advice & guidance as appropriate | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DO sits on Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership (3 meetings). DO attended and helped facilitate Gloucester LNRS meeting and consultation event. AM invited to sit on Herefordshire LNRS Steering Group, representing both Malvern Hills & Wye Valley AONBs. 2. AM co-chaired WCP and sat on Steering Group. DO did presentation to WCP. 3. AM attended WyeNAC x 2 4. AM attended Cotswolds Plus LVEP Board x3 IO worked with WVFDTA re Dark Skies, Visit Herefordshire re WVV & Herefordshire Trail and destination activity with Visit Monmouthshire. 5. AM sat on & advised WVRF CIC 7. DO & NRO attended GGG partnership meetings 8. LAF engaged through Lower Wye Tracks & Trails consultation (AM/PO) 9. AM attended and reported to WVV Delivery Group x4 10. Responded to general enquiries and provided advice & guidance as appropriate (all) |
| <p>WV-P4 WV-P5 WV-P9</p> <p>National Collaboration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and engage with the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and attend appropriate seminars & events 2. Co-host 2023 National AONB Conference 5th-7th Sept including hosting Field Trip 3. Work with Welsh Government and Tirweddau Cymru Landscape Wales (National Designated | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seminars & events included: National Lottery programmes meeting, Nottingham, July 23 (DO) & Newport (AM), National Conference "Invested and Investing in Landscape: Who, why, how" September 23, Bath (AM, sPO, PO, NRO, FO, IO) Lead Officers' Meeting, Birmingham, February 24 (AM) Green Finance event, Birmingham, March 24 (DO) Communications Officers' Group (IO) 2. hosted field trip to Tintern with 20 attendees 3. AM appointed vice-chair of TCLW. DO attended TCLW collaborative meetings related so SFS & Lottery funding programmes NRW liaison & grants meetings (AM) |

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| | Landscapes Partnership) and other stakeholders, including NRW & NAAONB 4. Work with DEFRA and others in progressing the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England, including Natural England & NAAONB | 4. DEFRA update meetings (AM) |
| | Place | |
| WV-L1 WV-P3 | AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 1. Publicise and promote Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2. Monitor use of Management Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries and by stakeholders | 1. Reference to the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 continued to be made in all planning application and strategic planning representations, helping to uphold the vision for the designation and the priorities for its management, particularly in relation to development management/strategic planning. 2. sPO continued consistent monitoring, identifying and tracking applications where the National Landscape Team has made representation and followed through to subsequent decision-making and, where relevant, monitoring of conditions. a) From reading delegated officer/committee reports after the sPO has made representation and when decisions are issued by LPAs, the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026, which is a statutory plan and a material planning consideration in decision-making, continues to often be either ignored or misinterpreted by Local Planning Authorities. b) The sPO has identified that constructive comments and request for conditions is still being ignored - bearing in mind that the conditions are worded and meet the Welsh Government Circular (WGC) 016/2014 "The Use of Planning Conditions for Development Management" and/or the 'Use of Planning Conditions' within Planning Practice Guidance. |
| WV-D1 WV-D2 WV-D3 WV-P4 | AONB Planning & Development Control 1. Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents 2. Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB 3. Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB 4. Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members 5. Monitor Planning support & activity jointly with Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. | 1. The sPO continued to oversee all planning applications within the Wye Valley National Landscape and its setting and filtered those applications which require a formal review / site visit / representation. This often led to filtering out applications relating to tree/hedgerow works & Listed Building Consents as it is felt that the Local Planning Authorities have technical consultees who are suitably qualified to make formal input. Some applications were also filtered out where it is clear that the development will not have an adverse impact on the National Landscape or its Special Qualities. 2. sPO made representation on 166 planning applications, including 21 formal objections to planning applications. Particular success was the Forest and Wye Valley Campsite, The Bearse, St Briavels (FoDDC reference: P0308/23/FUL) where an application was made for the change of use of land to tourism and for the siting of 41 holiday (caravan) lodges in lieu of 60 touring caravan and glamping pitches. A detailed objection by sPO, including subsequently speaking at FoDDC Development Management Committee reflected in the reason for refusal of planning permission by the committee. 3.a) The sPO also made representations to strategic planning consultations including the National Planning Policy Framework revised draft consultation, Woolhope's Regulation 14 draft Neighbourhood Development Plan and Dormington and Mordiford Group Regulation 14 draft Neighbourhood Development Plan. Work began to review and respond to Herefordshire's draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation towards the end of the period, as consultation had just begun. 3.b) The sPO continued to engage with NLA consultations and contributed as appropriate, including representing the Wye Valley National Landscape on a 'Task & Finish' group with regards to the recent strengthened Section 85 'duty to further the purposes' of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and the implications this has for the National Planning Policy Framework and 'relevant authorities' more |

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| | | <p>widely, as well as contributing to multiple National Planning Policy Framework consultations and involved in the establishing of the Planning & Placemaking Community of Practice for National Landscape Teams Planning Officers across England c/o the NLA.</p> <p>4. Preparations commenced for a future training programme for LPA staff and elected members. Attendees would benefit from greater awareness and understanding of what the AONB designation is about and why the Management Plan is important, particularly in relation to plan-making and decision-making. However, this has been deferred as many Local Planning Authorities were experiencing high turnover of staff, as an event had been planned with Herefordshire Council in late 2023 and had to be postponed for this reason. However, a number of planning officers attended the National Landscape Partnership Winter Seminar held on 19 March 2024, which provided some CPD and training on planning/development management issues in the National Landscape.</p> <p>5. sPO worked jointly between the Wye Valley National Landscape and Malvern Hills National Landscape working 2.5 a week with each National Landscape. It is continually noted that when a representation is made by the sPO to a planning application, particularly on smaller scale ('full householder'), these are often ignored, whereas applications for minor dwellings/commercial/major applications, the comments will be considered and often lead to positive dialogue between the Local Planning Authority / agent / applicant & sPO, leading to amended plans to benefiting the National Landscape, although this does vary between LPAs and is dependent on resources & Terms of Reference which the National Landscape Team has with each Local Planning Authority.</p> |
| WV-L4 WV-B5 WV-H2 WV-S3 WV-P8 | Monitoring <ol 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 & ground-truthing Investigate opportunities to update heritage, tourism and recreation monitoring. Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Undertake Fixed point photography across the AONB | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> DO / NRO attended a Tirweddau Cymru habitat mapping workshop and received Wye Valley specific habitat information. National hedgerow dataset was received and will be analysed for State of the National Landscape report. Fixed Point Photography carried out across 21 sites in 23/24. |
| WV-P1 WV-P2 WV-P3 | Funding and resources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare grant bids and claims for NRW, Welsh Government and DEFRA, and other funding bodies as required. Continue pursuing funding and develop opportunities for external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> All bids and claims submitted as required (AM, BSA) LEI EOI submitted for £400k project in Walford/Marstow area. |

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| | 3. Develop fundraising campaign for HCF Wye Valley AONB Fund | |
| WV-P5 WV-P9 | Work placements Support the needs of student placements/group projects. 1. Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities | Hosted a Swansea University PhD student on placement with the AONB Unit for 5 weeks in late summer, researching their thesis 'Water as a contested space - Improving the quality of our rivers'. |
| WV-L5 WV-F1 WV-F2 WV-F3 WV-F4 WV-F5 WV-C2 WV-E2 | Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme 1. Provide advice & guidance, as directed by DEFRA, to farmers and land managers to develop applications to help deliver bigger and better outcomes under the themes of Climate, Nature, People and Place. 2. Service the Local Assessment Panel in determining applications and allocating funding. 3. Manage delegated grants (<£5k) 4. Administer grant payments and monitor and report to DEFRA 5. Use the AONB Farming Award to present to a notable project. | <p>1. 58 FiPL enquiries received in 2023/24,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63 site visits delivered (including enquiry, progress, claim sign-off) • 6 Advice & Guidance events facilitated/participated in: 2 farm walks, 1 x SFI soil workshop, 1 x community event Breakfast on the Farm, contributed with content to 3 agricultural local events (Caplor Farm, Agroforestry Day/SevernTreescapes, Rural Business Advice Day/Hereford) • Headlines outcomes : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 projects to reduce flood risk • 8 Projects to improve understanding of carbon storage, carbon emissions and climate change impacts • 1894 trees planted (including 2 x Optimal Shelterbelts OSBs) • 518.7 m of hedgerow planted • 2.36 ha of tree canopy created (incl. wood pasture, hedgerow trees, shelterbelts) • 6 SSSIs under favourable management through FiPL (including River Wye SSSI) • 1 project targeted at recovery of threatened species (Plantlife) • 2 projects making it more accessible to visitors • 15 Educational visits (schools) • 5 schools engaged inside the Protected Landscape boundary and 2 outside • 15 projects increasing reliance of nature friendly sustainable farm businesses • 37 farmers engaged (92 from the start of the programme); not counting engagement facilitated through other FiPL projects (e.g Pasture for Profit in Protected Landscapes or LEI Facilitation) • 12 farmers engaged who have not been engaged with the PL before; not counting engagement facilitated through other FiPL projects (e.g Pasture for Profit in Protected Landscapes or LEI Facilitation) • Total land supported 2,604 ha – 18.6% of agricultural land on the English side of the Wye Valley National Landscape • FO gained BASIS Soil & Water qualification in April 2023 <p>2. 9 Panel meetings convened. 43 projects approved, 1 withdrawn</p> <p>3. 15 delegated grants approved (under 5K)</p> <p>4. Programme budget of £339,063 received with additional funding of £37,101 applied for and awarded, totalling the programme budget at £376,164</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly monitoring forms submitted to DEFRA throughout the year. • 2023/24 Budget 100% spend • 76 grant payments issued (also multi-year projects) • Project work of £24,861.97 reallocated from 23/24 to 24/25 |

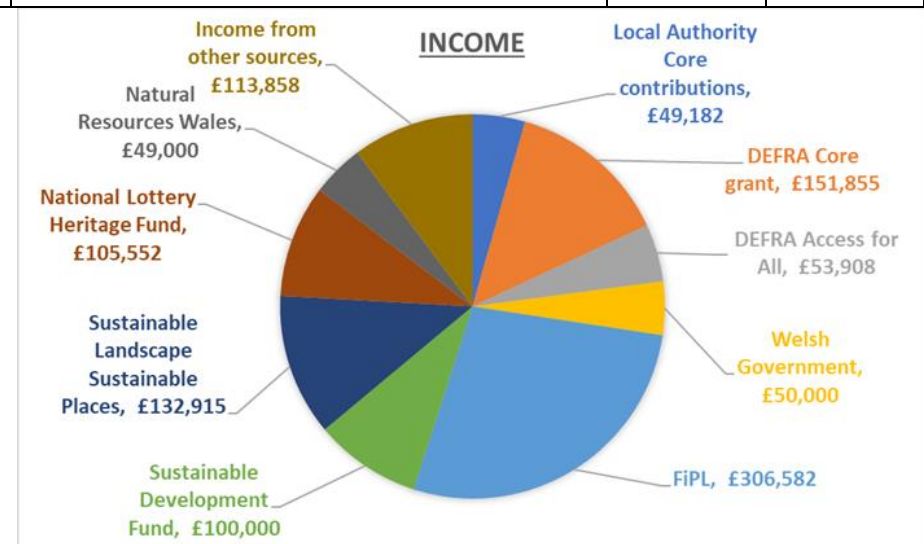
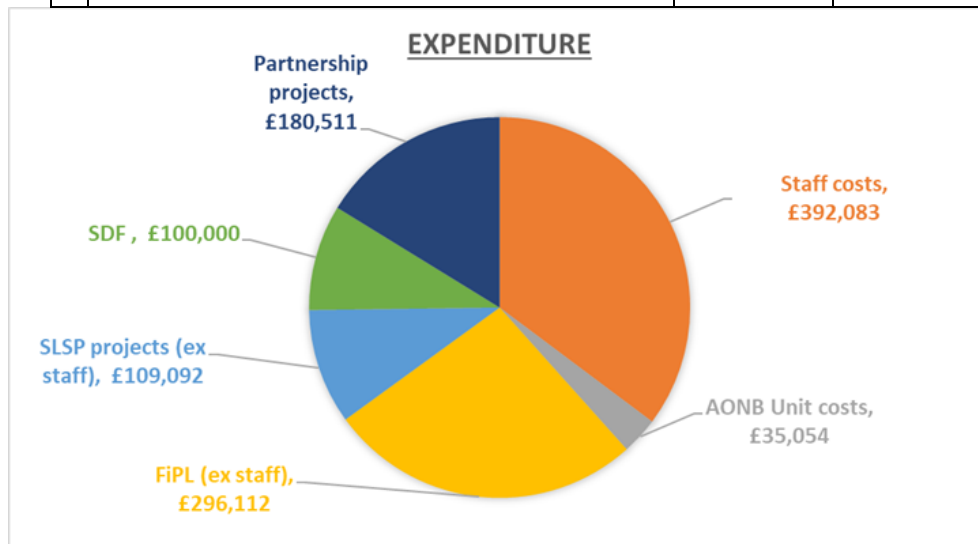
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| National Landscape / AONB Unit Work Programme AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives National Landscape Team / AONB Unit Initiatives | | National Landscape Team / AONB Unit Achievements & Outcomes 2023-24 |
|---|---|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original allocation: Advice & Guidance and Admin 23.5% of the total budget. Actual: A&G and Admin 18.5% of the total budget 5. Farming Awards reviewed, but not implemented for this year. |
| <p>WV-L1 WV-C1 WV-S2 WV-S4 WV-R4</p> <p>Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) Deliver & manage scheme: Nature Recovery:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Wye Valley Nature Recovery Initiatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Invasive non-native species (INNS) control Landscape Connectivity Species Action Plans esp. Orchards project Sustainable Tourism:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Wye Valley Tourism & Access Improvements <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley Walk enhancements: Wyesham & Piercefield Integrated Access Strategy Decarbonisation & Supporting Communities:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Wye Valley Village Halls Energy efficiency & Hub development Engagement in collaborative projects across multiple Designated Landscapes:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wales Dark Skies Education Resources Programme | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.a) INNS control undertaken on numerous stands of Japanese knotweed, Cherry laurel, American skunk cabbage and Himalayan balsam, with contractors and volunteers. 1.b) Soil & water testing equipment purchased for land management advice. Cleddon Bog additional improvements made to infrastructure to facilitate grazing and scrub control. 1.c) Supported Hedgehog Champion and contributed to improvement works in the Lower Wye Nature Networks project and also supported Gwent Wildlife Trust enhancement works to The Wern Reserve with infrastructure to enable gazing in open woodland and small heathland. 2.a) Wyesham works only partially progressed due to PO leaving in November. Piercefield enhancements undertaken by Gwent Wildlife Trust. 2.b) Lower Wye Track & Trails Strategy progressed through market & data research, drafting and 12 week public consultation, including 2 public engagement events. 350 responses received and analysed by consultants and project management steering group including MCC & NRW. 3. Decarbonisation advice & support given to communities & Village halls, including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Village halls received energy audits from Andrew David, Southeast Wales Energy Agency • 5 village halls received funding to make energy improvements following recommendations from the Energy Audits. This included 2 halls improving lighting, 1 new boiler and insulation, 1 match funding for solar panel battery storage, 1 new heating system. 4. Consultants, Ridge, undertook Dark Skies survey of area, identifying 24 properties/locations where potential lighting improvements would enhance Dark Skies. 7 shortlisted for further investigation and 2 projects taken forward by Designated Landscapes Dark Skies Officer at Trellech School and Llandogo Millennium Hall. Dark Skies Wales week held Feb 2024 – See Outreach Activities, above. 5. Education Team at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority lead this project, delivered collaboratively with teachers and learners from within and around all 8 Designated Landscapes. On-line portal designed called 'Tirlun' ('Landscape'), initial drafting of 12 Key Activities covering generic topics that will lead to Designated Landscape specific activities linked to localised topics and themes, all linked to Curriculum for Wales. | |
| <p>WV-L1 WV-B3 WV-C1</p> <p>Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of SDF to potential applicants Assist potential applicants with application process and project development Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating SDF funds. Manage delegated grants and Landscape & Biodiversity Enhancement Grants (<£3k) Training for SDF Assessment Panel members Administration of grant scheme and reporting to Welsh Government | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SDF Flyer produced and circulated around local groups, organisations and community facilities. 3 social media take overs by SDF Projects. 2. 14 applicants were supported through the project development and application process 3. 5 applications were approved at the SDF Panel during a meeting on 11th May 2023 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 applications were approved by the SDF via the fast-track process 4 applications were approved by the delegated officer decision 4. No potential applicants or applications were supported through the L&B Enhancement Grant. 5. No training was provided 6. 100% of the SDF Grant was spent totally £100,000 (including £10,000 admin) Total match funding for 23/24 was £286,863.27 Total project costs £404,443 Average mean SDF percentage 54% | |

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|---|--|--|
| | | 1 interim report was submitted to Welsh Government 1 End of Year annual report was submitted to Welsh Government 1 SDF Monitoring tour with Delegate from Welsh Government |
| WV-L1 WV-B3 WV-C1 | Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) 1. Promote Wye Valley AONB Fund with HCF to potential applicants 2. Assist potential applicants with application process and project development 3. Collate applications for the SDF Assessment Panel and liaise with HCF 4. Service SDF Assessment Panel recommending allocations to HCF. | 1. The AONB Fund was included in the SDF Flyer 2. 2 applicants were supported through the application process totalling £3,500 3. 2 applications were approved via the delegated officer process |
| Additional not in original Work Programme | | |
| | DEFRA Access for All Funding | 7 projects were supported totalling £53,908 = 100% of the funding allocation spent (CLO,IO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Accessible barrier free walk was developed – The Willow Walk • 37 gates we purchased and installed with support from the Ross Walkers are Welcome volunteers • 1 bridge was replaced with a wheelchair accessible bridge along the WVV and Willow Walk which included tree works, bank stabilisation • 1 accessible bird hide/information hub was developed along the WVV & Willow Walk at Townsend farm • 2 accessible bench/tables were installed at Townsend farm along the WVV & Willow Walk • Improvements were made at Ross play park next to the WVV • 3 willow weaving workshops held to promote the Willow Walk |

| Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts | | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | | | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|---|--|------------------|------------------|---|--|------------------|------------------|
| Expenditure | | £ | £ | Income | | £ | £ |
| Staff costs | | 298,462 | 392,083 | Local Authorities core contributions | | 49,182 | 49,182 |
| Unit Operating costs | | 40,930 | 35,054 | DEFRA Core grant | | 151,855 | 151,855 |
| Farming in Protected Landscapes | | 155,775 | 296,112 | DEFRA Access for All | | ~ | 53,908 |
| Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places | | 221,132 | 109,092 | Welsh Government | | 50,000 | 50,000 |
| Sustainable Development Fund | | 100,000 | 100,000 | Farming in Protected Landscapes | | 220,110 | 306,582 |
| Partnership projects | | 256,722 | 180,511 | Sustainable Development Fund | | 100,000 | 100,000 |
| TOTAL | | 1,073,021 | 1,112,852 | 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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