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26th February 2018

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Monday, 5th March, 2018 at 2.00 pm,
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.**

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence and Introductions.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Question Time.	
4.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting dated 6th November 2017.	1 - 8
5.	AONB Unit 2018/19 Work Programme.	9 - 12
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12.	Pine Marten reintroduction feasibility study update.	47 - 52
13.	National Association for AONBs.	53 - 56

14.	Partner and AONB Unit progress reports and updates.	57 - 60
15.	Dates of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Group Meetings for 2018/19: To be held at 2.00pm in the Forest of Dean District Council Chamber, Coleford: Monday 2 nd July 2018 Monday 5 th November 2018 Monday 4 th March 2019	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Local Authority Members with Voting Powers

Gloucestershire:

T. Hale
P. Molyneux

Herefordshire:

P. Cutter
B. Durkin
J. Hardwick
E.J. Swinglehurst

Monmouthshire:

L. Jones
D. Dovey
M. Lane
A.E. Webb

Forest of Dean:

G. Davies
B. Hogan

Town / Parish Community Councils with Voting Powers

Councillor B. Evans – Gloucestershire Association of Town / Parish Councils
R. Gething – Herefordshire Association Local Councils
Councillor G. Powell – One Voice Wales

Co-opted Members with Voting Powers

Dr. G. Peterken – Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire
B. Nash - Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire
A. Thomas - Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire
R. Goodwin – Country Land and Business Association
M. Price – National Farmers Union
L. Taylor – The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales

Co-opted Members without Voting Powers

C. Barron – Wye Valley Society
Vacancy – River Wye Preservation Trust
A. Lee – Recreation Sector
D. Broadbent – Local Tourism Sector
A. Nixon – Local Wildlife Trusts
D. Price – National Farmers Union Wales

Public Information

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Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Outcomes we are working towards

Nobody Is Left Behind

- Older people are able to live their good life
- People have access to appropriate and affordable housing
- People have good access and mobility

People Are Confident, Capable and Involved

- People's lives are not affected by alcohol and drug misuse
- Families are supported
- People feel safe

Our County Thrives

- Business and enterprise
- People have access to practical and flexible learning
- People protect and enhance the environment

Our priorities

- Schools
- Protection of vulnerable people
- Supporting Business and Job Creation
- Maintaining locally accessible services

Our Values

- **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.
- **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford. on Monday, 6th November, 2017 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor P. Cutter (Chair) (Herefordshire Council)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: M. Lane and A. Webb

Gloucestershire County Council

County Councillors: T. Hale and P. Molyneux

Herefordshire Council

Councillors J. Hardwick and E.J. Swinglehurst

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillors: G. Davies and B. Hogan

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

Herefordshire Association of Local Councils – Mr. R. Gething
One Voice Wales – Councillor G.M. Powell

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire - Dr. G. Peterken
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire – Mr B. Nash

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron
Recreation Sector – Mr. A. Lee
Local Tourism Sector – Mr. D. Broadbent

Technical Advice Officers

Wye Valley AONB Manager – Mr. A. Blake
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams
Gloucestershire County Council – Mr. R. Niblett

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford. on Monday, 6th November, 2017 at 2.00 pm

APOLOGIES:

M. Price, J. Bisset, D. Griffiths and S. Dereham

1. Simon Dereham

The Chair informed the Committee that today's meeting would have been Simon Dereham's final meeting as a member of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee. However, he had been unable to attend due to illness.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Simon for the excellent work that he had undertaken as a long standing member of this Committee and in the wider community.

The Chair and the AONB Manager will meet with Simon in due course to present him with a gift, on behalf of the Committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared interests as Planning Committee Members of their respective authorities in matters that might arise relating to development control issues:

Councillor P. Cutter
Councillor E.J. Swinglehurst
Councillor J. Hardwick

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dated 3rd July 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present.

5. Local Authority contributions and Memorandum of Understanding 2018-2021

We received a report outlining requests for contributions from the four constituent local authorities to the budget for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership for 2018/2019, 2019/20 and 2020/21 to be included in the AONB Memorandum of Understanding between the four local authorities for this period.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The AONB Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the AONB Partnership.
- The current MoU ends in March 2018 and the next version is proposed to run until 2021.

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- Prior to the MoU the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) annually recommended to the constituent local authorities the contribution required for the continued effective operation, management and governance of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.
- Gloucestershire County Council has already confirmed its financial contributions for the Wye Valley AONB until 2020/21. Other funding partners are requested to make similar three year commitments where possible.
- The contributions from the local authorities form the foundation to the budget managed by the AONB Unit.
- DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are not signatories to the MoU but are party to the negotiations and their funding offer letters are appended to the MoU. The DEFRA grant offer currently extends until 2020. NRW will issue a new offer in 2018.
- For every £1 of Local Authority contribution, the AONB Unit has levered in over £8 on average in recent years.

We resolved that the Joint Advisory Committee:

- (i) requests from the constituent local authorities the agreed financial contributions for the Wye Valley AONB for 2018/2019, 2019/20 and 2020/21;
- (ii) encourages the constituent local authorities to renew the AONB Memorandum of Understanding for 2018 – 2021.

6. Wye Valley River Festival 2018

We received a report which outlined the programme for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Wye Valley River Festival presents high quality, original art works in the landscape with an inspiring, collaborative and vibrant programme of unique, provocative and spectacular events. The Festival is led by the Wye Valley AONB Unit and contracted independent arts practitioners.
- Sufficient funding for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 to proceed has been secured from Arts Council England, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and several other sources.
- Additional funding applications are being submitted along with campaigns on sponsorship, advertising and sales planned for the remaining parts of the programme.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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- The programme of events between 5th and 19th May 2018 is being finalised and is based on the theme of 'Woods and Trees'.
- The future of the biennial Wye Valley River Festival is also being considered in the context of the three Festivals in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Unit is working with a number of town, community and parish councils.
- Town, community and parish councils were in the process of setting their precepts for 2018/19. It was suggested that the AONB unit contacts them shortly with a view to establishing funding contributions towards the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.
- A programme of workshops are being planned to encourage the local communities and schools to get involved with the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.

We welcomed the funding to date for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and the evolving programme.

7. Future Landscapes Wales and Governance Review

We received a report regarding the opportunity to peer review the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Joint Advisory Committee agreed at the last meeting to adopt the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*.
- Swansea City Council, the lead authority for Gower AONB Partnership, is also interested in adopting the 'Principles of Good Governance'.
- A joint initiative between the Wye Valley and Gower AONB Partnerships over the adoption of the 'Principles of Good Governance' would demonstrate good collaboration in line with Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) programme and introduce some peer-review scrutiny to the process.
- The Review of Designated Landscapes (AONBs and National Parks) in Wales has continued with the Welsh Government consultation *Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*, which closed on 30th September 2017.
- Lesley Griffiths, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, stated that "The recent review has provided an opportunity to reaffirm the importance to Wales of our designated landscapes."

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- The AONB Manager continues to contribute to The Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) Working Group, chaired by Lord Elis-Thomas, which is taking forward the priorities identified in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- A task and finish group will be established consisting of two or three members from the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee and the Gower AONB Partnership. Two or three meetings will be required whereby the AONB Managers will report back the findings and any recommendations from the task and finish group meetings to their respective Committees, in due course.
- Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) Members expressing an interest in joining the task and finish group were asked to contact the AONB Manager.
- The joint working aspect will benefit both AONBs. The task and finish group will consider the principles of good governance in relation to both AONB partnerships. Joint working will create good scrutiny of the peer review.
- A member of the JAC informed the Committee that the local authority Chief Executives are the chief executive officers responsible for the AONBs. However, it was considered that these executives were not, but should be, liaising with each other in relation to taking forward the development of AONBs, both locally within the AONB and at a national level.
- A member of the JAC suggested that a third AONB should be involved in the process to provide a suitable level of peer review. It was suggested the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB could be invited to provide this.

We resolved that the Joint Advisory Committee:

- (i) welcomes the opportunity to peer review with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes', as outlined in the *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* report;
- (ii) investigates with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to undertake the 'Good Governance Review'.

8. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

We received a report regarding the allocations of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for 2017/18 and 2018/19, subject to available funds.

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In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The 2017/18 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) from Welsh Government is £55,000.
- The SDF Assessment Panel had allocated £53,977.46 for 2017/18 to date.
- The SDF Assessment Panel had provisionally allocated £36,000 for 2018/19 subject to funds being made available from Welsh Government.
- The Joint Advisory Committee had previously endorsed the principle of allocating any remaining SDF at end of year to specific AONB projects that met the SDF criteria.

We resolved to endorse the recent allocations of the SDF for 2017/18 and for 2018/19 subject to funds being available.

9. AONB Partnership Study Tour feedback

We received a report regarding the success of the AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- A total of 29 people attended the annual AONB Partnership Tour.
- There was a good spread of representation from throughout the AONB even though the Tour was focused predominantly on the south Herefordshire part of the AONB.
- Feedback from attendees of the Tour has been extremely positive.
- There is still the ambition for a joint initiative with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, probably sometime in 2018.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

10. NAAONB update

We received a report outlining the activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairman's Conference and Annual General Meeting is being held on 23rd November 2017 and will be attended by the AONB Manager.

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Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford. on Monday, 6th November, 2017 at 2.00 pm

- The NAAONB gave Oral Evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
- Outstanding Week was held on 6th - 24th September 2017 with over 90 events held nationally.
- A joint publication and declaration has been signed with Europe's Nature Parks entitled 'Living Landscapes'.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

11. AONB / Partner progress

We received a report regarding the activity of the AONB and partners relating to:

- Lydbrook Bridge.
- mindSCAPE Conference.
- Youth Rangers.
- Venison Processing and Marketing Feasibility Study.
- Wales National Parks (NPs) Seminar and hosting the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) event / visit 2018.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Lydbrook Bridge - The AONB Manager informed the Committee that a meeting was to be held with Gloucestershire County Council officers with a view to discussing funding for the restoration of pedestrian access over Lydbrook Bridge. A project enquiry form had been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which was an outline expression of interest. However, it was noted that there is considerable competition for HLF grants and at present, the success rate is running at around 27%.

Concern was expressed that a contingency plan would need to be considered should the HLF funding request not be successful. It was noted that Gloucestershire County Council was in the process of arranging meetings with a view to moving forward on this matter.

The restoration costs for the footbridge equated to £1,246,650. A view was expressed that these costs were excessive and needed to be reviewed.

The AONB Manager stated that he would keep the Joint Advisory Committee updated in respect of developments with regard to this matter.

- The mindSCAPE Conference held on 5th October 2017 had been a successful event promoting the achievements to date in the final year of the current 4 year project funding from Big Lottery. The aim was to consolidate mindSCAPE activity in Gloucestershire and investigate ways to expand activity into Monmouthshire and Herefordshire.

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- The next cohort of Wye Valley AONB Youth Rangers had begun, consisting of 20 new young people joining the 2 year programme.
- The Venison Processing and Marketing Feasibility Study is nearing completion and a final report should be available by the end of 2017.
- The AONB Manager and Cllr Mrs A Webb had attended the National Parks Wales Seminar on 3rd and 4th October 2017. The AONB Manager and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority staff and members had reiterated the ambition for a shared event, recognising that this is likely to be held in the first half of 2018.

It was noted that the AONB unit and Monmouthshire County Council had submitted comments to Welsh Government regarding the document on Designated Landscapes.

In response to a question raised regarding an update about the Pine Marten Study, the AONB Manager would investigate whether any progress had been made and report back to the Joint Advisory Committee.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

12. Next Meeting

Future meetings of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee will be held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford on the following dates:

5th March 2018

2nd July 2018

5th November 2018

4th March 2019

The meeting ended at 3.11 pm.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

AONB UNIT WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

Purpose

To seek members' approval for the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Endorses the AONB Unit Work Programme 2018/2019
- B. Welcomes the Welsh Government two-year allocation of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).
- C. Note the various additional project funding bids submitted by the AONB Unit in support of the AONB Work Programme

Key Issues

- The attached table sets out the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit in the form of the Work Programme 2018/2019.
- This is focused on delivering the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and appraising the future prospects for the River Festival, commencing the review for the AONB Management Plan for 2020-2025 and continuing other existing activities while retaining flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.
- Welsh Government have confirmed that the allocation of the Sustainable Development Fund will remain at £55,000 for 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- The budgets in the Work Programme have been approved by the AONB Steering Group and DEFRA, and are being negotiated with Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

Reasons

The main tasks in the year ahead are:

- Promoting the use of the adopted AONB Management Plan 2015 - 2020.
- maintaining a high profile for the AONB including launching a refresh website, delivering the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and evaluating its success
- continuing activities such as the AONB Farming Awards and the Youth Rangers and mindSCAPE programmes, both now part funded through the Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership and Heritage Lottery Fund
- delivering ongoing partnership initiatives, such as the Wye Valley Walk Partnership and the legacy opportunities related to the Overlooking the Wye scheme

- developing and submitting new projects, partnership initiatives and funding bids for the future delivery of the AONB Management Plan including landscape scale partnership projects, pursuing the restoration of Lydbrook Bridge and supporting the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory.

Implications

Defra provided a four year grant allocation (2016-2020) and a new Memorandum of Understanding has been signed for 2018-2021 between the Local Authorities. Similarly a new three year grant programme is being negotiated with Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Welsh Government have confirmed that the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Environment have agreed to provide funding of £55,000 in 2018/19 and again in 2019/20 to the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). They have also agreed to provide an indicative figure of £55,000 for the SDF in 2020/21. This all provides medium term security of funding for the core AONB Unit.

Overall the AONB Unit business plan, based on the Work Programme, maximises the benefit for the local communities, the local economy and the outstanding landscape, while making best use of resources available. This is achieved by collaboration and having the flexibility to lever in additional funding and resources wherever possible.

Additional Funding Applications

The following bids and applications have been submitted by the AONB Unit in support of the AONB Work Programme:

Recreational Access Funding - Welsh Government

Following submission of a Recreational Access Pressures and Opportunities Report for the Monmouthshire part of the AONB, Welsh Government have offered £15,000 revenue & £20,000 capital towards priority access work identified in the Pressures Report. The main priority scheme is the Wye Valley Walk between Monmouth Showground and Monmouth - a 600m section adjoining the River Wye at risk due to river erosion and very limited land availability. The revenue funding will facilitate commissioning the studies, specifications and licenses, and the capital funding will be used to contract and deliver the works. Any underspend will be directed to other items listed on a prioritised 'quick wins' basis, including the revamp of the Wye Valley Walk website.

Total project cost £35,000.

AONB commitment in-kind staff time.

Wild Venison Supply Chain Training - Natural England

Funding is approved for £2,000 to take forward recommendations set out in the Wild Venison Marketing Feasibility Study, to provide training for butchers and restaurateurs in England.

Total project cost £2,000

AONB commitment in-kind staff time.

An application was unsuccessful to Natural Resources Wales for an 18 month project to deliver recommendations set out in the Wild Venison Marketing Feasibility Study in Wales. Total project cost was £27,370 requesting £13,500 from NRW. The AONB budgetary offer was £3,000 and £8,170 in-kind (staff time). Options for other funding is now being pursued.

Lower Wye Valley Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management Scheme - Natural Resources Wales

In partnership with Monmouthshire County Council, an Expression of Interest has been accepted for an 18 month project to develop plans to resolve long standing access problems

caused by surface water run-off and flooding in the lower Wye Valley, integrating landowner advice, small scale 'slow the flow' works and Invasive Non Native Species control. The full application is now being prepared for the submission deadline of 23rd April.

Total project cost £144,023 requesting £72,000 from NRW.

AONB budgetary commitment £10,275 and £21,600 in-kind (staff time)

Wye Valley River Festival 2018 – Visit Wales

An application to Visit Wales has been submitted to provide funds for marketing the Wye Valley River Festival in 2018 and to fund a Research and Development phase to be undertaken from September 2018 to March 2019 to produce a 6 year Business Plan taking the biennial Festival up to 2024.

The total project cost is £30,000

AONB budgetary commitment £5,000 in-kind (staff time)

Tintern Abbey ibeacon project - Monmouthshire LEADER

Application submitted to Monmouthshire LEADER LAG for a project to start in June, researching stories and developing an app to provide digital interpretation of the Abbey's connections with the wider landscape.

Total project cost £24,824, application for £16,080.

AONB budgetary commitment £0 and £2,265 in-kind (staff time)

mindSCAPE continuation - Arts Council England

Artspace Cinderford are leading on an application to Arts Council England to continue and expand upon the mindSCAPE project. This 3 year project will include the continuation of the existing group at the Orchard Trust, development of a second group in the Forest of Dean and community outreach activities. This will complement and expand the on-going work in Residential Centres and Care Homes funded through the Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership and Heritage Lottery Fund.

Total project cost £113,280, application for £90,000.

AONB budgetary commitment £3,000

Trees Outside Woodlands - Woodland Trust / Heritage Lottery

The Woodland Trusts is collating 'expressions of interest' for a collaborative 'Trees Outside Woodlands' Heritage Lottery funded project. The AONB Unit has submitted one project proposal and is a named partner in another.

1) Riparian & Veteran Trees

This expression of interest is for a 5 year project to increase management and understanding of the importance of Veteran and Riparian Trees in the AONB.

The total project cost is £845,000, requesting £478,500 from the Heritage Lottery.

AONB budgetary commitment £25,000 and £25,000 in-kind (staff time)

2) Wye to Wyre project

This expression of interest is also for a 5 year project, focussed on habitat connectivity and fruit trees. It looks to improve connectivity and orchard habitats between the Wye Valley woodlands and the Wyre Forest.

Total project cost is £1,947,400 plus in kind contributions.

No allocated Wye Valley AONB commitment, but AONBs (Malvern Hills and Wye Valley) are highlighted as possible cash match funders.

Three other submitted proposals touch on the AONB: Herefordshire Wildlife Trust have a Tree Warden scheme, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are leading on a connectivity project between the Wye woodlands and Forest of Dean and the Woodland Trust are lead for the Usk to Wye landscape scheme. The overall bid is likely to be heavily oversubscribed.

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 <i>Strategic Objectives</i>	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
AONB Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise and distribute Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Monitor use of Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries etc Commence 2020-2025 Plan Review process: Initial consultations & 1st Draft of Plan 	<p><i>WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features</i></p> <p><i>WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan</i></p>	AONBM	
AONB Partnership events	<p>For JAC members, AONB Ward members, representatives from partner organisations and local Town/Parish/Community Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise AONB Partnership Seminar on key issue Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues Complete evaluation of AONB Perceptions Questionnaire 	<p><i>WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-P7 Encourage partners to be champions and ambassadors for the AONB in their contact with other interests, and ensure those interests recognise and consider the Management Plan and AONB work programme when relating to the area</i></p>	AONBM/ FAO	£2,005
Planning, Development Control and Strategic Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew annual contract for AONB Strategy & Development Advisor to support AONB Unit 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 debate and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members 	<p><i>WV-D1 Ensure a consistent and coherent framework of planning policies relating to the AONB is fully reflected in the statutory land use planning documents and their effectiveness monitored</i></p> <p><i>WV-D2 Encourage and support high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage and landscaping in all developments, including Permitted Development, to ensure greater sustainability and that they complement and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and minimise the impact on the natural environment</i></p> <p><i>WV-D3 Resist inappropriate development which will create a persistent and dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and/or if it damages Special Qualities in the AONB, including through high levels of noise and/or light pollution or any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or other sites designated as environmentally important</i></p>	AONBM	£6,000
AONB Farming Awards	<p>Promote & publicise 11th 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.</p>	<p><i>WV-L5 Support measures which increase public awareness and appreciation of the natural beauty and importance of the Wye Valley AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-F1 Encourage farmers and landowners to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve or enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB</i></p>	DO	£1,400

Key Officers' abbreviations: AONBM = AONB Manager; DO = Development Officer; CLO = Community Links Officer; IO = Information Officer; FAO = Finance & Admin. Officer

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek sponsorship for the AONB Farming Awards from local businesses etc. Site visits of all farm entries for short-listing Judging Present the prizes at the Monmouthshire Show Involve winner in Open Farm Sunday event. 	<p><i>WV-F5 Promote a wider understanding of the value of farming to the landscape and economy of the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i></p> <p><i>WV-E2 Raise awareness of good practice and encourage local businesses in the AONB to take opportunities to become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, particularly in ways that sustain the natural beauty of the area</i></p>		
Habitat Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise monthly volunteer task days Continue Phase 1 and priority BAP habitat surveys Convene & service Woodland Management Group and emerging projects Support species rich grassland initiatives including Herefordshire Meadows Network, Monmouthshire Meadows Group and Parish Grassland Project. Develop non-native invasive weed control programme Liaise over national roadside verge initiatives with local authorities and Highways Agency 	<p><i>WV-L2 Encourage and enhance appropriate landscape scale and green infrastructure action by all particularly on consolidating ecosystem services and positively contributing to habitat connectivity that allows wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change</i></p> <p><i>WV-L4 Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change</i></p> <p><i>WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB</i></p>	DO/CLO	
Landscape scale conservation	<p>Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB. Target areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little Doward & South Herefordshire with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & others Woolhope Dome and area north of Foy & Sellack National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich Usk to Wye initiatives including Long Forest 	<p><i>WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features</i></p> <p><i>WV-L2 Encourage and enhance appropriate landscape scale and green infrastructure action by all particularly on consolidating ecosystem services and positively contributing to habitat connectivity that allows wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change</i></p> <p><i>WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and/or restore the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through landscape scale habitat connectivity</i></p>	DO	£2,500

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angidy & Lower Wye Valley Catchments Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management • 'Trees outside Woodlands' projects with veteran trees, riverine trees and orchards • Wye Catchment Partnership 	<p><i>WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan</i></p> <p><i>WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB 3-year work programme</i></p>		
Deer Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene & service Deer Management Groups and Deer Monitoring Project • Coordinate deer surveys in the Woolhope Dome and Lower Wye Valley • Assist co-ordination of collaborative deer cull through the Deer Management Groups • Review and implement as appropriate the recommendations of the venison marketing feasibility study 	<p><i>WV-B2 Encourage and support measures that contribute to the management of all statutory designated sites and County local/key wildlife sites so that they are in favourable condition and within robust ecological networks</i></p> <p><i>WV-B4 Identify species and diseases considered to be detrimental to the biodiversity value of the AONB and encourage their monitoring, management and, where appropriate, their control</i></p> <p><i>WV-W4 Support the monitoring, management and where appropriate, control of diseases, pests and other threats, which may cause substantial mortality in tree species and woodland habitats and seek to mitigate the landscape impact of any loss</i></p> <p><i>WV-W3 Support the development of employment and skills and markets for local timber and woodland produce</i></p>	AONBM	
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS and State of the AONB data, including habitats and species, heritage, tourism and recreation etc. • Support evaluation of Drystone walls • Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Action Plan • Support NAAONB in development of AONB Key Performance Indicators with DEFRA 	<p><i>WV-L4 Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change</i></p> <p><i>WV-B5 Support the identification and monitoring of key indicator species and priority species and habitats, in partnership with conservation organisations, relevant individuals and the Local Biological Record Centres</i></p> <p><i>WV-H2 Promote establishment of baseline data to monitor change and improve the local databases of historic landscape assessments, conservation areas, locally important buildings, buildings at risk, ancient trees, heritage features and sites in the AONB in conjunction with Local Planning Authorities, local archaeological trusts and individuals</i></p> <p><i>WV-S3 Ensure adequate provision of co-ordinated tourism data and visitor engagement to inform strategic and practical decision making on conserving or enhancing the Special Qualities of the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-P8 Develop and co-ordinate the acquisition and analysis of data across the AONB, to inform priority setting, planning, implementation and monitoring of change affecting the natural beauty, including developing a better</i></p>	AONBM/ DO	

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
		<i>understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on the landscape of the Wye Valley AONB and supporting mitigation and adaption actions</i>		
Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate SDF project applications for the SDF Assessment Panel Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating funds Review SDF application processes and Assessment Panel Complete establishment of AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation 	<p><i>WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features</i></p> <p><i>WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and/or restore the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through landscape scale habitat connectivity</i></p> <p><i>WV-C1 Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3</i></p>	CLO	£55,000
Wye Valley River Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver 'Woods & Trees' theme Festival 5th May – 20th May 2018 with funding from SDF, England & Wales Arts Council, Forestry Commission, Foresters' Forest, Environment Agency and other contributors & sponsors. Manage and maintain www.wyevalleyriverfestival.org.uk website. Complete all claims and evaluations Carry out review of 3 Festivals to date and future prospects Prepare tenders for subsequent Festivals 	<p><i>WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness</i></p> <p><i>WV-W5 Increase understanding, awareness and enjoyment of trees and the special nature of the Wye Valley woodlands and promote them as a resource for appropriate educational, community, recreational and health opportunities</i></p> <p><i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i></p>	AONBM/ CLO	£10,000 [£60,000]
MindSCAPE – Foresters' Forest HLF funding 2018 - 2022	<p>HLF initiative enabling people living with dementia to reconnect with the landscape, through arts and creative environmental activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage project and submit reports & claims Supervise contractor organising regular creative sessions, workshops and social activities at appropriate sites for participants. 	<p><i>WV-W5 Increase understanding, awareness and enjoyment of trees and the special nature of the Wye Valley woodlands and promote them as a resource for appropriate educational, community, recreational and health opportunities</i></p> <p><i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i></p>	DO	£1,000 [£5,000]

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop opportunities to expand project into other areas 	<i>WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate</i>		
Youth Rangers – Foresters’ Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue structured programme of activity for 4th Cohort of young people (14-16 year olds) that will increase their skill set in landscape and heritage conservation and management. Develop next phase of scheme to continue opportunities of engaging young people in conservation and heritage 	<i>WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB</i> <i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i> <i>WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB</i>	CLO	£1,000 [£3,500]
Website and social media	Update and manage websites and social networking sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk (including www.overlookingthewye.org.uk) www.wyevalleywalk.org www.wyevalleyriverfestival.org.uk Facebook and Twitter. 	<i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i> <i>WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness</i>	IO	
Public Relations & Outreach	Promote the AONB through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular on-line editions of the AONB newsletter, ‘Picturesque’ to provide information and interpretation to increase subscribers’ awareness and appreciation of the AONB Guided walks, events, children’s activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB Give talks/presentations to local groups Regular press releases and magazine articles / advertorial 	<i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i> <i>WV-E4 Raise awareness of the value of the AONB and the importance of retaining a high quality environment in attracting and retaining entrepreneurs, relocating businesses, inward investment and skilled personnel</i> <i>WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness</i>	IO/all	£3,500

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 <i>Strategic Objectives</i>	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stands at the Monmouthshire Show, Herefordshire Country Fair and other relevant shows. Local exhibitions and other local appropriate / prestigious events. 			
Tasks below covered by AONB Unit core costs				£207,907
Underground-ing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working with Western Power to identify power-lines within the AONB suitable for undergrounding 	<p><i>WV-U2 Encourage further under-grounding of existing and proposed power and telephone lines, where these do not conflict with any SAC, and resist new overhead lines where skylines or important views are affected</i></p> <p><i>WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CROW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB 3-year work programme</i></p>	DO	
Wye Valley Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership Monitor counters along Walk Manage route promotion, website and Passport scheme Facilitate future options for Lydbrook & Redbrook Bridge (in combination with campaign for Tintern Wireworks Bridge) 	<p><i>WV-S1 Encourage and promote the AONB as a sustainable tourism destination with forms of tourism activity and development that are based on the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Special Qualities and features of the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-S2 Promote the improvement of the visitor experience, particularly at the most heavily visited sites, and facilitate the opportunity for visitors to explore and discover other appropriate but less used locations throughout the AONB, thus spreading demand and balancing pressures across sites where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs</i></p> <p><i>WV-R1 Encourage and promote recreational pursuits and responsible access compatible with the AONB purposes, particularly linking sustainable transport and town and village facilities. Associated development and new access to land should be subject to WV-D2 & -D3</i></p> <p><i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i></p>	AONBM /IO	
Offa's Dyke Collaboratory	Collaborate with opportunities for cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological projects and investigation into landscape significance of the 8 th century monument	<p><i>WV-H1 Initiate and encourage schemes, policy development, advice and sympathetic management through partnerships and positive action to conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment, in conjunction with landowners, national agencies and other relevant organisations</i></p> <p><i>WV-H3 Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage and historic environment</i></p>	AONBM	

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 <i>Strategic Objectives</i>	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
		<i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i>		
Overlooking the Wye legacy	Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme	<i>WV-H1 Initiate and encourage schemes, policy development, advice and sympathetic management through partnerships and positive action to conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment, in conjunction with landowners, national agencies and other relevant organisations</i> <i>WV-H3 Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage and historic environment</i> <i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i>	AONBM/ DO/IO	
Partnerships (local / regional)	Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Destination Management Partnership • Visit Herefordshire Leisure and Recreation Forum. • Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire • Wye Catchment Partnership • Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) • Monmouthshire Environment Partnership • Herefordshire Wildlife Link 	<i>WV-R2 Assist the resolving of conflicts, real and perceived, between recreation, conservation and local interests, including other economic activities, and between different recreation interest groups in relation to the purposes of the AONB designation</i> <i>WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan</i> <i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i> <i>WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB</i> <i>WV-P7 Encourage partners to be champions and ambassadors for the AONB in their contact with other interests, and ensure those interests recognise and consider the Management Plan and AONB work programme when relating to the area</i>	AONBM/ DO	
Collaboration (Designated Landscapes)	<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 Wales Designated Landscapes in taking Future Landscapes Wales Programme forward • Work with NAAONB & English AONBs on '21st Century Hobhouse Review' of National 	<i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i> <i>WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate</i>	AONBM	

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

Work Programme for AONB Unit staff 2018/2019

AONB Unit Initiatives	Detailed programme – all years [unless dated]	AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	2018/19 AONB Budget [non AONB]
	Parks & AONBs in UK Government's 'A Green Future - 25 Year Environment Plan'.			
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group Monitor implementation of 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales'. Prepare grant bids and claims for Natural Resources Wales and Defra, and other funding bodies as required. 	<i>WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB</i> <i>WV-P2 Sustain and enhance local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit to add value to delivery of the AONB purposes</i>	AONBM	
Funding and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue investigating funding and development opportunities. Investigation into external funding and securing resources for strategic and partnership projects 	<i>WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB</i> <i>WV-P2 Sustain and enhance local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit to add value to delivery of the AONB purposes</i> <i>WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan</i>	AONBM/ FAO	
Work placements	Support the needs of student placements/group projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities 	<i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i> <i>WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate</i>	DO/CLO	
			TOTAL	£290,312

Agenda Item

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

AONB GOOD GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Purpose

To receive verbal feedback on the outcome of the recent Task Group with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership on the review of the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes'.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the outcomes of the Task Group meeting of 1st March 2018 and considers any recommendations to be formally presented to the next meeting.

Key Issues

- The JAC agreed to establish a joint Task Group with Swansea City Council, the lead authority for Gower AONB Partnership, to review the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*.
- The Task Group met on Thursday 1st March at the Wye Valley AONB Office.
- The members of the Task Group will verbally feedback the findings and any recommendations of the meeting.
- Any formal recommendations will be reported back to the next JAC for consideration.

Reasons

At the last meeting the JAC agreed to proceed with a joint initiative between the Wye Valley AONB and Gower AONB Partnerships to undertake a detailed review of current governance processes and structures against the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* and make recommendations for change to their respective partnerships. This demonstrates good collaboration between AONB partnerships in line with the Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) programme, including some peer-review scrutiny through the additional engagement with the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Partnership.

Implications

A small Task and Finish group has been established with 3 members from each AONB Partnership, supported and facilitated by both AONB lead officers. The Wye Valley AONB Partnership members are:

Cllr Phil Cutter	JAC (Chair) / Herefordshire Council
Chris Barron	JAC / Wye Valley Society
David Broadbent	JAC / Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism
Andrew Blake	AONB Manager

The inaugural meeting of the Task Group was at the Wye Valley AONB office, Hadnock Road, Monmouth on Thursday 1st March 2018. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB lead officer also attended and advised.

The group met and received presentations on the different governance arrangements and structures for the three AONBs. They then discussed the Future Landscapes Wales Governance Principles and considered how they may be applied to the existing governance arrangements for Gower AONB Partnership and Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

The group may determine to meet a second or third time if necessary. A second meeting would be hosted in Swansea.

Any recommendations for change will be formally presented to a subsequent JAC for consideration.

Background

The ‘Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes’ as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* report are:

(see page 11. Table 1. <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/170508-future-landscapes-delivering-for-wales-en.pdf>)

Legitimacy, participation and voice	• Acceptance in society
	• Representation and participation
	• Active dialogue and consensus
	• Subsidiarity
Developing and implementing a strategic vision for the area	• Inspiring and consistent vision
	• Consistent with national outcomes
	• Reflect obligations
	• Adaptive management and innovation
Effective performance management	• Management effectiveness
	• Learning culture, skills and knowledge
	• Advocacy and outreach
	• Acknowledging and addressing weakness or poor performance
	• Efficient use of financial resources
Accountability and transparency	• Integrity and commitment
	• Decision making and reporting
	• Allocation of resources
	• Communication
Fairness and rights	• Ethical and fair decision making
	• Impartial and without discrimination
	• Respectful of language and culture
	• Respect rights
	• Active engagement

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL 2018

Purpose

To inform members of the developing programme and sponsorship for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the sponsorship and funding secured to date for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and endorses the developing programme and the work of the AONB Unit and Festival Team.

Key Issues

- The programme of events for the Wye Valley River Festival is being finalised for the main festival fortnight between 5th & 20th May 2018 based on the theme of 'Woods & Trees'. Programme highlights are attached below.
- About 300 people will be engaged in a range of school and community workshops planned for the run up to the Festival to create props and build engagement.
- AONB Volunteers and the AONB Youth Rangers have been working in the woods making hurdles and walking staves for the Festival.
- The Arts Council of Wales grant aid has been approved and a number of sponsorships have been secured and further opportunities are being negotiated.
- A new Wye Valley River Festival website is about to go live and tickets for events will be available through the TicketSource website.

Reasons

The Wye Valley River Festival 2018 gets underway in 2 months on 5th - 20th May 2018. The programme of events, as well as the pre-Festival workshops, are progressing well. Sponsorship deals are falling into place and marketing and promotion is gaining reach locally, regionally and (inter)nationally. The core ensemble group of artists have had a further meeting with local environmental experts to 'ground' and refine the Ensemble theatrical shows that permeate the Festival and provide a narrative to the Woods & Trees theme.

The Festival Team, Artistic Directors –The Desperate Men, Festival Director – Phillipa Haynes and Production Manager – Netty Miles, all worked on the 2014 & 2016 Wye Valley River Festivals. They continue to work through a creative dynamic with the AONB Team on fashioning fresh opportunities to engage new audiences with the AONB's work and to broaden appreciation of the landscape through a high quality arts programme, that brings communities together.

Implications

The last part of the main Festival funding has been secured with the approval of the Arts Council of Wales grant aid. Sponsorship deals have been agreed with County Marquees, Alun

Griffiths Contractors, Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire and SARA. Further sponsorships are being negotiated. Mentoring discussions have been held with The Hay Festival and the Visit Wales Major Events Team and Herefordshire's Great Place team.

Marketing and promotion is progressing with a new Wye Valley River Festival website being launched www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk. The River Festival Facebook page www.facebook.com/wyevalleyriverfestival has over 1000 followers and a reach of over 2,000 people. Partners and tourism providers are publicising the Festival, including the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire, Visit Herefordshire, Visit Monmouthshire, Sunshine Radio and Big House Holiday Lets in the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean. There's been interest in the Festival from America and beyond.

Most of the River Festival events are free. However tickets are being sold for the guided walks and activities associated with Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon at Tintern Abbey. Outside of Cadw's normal opening hours for Tintern Abbey, entry tickets for the Museum of the Moon will be charged at £3.80 for a standard adult, £3 for children and £12 for a Family ticket. Tickets are available from www.ticketsource.co.uk.

Four Pilgrimage Walks are planned for Wednesday 16th May all leading to a light supper hosted by Tintern villagers followed by entry to the Museum of the Moon in Tintern Abbey. The walks are being led by Chepstow, Monmouth and Abergavenny Walkers are Welcome groups and the National Trust, with walks of varying lengths from Chepstow, Brockweir and The Kymin. The AONB Volunteers and the AONB Youth Rangers have been coppicing in local woodlands and making walking staves for some lucky walkers on the Pilgrimage Walks.

Schools' workshops will take place in the week of 16th April led by PriorMade, who worked with schools in 2016 to produce the Festival Banners. About 200 children in 7 Primary Schools will work with the visual artists to create woodland automata for the Festival. The schools are Ashfield Park (Ross), Goodrich, Fownhope, Llandogo, Lydbrook and Whitchurch.

Community workshops are planned for Coleford and Monmouth during the Easter holidays to make lanterns and puppets for the procession in Monmouth on the evening of Saturday 12th May.

Programme highlights

Saturday 5th May Hereford River Carnival

large puppet parade & Festival Theatrical characters

Saturday 5th May, Symonds Yat Rock 5:30pm – 10pm

Woodland Activities, Art Blast, Youth Circus, The George Choir, Herbalist, Forest bathing, Forestry Commission & Foresters' Forest Meet the Festival Theatrical characters

8:00 – 10:00pm Theatrical show & Jony Easterby Show

Sunday 6th May, Symonds Yat Rock 5:30pm – 10pm

Woodland Activities, Art Blast, Youth Circus, Berry Hill Brass Band, Herbalist, Forest bathing, Forestry Commission & Foresters' Forest Meet the Festival Theatrical characters

8:00 – 10:00pm Theatrical show & Jony Easterby Show

Monday 7th May, Lydbrook Tump 1:00 -5:00pm

Festival Theatrical Show & fete events including Lydbrook Band and Passing the Baton performance.

Wednesday 9th May, Fownhope 7:30pm

Festival Theatrical Show

Thursday 10th May, Hoarwithy 3:00pm
Festival walk: Timber trade on the Wye with Heather Hurley
(Tickets £5 including tea)

Thursday 10th May, Ross on Wye 7:30pm
Festival Theatrical Show

Friday 11th May, Monmouth/Wyesham
Festival Theatrical show

Friday 11th May, Chepstow 7:30pm
Festival Theatrical Show

Saturday 12th May, Shire Hall Monmouth 11:30am – 9:30 pm
Arborealists Film Premiere
Shire Hall ‘The tree comes to town’ art installation, Sculpture Trust,
performers & Theatrical Show, Monmouth Band,
Talks on woodland ‘On the stump’ & Court room session
Arborealists Exhibition Opening Night, Monmouth Museum
Evening Theatrical Show and parade

Sunday 13th May, Monmouth Sports club
Wild Swim

Monday 14th May, Tintern Abbey Museum of the Moon
7:30pm – 8:00pm Press night, VIPs, sponsors & invited guests.
8:00- 10:00 Museum of the Moon opens to public
(Tickets £3.80 / child £3 / Family £12)

Tuesday 15th May, Tintern Abbey Museum of the Moon 6:00pm – 10:00pm
First night (Tickets £3.80 / child £3 / Family £12)

Tuesday 15th May Tintern Anchor 7:30-8:30
Illustrated presentation The Moon: It’s meaning through the ages with
Professor John Clarke (Tickets £5 including admission to Museum of
the Moon)

Tuesday 15th May, Redbrook 7:30pm
Festival Theatrical Show

Wednesday 16th May, Tintern Abbey Pilgrimage Walks. Various start times
meet Tintern: 11.30 for Kymin, 2pm for Chepstow, 6pm for Brockweir
(Tickets £5 including transport, light supper & Museum of Moon)

Wednesday 16th May, Tintern Abbey Museum of the Moon 6:00pm – 10:00pm
(Tickets £3.80 / child £3 / Family £12)

Thursday 17th May, Tintern Abbey Museum of the Moon 6:00pm – 10:00pm
(Tickets £3.80 / child £3 / Family £12)

Thursday 17th May, Tintern Abbey 7:30pm
Passing the Baton (2 performances)
(tickets £5 include entry to the Museum of the Moon)

Friday 18th May, Llandogo 4pm-7pm
Trapeze workshops

Friday 18th May, Tintern Abbey Museum of the Moon Picnic 6:00pm – 10:00pm.
Festival show, picnic and musical entertainment. (Tickets £6)

Saturday 19th May, Tintern Abbey Museum of the Moon 6:00pm – 10:00pm
(Tickets £3.80 / child £3 / Family £12)

Saturday 19th May, Llandogo Festival Finale 2:00pm – 10:30pm
Woodland Activities, Festival show, lots of music, food, stalls, circus
skills, Trapeze workshops, canoe ballet, dancing and singing.
Fire Procession & Finale!

Sunday 20th May, Tintern Abbey Museum of the Moon 6:00pm – 10:00pm
Last chance to see the Moon (Tickets £3.80 / child £3 / Family £12)

May – September: Arborealists Exhibition, Monmouth Museum.

Background

The Wye Valley River Festival 2018 is a Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership initiative with funding from the Sustainable Development Fund, a Welsh Government Initiative in the Wye Valley AONB, The Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, supported by the Welsh Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission England, Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership, and in-kind support from Cadw, County Marquee, The Shire Hall, Monmouth, numerous volunteers & local communities; main charity sponsor Severn Area Rescue Service (SARA). For a full list of sponsors see www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

The Wye Valley River Festival celebrates nature, culture, landscape and life in the Wye Valley AONB. It aims to

- Create a high quality arts programme with artists to reflect the unique qualities of the area and its people, that brings communities together
- Increase participation in the arts and the AONB Partnership's work, building new audiences
- Invest in professional development for artists, enabling them to create work beyond their normal range and cultivating positive working partnerships and new collaborations
- Work with local partners, organisations and businesses and to provide a platform for local artists, groups and voluntary sector organisations
- Foster community cohesion, social and cultural capital between individuals, groups and communities, including new networks for artists within the region.
- Creatively engage schools and colleges and encourage volunteer involvement in the event organisation
- Encourage sponsorship, promotion and engagement of the event by local business
- Promote the profile of the Wye Valley as a premier destination, encouraging visitors to visit more frequently and stay longer, helping to support and develop cultural tourism in and for rural communities.
- Develop a sustainable, nationally recognised biennial Wye Valley River Festival that complements the areas and the AONB's purposes
- Increase awareness of the local and global conservation & environmental issues that affect the Wye Valley landscape
- Vigorously market and promote the Festival through social media and tourist and destination organisations to reach wider audiences and build the Festival profile.

The River Festival provides a unique opportunity to engage new audiences with the AONB, broadening understanding through art and reaching a more diverse public. Before the 2014 Wye Valley River Festival there was nothing of this kind in the area and the 2014 & 2016 Festivals showed that there is an appetite for quality arts and community led events that link communities throughout the valley that also attract visitors.



TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

LYDBROOK BRIDGE HLF BID

Purpose

To seek members support for the bid by Gloucestershire County Council to the Heritage Lottery Fund for restoration of Lydbrook Bridge.

Recommendations

That the JAC supports Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council in the Heritage Grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of Lydbrook Bridge.

Key Issues

- Lydbrook Bridge is one of the three remaining former railway bridges spanning the River Wye in the AONB that provides a strategic crossing for walkers, including on the Wye Valley Walk.
- Gloucestershire County Council had to close Lydbrook Bridge in February 2016 due to safety issues with the structure.
- The Wye Valley AONB Manager has been assisting Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council (joint owners of the bridge) with a Heritage Grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the restoration of Lydbrook Bridge.
- The Heritage Grant application totals £1,687,000 and requests 84% support from HLF up to April 2021.
- The AONB Unit is committing £5,000 towards the project, alongside anticipated contributions of £250,000 from Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council.
- In the meantime essential safety work will be carried out to the bridge structure this summer to ensure there is no threat to users of the navigation on the river and the footpath that both pass under the bridge.

Reasons

Lydbrook Bridge, also known as Stowfield Viaduct or The Black Bridge, spans the river between Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. The bridge is jointly owned by Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council. Under mutual agreement Gloucestershire County Council have responsibility for maintenance of this bridge. The decked walkway of the former railway bridge was used as a footpath forming part of the Wye Valley Walk and providing pedestrian access to the Wye Valley Youth Hostel at Welsh Bicknor. The walkway is a designated Public Right of Way on the Herefordshire half of the Bridge but not the Gloucestershire part.

The bridge was in a deteriorating state despite Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) having regularly repaired the permissive footway deck. Following safety concerns raised during a routine inspection, the bridge was initially closed in February 2016. A Principal Inspection of the structure was undertaken in March 2016, as per GCC's Inspection Policy, by Xeiad (a third party contractor) to allow a roped access inspection and a diving survey. This confirmed the suspicions of the General Inspection that significant works were required. The iron and steel structure is severely corroded in places threatening the integrity of the bridge. A feasibility study was commissioned from GCC's partner contractor Amey to provide more comprehensive advice on the bridge's condition and how it should be managed. The bridge remains closed and remedial Health and Safety work is being carried out to make the bridge 'safe', ie not to be hazardous for those passing under it.

A cost benefit analysis in the feasibility study concluded that unless there is suitable support for conserving the heritage structure, then the majority of the bridge may have to be dismantled for public safety (to protect users of the two public rights of way underneath the bridge: the footpath and the navigation). A new simple footbridge could be installed, probably just upstream over the Wye, if or when sufficient public funds become available. Consequently the historic railway bridge would be lost to future generations.

Six of the 10 railway bridges that once spanned the River Wye between Chepstow and Hereford have been removed. The other remaining 3 are all of a similarly precarious nature. Without sufficient funding most, if not all, of these historic railway bridges over the Wye could have to be closed and dismantled on public safety grounds over the next 10-20 years. Two of the bridges have no formal rights of public access anyway.

The JAC debated the closure of Lydbrook Bridge in November 2016 and voiced their support for Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) reopening the bridge. The Forest of Dean District Council passed a similar motion as did the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association. In June 2017 a public meeting in the Welsh Bicknor Youth Hostel was attended by 59 people. An outcome was the creation of the Black Bridge Steering Group with broad local representation and an active Facebook page (members include representatives of GCC, HC, Forest of Dean District Council, Lydbrook Parish Council, Lydbrook Tump Committee, Lydbrook WI, Wye Valley AONB Manager and local residents/interested members of the public). The AONB Manager led on the submission of a Heritage Grant Project Enquiry Form (PEF) to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the bridge restoration. The positive feedback from the HLF was circulated and shared, albeit recognising that there was about a 27% pass rate for Heritage Grant applications. A joint meeting between GCC & HC and the Steering Group debated the requirements for progressing with the bridge restoration and agreed to progress the Heritage Grant HLF bid.

Implications

On behalf of GCC & HC, the AONB Manager has been drafting the Heritage Grant application for the restoration of the bridge. The proposal is to restore use of the former railway bridge as a pedestrian crossing point over the River Wye and develop community-based research, recording and celebrating the industrial heritage connected with the local railways, use of river and the symbiotic relationship between Lydbrook and Welsh Bicknor. A Feasibility Study by Gloucestershire County Council (August 2017) identifies the option to repair the bridge structure sufficiently by inserting a Fibre Reinforced Plastic (FRP) deck to carry the footpath. Community projects will include an Oral History project and wider community engagement, linked to interpretation, creative arts and celebration of the use of the

bridge, the river (commerce, canoeing & fishing), the railways, local products passing over and under the bridge (past industrial and contemporary), the Youth Hostel (visitors experiences & memories), the Wye Valley Walk and local walks (experiences and promotion). Information gathered will be displayed both on site, in the village, at the YHA, on-line and at a range of events, bespoke & established. Lydbrook Brass Band will be commissioned to compose a piece of music celebrating the bridge and it will feature in a future Wye Valley River Festival. There would also be seminars on bridge conservation and opportunities for volunteers, apprentices and trainees.

The HLF Heritage Grant application is a 2 stage process, with competitive submissions at both Development Phase and Delivery Phase. The bid will be for £97,000 for the Development Phase during which time all the costs for the Delivery Phase will be finalised. These are currently estimated at £1.59million, with £1.25million for the capital bridge restoration works and £343,000 for project management and community outreach activities. The total grant request from HLF £1,405,175 which is 84% of the total project. The HLF Guidance states a minimum of 10% match funding. Current contributions are estimated at £270,400 with £250,000 from GCC & HC. The AONB Unit is committing £5,000 towards match-funding. The remainder is being sought from other agencies, local organisations, neighbouring landowners and community fundraising, spread over the next four financial years. HLF have advised that there is a 27% success rate for Heritage Grant applications.

If the HLF application is unsuccessful the bridge is likely to remain closed for the foreseeable future until GCC & HC secure the £1.25million necessary to restore the bridge &/or find a less resource intensive solution.

Background

Lydbrook Bridge constructed circa 1869-1873 to carry the connection between the Ross-Monmouth Railway and the Severn and Wye Railway at Lydbrook junction station, for the Edison Swan Cable works. It is one of the four remaining (of the original ten) rail bridges to span the River Wye between Hereford and Chepstow. The bridge is not listed and is maintained by Gloucestershire County Council.

There has been concern for a number of years relating to the long term viability of several of the former railway bridges as pedestrian crossing points over the River Wye. The Wye Valley AONB Partnership undertook a review of the situation, commissioning several surveys and reports, in 2011 & 2012. This identified that the bridges in greatest need of attention were Redbrook Bridge / Penallt Viaduct and Lydbrook Black Bridge (also known as Stowfield Viaduct). Both bridges were recognised as needing significant repair work in the short to medium term to retain their future role as viable crossing points. The Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) endorsed the approach, recognising the concerns centring around the effects of increasingly disconnected local communities, but also the risk the deteriorating structures pose to navigation along the River Wye, the potential closure/diversion of the Wye Valley Walk and other local walking routes, the consequential impact on tourism and recreation and the continuing loss of heritage, with many railway bridges over the Wye already lost. Following discussion and advice from HLF at the time it was decided to progress a project focused on Redbrook Bridge / Penallt Viaduct. This resulted in widespread public consultation and consequent support for the 'Bridging Borders' Heritage Grant application for Redbrook Bridge. This bid was unsuccessful but outlined a range of community engagement and heritage interpretation initiatives that were locally supported.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS’
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

WILD VENISON MARKETING FEASIBILITY STUDY

Purpose

To inform members of the outcomes of the Feasibility Study Investigating the Production, Marketing and Sale of local Wild Venison in the Lower Wye Valley and southeast Monmouthshire.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcomes the ‘Feasibility Study Investigating the Production, Marketing and Sale of local Wild Venison in the Lower Wye Valley and southeast Monmouthshire’ and endorses the conclusions and recommendations.

Key Issues

- It is widely accepted that deer are more abundant and widespread in the wild now than at any time in the past 1000 years.
- The ‘Feasibility Study Investigating the Production, Marketing and Sale of local Wild Venison in the Lower Wye Valley and southeast Monmouthshire’ has been concluded and published on-line.
- The Deer Initiative undertook the study, interviewing nearly 500 people, and proposing 8 Recommendations.
- In the report, the situation with feral wild boar was also included in discussions.
- Funding is now being sought to implement some of the recommendations.

Reasons

The ‘Feasibility Study Investigating the Production, Marketing and Sale of local Wild Venison in the Lower Wye Valley and southeast Monmouthshire’ is available at http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/images/uploads/general/Venison_report_final.pdf. The Study considers the current situation regarding wild deer managed in and around the Wye Valley AONB, where venison is processed and sold, and how it is marketed. It also investigates whether there are opportunities to develop a local market for wild venison and what stages of the supply chain need to be developed to ensure it can be supplied, processed, distributed and marketed locally. The focus of the study area encompasses the lower half of the Wye Valley AONB from Symonds Yat in the north to Chepstow in the south and westwards across eastern Monmouthshire between The Hendre and Wentwood. This area has a high deer population and consequently the associated impacts on woodlands and habitats are greater.

The Deer Initiatives interviewed 476 people as part of the Study. Questions were asked to people through both an online survey and face-to-face. The online survey was circulated to landowners, and other interested individuals via email through partner organisations. Face to face questions were asked in butchers, restaurants and pubs and to stalkers in the project area. The general public were also questioned in and around these outlets, as well as at the Monmouthshire Show.

Implications

The conclusions and recommendations of the Study are as follows:

Conclusions (see pages 14-15 of the Study)

- While a purpose built facility to provide a location for stalkers to use to process their wild venison is unlikely to succeed, there are a number of opportunities around marketing, promotion and training to increase the proportion of local wild venison remaining in the local market.
- Overall, everyone interviewed face-to-face and those who completed the online survey seemed responsive to a quality and provenance scheme, which would guarantee local venison be sold in local markets. However, many areas of the potential market are unaware of the many positive reasons behind choosing to eat wild venison.
- Members of the public would benefit from education as to why venison is hunted in the UK, and how this benefits the natural ecosystem. This can be seen in the 73% of people who would be encouraged to buy Local Wild Venison if these benefits were highlighted in comparison to only 5% to whom this would make no difference to their opinion on the meat.
- The end consumers may also benefit from instruction in how best to prepare venison. While conducting the face-to-face interviews, it became apparent that while many people were aware how to cook venison, a large proportion were unsure how best to prepare the meat and stated that they have been unimpressed with the taste, whether too gamey or tough to eat. However, if prepared sympathetically to its natural flavour and cooked correctly venison is a very flavourful meat. This has been seen whenever live demonstrations have been carried out, the feedback has always been very positive from all sides and those that have tried the final product have been pleasantly surprised. Providing customers with recipe cards on how to prepare dishes that people wouldn't normally try, placed in butchers or supermarkets for example to encourage people to buy venison over other meats and in doing so, have a positive experience with it, could have broad benefits.
- It is also clear that most consumers are not aware that there are huge differences in flavour and texture let alone size of joints between the different species as well as the health benefits of including venison in diets. Few people understand the nutritional benefits of wild venison. With the growing concerns over obesity and high cholesterol related problems it is quite possible that a venison based menu could be of benefit to many people (appendix 4)
- While making recipe ideas available to members of the public, it may be worthwhile to provide a similar marketing scheme or tasting session to chefs in restaurants to encourage them to include a broader variety of venison recipes in their menus. Some chefs believe that marinating in red wine is a vital ingredient when cooking venison yet in reality white wine

often produces a better flavour and often marinating is unnecessary. A tasting session would also be an excellent place to increase awareness of Local Wild Venison and its availability in local markets.

- It appears that butchers and restaurants are able to stock local Wild Venison, but there is no value currently being added to the product by stating its provenance, promoting its health benefits or advising on how best to cook it. Promotional activity involving suppliers, retailers and consumers is required to encourage more people to eat wild venison, thereby encouraging retail outlets to stock more venison and give suppliers more reason to sell their venison locally rather than via game dealers. It is possible that if an advisory information pack were produced this could go a long way to dispelling many of the misunderstandings and myths relating to Wild Venison.

Recommendations (spread throughout pages 9 – 14 of the Study)

Recommendation 1 - Increase awareness of how to cook venison to achieve the best from its natural flavour will help increase sales, including through cooking demonstrations and recipe cards.

Recommendation 2 – Establish a marketing &/or education campaign promoting and making clear the ecological benefits of Wild Venison over traditional farmed meats.

Recommendation 3 – Butchers are the main source of venison over other outlets, therefore a marketing campaign targeting butchers could prove to be the most effective method of increasing sales. However, it should be noted butchers may have limited space to store &/or display more venison.

Recommendation 4 – More work is required to establish the most suitable ‘brand’ and how this would be administered in practice.

Recommendation 5 - Offering ongoing training, encouraging stalkers to continue to improve, shooting skills and use of appropriate bullets, should reduce the amount of venison being unnecessarily lost to the food supply chain.

Recommendation 6 - It is possible that there may be some benefit in raising awareness of the legislation through the creation of a document which is easier to navigate than the current Wild Game Guide, and perhaps one aimed directly at stalkers. Having a simplified document should remove any confusion surrounding the legislation which currently exists throughout the stalking community and lower the risk of stalkers unknowingly acting outside of the laws surrounding game.

Recommendation 7 – There is an opportunity to provide training / advice to butchers on the differences in taste between deer species, along with promoting the opportunity to freeze venison in a variety of forms for sale throughout the year. Additional storage may be required for butchers to make this practical.

Recommendation 8 – If a local food hub was developed, local wild venison should be included. Supply of local wild venison would need to be highlighted as an opportunity to potential wild venison suppliers, eg. through the Deer Management Group.

The AONB Unit have been investigating funding opportunities to progress the Recommendations. Natural England agreed to provide some modest funding to take forward Recommendations 3 & 7 on the English side of the Valley. An application to Natural Resources Wales for a more comprehensive delivery of the recommendations has been unsuccessful. Other options are now being considered.

Background

The 'Feasibility Study Investigating the Production, Marketing and Sale of local Wild Venison in the Lower Wye Valley and southeast Monmouthshire' was prepared by the Deer Initiative, commissioned by the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, and funded by the Vale of Usk Local Action Group (LAG) under the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, Natural England and the Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund, a Welsh Assembly Government initiative in the Wye Valley AONB.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Investigate the current situation with venison supply and distribution of carcasses across the area and by whom the venison is being supplied by.
- Research the potential demand for locally sourced wild venison.
- Investigate the opportunities for supplying wild venison into local outlets including butchers, restaurants and pubs and food hubs and distribution centres.
- Determine the interest among Lower Wye Valley Deer Management Group (LWVDMG) members and other local venison suppliers, to supply wild venison into the local food chain.
- Establish the location and availability of facilities for the storage, butchery and distribution of carcasses and determining if there is an opportunity for linking with or cross promoting the supply of other local meat products, both farmed and wild, including wild boar.
- Establish the steps necessary to fill gaps in the existing local supply chain to include but not restricted to butchery skills, distribution and seasonality of supply.
- Raise awareness of the marketing opportunities to suppliers and sales outlets and outline the brand values.
- Make recommendations as to future steps needed to ensure sustainable supply and sales of locally sourced wild venison, including branding opportunities.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

A466 RIVER VIEWS FEASIBILITY REPORT

Purpose

To inform members of the outcomes of the A466 River Views Feasibility Report.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the 'A466 River Views Feasibility Report' and the identified areas where views could be opened up.
- B. Encourages landowners, Highway departments and other stakeholders to have regard to the Report when considering works along the A466.

Key Issues

- The JAC had received requests for roadside and riverside vegetation to be managed along the A466 to open up lost views of the river.
- The 'A466 River Views Feasibility Report' has been concluded and published on-line.
- The AONB Trainee Ecological Surveyors undertook the study, identifying 18 places along the A466 where enhancements to views could be made.
- Separate to the Report, the section of the A466 between Bigsweir Bridge and The Florence has recently had tree work done which has opened up the views.
- Highway departments, roadside landowners, and other stakeholders should be encouraged to have regard to the Report when considering works along the A466.

Reasons

The JAC and the AONB Unit at various times have received requests for roadside and riverside vegetation to be managed along the A466 between Monmouth and Chepstow to open up lost views of the river. The AONB Unit secured an SDF grant to extend the contracts of the two AONB Trainee Ecological Surveyors to undertake a study to identify any potential areas where work could be carried out to enhance the views of the River Wye from the A466. It was recognised that there may also be impacts on the landscape, wildlife and tranquillity of the area that also needs to be considered and balanced in any decisions.

Implications

The A466 River Views Feasibility Report is available to view on the AONB website http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/images/uploads/general/FINAL_A466_river_views_feasibility_report_s.pdf. The Report surveyed the entire A466 between Monmouth and Chepstow identifying 11 existing views (Section 2 of the report) and 12 stretches of road where constraints suggested that works would not be appropriate (Section 5 and the maps in Appendix 3 of the Report). Eighteen places were identified where consideration could be

given to opening up views (Section 3). The Report also covered General considerations and constraints (in Section 4).

The report did not gather landowner information. The respective landowners will need to be contacted with regard to the view enhancement opportunities. Similarly there are no immediately applicable resources to take forward any roadside view management. However there will be opportunities, such as has been realised between The Florence and Bigsweir Bridge, when views of the river can be managed and/or re-opened. Landowners and Highways authorities should be encouraged to take these opportunities when appropriate. But additional surveying needs to take place in these specific areas to more accurately investigate the potential. Ecological surveys, landscape and visual appraisals and habitats regulations assessments may need to be included in further investigations.

Background

In the past, viewpoints in the Wye Valley were, in general, more open due to the way that riparian woodlands and adjacent land used to be managed. Local residents who have lived in the area for many years remember the journey along the A466 offering more frequent and extensive views of the River Wye and valley beyond. As coppicing, heavy industry, river traffic and the railways declined in the Wye Valley, the steep valley sides became more wooded and trees grew up along the roadsides, riverbank and redundant railway line. These provided habitats for wildlife and, in many areas, a visual screen and noise buffer from road traffic for local residents. As this landscape change has progressed, roadside and bankside vegetation is now quite dense in places obscuring previous views of the river.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS’
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

BEAVERS IN THE WYE CATCHMENT

Purpose

To inform members of the latest situation with regards to the reintroduction of Beavers in the Wye Catchment.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- This Spring, Forestry Commission England will be releasing a family of beavers into a secure enclosure in the Forest of Dean just outside the AONB boundary near Lydbrook.
- Andrew Nixon, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, will give a brief verbal update on the Positions Statements from the local and national Wildlife Trusts on the general approach to Beaver releases (see attached documents).
- There are anecdotal stories of beavers already having been present in the Wye Catchment.

Reasons

In December 2017 the Environment Secretary and the Forestry Commission confirmed plans, approved by Natural England, to release two adult beavers and two kits into a secure enclosure at Lydbrook, Gloucestershire. It is anticipated that the four animals will help prevent flooding in the area by improving biodiversity and building dams and ponds.

The Wildlife Trusts Wales, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Wildlife Trust have produced a Draft Position Statement on Beavers in The River Wye Catchment (attached below). The draft Statement notes “there have been the occasional report of beavers on the River Wye, but until recently there has not been any conclusive evidence.”

The Wildlife Trusts, the national umbrella organisations for the local Wildlife Trusts produced a Position Statement on Beavers in 2016 (also attached below).

Implications

The Forest of Dean Beavers are due to be released this Spring into a 6.5 hectare (16-acre) enclosure with the Greathough Brook running through it, just outside the AONB boundary near Lydbrook. The fence will run alongside a well used forestry track which will provide local people and visitors the ability to view the Beavers (noting that they will be naturally elusive). The Beavers are expected to create dams, which in turn will create pools of open water and wetland delivering a range of benefits for local wildlife, as well as a more visually interesting valley walk. Work is being completed to fence the enclosure and secure grills to the culverts on the Greathough Brook to prevent beaver escapes.

Background

See the attached Position Statements.

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Wildlife Trusts Wales, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Draft Beaver Position Statement
The River Wye Catchment
December 2017

The Wildlife Trusts have been at the forefront of Eurasian beaver *Castor fiber* reintroductions to Britain. This has been through licenced reintroduction trials and enclosed beaver projects. The first licenced beaver reintroduction to Britain took place in 2009 as part of the Scottish Beaver Trial (a partnership between Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS)).

The Eurasian beaver is a native species to Britain, but they became extinct by the end of the 16th Century due to human persecutionⁱ. Beavers have also faced a similar fate across Europe, but they have now been successfully reintroduced to over 24 European countriesⁱⁱ.

Research has shown that beavers can provide ecological, societal and economic benefits^{iii, iv}. Through modifying their habitat beavers can create wildlife refuges, increase biodiversity, improve water quality, modify water flow and increase water storage capacity^{v, vi}. These benefits are becoming increasingly important, especially now due to the unpredictability of climate change leading to more frequent and severe flooding events. The reintroduction of Eurasian beavers offers a cost-effective and natural solution to help address these serious problems, as well as deliver opportunities for the tourism industry through eco-tourism^{iv}.

Whilst we fully support the reintroduction of beavers to Britain, we recognise that some negative impacts can occur as a result of beaver activity, such as unwanted felling of trees, interference with human infrastructure and localised flooding. Therefore, the reintroduction of beavers to a catchment requires careful consideration and, unauthorised beaver releases do raise some concerns. There is a risk the habitat may not be suitable for beavers, which could have a potential impact on human land-use where beaver management networks have not yet been established. There is also a risk that the wrong species (the North American beaver *Castor canadensis*) may be released into an area. Unauthorised releases can undermine the efforts of organisations like The Wildlife Trusts involved with restoring the species in a coordinated manner.

The Wildlife Trusts fully support the managed reintroductions of beavers to Britain in order to minimise any detrimental effects whilst maximising the positive impacts of beaversⁱⁱ. We believe the benefits from beavers significantly outweighs their costs^{iv}. Other European countries have demonstrated that beaver activity can be managed effectively so both people and beavers can co-exist. We can learn from the examples of our European and North American colleaguesⁱⁱ.

Whilst managed beaver releases are the ideal situation, it is accepted that established beaver families may be discovered that have resulted from natural spread, escapes from enclosures or unauthorised releases. It is important that the impacts of such families are carefully considered before any action is taken to ensure the correct decisions are made. compliance with legislation and European Directives. We consider it important to learn from those that have experienced this first hand. In 2010 beavers were discovered on the River Tay in Scotland. This population was then monitored alongside the official Scottish

Beaver Trial in Knapdale, Scotland. Following the completion of the Scottish Beaver Trial in 2014 the Scottish Government officially recognised the Eurasian beaver as a native species in 2016^{vii}. In 2014 a family of beavers were discovered on the River Otter in Devon. In 2015 Natural England granted a licence to Devon Wildlife Trust for a five-year beaver reintroduction trial. The trial will run until 2020 and is being monitored alongside Devon Wildlife Trust's enclosed beaver site^{viii}. Over the years there have been the occasional report of beavers on the River Wye, but until recently there has not been any conclusive evidence. We do not know where the River Wye beavers have come from, but we may be at a stage in the Britain where beavers are dispersing to new areas naturally and this is an opportunity to monitor beavers in the wild. The discovery of beavers on the River Wye will lend us this opportunity.

Given the right conditions, the Eurasian beaver can be of overall benefit to wetland ecosystems, where their activities can benefit many species, including humans^{iii, vi}. Beavers will be a valuable tool in contributing to the sustainable management of extensive wetland ecosystems^{vi}. We consider the presence of beavers in the British landscape as the return of a lost native species that has the potential to provide huge ecological and socio-economic benefits^{iii, iv}. We welcome the opportunity to work with local communities, statutory organisations and Non Government Organisations to ensure that both beavers and people can co-exist in Britain.

ⁱ Kitchener, A. 2001. Beavers. British Natural History Series. Whittet Books, Suffolk.

ⁱⁱ Campbell-Palmer, R., Gow, D., Campbell, R., Dickinson, H., Girling, S., Gurnell, J., Halley, D., Jones, S., Lisle, S., Parker, H., Schwab, G. and Rosell, F. (2016). The Eurasian Beaver Handbook: Ecology and Management of *Castor fiber*. Exeter: Pelagic Publishing, UK.

ⁱⁱⁱ Law, A., Gaywood, M., Jones, K.C., Ramsay, P. and Willby, N.J. (2017). Using ecosystem engineers as tools in habitat restoration and rewilding: beavers and wetlands. *Science of the Total Environment*. **605-606**: 1021-1030.

^{iv} Campbell, R., Dutton, A. and Hughes, J. (2007). Economic impacts of the beaver. Wildlife Conservation Research Unit. Oxford University.

^v Parker, M. (1986) Beaver, water quality and riparian systems. Proceedings of the Wyoming Water and Streamside Zone Conference. Wyoming Water Research Centre, University of Wyoming, Laramie, 1, 88–94.

^{vi} Puttock, A., Grahma, H.A., Cunliffe, A.M., Elliott, M., Brazier, R.E. (2017). Eurasian beaver activity increases water storage, attenuates flow and mitigates diffuse pollution from intensively managed grasslands. *Science of the Total Environment*. 576: 430-443.

^{vii} Gaywood, M. (2017). Reintroducing the Eurasian beaver *Castor fiber* to Scotland. *Mammal Review*. **48**: 48-61.

^{viii} Devon Wildlife Trust (2017). Beavers – Nature's Water Engineers A summary of initial findings from the Devon Beaver Projects.

The Wildlife Trusts Position Statement

Reintroduction of the Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) to England

1. The Wildlife Trusts' position

The Wildlife Trusts are leading efforts to reintroduce the Eurasian beaver to England¹ because of their important potential role in restoring natural ecosystem processes at a landscape scale.

There is substantial evidence from Europe about the positive benefits of beaver reintroduction and there would seem to be no substantive reason why these successes could not be repeated in England, Wales and Scotland. The evidence strongly suggests that the positive benefits of beaver presence far outweigh any localised problems they are alleged to cause.

The beaver could be a valuable and effective 'natural' tool for restoring wetland habitats, reducing management intervention requirements and increasing the resilience of ecosystems in the face of threats such as climate change.

The Wildlife Trusts therefore support the reintroduction of the beaver to England using IUCN guidelines².

The Scottish Wildlife Trust played the leading role in the Scottish Beaver Trial and the study of the unlicensed beaver population on Tayside. Trusts are at the forefront of developing proposals for the reintroduction of beavers in Wales.

In England, a small number of Wildlife Trusts have, under Natural England licence, introduced beavers into fenced reserves to improve wetland habitat and/or have conducted feasibility studies within enclosures to assess the impact of beavers on landscapes and their biodiversity. In 2014, beavers were discovered living wild in east Devon and, after extensive public consultation and under rigorous licence conditions, Devon Wildlife Trust is leading the River Otter Beaver Trial to monitor this population over the next five years.

The Wildlife Trusts fully support Devon Wildlife Trust's trial reintroduction programme.

These trials will build on what we have already learned about the feasibility and practicalities of living with beavers in England, and the weight of evidence from Europe suggests that the return of this formerly native mammal would be of overall benefit to British biodiversity.

The Wildlife Trusts do recognise that beavers can have some detrimental impacts to the economic interests of farmers and landowners in certain situations and so reintroduction programmes will need careful local consideration and be subject to appropriate monitoring and adaptive management. Landowners and managers, statutory agencies and local communities must be engaged in the development of any reintroduction plans. The Scottish Government has recently developed a Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations³ and accompanying Best Practice Guidelines⁴, which should also be adapted for use in England and Wales.

¹ There is no evidence that the Eurasian beaver was ever native to Ireland

² IUCN / SSC (2013) *Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations. Version 1.0*. Gland, Switzerland <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2013-009.pdf>

³ <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1327922.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/wildlife/CodeTranslocationsGuidelines.pdf>

2. Frequently asked questions

Why reintroduce the beaver to England?

The Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) became extinct in England in the 16th century, primarily due to hunting for its pelt, meat and scent glands. Beavers are a missing element in our native biodiversity and bring many benefits to their local environments.

The beaver is a ‘keystone’ species⁵ and its absence has had a profound impact on the ecology of our rivers. There are few species which have such significant and positive influences on ecosystem health and function.

Beavers are often referred to as ‘ecosystem engineers’. By modifying their habitats through the coppicing of tree and shrub species, the digging of canal systems and, in some cases, damming of water courses (beavers living on lochs or large rivers have little need of dams) beavers create and maintain diverse wetlands that can bring enormous benefits to other species including otters, water shrews, water voles, birds, invertebrates (especially dragonflies) and breeding fish. This kind of habitat restoration can be extremely costly to achieve by artificial means.

Beavers and the landscapes they generate provide a range of ecosystem services of benefit to both wildlife and people, including:

- **Alleviation of downstream flooding** – the channels, dams and wetland habitats that beaver create hold back water and release it more slowly in periods of heavy rain.
- **Increased water retention** – by storing water and greatly enhancing the absorption capacity of the wider landscape, beaver activity also helps to sustain flows during periods of low water.
- **Water purification** – beaver-generated landscapes have been linked to the significant amelioration of diffuse pollution from human activities. Beavers have been specifically introduced into some river systems in Europe and North America to combat environmental degradation and pollution.
- **Reduced siltation** – dams trap silt, helping to reduce turbidity and sedimentation of water courses, reservoirs and lakes.
- **Ecotourism** - where beavers have been reintroduced on mainland Europe, there is substantial evidence of revenue and employment generation from ecotourism. The most appropriate sites for initial reintroduction can often be in more remote areas where alternative forms of livelihood from traditional land uses are in decline.

What is the European experience of beaver reintroductions?

Reintroductions and translocations of Eurasian beaver have now taken place in 24 European countries. They began in the 1920s in Sweden, Norway, Latvia, Russia and the Ukraine and continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s in the Netherlands, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

Reintroductions usually involve the release of animals over a number of years to several sites. Most have been successful in terms of breeding, population growth and range expansion.

⁵ A keystone species is defined here as one that affects ecosystem function in a significant manner through its activities; the effect normally being disproportionate to its numerical abundance. The removal of a keystone species initiates changes in ecosystem structure and often loss of diversity.

More than 150 translocations have now been undertaken across Europe, most without the detailed monitoring carried out by the Scottish Beaver Trial and other British projects, but some have been thoroughly studied, enabling scientists to predict with confidence the likely pattern of events post reintroduction.

What are the potential economic impacts?

A study on the economic impacts of the beaver by the University of Oxford's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit concluded that "with forethought, prior consultation and planning, a beaver reintroduction should bring significant monetary benefits within the local economy and communities that could greatly outweigh any potential negative impacts."

Research into the impact of beavers on the local economy around Knapdale Forest was carried out as part of the Scottish Beaver Trial and its results are currently being assessed by the Scottish Government. Local businesses reported an upturn in business due to interest in the Trial increasing visitor numbers to the area. There is also anecdotal evidence of an increase in beaver tourists to the River Otter in Devon.

What impact do beavers have on their environment?

Beavers can modify the habitats and landscapes they live in through coppicing, feeding and in some cases damming (beavers living on lakes or larger rivers have little need of constructing dams). However in many cases when they are living at low density, their impacts can be remarkably subtle and go unnoticed for many years.

Beavers forage close to water with activity usually concentrated within 20 metres of the water's edge. Beavers do fell broad-leaved trees and bushes to reach upper branches, encourage regrowth, to eat the bark during the winter and to construct their lodges. Many tree species regenerate, which diversifies the surrounding habitat structure and create areas of mixed-height, mixed-age vegetation. Coppicing has been practiced by foresters throughout history as a method to manage bankside trees. The actions of beavers are very similar, meaning woodlands and trees are more naturally managed.

Evidence from Europe shows that beaver impacts are, in the vast majority of cases, small-scale and localised. Beavers are not normally regarded as pests in Europe and where localised problems have occurred, there are a number of well-established mitigation methods that can be adopted. These include the removal of dams, the introduction of overflow piping, or the installation of fencing (as one does for deer and rabbits). In some cases, the removal and translocation of beavers could be considered. Some countries with sustainable beaver populations permit seasonal hunting and/or lethal control as legitimate management strategies.

Do beavers reduce or cause flooding?

Beavers can have a significant impact on water management. By creating dams and associated wetlands in headwater streams, they store floodwater in upper catchments, moderating water flows. This reduces the height of flood peaks and also ameliorates low flows during dry periods as the leaking dams recharge streams with fresh constant flows. For those landowners impacted, these dams clearly cause localised "flooding" or raised water levels in wetland habitats. The size of these ponds and wetlands can be restricted by the use of flow devices where pipes set the maximum height of the dam, and thus the area of land flooded.

Beavers rarely build dams in main rivers downstream where there is sufficient depth of water, and so many of the concerns about flooding are not real. However in low lying floodplains where

agricultural activities depend on land drains and deep ditches, beaver dams can have more significant impacts. They can obstruct culverts and “restore wetlands” in places that are not compatible with the existing land-uses and therefore create real, and perceived conflicts. In some cases mitigation measures will not be successful, and beavers may need to be moved on.

Evidence from elsewhere in Europe shows that instances of beaver dams creating undesirable flooding are uncommon, localised and usually small-scale. In these situations dams are simply removed or pipes (‘beaver deceivers’) are placed through them to manage water levels.

What impact will beavers have on migratory fish?

Beavers are herbivorous, so do not eat fish. Habitat modification by beavers, however, can have significant impacts on fish populations in some circumstances, and fisheries groups are often concerned about the potential impact of beaver dams on the movement of migratory fish.

The interaction between beaver activity and freshwater fisheries has been the subject of several reviews. Based on the combined results of an independent and systematic review of the literature and survey of expert opinion, Kemp *et al.* (2012)⁶ concluded that:

- Benefits (184) were cited more frequently than costs (119).
- Impacts were spatially and temporally variable and differed with species.
- The most frequently cited benefits of beaver dams were increased habitat heterogeneity, rearing and overwintering habitat; flow refuge; and invertebrate production.
- The most frequently cited negative impacts were impeded fish movement because of dams; siltation of spawning gravels (particularly for salmonids); and low oxygen levels in ponds.
- The majority of 49 North American and European experts (more than 60% of whom described themselves as fisheries scientists or managers) considered beavers to have an overall positive impact on fish populations, through their influence on abundance and productivity.

How big are Eurasian beavers?

Beavers can grow to the size of a tubby spaniel, they usually weigh between 16–30kg, measuring 60–90cm in body length, with tail lengths of 20–35cm. It is hard to tell the sex of a beaver from its appearance. Unusually for mammals, female beavers are the same size or slightly larger than males of the same age. Beavers are uniquely adapted for a semi-aquatic lifestyle, with a sleek waterproof coat, large flattened muscular tail and webbed hind feet to provide propulsion underwater.

What do beavers eat?

Beavers are herbivorous and feed on aquatic plants, grasses and shrubs during the summer months, resorting to more woody plants in winter. They will often cache food underwater near the lodge so that they can access it if the water freezes over.

In woodland environments, beavers help to diversify the woodland structure by coppicing larger trees, and stimulating regrowth. This helps to create a diverse age range of trees which greatly benefits woodland biodiversity.

⁶ Kemp *et al.* (2012) Qualitative and quantitative effects of reintroduced beavers on stream fish. *Fish and Fisheries* 13: 158–181. See also *Kemp, P.S., Worthington, T.A. & Langford, T.E.L. (2010) A critical review of the effects of beavers upon fish and fish stocks. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report, No. 349 (iBids No. 8770)*

Do beavers build dams?

Beavers are well known for their construction skills. They tend to build dams when their habitat does not provide all the conditions suitable for a beaver's needs.

Beavers feel safest when they have easy access to deep water, and so to ensure their safety a beaver may construct a dam in order to create deeper ponds on which to build its lodge, and/or to enable water access to food resources.

When beavers do dam, this modification can have a positive effect for biodiversity. Their ponds benefit many species including otters, water shrews, water voles, birds, invertebrates (especially dragonflies) and breeding fish. Dams can also hold water in periods of drought, can regulate flooding and improve water quality by holding silt behind dams and catching acidic and agricultural run-off.

When do beavers start breeding and do they hibernate?

Beavers are highly territorial and live in family groups, with a family group occupying a few kilometres of river or stream, or wetland or freshwater lakes. Beavers are crepuscular, rather than nocturnal, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk throughout the year and do not hibernate.

Beavers can live up to 25 years in captivity, but would not live as long in the wild – possibly 15 years. Beavers are thought to be monogamous which means they mate for life or until their partner dies. A breeding pair can produce 2-4 kits per year. Mating takes place between January and February, with kits born within the lodge from April to June (gestation of around 105 days). Other family members may bring vegetation to the lodge for kits to feed on during this time. Kits are usually weaned after 2-3 weeks and emerge from the lodge to feed with their parents during June or July.

Offspring will remain with their parents until they are around two years old. Around this period they become sexually mature and leave to find territories and partners of their own.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

PINE MARTEN REINTRODUCTION FEASIBILITY STUDY UPDATE

Purpose

To update members on the two year feasibility study into whether pine martens should be reintroduced to the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Pine martens are one of Britain's rarest mammals, and are predominantly restricted to Scotland with low numbers in Wales and South Shropshire.
- In March 2017 the JAC received a presentation by Dr Andrew Stringer, Pine Marten Project Manager, on the feasibility study into reintroducing pine martens to the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley.
- The attached report updates on progress with the study
- A decision on the reintroduction of pine martens to the area will be made later in 2018.

Reasons

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, and the Forestry Commission, supported by Forest Holidays and the Woodland Trust, are leading on the collaborative project to investigate the feasibility of reintroducing pine martens to the Forest of Dean and lower Wye Valley. Pine martens are housecat-sized members of the stoat and weasel family. They are dependent on woodland habitat offering plenty of food and denning potential. They are very mobile, easily travelling 20km in a day and live at low density. Their main prey are small mammals, but they have a broad and varied diet, for instance eating large quantities of berries when in season. There are populations in Scotland and Wales but Shropshire has the only known breeding population of pine martens in England.

Implications

The feasibility study has assessed the suitability of the habitat in the Forest of Dean and lower Wye Valley for pine martens and whether a stable population of pine martens could live in this area. The research shows that the region could support nearly 200 pine martens. If a reintroduction goes ahead, 40 animals could be released. Due to geographical barriers, these pine martens would predominantly expand to the west and north, towards where pine martens are already established in Wales. The project utilises key international guidelines on reintroductions and is assessing the costs and benefits of a reintroduction within three key areas: Biological feasibility, Ecological feasibility and Socio-economic feasibility.

Background

For more information see www.GloucestershireWildlifeTrust.co.uk/PineMarten and / or contact Andrew.Stringer@GloucestershireWildlifeTrust.co.uk

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Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Pine Marten Reintroduction

1. Project summary

The pine marten is the UK's second rarest carnivore. They are a woodland dependent mustelid, related to stoats and otters, with a broad diet which includes small mammals, birds, invertebrates, and large quantities of berries. They were eradicated from much of the UK by Victorian gamekeepers. In 2015, the population in England and Wales was deemed to be too small to recover. 51 animals were translocated from Scotland to central Wales to establish a population there. This single population is small and vulnerable, and the creation of a second population is now essential. Having two populations hugely increases the likelihood of population persistence and conservation success, decreasing overall extinction risk from 22% to 5%.

In summer 2016, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, and the Forestry Commission, supported by Forest Holidays and the Woodland Trust, began a collaborative project investigating the feasibility of reintroducing pine martens to the Forest of Dean and lower Wye Valley. The area has abundant suitable habitat and is just 100km away from the Welsh population. A reintroduction project to the area would involve the translocation of 40 animals over two years. A five-year project would oversee the reintroduction, and include detailed monitoring of the success of the population, the ecological impacts that occurred, and the adaptive management of any conflicts.

2. Project need

From 2015 to 2017 The Vincent Wildlife Trust translocated 51 animals from Scotland to central Wales. This was to establish a population there which would support the fragmented population that was thought to still exist. This pilot translocation project has been successful. However, isolated and small populations are vulnerable to extinction, and the creation of a second population is now vital. Having two populations greatly increases the likelihood of conservation success for a variety of reasons. Small populations are vulnerable to poor breeding years, years with low levels of food availability, or disease outbreaks. Having two populations with migration between them means that the populations will mutually reinforce each other, so if one population has a poor year, it may be supplemented by the other population. Also, small populations are more likely to suffer from inbreeding depression, and a reduction in genetic diversity caused by genetic drift. Having two populations greatly increases the genetic variability of the overall population, and the availability of unrelated potential mates. Our own population modelling indicates that the extinction risk of the overall population is reduced by the creation of a second population from 22% to 5%, virtually guaranteeing its survival.

The opportunity to create a second population alongside the establishing central Wales population is time limited. The sooner a second population is established, the sooner the risk of population extinction is reduced. The failure of the Welsh population now would be a hammer blow to conservation efforts of the species in England and Wales.

3. Feasibility Study

International guidelines on species translocations and reintroductions have been published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. These recommend that detailed feasibility studies are completed before any reintroduction is attempted. Although still to be formally concluded, the feasibility study findings suggest that a reintroduction could have a variety of benefits for pine martens, wildlife and people. Within the release area there is suitable habitat to support a core population of nearly 200 individuals. Foxes and roads may be sources of mortality, however road density is comparable with areas of the Netherlands which support healthy pine marten populations.

Ecological feasibility: The reintroduction of a generalist predator can have numerous positive effects for an ecosystem. By limiting the population size of our most common species they can let rarer species thrive, an important balancing effect for ecosystems. Pine martens have also been shown to have a controlling effect on invasive non-native grey squirrels. In central Ireland, the natural recolonisation of the pine marten has led to the local extinction of grey squirrels from six counties. Initial results from Scotland suggest that pine martens may be influencing grey squirrel populations in a similar manner there. An ecological risk assessment was also completed to assess any risks to rare and protected species. The only high risk identified was the potential disturbance of large bat roosts within buildings. The Vincent Wildlife Trust have previous experience mitigating against this type of disturbance. Further work will be needed to evaluate what mitigation options would be effective in the release region.

Socio-economic feasibility: As a charismatic mammal, pine martens could be a useful tool in engaging people with nature and increasing ecotourism to the area, as well as benefiting forestry businesses due to a reduction in grey squirrel numbers. However, enclosed populations of poultry such as pheasants and chickens, near or within woodlands, are at risk from pine marten predation. Evidence is lacking as to how often they pose a threat in comparison to other predators such as foxes and mink. The project is working closely with the National Gamekeepers Organisation and the British Association for Shooting & Conservation to get the opinions of their members, and potential mitigation options.

Community consultation: Community support is essential for the reintroduction to proceed. Initial results from formal stakeholder interviews completed by an independent project partner suggest a broad support for the principles behind the project. Many stakeholders suggested that potential concerns could be addressed by the detailed monitoring of impacts post-release. The main community consultation, including an independently run on-street survey, is currently being completed. Initial results show strong public support for the project. The on-street survey will be completed by the end of February.

4. Project description

Project aim: To re-establish a stable population of pine martens (*Martes martes*) in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley with overall benefits for both wildlife and people.

The reintroduction project would have four major parts.

- **Capture, Translocation and Release:** Pine martens need to be released in a 6-week period in September/early October. The project would release 40 animals over two years. The overall project is five years, which encompasses time for further monitoring of the reintroduced population post release.
- **Monitoring:** We will monitor the survival and dispersal of individuals using radio collars fitted during capture. The health of individuals and the status of the population will be monitored using an array of camera traps. The impacts on the ecology of the release area will be monitored by, among other methods, dietary analysis. The impacts for people will be measured by recording the number of people engaged by the project, and collating all feedback the project receives.
- **Adaptive management:** An adaptive management strategy will be employed to maximise the chance of success of the project, and minimise any negative effects. This will include improving habitat quality, such as by installing den boxes. It will also mitigate any negative ecological risks, such as the potential risks to bat roosts. Furthermore, the project will include strategies to increase ecotourism, develop wildlife viewing opportunities, as well as mitigate human-wildlife conflict.
- **Communications and engagement:** An open and transparent approach to communicate the results of monitoring, promote benefits, and encourage dialogue regarding conflicts will be adopted. The websites of project partners will be regularly updated with project updates, information on pine martens, and contact information for project staff. The local community will be engaged with a range of volunteering opportunities including tracking, monitoring, ecological surveys, scat analysis and community ambassador roles to mitigate human/wildlife conflict.

This project could have a range of positive impacts for pine martens, biodiversity, and people. Conservationists often lament the decline in UK wildlife, and this restoration project could be a key step in reversing that decline. A decision will be made about whether to reintroduce pine martens in 2018.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

NAAONB UPDATE

Purpose

To advise members of activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB)

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairman's Conference and AGM was attended by the AONB Manager.
- The 2017 Annual Report for the NAAONB is published and the Latest News bulletin.
- The NAAONB have welcomed the UK Government's 'A Green Future - 25 Year Environment Plan' and are working with DEFRA on implementation.
- The NAAONB has been in discussion with DEFRA around how AONB partnerships and Management Plans can support agri-environmental delivery post Brexit. This was also the focus of the AONB Lead officers' meeting in Birmingham in February.
- The Landscape for Life 2018 National Conference is likely to be in Kent in late July.

NAAONB Chairman's Conference

The Landscapes for Life Chairmen's Conference took place on Thursday 23rd November 2017 in London. The Chairmen's Conference built on the work from the previous year, focusing on 'Brexit and Landscape'. In the morning, attendees heard from

- The Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Under Secretary of State, DEFRA
- Howard Davies, NAAONB Chief Executive – the work being done by the NAAONB and the AONB Family offer
- Jim Bailey, Chair, North York Moors National Park Authority – farming in the English National Parks post-Brexit
- Sally Marsh, Director, High Weald AONB Partnership – linking Natural Beauty with farming and agriculture
- John Davies, Vice President, NFU Cymru – the changes required to make a success of post Brexit agriculture
- Graeme Willis, Senior Rural Policy Campaigner, CPRE – the challenges of marginal farming and what Protected Landscapes can do to support farmers
- Teresa Dent, Chief Executive, GWCT – the hub approach as a solution to Brexit, citing the work of the Marlborough Downs NIA

In the afternoon, there were presentations on work already progressing from Cranborne Chase AONB, Dorset AONB and Kent Downs AONB. Attendees subsequently broke into

small groups to consider the challenges raised in the morning, some of the solutions already being offered by the Protected Landscapes and what can be achieved by working collaboratively as a Protected Landscapes Family.

Landscapes for Life 2017 Annual Report

The 2017 Annual Report for the NAAONB is published here <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Annual-Report-2017.pdf>. The Report provides examples of work under four themes: Landscapes for Nature, Landscapes for People, Landscapes for Business and Landscapes for Culture. The Wye Valley AONB Youth Rangers programme is included as a case study under Landscapes for People.

Latest News

The NAAONB 'Latest News' bulletin, for December 2017, is available to download here <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Latest-news-from-the-NAAONB-December2017.pdf>.

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

The NAAONB welcomed the UK Government's long-awaited 25-year Environment Plan, launched in January. It sets out the Government's goals for improving the environment, within a generation, and leaving it in a better state than we found it. The Plan forms the culmination of over 2 years of close work and consultation with environmental bodies, including the NAAONB.

Chapter 2 of the Plan 'Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' states: "...the creation of designated landscapes – which also include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty AONBs) – has been among the outstanding environmental achievements of the past 100 years. They provide a patchwork of stunning, and protected, landscapes. In England, a quarter of our landscape is designated in this way, around 10% as National Parks and 15% as AONBs. We will make sure they continue to be conserved and enhanced, while recognising that they are living landscapes that support rural communities."

Under Section 2 'Conserving and enhancing natural beauty' the Plan goes on to say: "Over the next 25 years we want to make sure they [*National Parks & AONBs*] are not only conserved but enhanced. Many of the policies set out in the rest of the Plan will contribute to making all areas more beautiful...."

Reviewing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty:

The UK's first National Parks were created by an Act of Parliament in 1949 following the government's 1947 Hobhouse Report, which remains the basis for most protected landscape designation in England today. Now, 70 years on, the Government will commission a review for the 21st Century. This will consider coverage of designations, how designated areas deliver their responsibilities, how designated areas are financed, and whether there is scope for expansion. It will also consider opportunities to enhance the environment in existing designations, and expand on the

existing eight-point plan for National Parks to connect more people with the natural environment.

Actions we will take include:

- Commissioning a 21st Century ‘Hobhouse’ Review of National Parks and AONBs.
- Working with National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards to deliver environmental enhancement, including through demonstrator projects, and engaging with communities through their statutory management plans.

NAAONB Chairman, Philip Hygate, said

“The National Association for AONBs welcomes the 25 -year plan and sees it as an opportunity for AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards to work even more collaboratively with Government to provide rich and diverse landscapes that conserve and enhance the UK’s wildlife. Using our powers to convene, AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards have long engaged with and supported anyone who cares about our landscapes. We recognise that maintaining vibrant, healthy and diverse local communities is essential to the future of AONBs and we will continue to work to improve the connection between people and nature. Part of this work is recognising that, as dynamic, living landscapes, AONBs are important for the UK’s economy, so we will strengthen our relationships with landowners, farmers and other businesses to ensure a robust and sustainable local economy after Brexit. We are confident that Management Plans, consulted on locally, and produced by the AONB Partnerships/Conservation Boards, provide the tools and opportunities to deliver the Government’s plans.”

AONB Lead officers’ meeting

The AONB Manager joined 25 other AONB lead officers in Birmingham to debate how AONB Management Plans might relate to the development of a post Brexit agri-environmental support scheme. AONB Management Plans are statutory documents with a democratic basis rooted in evidence that provide a locally led, strategic articulation of the character and qualities of these places recognised as outstanding national assets. The Plans articulate what constitutes valued landscape, endorsed by expert input and public opinion. Where high quality landscape is coincidental with sustainable land management the Plans provides an ideal framework within which to drive agri-environment and rural development funding. This would ensure that agricultural policy cross references with wider environmental, social, and economic outcomes, resulting in more productive and prosperous rural areas that conserve and enhance these locally and nationally valued landscapes. The NAAONB will be feeding the results of the discussions back to DEFRA.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

AONB & PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the AONB Unit and Partners, relating to:-

- a. Undergrounding update
- b. Offa's Dyke Collaboratory
 - i. Lancaut investigations & Day School
 - ii. Knighton (attached) & Oswestry events
- c. Youth Rangers 4th cohort with Foresters' Forest
- d. mindSCAPE with Foresters' Forest
- e. Ross Riverside enhancements with Ross Town Council

FOR INFORMATION

a. Undergrounding update

Work continues on the Reddings Farm and Penterry Church schemes near Tintern and St Arvans. The overhead cables have been placed underground and Western Power Distribution (WPD) are working to remove the poles. The scheme at New Mills Hill, Goodrich is still with the local WPD Wayleaves team. A potential scheme at Coppett Hill is still with the local WPD team undergoing more detailed consideration.

b. Offa's Dyke Collaboratory

The Offa's Dyke Collaboratory supports a network of individuals, groups and organisations working to manage and investigate Offa's Dyke and related monuments and their wider landscapes, see <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/>.

i. Lancaut investigations & Day School

The AONB Unit is coordinating an archaeological partnership project at Lancaut on behalf of the Forest of Dean Buildings Preservation Trust, who own Lancaut Church. The project includes archaeological walkovers, geophysical surveys and targeted excavations around the medieval church yard at the Lancaut DMV and in the promontory fort at Spital Meend, where the embankment appears to be on the line of Offa's Dyke.

A Day School event is planned for Friday 16th March, at the Chepstow Drill Hall 10am-3.30pm. This will reveal the results from the small partnership project at Lancaut and Spital Meend. The questions the project hopes to shed light on include whether Lancaut was a Celtic (British) / Early Christian monastic complex, how and when Spital Meend was occupied and used, and how these

related to Offa's Dyke. The Programme is outlined below. Tickets cost £5 from <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/464418> and include a light lunch & refreshments).

The partnership is between the Forest of Dean Buildings Preservation Trust, Historic England, Gloucestershire Archaeology, Herefordshire Archaeology, Offa's Dyke Collaboratory, Southern Marches Archaeological Practice Ltd., Wye Valley AONB Partnership and local landowners, with funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and Gloucestershire Environmental Trust.

Programme - Lancaut Revelations, Friday 16th March, at the Chepstow Drill Hall

Time	Speaker	Topic
9.30		<i>Doors open; Refreshments & Registration</i>
10.00		
10.10	Andrew Blake Wye Valley AONB	Welcome & introductions
10.15	Kate Biggs Forest of Dean Building Preservation Trust	Forest of Dean Building Preservation Trust
10.30	Jon Hoyle Gloucestershire Archaeology	Forest of Dean LiDAR survey project
11.00	Mel Barge Historic England	Management of Scheduled Monuments in the area (England)
11.30		<i>comfort break</i>
11.45	Rob Iles (retired English Heritage)	Medieval Lancaut and its environs
12.05	Tim Hoverd Herefordshire Archaeology	Results of the archaeological fieldwork at Lancaut & Spital Meend
12.45		<i>Lunch</i>
1.30	Dr Keith Ray Southern Marches Archaeological Practice Ltd	Interpreting the landscape of the Early Medieval Lancaut area
2.15	Dr Mark Redknap National Museum Wales	Local artefacts in context and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)
2.45	Andrew Blake	<i>Questions</i>
3.15	Kate Biggs	Closing remarks
3.30		<i>Depart</i>

ii. Knighton (attached) & Oswestry events

A further event is planned in Knighton the following week –Friday 23rd March, (flyer appended) under the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory. A later event is planned in Oswestry on Saturday 21st April.

c. Youth Rangers 4th cohort with Foresters' Forest

The new recruits to the 4th cohort of AONB Youth Rangers have been on their third outing of their 2 year programme. They have been undertaking and learning about habitat management, geology, green woodworking and willow hurdle making, navigation skills and veteran tree surveying working with Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership.

d. mindSCAPE with Foresters' Forest

The mindSCAPE project is now coming to the end of its final year of Big Lottery funding. A project proposal to continue the existing group and take forwards lessons learnt from the project is being led by Artspace Cinderford and is currently awaiting a decision on Arts Council funding.

Through the Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme, with Heritage Lottery Funding, the mindSCAPE project is extending into care homes. Initially Arts practitioners were working in the Coombs Nursing Home and they have just started delivery in Hazelhurst, Bishopswood. Two resource guides, one focused on Care Homes and the other aimed at local community groups, are in production. These provide details of mindSCAPE activities and how best to plan and deliver them. These will be made available to Care Homes and community groups to encourage mindSCAPE activities to continue beyond the end of the current funding.

e. Ross Riverside enhancements with Ross Town Council

The partnership between Ross-on-Wye Town Council, Natural England and the Wye Valley AONB Unit has continued, undertaking work to manage the riverside in Ross to encourage biodiversity and improve riverside views. The programme of tree management work carried out with contractors from the Wye and Usk Foundation, has recently seen more coppicing, pollarding and pleaching along the riverbank. This varies the height structure of riverside trees, creating views of the river and more light and shade on the river and along the river bank enhancing habitats for a variety of species. Shade helps to maintain beneficially high oxygen levels in the water, whilst adequate light means the growth of aquatic plants is not inhibited.



Offa's Dyke Heritage

New Research on the Heritage of Offa's Dyke and other
Linear Earthworks

The 3rd Offa's Dyke Collaboratory Meeting

10.30–17.30, 23rd March 2018

The Offa's Dyke Centre, Knighton, Powys, LD7 1EN

£10 including refreshments + packed lunch

To attend, please pre-book by Monday 19th March by contacting the Offa's Dyke Centre:

Phone: 10.00am–3.00pm daily: 01547 528753

Email: oda@offasdyke.org.uk

This is the third meeting of the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory – a research network investigating the early medieval linear earthworks of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands: <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/>. The Knighton workshop follows on from successful meetings at Shrewsbury (April 2017) and Cardiff (December 2017). The day workshop will explore the heritage conservation, management and interpretation of Offa's Dyke and other linear earthworks of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands.

Talks will include:

Offa's Dyke by Numbers

– *André Berry*

Recent Revelations from the Lancut Peninsular

– *Andrew Blake*

Community Stewardship of Mercian Monuments Project (CoSMM)

– *Ian Mackey and Mel Leggatt*

Archaeological Earthworks & Visitor Carrying Capacity: Proactive Versus Inactive Management

– *Dave McGlade*

Bridging Boundaries: Creating an Integrative Digital Approach for Linear Earthworks Research

– *Patricia Murrieta-Flores*

Making Earthworks Visible: The Example of the Oswestry Heritage Comics Project

– *John G. Swogger*

Offa's Dyke, Death and Memory

– *Howard Williams*