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28th October 2019

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 4th November, 2019 at 2.00 pm
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair.	
2.	Appointment of Vice Chair.	
3.	Apologies for Absence, Introductions and New Members.	
4.	Declarations of Interest.	
5.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	1 - 12
6.	Public Question Time.	
7.	AONB Management Plan public consultation & revised timetable.	13 - 16
8.	Local Authority financial contributions & Memorandum of Understanding.	17 - 20
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13.	Wye Valley AONB 50th Anniversary in 2021.	53 - 54
14.	AONB / Partner progress.	55 - 60
14.1.	NFM Seminar poster.	61 - 62
15.	<p>Proposed dates of meetings for 2020:</p> <p>Monday 2nd March 2020 at 2.00pm. Monday 6th July 2020 at 2.00pm. Monday 2nd November 2020 at 2.00pm</p> <p>To be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.</p>	

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:

B. Durkin
J. Hardwick
P. Symonds
Y. Watson

Monmouthshire:

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

Forest of Dean:

D. Wheeler
C. McFarling

Town / Parish Community Councils with Voting Powers

C. Evers – Gloucestershire Association of Parish / Town 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

Co-opted Members without Voting Powers

L. Taylor – The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
C. Barron – Wye Valley Society
R. Hesketh – River Wye Preservation Trust
A. Lee – Recreation Sector
D. Broadbent – Local Tourism Sector
A. Nixon – Local Wildlife Trusts
D. Price – National Farmers Union Wales

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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 held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford. on Monday, 1st July, 2019 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor A. Webb (Vice-Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: D. Dovey, M. Lane and A. Webb

Gloucestershire County Council

Councillor T. Hale

Herefordshire Council

Councillor Y. Watson (observing)

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillors: C. McFarling and D. Wheeler

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC – Mr. C. Evers

HALC – Mr. R. Gething

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire – Dr. G. Peterken

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire – Mr. B. Nash

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas

Country Land and Business Association – Mr. R. Goodwin

National Farmers Union – Mr. M. Price

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron

River Wye Preservation Trust – Mr. R. Hesketh

Technical Advice Officers

Wye Valley AONB Manager – Mr. A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams

APOLOGIES:

Mr. D. Price, Mr. R. Niblett, Ms. H. McDowell and Councillor G. Powell

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1. Election of Chair

As Herefordshire Council had been unable to appoint its membership to the Joint Advisory Committee in time for today's meeting, it was agreed to delay the Annual General Meeting to the next meeting in November 2019 in which the election of Chair and Vice-Chair would be agreed.

Therefore, County Councillor A. Webb, as current Vice-Chair, chaired today's meeting.

The Vice Chair, on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee, thanked the former Chair Councillor P. Cutter for all the work that he has undertaken in his capacity as Chair, noting that his contribution has been greatly appreciated and will be missed.

We resolved that a letter of thanks be sent to Councillor Cutter expressing the Joint Advisory Committee's gratitude for the work that he has undertaken in support of the Committee and the Wye Valley AONB Unit.

2. New Members / Introductions

We welcomed to the meeting Councillors D. Wheeler and C. McFarling who had been appointed by Forest of Dean District Council to serve on the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

The Joint Advisory Committee had not yet received formal notification of the four representatives from Herefordshire Council who would be serving on the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee. However, Councillor Y. Watson attended the meeting as an observer and was welcomed to the meeting by the Joint Advisory Committee.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest raised.

4. Public Question Time

Councillor Y. Watson from Herefordshire Council raised the following issue:

Lack of signage entering the Wye Valley AONB

In response to a question raised regarding the lack of signage entering the Wye Valley AONB, it was noted that there is a sign located near Chepstow Race Course which is very faded and in need of replacement.

Some years ago, a study had been undertaken regarding gateway signage. It had been identified that there were a number of roads that formed the boundary of the Wye Valley AONB with one side of a road being located within the AONB whilst the other side was not. It had been difficult to identify the locations for 'gateway' signs including on the A40 and A49 which enter and leave the AONB at various points. It had therefore been decided not to pursue a systematic gateway signage strategy for the Wye Valley AONB.

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In response to an issues raised regarding a report by Highways England in respect of a number of incidents on the A40 in which vehicles had been driven in the wrong direction and therefore appropriate signage was needed to address this issue, the AONB Manager would discuss this matter with Councillor Watson after the meeting.

5. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 4th March 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Vice-Chair.

6. AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 Review

We received the pre-consultation draft Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 and the revised programme for the preparation and publication of the Management Plan.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) previously endorsed a balanced and proportionate review of the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2015-2020).
- The pre-consultation draft Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 was attached to the report.
- Members can provide comments to the AONB Manager on this pre-consultation draft before Thursday 18th July 2019.
- The Management Plan review programme proposes a 10 week public consultation period commencing in late July 2019 for the draft Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.
- The Scoping for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessments (HRA) will run concurrently with the public consultation.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The final version of the document will be available in March 2020.
- Two public meeting events are being established to be held in September 2019. One event being held in the north of the AONB with the other event being held in the south of the AONB.
- The draft Management Plan will be available to view on the Wye Valley AONB Unit's website and in public libraries by the end of July 2019 before launching the public consultation process.

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- Changes to the Management Plan should be highlighted to identify where the changes are being made.
- Remove unnecessary acronyms from within the report and include a glossary.

We resolved to endorse the 10 week public consultation period for the draft Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025.

7. Annual Report 2018/19

We received the annual report for 2018/19 on the achievements of the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the contracted Planning consultants for the AONB Unit.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The 2018/19 Annual Report on the Work Programme for the AONB Unit was attached to the report along with a summary financial report.
- High standards of achievement were maintained by the AONB Unit and staffing was augmented with the Lower Wye Catchment NFM&GI Project Officer.
- The AONB Unit has levered in over £10 for every £1 of local authority contribution during 2018/19.
- Worcestershire County Council Planning Department continued to provide strategic planning advice to the AONB Unit on development issues, preparing appropriate responses where necessary. The annual report for the contracted work was attached to the report.
- The AONB Manager, on behalf of the AONB Partnership, has made a limited number of comments on planning applications, including on two adjacent to the AONB, and has been involved in more pre-application enquiries and Neighbourhood Development Plans.

We welcomed the Annual Reports of AONB achievements for 2018/19.

8. Wye Valley River Festival 2020

We received the Five Year Business Plan for the Wye Valley River Festival 2019-2024 and the five tests for the future development of the Wye Valley River Festival.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Arts Council England funding is supporting the Research & Development phase of the Wye Valley River Festival 2020.

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- Two weeks of Creative Laboratory workshops have involved over 30 people, generating a range of exciting proposals and ideas around the Festival theme of 'Time'.
- The Five Year Business Plan for the Wye Valley River Festival, covering 2019-2024, has been produced and submitted with grant applications to Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England.
- The Business Plan was informed by the governance options study and includes five tests for the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) to approve to take the Wye Valley River Festival forward into a proposed Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).
- Currently, £186,800 has been secured for the 2020 River Festival and further opportunities and funding bids are being pursued including a grant application to Arts Council England.
- The Bowland Award, won by the Wye Valley River Festival last year, will be returned at the forthcoming national Landscapes for Life conference for a 2019 winner to receive.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Committee congratulated the AONB Manager and his staff for the last three River Festival events, all of which had been very successful.
- Over this period the AONB Unit has built up a Festival team to take each event forward. The establishment of a CIO in the coming years is intended to enhance future River Festivals, going forward.
- It is anticipated that by the 2024 River Festival, the CIO will be virtually leading on the development and management of this festival.
- With regard to the 2020 River Festival, the AONB Unit is looking to bolster the number of staff available, as well as looking at other opportunities to help run the festival.
- The cost of running the River Festival has increased each year. Future Festivals will remain predominantly free of charge. However, it will be necessary to ticket some events. Discussions with the Hay Festival organisers have been held with a view to obtaining the right balance for future River Festivals.
- A good working relationship between the AONB Unit and the CIO will need to be established with the CIO being legally and financially robust enough to become a stand-alone charity.

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- The Vice-Chair encouraged the Committee to engage with their respective community councils with a view to obtaining support for future River Festival events.

We resolved that the Joint Advisory Committee:

- (i) welcomes the Business Plan for the Wye Valley River Festival 2020 and subsequent proposals for future Festivals over the next five years.
- (ii) supports the on-going funding applications for Wye Valley River Festival 2020.
- (iii) endorses the five tests identified to secure the future of the Wye Valley River Festival.

9. AONB Partnership Study Tour - 20th September 2019

We received the date and outline programme for the Annual AONB Partnership Study Tour.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour will be held on Friday 20th September 2019.
- The programme is still being finalised but will focus predominantly on projects and management issues in the southern part of the AONB in Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire.
- Initial invitations for expressions of interest to attend will be despatched shortly.
- Invitations could be extended to representatives from our neighbouring Designated Landscapes and other appropriate partner organisations in the interest of sharing good practice and broadening collaboration.

We resolved to:

- (i) note the date of Friday 20th September 2019 for the Study Tour and encourage a good attendance, at £15 each.
- (ii) Invite representatives from the neighbouring Shropshire Hills and Malvern Hills AONB Partnerships and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and other appropriate partners.

10. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

We received a report regarding the achievements of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in 2018/19 and recent applications in 2019/20.

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In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is a delegated grant from Welsh Government administered by the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and confirmed for 2019/20 at £55,000 per annum.
- The achievements of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in 2018/19 were set out in the report.
- The current allocation of SDF grants was also set out in the report with £16,100 remaining to be allocated in 2019/20.
- The local government elections created a vacancy on the SDF Assessment Panel for a co-opted public sector representative. Suggestions were welcomed for the AONB Manager to approach. Representatives of the Joint Advisory Committee were asked to submit nominations to the AONB Unit.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question raised, the AONB Manager informed the Committee that the AONB Unit has worked closely with the Duchy of Cornwall Estate regarding various projects. However, the AONB Unit has not asked for any funding from the Estate but could consider this, going forward.
- The AONB Unit keeps close ties with applicants that have received grant funding, and many of the applicants tend to submit further applications for funding. However, it was noted that new applicants are being encouraged to come forward and submit applications for their various projects.

We welcomed the achievements of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in 2018/19 and 2019/20 to date.

11. Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Water Environment Grant (WEG) project

We received a report regarding the commencement of the Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Water Environment Grant (WEG) project with the Wye & Usk Foundation, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Herefordshire Rural Hub.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Wye & Usk Foundation, working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Herefordshire Rural Hub and the Wye Valley AONB Unit, submitted an application for the Water Environment Grant (WEG) entitled Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR).
- The WEG scheme is competitive and a bid for £1.2million covering the English part of the Wye Catchment was submitted in May 2018.

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- The ROAR project was finally approved in June 2019 with a grant of £672,000 until March 2021.
- The ROAR project includes additional farm Catchment Advisors across the English part of the Wye Catchment.
- Two advisors, covering the English part of the Wye Valley AONB and the adjacent Garren & Gamber catchment, will be employed by the Wye & Usk Foundation and hosted by the AONB Unit.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The main emphasis of the project is located within Herefordshire and on the main tributaries of the River Wye. However, there are tangential benefits for Gloucestershire.
- The AONB Unit had intended to undertake an assessment of the floodplain within the project. Unfortunately, this element was written out of the bid leading to very little monitoring of outcomes.
- The project will support the objective of the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) scheme to reduce the landscape and visual impact of National Grid's existing electricity infrastructure and enhance the quality of the affected designated landscapes. The National Grid is undertaking undergrounding works across four areas within the UK. £25M was available for all National Parks and AONBs across the UK for undergrounding and mitigation works. Lines within the AONB were placed 13th on the list of potential undergrounding works.
- The River Wye is used by Welsh Water and Severn Trent Water for water extraction to be used for drinking water. There are monitoring stations at Redbrook. Due to new extraction rates, there should be more water flowing down the River Wye than in previous years.
- It was noted the River Wye had remained brown for periods and it was not clear what was causing this effect. It was noted that exceptional rainfall and runoff might have contributed to this situation.
- Concern was expressed that the integrity of the River was becoming compromised due to drought and water extraction for irrigation of land. The quantity of water flowing down the river has an effect on water quality and biodiversity. However, it was noted that extraction of water licences can be revoked by the Environment Agency in times of drought.
- There has been large scale investment in irrigation reservoirs. However, issues regarding the planning process for these reservoirs have delayed progress in some instances.

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- There has been a major review of the implementation of water extraction licences over previous years which had led to changes being implemented to ensure more water is able to flow down the River Wye.
- The Joint Advisory Committee agreed that the AONB Manager invites a representative from the Environment Agency to attend the next meeting in November 2019 to discuss water extraction from the River Wye.

We resolved:

- (i) to welcome the collaboration with the Wye & Usk Foundation, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Herefordshire Rural Hub through the Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Water Environment Grant (WEG) project;
- (ii) that the AONB Manager invites a representative from the Environment Agency to attend the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting in November 2019 to discuss water extraction from the River Wye.

12. Climate & Environment Emergency

We received a report in which the Joint Advisory Committee was advised that local authorities covering the whole of the Wye Valley AONB have declared a Climate Emergency, as has Welsh Government.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The United Nations says we could have just 11 years left to limit a climate change catastrophe.
- Local authorities covering the whole of the Wye Valley AONB have declared a Climate Emergency, as has Welsh Government.
- The UK Parliament has also declared an environment and climate emergency.
- The new AONB Management Plan continues to emphasise the adaptation and mitigation measures required to address the environment and climate emergency.
- The AONB Unit will continue to collaborate with the local authorities and other public, private and third sector interests to help deliver sustainable mitigation and adaptation solutions in and around the AONB.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Unit has been pursuing initiatives in this matter for a number of years with limited resources. However, there is a need to get more people and organisations involved in the process. The National Association for AONBs is currently working with the UK Government.

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- The Forest of Dean District Council is implementing its action plan to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- Herefordshire Council is meeting this month to discuss this matter and to produce a plan, going forward.
- It was suggested that a carbon rating be placed alongside each of the recommendations outlined in the AONB Management Plan 2020 – 2025.

We welcomed the recognition of the climate and environment emergency now being declared at all levels of government in and around the AONB.

13. NAAONB update

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

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The national AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference will take place in Colchester on 9th - 11th July 2019 around the theme of 'Outstanding Beauty, Outstanding Opportunity'.
- The AONB Manager, Development Officer and Community Links Officer will be attending the national conference, where the Bowland Award will be passed to new winners.
- The AONB Development Officer and the AONB Community Links Officer are both participating in the professional training 'Taking the Lead' programme, which is supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Resilient Heritage grant.
- The AONB Manager attended a meeting with Julian Glover, chair of the Review of Designated Landscapes in England, with the NAAONB.
- The NAAONB has appointed a Wales Development Manager and the AONB Manager was on the interview panel.

We noted the report.

14. WyeNAC

We received a report regarding the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Environment Agency, as the Navigation Authority for the River Wye produces a Calendar of events for the river.

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- The Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) recently endorsed a dry weather briefing for the River Wye.
- The Environment Agency Wye Navigation Officers co-ordinate a Summer Survey of river users, the results for 2018 were attached to the report.

We noted the report.

15. AONB Unit / Partner progress

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

- Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management & Green Infrastructure Project.
- Wentwood to Wyre Endangered Landscapes Programme.
- AONB Farming Awards.
- AONB visits by Welsh Government and DEFRA staff.
- Ross Riverside, with Ross Town Council.
- Youth Rangers – recent activities and what some former Youth Rangers are doing now.
- AONB Volunteers.

We noted the report.

16. Date of next meetings

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:

Monday 4th November 2019.

Monday 2nd March 2020.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION & REVIEW

Purpose

To note the Public Consultation period for the AONB Management Plan and the revised review programme.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Encourages engagement by all partners and interested parties in the public consultation process that extends until 6th January 2020.
- B. Notes the revised programme for completion of the AONB Management Plan.

Key Issues

- The public consultation draft Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 is available on the Wye Valley AONB website <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/2020-2025-consultation/>.
- The 10 week public consultation period runs from 23rd October until 6th January 2020.
- As part of the consultation process two public meetings will be held in early December.

Reasons

Under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 Local Authorities have a duty to produce an AONB Management Plan and review it every 5 years. On behalf of the local authorities the Wye Valley AONB Unit has produced the Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan 2020-25.

Implications

The 10 week public consultation period for the draft Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 is from 23rd October to 6th January 2020. The document is available on <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/2020-2025-consultation/>. The consultation process has been widely promoted on social media, in the local press and the Plan is also available in local libraries and council offices. Two public meetings are planned for early December as part of the consultation process.

There has been some slippage to the previously agreed review programme. The revised timetable is appended. The JAC will receive the Post Consultation report and finalised Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 for adoption at the meeting on 6th July 2020.

Background

The CRoW Act 2000 (Sections 89 and 90) require local authorities to act jointly and publish an AONB Management Plan for their AONB, at not more than five year intervals, which formulates their policy for the management of their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

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Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025

Stages and outline timetable for review process

Update November 2019

TASK	WHO	EXPECTED TIMETABLE	Progress
FORMALITIES AND NOTIFICATION			
Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf [CRoW s89(9)]	AONB Unit	June 18	✓
Propose process and timetable of review	JAC	July 18	✓
Notify Natural England & NRW [CRoW s90(1a)]. Other stakeholders – identify any beyond Partnership.	AONB Unit	Oct 18	✓
Announce requirement for SEA, HRA & SA	Partnership	Oct 18	✓
SCOPING			
Evaluation workshop on current Plan.	Partnership	July 18	✓
Discussion of Plan review priorities among AONB Team, TOWP, JAC, Partnership and with key partners.	Partnership	June-Sept 18	✓
Analyse key stakeholders in Management Plan review process	AONB Team	June-Aug 18	✓
Report on impact and strengths/weaknesses of Plan.	AONB Team [TOWP/JAC]	June-Oct 18 [Oct/Nov ?]	✓
Gather information relating to new evidence/ issues	AONB Team	June-Oct 18	✓
List and assess relevance of new strategies/ plans in England & Wales	AONB Team	June 19	✓
Collate community views on issues from existing sources	AONB Team	June-Oct 18	✓
Write scoping report for SEA & HRA, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (stage A)	AONB Team	Oct-Nov 19	□
Consult on scoping report for SEA & HRA (6 weeks)	With statutory agencies	Dec 19-Jan 20	□
Publish update to State of the AONB report	AONB Team	Dec 19	□
REVIEW			
Assess individual sections of plan and agree main areas for revisions and structure [CRoW s89(10a)].	AONB Team/ Partnership	June-July 18	✓
Undertake specific targeted consultations /participatory workshops with relevant groups	Partnership & wider	July-Oct 18	✓
Reassess main issues, aims and objectives. Redraft, and discuss with relevant groups.	Partnership	Autumn 18	✓
Work on topic sections with relevant groups: WV&FoD Tourism Association, Area Statement group, – detailed issues, policies and updated actions.	Partnership	Autumn 18 – Spring 19	✓
Collate new draft plan	AONB Team	Spring 19	✓
Approve Draft for Consultation	JAC	July 19	✓
Assess effects of objectives, policies & actions and for SEA and develop alternatives. (Stage B)	AONB Team	Dec 19	□

Element of independent review required, inc LA Scrutiny			
Prepare Environmental Report for SEA & HRA (Stage C) and non-technical summary.		Winter 19	
CONSULTATION & APPROVAL OF FULL PLAN			
Run public consultation on new draft plan for 10 week period.	AONB Team/ Partnership	23 rd Oct 19 – 6 th Jan 20	✓
Run public consultation on SEA report (Stage D) for 6 week period.	AONB Team/ Partnership	Jan - Feb 20	
Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	AONB Team	Feb –Apr 20	
Report on consultation and suggested amendments [CRoW s89(10)]	Partnership	May 20	
Send to Natural England & NRW/WG [CRoW s90(1b)] for formal observations	AONB Team	May 20	
Consider comments from formal observations and amend plan [CRoW s90(1c)]	AONB Team / TOWP	June 20	
JAC Endorsement of Adoption Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025	JAC	July 20	
Publish Statement on how SEA & HRA taken into account and changes.	AONB Team	July 20	
Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 formally approved by local authorities	Local authorities	July 20	
Implement and monitor Plan and its effects (SEA Stage E).	Partnership	July 20+	
Design & publication of Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020-2025	AONB Team	August 20	
Send approved Plan to Secretary of State and Welsh Government.	AONB Team	August 20	

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' CONTRIBUTIONS AND AONB MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING 2018 - 2021

Purpose

To request contributions from the four constituent local authorities to the budget for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership as outlined in the AONB Memorandum of Understanding between the four local authorities for 2018 - 2021.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. request from the constituent local authorities the agreed financial contributions for the Wye Valley AONB for 2020/21.
- B. encourages the constituent local authorities to commence a review of the AONB Memorandum of Understanding for 2021 - 2024

Key Issues

- The AONB Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the AONB Partnership.
- The local authorities' financial contributions to the Wye Valley AONB Partnership are outlined in the MoU, which form the foundation of the budget managed by the AONB Unit.
- DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are not signatories to the MoU however their AONB grant funding offer letters are appended to the MoU.
- The current DEFRA grant offer extended from 2016/17 until 2019/20. A new DEFRA grant offer is anticipated following the publication of the 'Glover' Landscapes Review.
- The NRW grant currently runs from 2018/19 until 2020/21.
- The current MoU ends in March 2021 and a subsequent three year edition would run until March 2024.
- For every £1 of Local Authority contribution the AONB Unit has levered in over £8 on average in recent years.

Reasons

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) provides a framework for the delivery of duties and obligations in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) arising from Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 including the operation and management of the AONB Partnership and the AONB Unit. The MoU is intended to give medium term security to the AONB Partnership and sets out a shared vision for, and

commitment to, AONB management by the funding local authority partners. The MoU outlines the functions of the AONB Unit and the expectations on all parties to achieve the shared vision, which includes the understanding that:

- AONB management structures should be strongly supported by partners and relevant authorities.
- the statutory requirement to produce a Management Plan provides an important opportunity to strengthen partnerships and achieve better outcomes.
- security of funding and flexibility of funding for the AONB will deliver better outcomes.
- there should be a “can do” culture which is not risk-averse but where lessons from novel approaches are encouraged and learnt from, in both success and failure.
- monitoring of environmental outcomes is essential and needs to be undertaken to develop a sound, spatially-relevant evidence base.
- opportunities should be taken to maximise the synergies between the outcomes of the Management Plan with the plans of other Parties, and of the wider network of nationally designated Protected Landscapes.

The MoU complements the JAC Agreement, which constitutes the JAC, signed between the four local authorities.

Implications

The following Local Authority partner contributions are identified for 2020/21 in the MoU 2018-2021. They are based on an established historical formula aligned with the land area in the AONB. The MoU states that the local authorities retain the discretion to index link contributions, if or when appropriate.

Funding Partner	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Herefordshire Council	£23,860	£23,860	£23,860
Monmouthshire County Council	£15,716	£15,716	£15,716
Forest of Dean District Council	£5,826	£5,826	£5,826
Gloucestershire County Council	£3,600	£3,600	£3,600
Total LA contributions	£49,002	£49,002	£49,002

The proposed base budget for the AONB Unit for 2020/21 is £305,850. The local authority contributions receive up to 75% match-funding for core AONB initiatives from DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), on behalf of Welsh Government. The NRW grant will be £49,600 in 2020/21 and will be the last year of the current 3 year agreement. DEFRA had provided a 4 year funding offer up until March 2020.

DEFRA have been negotiating revised grant terms and conditions with Herefordshire Council, as treasurers for the AONB Partnership, in anticipation of a new funding offer following the publication of the ‘Glover’ Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England. These new ‘terms and conditions’ reference and recognise the Wye Valley AONB Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as the framework for medium term security and commitment to the AONB Partnership.

The remainder of the core Wye Valley AONB budget is made up from income from other sources, totalling £19,000 in 2020/21. The AONB Unit will also be managing externally funded partnership projects with a value in excess of £200,000. These projects include mindSCAPES, the Wye Valley River Festival (2nd – 17th May 2020), the Wye Valley Walk Partnership, a short extension to the Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management

(NFM) and Green Infrastructure (GI) Project, the AONB Youth Rangers programme and the Water Environment Grant funded Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) project with two Catchment Advisors seconded from the Wye & Usk Foundation to work in and around the English part of the Wye Valley AONB. These externally funded projects extend the work of the AONB Unit and allow project investment as well as some elements of cost recovery. Over recent years for every £1 of Local Authority contributions the AONB Unit has levered in more than £8.

The AONB Unit is constantly reviewing the structure and delivery of services in the AONB alongside income streams. Two of the 5 core members of staff in the AONB Unit work reduced hours so the core AONB Unit currently equates to 4.4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. Additional funding enables the staffing capacity of the AONB Unit to be augmented as required, for example with the Lower Wye Catchments NFM&GI Project Officer and the two ROAR Catchment Advisors seconded from the Wye & Usk Foundation. Similarly, some small expansion of capacity is being pursued around the Wye Valley River Festival.

The AONB Steering Group, made up from officers of the 4 local authorities and Natural England, on behalf of DEFRA, and NRW on behalf of Welsh Government, ensures that staff and resources are maximised and operational structures are fit for the future in the face of ongoing budgetary pressures. The focus remains on consolidating the activity of the core AONB Unit to maximise the leverage and spend on the delivery of initiatives that fulfil the statutory purpose of the AONB designation and benefit the landscape and local communities in the Wye Valley.

Background

Each Local Authority has a statutory Duty of Regard towards the purposes of AONBs under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. A considerable amount of the AONB Unit's core and project work (planning / promotion / advice / preparation & delivery of the Management Plan etc.) goes towards supporting each Local Authority in fulfilling its Duty of Regard. Through project delivery the AONB Unit also supports the Local Authorities' Statutory Duty for biodiversity under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

GLOVER 'LANDSCAPES REVIEW' IN ENGLAND

Purpose

To inform members of the publication of the Landscapes Review of AONBs & National Parks in England.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England was launched by Environment Secretary Michael Gove MP last year with a small advisory panel chaired by Julian Glover.
- The 'Landscapes Review' final report was published on 21st September 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- The Review identifies that AONBs should be strengthened, with increased funding, governance reform, new shared purposes with National Parks, and a greater voice on development.
- The report references future designation of the Forest of Dean and also stakeholder proposals for the Herefordshire Marches.
- The publication coincided with the 'National moment' by AONBs, including the poem 'Fugitives' by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage (appended), as part of the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- The Wye Valley River Festival is used as a case study in the Report.
- It is believed that the Review has been favourably received by DEFRA and a formal Government response will be provided in due course next year.
- The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has made an initial brief formal response (appended).

Reasons

The Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in England was launched in May 2018 as part of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The 'Landscapes Review' was led by the writer and journalist Julian Glover, supported by an expert panel of advisors consisting of Lord Cameron of Dillington, Jim Dixon, Jake Fiennes, Sarah Mukherjee and Dame Fiona Reynolds.

A 'call for evidence' was conducted in late 2018 and a small JAC Task Group assisted the AONB Manager in collating a response. In total DEFRA and the Review Panel received over 2,500 submissions. Panel members also visited every National Park and AONB in England, including the Wye Valley AONB, to talk to people on the ground.

The publication of the final report of the Landscapes Review was made to coincide with Landscapes for Life Week (formerly Outstanding Week) and the launch of a 'National moment' of hearts in the landscape by AONBs across the country. This included the poem 'Fugitives' by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage (appended below), as part of celebrating the

70th Anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 - founding legislation for AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales.

Implications

Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>.

The Review has been generally well received, as being good for nature, good for people and good for our most precious landscapes. The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) have given an initial formal response which is appended below. It is understood DEFRA have staff dedicated to addressing implementation of the Review, with whom the NAAONB are liaising regularly with. Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DEFRA is giving a Government Update on the Designated Landscapes Review to the NAAONB Chairpersons' Conference on 28th November. However, it is not anticipated that there will be a formal response from Government until sometime next year.

Both the Forest of Dean and the Herefordshire Marches are mentioned in the Review with regards to possible future designation (Annex 4, page 153, of the report). There is positive support for the designation of the Forest of Dean (pages 121).

The report includes a variety of highlighted case studies, including in Chapter 2: Landscapes for Everyone, the Wye Valley River Festival (page 67) and reference on page 73 to "the fantastic Wye Valley festival."

The Review sets out its findings and recommendations (proposals) across five areas:

- Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty
- Landscapes for Everyone
- Living Landscapes
- More Special Places
- New Ways of Working.

"The Review makes the case for wanting our national landscapes to work together with big ambitions so they are happier, healthier, greener, more beautiful and open to everyone". It states that "our system of national landscapes (44 in total in England) should be a positive force for the nation's wellbeing and must find innovative ways to collaborate to become more than the sum of their parts" (page 9).

The Review highlights that our national landscapes are just that; "they are England's soul and we should care for them as such" (page 5).

The 27 Proposals are listed below, followed below by a 10 page summary of the 168 page Final Report:-

1. Landscapes alive for nature and beauty

"The [2010 Making Space for Nature review](#) and the most recent [2016 State of Nature report](#) are explicit about the crisis of nature and what needs to be done to bring about a recovery. There is no need, in this review, to restate the excellent and mostly chilling analysis they contain, except to say that we agree and we want to see national landscapes lead the response."

Proposal 1: National landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature, and be supported and held to account for delivery by a new National Landscapes Service

Proposal 2: The state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes should be regularly and robustly assessed, informing the priorities for action

Proposal 3: Strengthened Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery including, but not limited to, wilder areas and the response to climate change (notably tree planting and peatland restoration). Their implementation must be backed up by stronger status in law

Proposal 4: National landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries

Proposal 5: A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes

Proposal 6: A strengthened place for national landscapes in the planning system with AONBs given statutory consultee status, encouragement to develop local plans and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework

2. Landscapes for everyone

“National Parks were created in part to provide a healing space, both mentally and physically, for the many who had given so much to protect our country during the Second World War. They were meant for everybody. Much has changed in the 70 years since. Modern Britain is a very different place socially and demographically. Today we recognise diversity as the mark of a healthy and resilient society. However, many landscape bodies have not moved smartly enough to reflect this changing society, and in some cases show little desire to do so. We want our nation’s most cherished landscapes to fulfil their original mission for people, providing unrivalled opportunities for enjoyment, spiritual refreshment and in turn supporting the nation’s health and wellbeing.”

Proposal 7: A stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscapes Service

Proposal 8: A night under the stars in a national landscape for every child

Proposal 9: New long term programmes to increase the ethnic diversity of visitors

Proposal 10: Landscapes that cater for and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing

Proposal 11: Expanding volunteering in our national landscapes

Proposal 12: Better information and signs to guide visitors

Proposal 13: A ranger service in all our national landscapes, part of a national family

Proposal 14: National landscapes supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism

Proposal 15: Joining up with others to make the most of what we have, and bringing National Trails into the national landscapes family

Proposal 16: Consider expanding open access rights in national landscapes

3. Living in landscapes

“Our system of national landscapes works best when it works with people on its side. We can all agree that a village that is lived in, with an active school, people who work, and who are part of a living tradition, is better than a sterile place that is full of shuttered homes, empty pubs and derelict shops. If we are serious about demonstrating the value

of ‘lived in’ landscapes to the global family of national landscapes, then we need to be serious about the people who live in them, and show how it’s possible to offer meaningful social and economic support for them.”

Proposal 17: National landscapes working for vibrant communities

Proposal 18: A new National Landscapes Housing Association to build affordable homes

Proposal 19: A new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes

4. More special places

“Almost a quarter – 24.5% – of England is already covered by national landscapes. We think there is a case for several larger AONBs to take on National Park candidate status, as well as for a new AONB (or National Landscape as we propose they are called in future). The success of the National Forest is also a model which should be replicated. We also think that a changing nation needs new ways to come together to support natural beauty and access.”

Proposal 20: New designated landscapes and a new National Forest

Proposal 21: Welcoming new landscape approaches in cities and the coast, and a city park competition

Proposal 22: A better designations process

5. New ways of working

“We want our landscapes to focus on enhancing natural beauty, supporting communities and visitors. But to do it better, we think they need to change and work together more.”

Proposal 23: Stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes

Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes

Proposal 25: A new National Landscapes Service bringing our 44 national landscapes together to achieve more than the sum of their parts

Proposal 26: Reformed governance to inspire and secure ambition in our national landscapes and better reflect society

Proposal 27: A new financial model – more money, more secure, more enterprising

Summary of Key Findings:

The Review recognises that there has been huge energy, enthusiasm and examples of success across our National Parks and AONBs in England. This has included farm cluster networks, school engagement, volunteer schemes and all sorts of joint working and dialogue on a diverse range of topics including wildlife conservation, tourism, planning and design, supporting local landowners and businesses, whilst also dealing with all of the complexities of local and central government. The Panel recognises that such activities like these happen every day, not much thanks is given for them and yet much of it is done well for relatively small sums of money (page 4). The Panel reports that "AONBs have become good at partnership working; lacking any resources of their own they have had to be" (page 13). Julian Glover expressed his personal gratitude that so much countryside, of so great a quality, is out there across our network of national landscapes, saved in part by the efforts of those who fought so hard to bring about the original concept and also those that work in them now. There is widespread recognition that all of England's most precious landscapes, be that

grassland, heath, farmland, river, moorland and coast, are living and working dynamic landscapes - sculpted and worked by the physical forces of nature and generations of farming and human activity.

The report demonstrates the many good examples of the way sympathetic farming practices can help support nature and well-managed farming systems should be viewed as good in itself (page 57).

What has not been working so well?

The Review has been hard-hitting in several areas stating for example that there is currently limited evidence of a wider common ambition; and that the national zeal of the founding mission for landscape protection has been eroded over time. The Panel believes that the national landscapes culture has not kept pace with the changes and demands in our society, nor responded with vigour to the decline in the diversity of the natural environment (page 7). The Review highlights an apparent disconnect with the wider public. Our National Parks and AONBs are national landscapes for the benefit of all, receiving tax payers' money, yet much of UK's society has little engagement, knowledge, or appreciation of these areas. The governance frameworks for National Parks especially, were found to be deeply unrepresentative of the country's diverse communities. The Review found that partnerships need to be strengthened and more representative of our diverse rural and urban communities (page 59)

The report stresses that what we currently have is not good enough and falls far short of what can be achieved and what the people of our country want. The current system of governance for both National Parks and AONBs requires substantial reform; the way that we protect and improve our landscapes need to change radically to take far greater account of modern pressures and the pace of change.

The report evidences a general lack of urgency in responding to the decline in the diversity of the natural environment and the climate crisis (page 7) citing critical commentary from organisations such as the RSPB, and the National Trust, and the continuing downward trajectory in the condition of what should be exemplar areas, including for example our Sites of Special Scientific Interest - SSSIs (figure 2, page 29). Often it has been shown that there has been a lack of sufficient data; "until we know what we have got, and what we have lost, efforts at landscape-scale work on nature will be incremental" (page 34).

Key Recommendations:

The Review sets out its findings and recommendations across five themes:

- Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty
- Landscapes for Everyone
- Living Landscapes
- More Special Places
- New Ways of Working.

Chapter 1: Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty

The report draws on the powerful and emotional connections between natural beauty and wildlife and argues that National Parks and AONBs should be leading the way in terms of the delivery of key government targets, as promoted through Professor Lawton's Review (page 28) and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The Panel highlights that from all of the responses received, more than any other thing, was the call for our national landscapes to do much more for nature. Despite some achievements (AONBs 70 @ 70 case studies, page 28) the negative trends affecting wildlife across the UK have not been reversed in our national landscapes, this must change. Nature recovery requires greater strategic leadership and

greater government commitment; the report recognises the challenges and the reality that a huge amount of what happens in our landscapes has been shaped by things over which our landscape bodies have had little control. The report repeatedly stresses the important and positive role farming can play in nature recovery, the enthusiasm for coming together with wider partners is growing and should be encouraged; this includes recognising and carefully balancing legitimate shooting interests (page 57, p58).

Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty - 6 proposals (Proposal 1- Proposal 6):

Proposal 1 is especially significant for AONBs, setting out the case for a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature, not simply relying on protecting and enhancing natural beauty. Performance should be assessed through a new, and independent, National Landscapes Service.

Proposals 2-5 cover the importance of nature, natural capital and climate change audits, strengthened Management Plans, and maximising the opportunities of Nature Recovery Networks and the (new) Environmental Land Management Schemes (NELMS). There is a recommendation that protected landscapes need to look beyond their boundaries to help ensure we have the most robust landscape and wildlife networks. Future Management Plans need to set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery and the response to climate change (notably tree planting and peatland restoration as and where this can be applied).

Proposal 6 makes the case for strengthening our national landscapes within the planning system, especially our AONBs, who should be given statutory consultee status and encouragement to develop local plans.

Chapter 2: Landscapes for Everyone

The report provides a powerful narrative on the value and importance of landscapes as described by the early Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth (page 25, p27) and passionate advocates for natural beauty including John Dower, John Muir (page 15) and landscape writers such as Robert Macfarlane (page 65). Glover recognises the widely understood belief, that is so hard to quantify, that our landscapes and their natural beauty matter in themselves and that our green and pleasant lands (so famously described by William Blake and immortalised in Sir Hubert Parry's Jerusalem) makes more people proud of their country than anything else, even above the NHS and the Royal Family (page 65).

Today our National Parks and AONBs provide a constant backdrop for a plethora of activity, not just walking, cycling and horse riding but fresh activities such as mass all-night walks for charities, volunteering, music festivals, scuba diving, glamping, arts trails, competitive triathlons etc. Perhaps, not surprisingly, the report found that significantly more people visit AONBs (estimated 170 million) than our English National Parks (estimated 100 million) - there are more AONBs and many are within 30 minutes' drive from sizeable conurbations. Relationships with leisure and recreation groups was found to be inconsistent and local, together with a perception that is a presumption against multi-user access (page 81).

Despite the wide recreational opportunities and the undoubted popularity for our national landscapes, this masks big differences in the types of people who typically enjoy them and a real concern from the Panel is that some groups remain excluded. The report powerfully argues that there are large parts of society that have no relationship with our National Parks and AONBs at all. Evidence from Natural England (2018) studies for example, serve to highlight that particular groups frequently disconnected from our natural landscapes are the older, the young – especially adolescents, those from lower socio-economic groups and weaker educational backgrounds, and black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. The Panel highlighted its engagement with the Policy Lab team in the Cabinet Office who undertook ethnographic interviews and vox pops on hard to reach and marginalised groups.

This resulted in 60+ hours of compelling evidence [https://youtube/FTKMY- TjHA](https://youtube/FTKMY-TjHA) (page 69).

Very tellingly the Review found that many communities in modern Britain feel that these landscapes hold no relevance for them (page 70). The Panel are firm in its belief and desire that our national landscapes should be open and accessible to all - regardless of age or background (page 65). Excellent engagement work was identified taking place across the National Parks and AONBs – including a case study on the Wye Valley River Festival (page 67). However the Panel found that this engagement was uneven nationally, some were doing good work with the young, others with health and volunteering but none seem to have the full complement.

Furthermore the Panel were highly critical of the lack of diversity within the governing bodies of National Parks and AONBs management/governance boards (page 73); for example highlighting the imbalance between male and female (68:32), the lack of youth with an average age of 64 in NPs and 54 in AONBs. Black, Asian and minority ethnic board members are extremely rare (<0.8%).

The Review recognises the strength and value of volunteering, but again found continual inconsistencies in the coverage and opportunities provided. At present each National Park and AONB runs its volunteering separately, duplicating efforts. AONBs were deemed to do their best, even though they are currently not charged with the 'people' purpose, nor funded to do it (page 75).

The Review recognises the mounting evidence for clear and powerful correlations between access to open space and enhanced quality of life, including the benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing (page 77) - these include lowering blood pressure, increasing cardiovascular health and improving mood. There is a huge opportunity to utilise our natural landscapes more fully, through for example growing 'social prescribing' programmes to help aid the wider public purse e.g. data from North York Moors National Park suggests that every £1 invested would provide some £7 of equivalent health and wellbeing benefits.

The Review is critical of the general support for visitors provided by our national landscapes with a need to improve on the basics, such as information and signage and on-the-ground help. This extends to websites, with some surprise that there is no single website for all of our national landscapes – with people expected to navigate through 40+ individual websites. The Review acknowledges that they have heard from many of the friction that can be caused by some visitor activity, and there is a need for better education and information provision to help rectify this, including effective dispersal from "honeypot" sites (page 93).

The Review makes a strong case for the future development and expansion of ranger services, for National Parks (currently with 177 rangers) and AONBs (currently with 24) which the Panel has identified as invaluable for providing links between visitors, land managers, local people and place (page 80). The Review is critical of the lack of training opportunities for ranger services (note: the report does not mention however that central training provision has been cut over the years, especially through removal of subsidies once provided via the previous governmental bodies such as the Countryside Agency (Countryside Commission) and closure of specialist rural training providers such as Losehill Hall in the Peak District).

Landscapes for Everyone - 10 proposals (Proposal 7 – Proposal 16):

Proposal 7 calls for a stronger mission to connect all people with our national landscapes, supported and held to account by the new National Landscape Services. The Review calls for a clear second legal purpose applied to all of our national landscapes to:

- "actively connect all parts of society with these special places to support understanding , enjoyment and the nation's health and wellbeing".

The Sandford Principle (page 136) should remain in place, and be extended to AONBs, to ensure the primacy of the first purpose (page 84).

Proposals 8-13 are aspirational in reaching out to new visitors and audiences through ambitious activity programmes focusing on children (a night under the stars for every child), ethnic diversity (new long-term engagement plans) and other marginalised groups (Reviewing and revitalising a new version of the National Parks MOSAIC programmes (page 87)). There is a call for the expansion and enhancement of ranger services and volunteering opportunities across all of our national landscapes (both with clearer national consistencies and a more structured approach). There should be a greater 'enabling' role to foster a very wide and inclusive volunteer base, especially focusing on under-represented groups (page 90). The Review would like to see 1,000 Rangers in place across our national landscapes, acting as ambassadors and the friendly and welcoming face of our national landscapes to visitors, school groups, land managers and residents (page 93).

There should be enhanced information and signs to guide visitors, and landscapes that truly cater for and improve the nation's health and wellbeing. The latter includes both national conversations with key health bodies (Dept for Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England) and development of local partnerships with local public health teams, clinical commission groups and social prescribing link workers. Rights of way should be enhanced to include a network of accessible, hard surface, stile-free paths that are disabled and wheelchair-friendly, with RADAR key gates and provision of all-terrain mobility scooters and routes (page 88). National Parks should take on legal responsibility to maintain the rights of way in their areas, AONBs should embrace close working with local highway authorities to ensure they receive the priority they need in our protected landscapes (page 92).

Proposals 14-16 focus on further access and visitor provision recommending that national landscapes should be supported to become leaders in sustainable tourism (including possible 'tourism zones' under the new Tourism Sector Deal), link better with our family of National Trails and consider further expansion of open access rights. The Review is not supportive of charging mechanisms to help control visitor numbers or raise funds – "our national landscapes do not have entry fees and nor should they" (page 94), but rather they should rely on leadership, education and good destination management to help shape who comes, what they do and how they benefit from their experience. Partnership sustainable tourism development plans should be encouraged to help reduce environmental impacts and help counter claims that certain places were being overwhelmed - "their popularity heralds their demise" (page 94).

Chapter 3: Living in Landscapes

The Review highlights the importance of the IUCN Category V classification for the UK's national landscapes (page 101), recognising the very special relationship and the challenge of combining people and nature. This chapter draws on the history and changes to the countryside which have been well documented by a number of writers and academics, including famously WG Hoskins (*The Making of the English Landscape*, 1955) and more recently commentators such as Simon Jenkins (*England's 100 Best Views*, 2013). These document the tensions from our ever evolving landscapes - with the pace of change a concern to many.

The Review found that many of our longstanding communities within our protected landscapes are feeling under great pressure, stressing particular anxieties in respect of local house prices and employment, the increasingly limited opportunities for the younger generation, and concerns with limited public transport and the issues of second-home ownership. Many of the community problems described could be applied in equal measure to our wider countryside, although the problems can often be exacerbated in our national

landscapes. The Review poses critical questions for those who love and shape our landscapes – not 'how do we conserve them?' but 'how do we make sure both natural beauty and society benefit from change rather than suffer? The Panel are optimistic - they believe that the future story of the link between people and our most beautiful places can be a positive one, just as it has often been in the past (page 102).

Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty - 3 proposals (Proposal 17 - Proposal 20):

The Review finds the current duty in relation to local communities to be vague so

Proposal 17 calls for a revised statutory purpose to be applied equally to both National Parks and AONBs to:

- Foster the economic and community vitality of their area in support of the first two purposes.

The Review calls for positive action, "our landscapes should be encouraging the kinds of economic and social activity that promotes renewed purposes of national landscapes. There's a real future in good jobs in our rural areas including growing and processing local food, sustainable tourism, nature recovery and land management, and many more sympathetic enterprises connected with their purposes" (page 109).

Proposal 18 seeks a new National Landscape Housing Association to focus on building affordable homes. This recognises the need to further the often good work undertaken by rural housing associations and local authorities (page 110). The Review highlights strongly the need for greater clarity in the application of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular in terms of the 'exceptional circumstances' for major development, which clearly should not be contravened for large housing schemes under the argument that there are no other available sites outside the protected landscapes (page 107). The Review recommends that the NPPF is amended to allow greater flexibility to deliver affordable homes in national landscapes generally (page 110).

As in the wider countryside, car use is the dominant mode of transport in journeying to and from our national landscapes, however **Proposal 19** advocates a new approach to coordinating public transport piloted in the Lake District, and new, more sustainable ways of accessing national landscapes. Whilst unrealistic to reverse car use, there should be more encouragement for joint-funded initiatives to help secure more sustainable transport, with improved integrated non-car services to help reduce the carbon impact of the visitor economy (page 113). In terms of carbon reduction, there should be a much greater push for suitable e-charging points, national landscapes need to collaborate and push for this – urban areas (*and motorway service stations*) are leading the way (page 115).

Chapter 4: More Special Places

The Review firmly states that it does not want to see protection removed from any landscape which is currently protected, however the terms of reference requested an assessment of new designations.

It is widely acknowledged that many of our protected landscapes are deeply rural and distant from our largest areas of population, often located to the west rather than the east, in our uplands not lowlands, and invariably inland. The system of designations has evidently been remarkably static, not responsive (page 117, p119) - this has enabled some national landscapes, especially National Parks (e.g the Peak District and Lake District) to become very much rooted to the places that they serve, and respected as a result.

The Panel agree that the division of landscapes into two distinct families, namely National Parks and AONBs is however unhelpful, both should be part of one greater whole, albeit with varied powers and sources of funding. The Review acknowledges that some AONBs – such as the Cotswolds - have been requesting designation as National Parks (page 117). The Panel

also found the current process for boundary changes to national landscapes, and new designations and new types of designations requires fresh impetus (page 117).

The Review felt that there was need for greater imagination to help link landscape to people in those areas close to our urban centres and that in some cases this may not necessitate the need for formal designation.

More Special Places - 3 proposals (Proposal 20 - Proposal 22):

Proposals 20-22 call for new designated landscapes and a new National Forest, new landscape approaches in our cities and coast with a city park competition, and a much improved designation process. The Review recommends that additional funding be provided to create three new National Parks from some of the larger AONBs, based upon proposals from The Chilterns, The Cotswolds and Dorset (combining both Dorset and East Devon AONBs). The Review recognises that there are opponents as well as supporters of a new status for these areas and suggests that Natural England and ministers consider the case for each (page 121).

The Review endorses the growing support for a new landscape designation for the Forest of Dean - an area on the original 1947 Hobhouse report (page 121). The Panel acknowledges other persuasive cases in need of further consideration including the Herefordshire Marches. The Review highlights the strengths of the National Forest programme and makes the case for one in the north midlands, taking in Sherwood Forest (page 122).

The Review again makes the case for a more joined up approach with new and enhanced connections between neighbouring protected landscapes – helping to shape wider management decisions, including for example emerging Environmental Land Management Schemes (page 123). The Review highlights the value and importance of our maritime areas, off shore and onshore (page 124); furthermore the need for connecting with important city initiatives (London – now a declared National Park City, and the West Midlands). The Panel specifically highlight green belt planning and the need for more ambitious socially and ecologically beneficial land in the future to benefit wildlife, landscape beauty and access provision, alongside well-designed new city development (page 124).

Page 126 summarises some of the findings in respect of the complexity and length of the designations process, but few responses set out how to make it better. Natural England (NE) is currently responsible for both designating new landscapes and taking forward any boundary Reviews for existing AONBs and National Parks, which is then sent to the Defra Secretary of State to 'confirm'. New designations have been slow to materialise; in the last 20 years there have just been two new National Parks created in England and the further extension of two NPs. The Review believes that the process is not itself flawed, but the main reason for the delays has been a lack of national resourcing and prioritisation. The Review proposes that the new National Landscapes Service should drive this activity in the future.

Chapter 5: New Ways of Working

The Review Panel set out not to get heavily caught up in the mire of structures and processes but look strategically outwards at the bigger picture; however there has been a realisation that very often the excellent work accomplished in our protected landscapes has often been in spite of the laws, policies and systems, not because of them (page 127).

The Panel have found that the two-tier system of protection for National Parks and AONBs has not been helpful, reinforcing differences in governance, finance and administration. This has resulted in a misplaced perception that AONBs are somehow second grade – yet they are often indistinguishable on the ground from National Parks. The 34 AONBs cover some 60%

of England's designated landscape, contain just as much important nature and attract more visitors than the 8 National Parks. The Review highlights the vital contribution of AONBs in promoting the understanding and enjoyment of their places, achieved without the recognition in law or equivalent support in resources (page 129).

The Review is critical of the general lack of collaboration between the National Park and AONBs, although there are some notable exceptions. The governance arrangements for both are seen as overly bureaucratic, with governance boards often unrepresentative of wider society and with far too much time often taken up in the minutia of day to day business, rather than outward looking to strategic matters in respect of landscape, biodiversity, access and recreation.

The Review argues that national landscapes have not always had the support within Whitehall that they should, with a view that National Parks and AONBs have been failing to punch at or above their collective weight. This has not been helped by changes in central government agencies over the years and associated reductions in support from the centre. Consequently our protected landscapes have collectively often been on the periphery of DEFRA business, and not at the vanguard of officials' thoughts in achieving the government priorities of the day (page 132).

National landscapes will receive a total of £55.4 m from Defra for 2019-20. Not a big sum in government terms, with the Panel recognising the ongoing significant disparity of funding between National Parks (£48.7m) and AONBs (£6.7m). The original funding agreements are, in the words of the Review, "fossilised and complex" (page 132) with Annex 3 providing a summary of the different formulas applied (page 152). The now dated AONB formula is: total core AONB grant = (AONB area in km² x £60 per km²) + (number of local authorities x £6,000 per local authority). The Review is critical in stating that there is no clear and concise explanation for the funding formula, with the grant income not clearly set according to priorities. The Panel are praiseworthy of the work accomplished by AONBs and their ability to be enterprising in delivering with and through others. The National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) and the Rural Development Programme's LEADER programme have been particularly important sources of additional funding to National Parks and AONBs. As a whole however the Review concludes that the funding for our national landscapes is not as well-diversified as it could or should be (page 133).

New Ways of Working - 5 proposals (Proposal 23 - Proposal 27):

Proposal 23 calls for a stronger purpose in law for our national landscapes. As set out in earlier chapters, the Review makes a compelling case for the purposes for National Parks and AONBs to be updated and to apply equally to both types of designation.

Subject to further debate and legal discussion the Review recommends the following three purposes:

1. Recover, conserve and enhance natural beauty, biodiversity and natural capital, and cultural heritage.
2. Actively connect all parts of society with these special places to support understanding, enjoyment and the nation's health and wellbeing.
3. Foster the economic vitality of their area in support of the first two purposes.

The Review make it clear that where there is conflict between any of the three purposes, then as applied through an updated 'Sandford Principle' (page 136) greater weight must be given to the first purpose (page 135).

Proposal 24 is particularly relevant to the AONB family, recommending that AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources and renamed as National Landscapes. This reflects desires expressed back in 2001 in the Landscapes at Risk? The Future for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (E. Holdaway and Professor G. Smart)

publication, that at that time called for a much higher standing for AONBs, "placing them at the top of the conservation tree, alongside National Parks, as a key part of our national heritage". The Panel feel that nearly 20 years on this is even more pressing (page 137).

Proposals 6, 23 and 27 are all specific to strengthening the position of AONBs, renamed as 'National Landscapes' to help raise their status to that alongside National Parks and remove the shackles of its rambling title, and its acronym that few know and many get wrong (page 129).

Proposals 25-27 make the case for a new National Landscapes Service, further reformed governance to inspire ambition across our national landscapes and to better reflect wider society, and a new financial model with crucially more money, greater security and increased focus on entrepreneurial approaches.

Pages 138-139 sets out the Panel's thinking and recommendations on how a new National Landscapes Service could work in practice. They envisage a small, expert board, appointed by Defra and working to bring our National Parks and AONBs (National Landscapes) together: inspiring collaborative and outward looking approaches, sharing and supporting peer Review, and stimulating joint action and initiatives across our 44 most beautiful landscapes to help the nation. The Review lays out in more detail ten aims of how such a body should work; helping ultimately to drive the new purposes of national landscapes – focusing on nature, culture, visitor experience, economic vitality and a drive for inclusiveness to both local communities and wider society.

Pages 140-141 details a recommended overhaul of governance arrangements, especially National Parks, which should have a much reduced main board (between 9 and 12 members), working alongside a wider partnership advisory group representative of the various interest and specialist groups. There should be a much greater effort to secure diversity - of social background, gender, age, ethnicity, (dis)ability. AONBs should consider adopting similar structures where possible, although in some cases, for smaller AONBs for example, simpler governance models may be more applicable. There should be scope to encourage wider citizenship opportunities and engagement within the main NP and AONB boards. There is a reaffirmation that the primary task of each board would be to prepare and drive ambitious delivery of Management Plans, delivering for nature, people and communities.

The Review covers the important issue of funding and resources in pages 142-144 (**Proposal 27**). A compelling argument is made in respect of the continuation of central government funding, and that this should be both extended further and secured across a five-year period. However the Panel are clear in their recommendations that there should not be an over-reliance upon core funding, but rather an ongoing drive to a new funding model – one that can secure diverse, larger and sustainable income. Building on earlier findings (page 133) the Review highlights the need for a simpler, fairer and dynamic system of funding, and that in future this should be overseen directly by the National Landscapes Service.

The Review proposes that the original funding formulas are revisited for all of our protected landscapes and carefully re-calibrated across a range of criteria (page 143) and phased in over time. In the more immediate period, it is proposed that AONBs need an uplift in their funding and that the current £6.7m (several million less than the South Downs N. Park receives - page 132) is raised to £13.4m. The Review clarifies that the local authority funding element for AONBs should continue.

The Review reported considerable tensions over various proposals to support our National Parks in developing charitable status, furthering commercial links etc. This the Panel found very surprising - with evidently a collective failure of coordination, ambition and expertise (page 143). Looking ahead the Review makes the case for a far more ambitious entrepreneurial and philanthropic programme of fundraising across the entire protected landscapes family.

Conclusions:

The Review argues that looking ahead there is a need for big ambitions - much more must be done for nature and natural beauty. Much more must be done for people who live in and visit our nationally protected landscapes. National landscape bodies themselves should do much more to reach out and invite people in (page 16, page 66). The Panel stress that our national landscapes should be alive for people, and places where everyone is actively welcomed and where there are unrivalled opportunities to enjoy their natural beauty - in essence landscapes for all (page 82). There is recognition that conservation and farming are partners, and that there should be farming for nature as well as food (page 145).

The Review Panel were appreciative of all involved and recognised the excitement and optimism of what can be achieved in the future. "This moment matters – aspiring to protect and enhance what we have will make England's special places even better" (page 145).

Background

The review of National Parks and AONBs in England was initially proposed in the DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan. The Review's purpose was to ask what might be done better, what changes could assist these areas, and whether definitions and systems, which in many cases date back to their original creation 70 years ago, are still sufficient. Weakening or undermining existing protections or geographic scope was not a consideration.

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National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – response to the findings of the Designated Landscapes Review



23 September 2019



"I am delighted the report recognises the immense value and potential of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and sets bold ambitions for their higher profile within the urgent imperatives of nature recovery and improving the health of the Nation. The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will work to ensure the Report is prioritised in the widest of policy contexts in the coming months and years. It is of the highest importance that the challenging but very positive messages of the Report are not lost sight of in the welter of pressures facing Government and Parliament. Indeed,

fulfilment of the Report's recommendations offers an unequivocally decent and positive focus for public and political dialogue and an opportunity to reunite a divided Nation"

Philip Hygate FRSA

Chairman

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty welcomes the findings of the Designated Landscapes Review. We are pleased that the Review team have recognised the value of the AONB designation and the hard work that AONB staff and members carry out to conserve and enhance these special areas. We are also heartened that the Review team recognise that, given adequate resources, there is so much more we can deliver for nature and society. We particularly welcome the recommendation that government provides the resources and policy framework to support local Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty teams to do this. We would like to thank Julian Glover, Dame Fiona Reynolds, Sarah Mukherjee, Jim Dixon, Ewen Cameron and Jake Fiennes for their time and commitment and for producing a challenging but fair report.

The central proposition that AONBs are strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes, is a powerful and fundamentally important step in ensuring the benefits of the AONB designation are optimised. The NAAONB looks forward to working with Defra, Natural England, and all 34 AONB partnerships to ensure this proposition becomes reality.

In this, the 70th anniversary year of the passing of the legislation which paved the way for the setting up of our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks, the Review was particularly welcome. Society has changed beyond recognition since that pioneering legislation was put into place. The demands placed on our designated landscapes have never been greater, demands matched only by our increased human need for natural beauty, wild spaces and tranquil places.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty teams are acutely aware of the need to significantly **increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity** in their areas – indeed the AONB Partnerships are already taking steps to make this happen. After making a declaration for nature – ‘The Colchester Declaration’ at their conference earlier this year, a steering group has now met to set an ambitious direction of travel. Such is the energy and commitment to this that the steering group was

well oversubscribed – a selection of members has been chosen to reflect the huge variation in landscape types represented across AONBs.

The Colchester Declaration sets out specific ambitious, stretching targets specially designed to protect what remains and, crucially, recover what has been lost in our natural environment. This will build on the significant, and often unpublicised work that AONB teams have been carrying out to restore nature: from Anglesey, where the Source to Sea project restored polluted waters to create habitats for fish and other wildlife; to Suffolk Coast and Heaths where the precious saltmarsh habitat for fish fry and birds has been restored; and valuable carbon capturing Peatland Restoration work has taken place across the country – in Cornwall, North Pennines and Forest of Bowland AONBs.

We welcome the recommendation that **Designated Landscapes become leaders in the government’s planned Nature Recovery Networks**; one of the earliest commitments of the Colchester Declaration is for each AONB to create an initial Species Action Plan for a species in their area in order to increase numbers such that at least 30 native species can be taken off the red list of endangered species by 2030. AONB Partnerships have a strong track record in this regard as demonstrated by the wide range of projects showcased in our [70@70 project](#), and in countless other examples.

We welcome the recommendation that designated landscapes **take a lead in the national response to climate change**. Climate change and the crisis in nature that we are seeing across the UK are two sides of the same coin. The depreciation of natural environments affects not only our native species, but also our national finances, amplifying the effects of climate change as evidenced by the many recent extreme weather events, from flooding to grassland fires. We welcome the recommendation that designated landscapes **develop landscape scale, long term strategies to assess and improve natural capital in the areas they oversee**. Many of the AONB teams’ host authorities have taken the step of declaring climate emergencies and are actively seeking ways to achieve net zero.

We believe that the AONBs’ Colchester Declaration takes us one step further, joining up all of these dots.

AONB Partnerships are committing to:

- achieving net zero by 2050 by incorporating meaningful actions in AONB Management Plans in their next cycle (2024);
- embedding an ecosystems services approach – maximising the benefits that nature can provide through carbon sequestration and flood alleviation, and
- actively working to restore habitats and re-establish species on a landscape scale through strong connections with their local landowners. The Colchester Declaration commits AONB Partnerships to specific ambitious targets to be achieved by 2030:
 - o at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
 - o at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
 - o at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place

We are proud of how much has been achieved with very little: AONBs receive around 20p per person in the UK per year. We are very conscious of how much more there is to do and recognise the pivotal role AONBs and National Parks will play in jointly improving the health and wellbeing of the nation.

It is important to note that while we have the proven knowledge and capability to deliver what is needed, AONBs are important landscapes that are, on the whole, in private ownership. Much of the richness these places have to offer is the product of the stewardship of generations of farmers and landowners. Whilst accessible to many, they are the working ‘factory floor’ of the UK’s food and timber production and support a growing and important domestic tourism industry. AONB teams, therefore, work in established partnerships with their local landowners: farmers, large estates, charities, local authorities and other conservation organisations such as Natural England, the National Trust and the RSPB to effect positive landscape change. We are therefore very pleased to see the recommendation that **designated landscapes be prioritised for the new Environmental Land Management systems**. The new schemes present a more simplified way to incentivise landowners to manage their land to maximise benefits for public good including nature, and we believe, with their existing relationships with local partners, that AONB teams are ideally placed to be able to support delivery of these systems.

The recommendation that **AONBs become statutory consultees in planning applications** is also welcome. We don’t believe that our areas need to be preserved in aspic: ensuring that affordable housing is available for local and younger people is critical for the continuing success of local businesses and communities; however, development in keeping with the local landscape is also key. The built environment contributes greatly to the overall sense of place and the emotional response of residents and visitors alike. Providing housing that is both affordable and in keeping with the look of an area is eminently possible, yet too often we find a lack of understanding of this in local planning department decisions.

We welcome the recommendation that AONBs and National Parks work more closely, under a dynamic **National Landscapes Service**. The AONB Family has always had a strong commitment to collaboration – both with the local partners who make up AONB Partnership formal Joint Advisory Committees (local representatives of other nationwide conservation bodies such as Natural England, RSPB, National Trust, local conservation groups, landowners, farmers, parish councils, user groups such as the Ramblers, and local business representatives) and across AONBs. The National Association for AONBs has recognised the value of closer connections between AONBs and to this end has spent the last twelve months creating closer ties through the Future Landscapes project, a National Lottery Heritage Funded programme bringing together staff from across AONBs and giving them time and space to work on visionary task and finish projects to benefit all AONBs. We know through experience that sharing learning, and more directly on the ground, ensuring that conservation work crosses organisational ‘boundaries’ which are of course invisible to nature, is the most effective way of maximising what we can achieve for wildlife and habitats. A more unified, strategic vision across all our designated landscapes, which currently cover a quarter of England’s land area, will greatly amplify what we can achieve. We therefore hope that government will support the NAAONB in extending its considerable experience in developing collaborative behaviours beyond the AONB network where its influence has already been clearly impactful and measurable.

We accept the finding that not enough is being done to **support first time visitors to our national landscapes**. Cuts to public transport services have created additional problems, but we recognise that our need to do more to support people in knowing how to access the countryside predates many of these cuts. Many urban schools serving more deprived communities struggle to fund transport into designated landscapes, but there are still some fantastic examples of outreach work across many AONBs. For instance, the Chichester Harbour Education Centre, on average, works with 580 people every week, and over the past 20 years we’ve worked with over 150,000 school children

from across the South East. With the recommended increase in funding and resources, there is much more we could deliver, and quickly. With around two thirds of the UK population living within a half hour journey of an AONB, we are acutely aware that our designated landscapes are not serving many of the groups virtually on our doorsteps and we want to take steps to address this. We would like to develop closer working relationships with other designated landscapes that have strong track records in attracting people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups to their areas to learn best practice actions to put into practice within our own areas.

We have recently secured funding from Arts Council England specifically for the purpose of finding ways to attract new audiences to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by connecting people with the landscape on an emotional level, and crucially to inspire them to return and explore. This is a programme of work we are committed to for the long term and we already have good examples of how arts projects can support people to spend time in our landscapes and to reap the health and wellbeing benefits. North Pennines AONB has regularly staged large scale outdoor art works and the Wye Valley River Festival is a key event in the calendar of the Welsh borders, attracting a diverse audience each year.

We strongly welcome the assertion that there is a clear case for increased funding for AONBs. AONB Partnerships were only given their limited powers in the year 2000, fifty-one years after the act that brought them into existence. Now is exactly the time to bring the 'founding zeal' to life. We have the all energy, skills, ambition and strong partnerships needed to deliver, and we call on Westminster to provide us with the power and resources to enable us to do so.

Fugitives

Then we woke and were hurtling headlong
for wealds and wolds,
blood coursing, the Dee and the Nidd in full spate
through the spinning waterwheels in the wrists
and over the heart's weir,
the nightingale hip-hopping ten to the dozen
under the morning's fringe.

It was no easy leap, to exit the engine house of the head
and vault the electric fence
of commonplace things,
to open the door of the century's driverless hearse,
roll from the long cortège
then dust down and follow
the twisting ribbon of polecats wriggling free from extinction
or slipstream the red kite's triumphant flypast out of oblivion
or trail the catnip of spraint and scat tingeing the morning breeze.

On we journeyed at full tilt
through traffic-light orchards,
the brain's compass dialling for fell, moor,
escarpment and shore, the skull's sextant
plotting for free states coloured green on the map,
using hedgerows as handrails,
barrows and crags as trig points and cats' eyes.

We stuck to the switchbacks and scenic routes,
steered by the earth's contours and natural lines of desire,
feet firm on solid footings of bedrock and soil
fracked only by moles.

We skimmed across mudflat and saltmarsh,
clambered to stony pulpits on high hills
inhaling gallons of pure sky
into the moors of our lungs,
bartered bitcoins of glittering shingle and shale.

Then arrived in safe havens, entered the zones,
stood in the grandstands of bluffs and ghylls, spectators
to flying ponies grazing wild grass to carpeted lawns,
oaks flaunting turtle doves on their ring-fingers,
ospreys fishing the lakes from invisible pulleys and hoists,
the falcon back on its see-through pivot, lured from its gyre.

Here was nature as future,
the satellite dishes of blue convolvulus
tuned to the cosmos, tracking the chatter of stars,
the micro-gadgets of complex insects
working the fields, heaths tractored by beetles,
rainbowed hay meadows tipsy with rain and light,
golden gravel hoarded in eskers and streams.

And we vowed not to slumber again
but claimed sanctuary
under the kittiwake's siren
and corncrake's alarm,
in realms patrolled by sleepwalking becks and creeks
where beauty employs its own border police.

And witnessed ancient trees
affirming their citizenship of the land,
and hunkered and swore oaths, made laws
in hidden parliaments of bays and coves,
then gathered on commons and capes
waving passports of open palms, medalled by dog rose and teasel
and raising the flag of air.

by Simon Armitage

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

FEEDBACK ON AONB PARTNERSHIP STUDY TOUR

Purpose

To feedback on the success of the AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- A total of 28 people attended the annual AONB Partnership Tour on 20th September.
- There was a good spread of representation from throughout the AONB even though the Tour was focused predominantly on the Monmouthshire part of the AONB.
- The tour visited a range of sites primarily associated with the Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) Project.
- The Tour also included a 'heart in the landscape' photo-opportunity in preparation for the 'national moment' on 21st September celebrating the 70th anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- Feedback from attendees of the Tour has been extremely positive.

Reasons

The AONB Partnership Tour continues to be popular and is a key tool in the transfer of information to the wider partners and interested parties in the AONB particularly to local Ward members, key officers and the Town, Parish and Community Councils. The Tour is held on one of the last Fridays in September.

Implications

Of the 28 attendees on the Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour, 10 came from Herefordshire, 8 from Monmouthshire and 4 from Gloucestershire. There were 6 JAC members, 4 local authority officers, 11 were from Town/Parish/Community Councils and one other, plus 5 AONB staff.

Sites and issues visited included Chapel Lane, Tintern, with flooding & erosion of the Unclassified County Highway associated with the Lime Kiln Brook; the A466 Road stabilisation works; Natural Flood Management (NFM) works at Penterry Farm and Lower Meend Farm; photo-opportunity at Bigsweir Bridge in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Background

The 2018 Tour looked at a selection of projects and issues in the Herefordshire part of the AONB north of Ross-on-Wye. The 2017 Tour looked at a number of projects and issues between Ross and Lydbrook. The 2016 Tour visited sites in and around Tintern.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND (SDF) & WYE VALLEY AONB FUND WITH HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (HCF)

Purpose

To inform members of the status of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in 2019/20 and the establishment of the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is a delegated grant from Welsh Government administered by the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and confirmed for 2019/20 at £55,000 per annum.
- The agreement with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has been signed for the establishment of the Wye Valley AONB Fund, with the criteria attached in Appendix 1.
- The current allocation of SDF grants is also appended with £8,875 remaining to be allocated in 2019/20.
- There remains a vacancy on the SDF Assessment Panel for a co-opted public sector representative. Suggestions are welcome.

Reasons

Welsh Government (WG) provide the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) which is administered by the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the SDF Assessment Panel. The SDF for 2019/20 is £55,000 per annum, similar to the previous 3 years. There may also be the opportunity to bid for underspends from other AONBs later in the year, subject to available funds and prospective applications.

The SDF Assessment Panel is made up of co-opted public, private and voluntary sector representatives with 2 appointees from each sector to ensure a balance across social, community, economic and environmental interests, with additional officers' support. The JAC has nominated 3 members, one for each sector. One public sector place remains to be co-opted to the Panel and another seat is for a trustee from the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) following the establishment of the Wye Valley AONB Fund with HCF. The SDF Panel will advise HCF on the assessment of projects and the allocation of the AONB Fund. The current SDF Assessment Panel membership is attached (Appendix 2).

Implications

The establishment of the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has approved by Herefordshire Council, as treasurers for the AONB Partnership. The funds are shortly to be transferred as a legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme. There will be a £10,000 'immediate impact' fund and a £50,000 Endowment Fund from which the income generated each year will be used to award grants. The latter will be able to receive donations and legacies and it is hoped that the AONB Fund will grow over time. The Fund criteria are in Appendix 1.

The current SDF allocations in 2019/20 are also listed below in Appendix 3. Grants to date total £40,625 with an average grant rate of 34% towards projects with a value of £146,177. There is £8,875 remaining from the £55,000.

The AONB Unit and other partners promote the availability of the SDF to as many sectors as possible in Monmouthshire. Members are similarly encouraged to do so, and Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, is available to discuss and advise on potential applications (contact community@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk). Similarly promotion and publicity will commence for Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) once the funds are transferred.

There is a vacancy on the SDF Assessment Panel for a co-opted Public Sector representative.

Background

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has been available in the Wye Valley AONB for 18 years in Wales and but was a casualty of austerity in England, where it ran for 10 years.

The establishment of a Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has been previously approved by the JAC as a legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme.

APPENDIX 1.

Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF)

- 1.1 The Fund will prioritise support for projects which benefit communities and the environment of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the area adjoining the AONB boundary (where the majority of benefit is within the AONB) that is within Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire.
- 1.2 The funds generated each year will be used to award grants to support projects, programmes and activities that meet the fund criteria.
2. Grants will be awarded to support community and voluntary groups and the non statutory activities of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership, including projects, programmes and project staff within the following criteria:
 - 2.1 **Conservation and enhancement of the landscape**

Activities could include landscape conservation grants to organisations, landowners, land managers and community groups for:

 - (a) Conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (as identified in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan)
 - (b) Maintenance and management of natural features including coppicing, tree and hedgerow planting, pond restoration, grassland and wetland management and heathland conservation
 - (c) Maintenance and management of historic features including viewpoints, former industrial sites, drystone walls and historic settlements or buildings
 - (d) equipment to undertake conservation activities
 - 2.2 **Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the Wye Valley AONB**

Activities could include grants for:

 - (a) Education visits and activities
 - (b) Information and interpretation projects, eg information boards, walking leaflets, websites, public transport promotion etc
 - (c) Outreach projects, eg targeting disadvantaged groups
 - 2.3 **Support the social and economic well being of the Wye Valley AONB**

Activities could include grants to landowners, business and communities for:

 - (a) Enhancing community facilities, eg village halls
 - (b) Start up enterprises, eg farm shops, local food initiatives
 - (c) Community enterprises, eg village shops, village play schemes
 - (d) Community well-being initiatives, eg walking groups, ‘green gym’ health & exercise groups simultaneously using and conserving the natural environment
3. The criteria can be varied at any time in the future by written agreement between the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee and the Herefordshire Community Foundation. For example, to add a further area of special concern or to change a priority.

APPENDIX 2.

Members of the SDF Assessment Panel

Public Sector representatives:

Cllr Mrs Ann Webb, Monmouthshire County Council (JAC)
vacant

Private Sector representatives:

David Price, NFU Wales (JAC)
Antony Smith, Wyastone Estates Ltd.

Voluntary Sector representatives:

Ashley Thomas: Monmouthshire voluntary conservation sector representative (JAC)
tbc – Herefordshire Community Foundation

Local Authority officer:

Colette Bosley: Principal Green Infrastructure & Landscape Officer,
Monmouthshire County Council

Statutory Agency officer:

Sarah Tindal, Partnerships Officer, Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

Wye Valley AONB officers in attendance:

Andrew Blake, AONB Manager
Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer

APPENDIX 3

2019/20 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants approved to date

<u>2019/20</u> Code	Applicant	Project Title	years		Total Cost	SDF Grant	%
			This	Total			
WV00 YR19W	Wye Valley AONB Unit	10% Admin	1	1		£5,500	
WV01 YR19W	Gwent Wildlife Trust	GWT Trainees	1	2	£2,192	£900	41%
WV02 YR19W	Gwent Wildlife Trust	GWT Machinery & Habitat Management Project	1	1	£35,360	£7,500	21%
WV03 YR19W	Wye Valley AONB Partnership	Wye Valley River Festival 2020	1	2	£106,300	£25,000	24%
WV04 YR19W	Wye Valley AONB Partnership	Japanese Knotweed Control Tintern	2	2	£2,325.00	£1,725	74%
TOTALS (to date)					£146,177	£40,625	Av36%
<i>Remaining from £55,000</i>						<i>£8,875</i>	

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

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 AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference, in Colchester in July, was attended by the AONB Manager, AONB Development Officer and AONB Community Links Officer.
- The Colchester Declaration – a 'declaration for nature' (attached) - was agreed at the Landscapes for Life Conference.
- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairperson's Conference and AGM is on 28th November and will focus on challenges of The Colchester Declaration and the Landscapes Review. The AONB Manager will attend.
- The AONB Development Officer and the AONB Community Links Officer are participating in the professional training 'Taking the Lead' programme as part of the NAAONB Future Landscapes Programme supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Resilient Heritage grant.
- Landscapes for Life Week (formerly Outstanding Week) was 21st – 29th September with the National Moment of 'hearts in the landscape' and publication of 'Fugitives' by the poet laureate, Simon Armitage
- The Glover Landscape Review Final Report was published to coincide with Landscapes for Life Week.

Landscapes for Life Conference 9th-11th July, Colchester

The annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference took place at the University of Essex, Colchester from 9th -11th July in association with the Dedham Vale AONB and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager and Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, and Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer attended. Keynote speakers included: Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State DEFRA; Dame Fiona Reynolds; Jules Pretty, Professor of Environment and Society at University of Essex; Julian Glover, Chair of the Review of Designated Landscapes in England and Craig Bennett, Chief Executive of Friends of the Earth.

There were also field trip options. Andrew Blake's trip looked at 'Natural Beauty, Special Qualities and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' around the village of Wissington and the Stour valley. Sarah was on the 'Enhancing Natural Beauty through Management' trip visiting several estuarine and woodland sites to discover how management techniques can help these habitats in time of climate change, while Nick's trip looked at 'Enhancing Special Qualities' visiting a river restoration scheme and learning about the practicalities of achieving catchment improvements in today's lowland river systems.

On behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the Wye Valley River Festival, Andrew & Sarah handed over the won The Bowland Award to the Chichester Harbour Education Service, as elected winners for 2019. There were 6 projects nominated for The Bowland Award 2019 which is voted on by all AONB Partnerships attending the conference. The Award recognises a best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The conference concluded with NAAONB Chief Executive Howard Davies making The Colchester Declaration – a Declaration for Nature. This was developed through a series of pre-conference discussion fora and workshop sessions during the conference. The Declaration is appended and is the pledge for nature of the AONB network: to protect what remains and restore what has been lost.

The conference is an excellent networking opportunity with plenty of informed, enthused and energised debate and sharing of experiences and advice.

NAAONB Chairperson's Conference & AGM

The Landscapes for Life Chairperson's Conference and NAAONB AGM which will take place on Thursday 28th November 2019 in London. The programme is attached. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager, will attend on behalf of the JAC Chairman and represent the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

This year's Chairmen's Conference will focus on the challenges of The Colchester Declaration and the Landscapes Review. A key challenge identified in the Review is an apparent disconnect with the wider public where much of UK's society has little engagement, knowledge, or appreciation of our National Parks & AONBs. Lord Gardiner, Under Secretary of State for Environment, will be keynote speaker, along Maxwell Ayamba, Environmental Journalist and author of 'Black Men Walking' and 'Outdoors for all? Exploring barriers to the use of open spaces by British Black and Ethnic Minority young people'.

Taking the Lead - Future Landscapes Programme.

Nick Critchley, Wye Valley AONB Development Officer and Sarah Sawyer, Wye Valley AONB Community Links Officer both continue their participating in the 'Taking the Lead' programme. This is a professional and personal development programme delivered through the NAAONB across staff from 38 AONBs in England and Wales. It aims to help develop greater collaborative working across the AONB network. Through CPD, personal reflection based upon Lumina Spark psychometric tests, and Topic Working Groups, the participants

are concentrating on some of the key challenges facing AONBs, and will be finalising their recommendations early in the New Year.

Nick Critchley is working in the Staff Development Topic Working Group. They are looking at a number of connecting themes related to the subject, including reviewing and rewriting an AONB Induction Pack for both new AONB staff and members of AONB Partnerships. They are also exploring both formal and informal staff development opportunities.

Sarah Sawyer is in the Technology, Data and Evidence Topic Working Group. Their research has revolved around harnessing data to provide insight and evidence for AONB work.

The Taking the Lead programme, with support from the National Lottery Resilient Heritage grant, is an enriching experience for participants and is having positive benefits in work practices locally and nationally. Much of the focus of the programme involves looking at ways to improve collaboration and partnership working in individual settings and across the AONB Family.

Landscapes for Life Week

Formerly ‘Outstanding Week’, this week-long focus on AONBs ran from 21st – 29th September this year. One of the Topic Working Group co-ordinated a National Moment of ‘hearts in the landscape’ as part of the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. All AONB Partnerships were encouraged to make heart shapes in the landscape. The Wye Valley AONB Partnership did this 2 (or 3) ways; on the AONB Partnership Tour attendees stood in a heart shape by Bigsweir Bridge; the AONB Youth Rangers navigated a route on footpaths that marked out a (rough) heart shape; they also made a number of hearts with their bodies, shadows and even some blackberries!

The poet laureate, Simon Armitage, was commissioned by the NAAONB to create a poem for the National Moment and in celebration of AONBs, following their designation under the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The poem is entitled ‘Fugitives’ (included above in Glover Landscape Review report and also available here <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/1915/6923/9522/Fugitives.pdf>)

Julian Glover decided to launch of the Landscape Review Final Report to coincide with the National Moment.

Background

The NAAONB is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK’s AONBs. Its objectives are to promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs, advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs, and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other Protected Areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued. It takes a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with its membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals. For more information see:

www.landscapesforlife.org.uk

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The Colchester Declaration 2019

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient – the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty believes that now is the time to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Using our unique network and partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change.

With many AONB host authorities having taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency we are demonstrating our readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

We believe

1. Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people
2. AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife
3. Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
4. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change
5. The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges

We pledge

By July 2020

1. To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature.
2. To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB

By 2024

1. To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans
2. To ensure all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero

By 2030

1. That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
2. That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
3. That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place
4. That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030

We call on Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WYE VALLEY AONB IN 2021

Purpose

To advise members of the forthcoming 50th anniversary of the designation of the Wye Valley AONB in 1971.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Wye Valley AONB.
- An outline programme of events for 2021 is being developed.
- The Offa's Dyke Path National Trail was also created in 1971.

Reasons

The Wye Valley AONB Designation Order was submitted on 24th February 1971. The Order was confirmed and signed by the Secretary of State on 13th December 1971.

Throughout 2021 the opportunity should be taken to raise public awareness of the Wye Valley AONB and the work carried out by the JAC and the AONB Unit on behalf of the AONB Partnership. The following strategic aims are proposed:

- To raise the profile of the Wye Valley AONB locally, regionally and nationally in a creative and engaging manner
- To bring home to residents and visitors alike the value of the area's unique environment and the significance of its AONB designation.
- To promote the role of the AONB Unit as facilitator and in the area, helping forge productive collaborations on behalf of the AONB Partnership.

Implications

The AONB Unit is commencing work on developing an effective public relations and promotional strategy for the Wye Valley AONB's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2021. There is likely be a formal JAC event around either the designation submission or confirmation dates. Wherever possible linkages will also be made with other events, activities and shows, dependant on staff and resources. Overall budgets and costs have yet to be identified but some may be shared or augmented with partner funding &/or in kind contributions where appropriate.

Key audiences identified include

- The area's residents and local communities
- Those who work in the area (including those not involved in land-based businesses &/or tourism enterprises)
- Visitors (extending to those who have yet to be attracted to the area)
- Existing and potential partners.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th November 2019

AONB UNIT & PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit and various partners.

FOR INFORMATION

Below are brief update reports on the following AONB Unit and partners' initiatives: -

- a) AONB Farming Awards
- b) Gilpin2020 & Launch by HRH Prince of Wales
- c) Lower Wye Catchments Green Infrastructure & Natural Flood Management Project
- d) Wye Valley River Festival 2020
- e) Water Environment Grant ROAR & Catchment Advisors
- f) Priorities funding opportunity Welsh Government
- g) Offa's Dyke Collaboratory
- h) Ross Riverside

a) AONB Farming Awards

Monmouthshire Meadows Group won the 2019 Wye Valley AONB Farming Awards, receiving the Farming Awards' Trophy and a £400 cheque. Gadr Farm, Cwmcarnvan was awarded an 'Outstanding Contribution' certificate and Berry Hill Community Orchard were 'Highly Commended'. This was the 12th year of the Awards, which are for anyone managing land in or adjacent to the AONB that makes an outstanding contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape. The announcement of the winners was made at the Monmouthshire Show on July 6th. The judging panel consisted of Andrew Blake (AONB Manager), David Price (NFW Wales & JAC), Mike Williams (Wye & Usk Foundation) and Martin Rowberry (Coppett Hill Common Trust & 2017 winners).

b) Gilpin2020 & Launch by HRH Prince of Wales

2020 is the 250th anniversary of William Gilpin taking the Wye Tour in 1770. This was a significant event as it heralded the birth of British tourism. Gilpin was a pioneer of the 'Picturesque' and his ideas led to the concepts of landscape appreciation and environmental conservation, culminating in the designation of protected landscapes – our National Parks and AONBs. The Wye Valley AONB Unit is helping co-ordinate local organisations to celebrate this anniversary as a year-long opportunity to raise awareness of the cultural heritage of the Wye Valley, improving understanding and knowledge about the Wye Tour, its sights and

highlights, and provoking discussion about the landscape and environment of the Wye Valley AONB today.

Initiatives currently planned as part of Gilpin2020 include a Primary Schools project around Ross (the start of the Wye Tour), CreateRoss artistic workshops and exhibitions in Ross and at Goodrich Castle, several local walks along stretches of the Wye between Ross & Chepstow, talks and events in Ross, Monmouth and Chepstow and the updating and re-publication of The Picturesque Wye Tour booklet. For more details please see <https://gilpin2020.org/>

The Prince of Wales is visiting Ross-on-Wye on 5th November and will officially launch Gilpin2020, to celebrate the town's role as the birthplace of British tourism. His Royal Highness will tour a local producers' market and meet groups representing the strong philanthropic heritage of Ross, including the Wye Valley AONB stand and a range of local community organisations and their local business supporters, around the Old Market, Ross.

c) Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) Project

The Project has entered its final quarter of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) funding. However, some modest resources have been secured to continue with some elements of the project into next year.

Farm management advice

Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) have completed eleven farm advice visits in the Angidy catchment. Capital works funded with 50% grants through the project are being delivered by the farmers, including riparian fencing, farm yard infrastructure (to separate clean/dirty water), cross contour hedgerows and woodland linkage, fencing to assist rotational grazing, wet meadow management, leaky ditch barriers and maize under-sowing trials. Farmers have also been supported with applications to Glastir small grants where this fits with the farmer's ongoing business needs.

MCC access project research, development and GI strategy

Atkins consultancy have concluded a second report looking at 4 further Unclassified County Highways and water management proposals. This follows their modelling and investigations into the Chapel Hill Road/Limekiln Brook at Tintern. Surface water run-off causes significant degradation to these routes and various potential solutions are suggested. The next step is to get these prioritised and costed up for future capital bids.

Best practice/info sharing events

The NFM & GI Project has held or contributed to thirteen events to date. It has also worked with volunteer groups and held guided walks promoting the project and natural flood management opportunities.

A Natural Flood Management (NFM) seminar will be hosted on Wednesday 27th November 2019 at the Bridges Centre, Monmouth (poster attached). This free event will be a chance to local agencies and interested individuals to hear about different NFM approaches, experiences and best practice through a series of presentations, including from Chris Uttley (Environment Agency), Bethany Lewis (Herefordshire Council), David Gasca-Tucker (Atkins Consultancy) and Huw Thomas (Forest Research).

Pilot NFM work

Watercourse consents are being approved for a number of leaky dams on private land. These can be used in future to demonstrate locally show NFM can help to slow the flow of water through a catchment, by reducing run off and increasing the ability of catchments to hold water, which can help to reduce peak flows.

Invasive weed mapping and control

Thirteen locations with Japanese knotweed (JK) have been mapped and sprayed. The main site of American Skunk cabbage (ASC) in the Whitebrook catchment has also been sprayed. Local volunteers have also worked on a number of sites to control Himalayan Balsam (HB).

d) Wye Valley River Festival 2020

The Arts Council England grant of £70,000 has been confirmed, which means the majority of the funding is secured to progress with the Festival in 2020. Work is now underway with Phill Haynes, Festival Director, and Desperate Men, Artistic Directors, to consolidate the main concepts, features and artists around the Festival theme of ‘Time’.

Early in the new year the AONB team and the Festival team will undertake some team-working using the Lumina Spark model of personal & professional development, jointly with the Shropshire Hills AONB team and facilitated by NAAONB.

e) Water Environment Grant ROAR & Catchment Advisors

The Wye & Usk Foundation, working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Wye Valley AONB Unit and Herefordshire Rural Hub were successful with the Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) project application for the Water Environment Grant under the Rural Development Programme for England. The total project is for £672,000 until March 2021 for the English part of the Wye Catchment, including the English part of the AONB as well as the adjacent Garren & Gamber catchment. The main aims of the ROAR project are to:-

1. Engage stakeholders with tailored advice
eg. on improving water quality, diffuse pollution, good soil management, improving biodiversity, habitat condition and connectivity.
2. Promote land management practices
to reduce the impact of diffuse pollution from agriculture on phosphate levels in the Wye catchment.
3. Improve understanding and acceptance
amongst farmers, land managers and their advisors, of the need to improve water quality within the Wye catchment.
4. Demonstrate effective working practices
made possible by Catchment Partnerships.

The Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) have employed three new Catchment Advisors to operate through the ROAR Project and complement their existing team of Catchment Advisors. Ben Nott and Rebecca Meredith cover the English part of the Wye Valley AONB and the adjacent Garren & Gamber catchment, and operate from the AONB Office in

Monmouth while being integrated with the WUF Catchment Advisor team. To date Ben & Bex have visited 8 farms in the area and are preparing Farm Plans for each.

f) Priorities funding opportunity Welsh Government

Following the publication of *Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs & National Parks* (July 2018), officers from the Welsh AONBs, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Welsh Government (WG) have been meeting to discuss how to provide greater parity for AONBs with National Parks in Wales. Each AONB team was requested by WG to identify priority pressures and projects in the event of any additional WG fund becoming available. Currently identified projects that have been proposed and recently received modest support are

- Himalayan Balsam & Japanese Knotweed control
- Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) work - continuing NFM & GI capital work & landowner liaison when NRW funded Lower Wye Catchments NFM&GI Project ends in December 2019
- Walking & well-being initiatives
- Gilpin2020 events and community collaborations
- Wye Valley River Festival 2020 - volunteer co-ordination & training and a Schools engagement programme (between Monmouth & Chepstow)
- AONB interpretation
- AONB Youth Rangers

Officer from the Welsh AONBs, NRW, NAAONB & WG are meeting again in December to continue discussing greater parity for AONBs with National Parks in Wales.

g) Offa's Dyke Collaboratory (ODC)

The AONB Manager continues to be a Convenor of ODC along with Professor Keith Ray (Cardiff University), Professor Howard Williams (Chester University), Christopher Catling (Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales), Dr Paul Belford (Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust) & David McGlade (Offa's Dyke Association) that focuses on the promotion, interpretation and conservation of Offa's Dyke.

On-going work includes: -

- Offa's Dyke Conservation Management Plan (Cadw & Historic England - ed. André Berry) CMP and Year One Action Plan produced: sets a huge challenge and will attempt to reverse hundreds of years of so-called 'benign neglect'. Offa's Dyke Association (ODA) currently leading on Action Plan.
- Saturday 21st September - Early Medieval Wales Archaeological Research Group
Dr Paul Belford & Prof Keith Ray both are gave lectures on Offa's Dyke at the meeting at Haverfordwest.
- 29th -30th November - 'The Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia' conference
Prof Keith Ray to contribute a talk about the Dyke and the frontier in 8th-century Mercia to a conference at the Oxford University Dept for Continuing Education.
- 22nd January 2020 at Cardiff University - ODC second meeting
Follow up on the inaugural ODC meeting in Shrewsbury in April 2017. Invited group of experts will address recent active and substantive research including on mapping, reconnaissance, survey and excavation work on either/both Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke &/or closely relevant aspects of the 8th-9th century frontier.

- April/May 2020 - a major ODC ‘community projects’ event at Trefonen village hall
- 6th -9th July 2020 - The International Medieval Congress 2020, Leeds University
The special theme is ‘Borders’ and it is proposed that the Offa’s Dyke Collaboratory has a sponsored session or strand of sessions at this paramount European venue for medieval studies.

For more information see also <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/>

h) Ross Riverside

The AONB Development Officer has been working closely with Ross-on-Wye Town Council and the Herefordshire Meadows Group on the restoration of approximately 0.6 hectares of amenity grassland to floodplain meadow. Re-seeding has been completed with locally sourced traditional floodplain meadow seed. Pupils from Ashfield Park Primary School have also been involved. All the above organisation involved in the Ross Riverside meadow restoration project will be meeting HRH The Prince of Wales on 5th November.

HRH The Prince of Wales is Plantlife's Patron, and in 2013 called for the creation of new wild flower meadows, at least one in every county, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Queen’s Coronation. Herefordshire Meadows Group have 2 Coronation Meadows in the AONB, at Joan’s Hill Farm, Woolhope (donor site) and Hurstans, Sollers Hope (restoration / recipient site). AONB volunteers have worked on both sites over the years.

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Agenda Item 14a Natural Flood Management Seminar



Join the Wye Valley AONB Partnership to find out about national and local Natural Flood Management approaches



Presentations to include:

Chris Uttley (Environment Agency)

Bethany Lewis (Herefordshire Council)

David Gasca-Tucker (Atkins Consultancy)

Huw Thomas (Forest Research)

This free event is a chance to hear about different Natural Flood Management approaches, experiences and best practice through a series of presentations. If you have a project you wish to share please get in touch as there will be opportunities to hear people's own experiences and lessons learnt.

**Wednesday 27th November 2019 at the Bridges Centre,
Monmouth, NP25 5AS 11:45 to 16:00 (lunch provided)**

Booking essential: Please contact Chris Radford projects@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk to book your place by Friday 8th November 2019.



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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