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County Hall
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NP15 1GA

22nd February 2021

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 1st March, 2021 at 2.00 pm
Remote Meeting

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for absence and introductions.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Chairperson's announcements - County Councillor David Dovey.	
4.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	1 - 10
5.	Public Question Time.	
6.	Wye Water Quality:	
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15.	Dates of meetings for 2021: 2pm Monday 5th July 2021 (Subject to Covid-19 restrictions the meeting will be held at Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford). 2pm Monday 1st November 2021 (Subject to Covid-19 restrictions the meeting will be held at Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford).	

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
Vacancy
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 R. Edwards – 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
H. Dale – 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
K. Ballard – Local Tourism Sector
A. Nixon – Local Wildlife Trusts
D. Price – National Farmers Union Wales

Public Information

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Welsh Language

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

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Outcomes we are working towards

Nobody Is Left Behind

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

People Are Confident, Capable and Involved

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

Our County Thrives

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

Our priorities

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

Our Values

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

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Remote Microsoft Teams Meeting on Monday, 2nd November, 2020 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor A. Webb (Chair)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: M. Lane

Herefordshire Council

Councillors: J. Hardwick, P. Symonds and Y. Watson

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillor C. McFarling

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

GAPTC – Mr. C. Evers

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas
National Farmers Union - Mr. M. Price

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron

Technical Advice Officers:

Wye Valley AONB Manager – Mr. A. Blake
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams
Monmouthshire County Council – Mrs. W. Barnard

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: D. Dovey, B. Durkin, D. Wheeler.

Mr. B. Nash, Mr. R. Niblett, Ms. D. Griffiths, Ms. H. McDowell and
Councillor G. Powell

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1. Election of Chair

We elected County Councillor A. Webb as Chair.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

We appointed County Councillor Y. Watson as Vice-Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

None received.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee dated 2nd March 2020 were confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

Mr. A. Thomas had sent his apologies for this meeting.

5. July 2020 For Information Report

We noted the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee information report.

6. Public Question Time

No questions received.

7. Local Authority Financial Contributions & Memorandum of Understanding

We received the report on Local Authorities' contributions and AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2021 – 2024.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The AONB Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the AONB Partnership.
- The current MoU ends in March 2021 and a revised three year edition, until March 2024, is being finalised between the four local authorities.
- The MoU includes the minimum contribution expected from the local authorities 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 anticipated AONB grant funding offer letters, when received, will be appended to the MoU.
- The local authorities' financial contributions to the Wye Valley AONB Partnership are requested with a 1% increase on the current year.

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- For every £1 of Local Authority contribution in 2019/20 the AONB Unit has levered in over £10.

We resolved:

- (i) to request from the constituent local authorities the financial contributions for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership for 2021/22.
- (ii) to encourage the constituent local authorities to finalise and agree the AONB Memorandum of Understanding for 2021 - 2024

8. AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 Post Consultation Draft, SEA & HRA Screening and State of the AONB Report

We received a report regarding the Joint Advisory Committee's endorsement of the Post Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 and to recommend the Plan for adoption, subject to the Habitats Regulation Assessment modified screening and realigning the Plan period.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Post Consultation Draft of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025 has been prepared. The Post Consultation Draft (amended) and the version showing the amendments to the Consultation Draft Plan are available on the AONB website:

<https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/2020-2025-consultation/>.

- The following documents are also on AONB website:
 - the table of comments received from the public consultation with the formal responses and proposed modifications to the Plan.
 - The draft State of the AONB Report.
 - The Screening Reports for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).
- The SEA Screening conclusion that the Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects is supported by Cadw, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales.
- The HRA Screening was partially supported by Natural Resources Wales. Natural England has requested some modifications to the HRA screening which is now underway and needs to be completed before the Plan can be formally adopted by the local authorities and government agencies.

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Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Remote Microsoft Teams Meeting on Monday, 2nd November, 2020 at 2.00 pm

- The finalised Plan is anticipated before the end of the year with adoption likely early in 2021. Therefore, it would be appropriate to re-define the five year Plan period as 2021-2026.

We resolved to:

- (i) approve the Post Consultation Draft version of the AONB Management Plan and recommend the Plan for adoption by the local authorities and government agencies, subject to the Habitats Regulation Assessment modified screening.
- (ii) endorse the realignment of the five year period of the AONB Management Plan to cover 2021-2026.

9. Wye Valley River Festival 2020

We received a report regarding the achievements and the initial evaluation of the fourth Wye Valley River Festival, re-imagined due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The fourth Wye Valley River Festival had to be completely re-imagined because of the Coronavirus Pandemic, and postponed from an outdoor art & environment festival on 2nd - 17th May 2020 to an on-line festival on 21st - 27th September 2020.
- The theme of 'Time' was retained, celebrating nature, culture, landscape and life along the Wye Valley; past, present and future.
- As with previous Wye Valley River Festivals, this fourth Festival was organised by the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the professional Festival Management team with an overall budget of £200,000 working in collaboration with arts professionals, conservationists and local communities.
- The re-imagined Festival evolved to an on-line, web-based series of live and pre-recorded creations and events that proved both challenging and rewarding for many artists and participants.
- The Festival presented over 90 hours of content, involving 188 paid artists and contributors and 121 new products and commissions.
- Funding for the Festival primarily came from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Arts Council England, Visit Wales, Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Government, Forestry Commission, Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership, Environment Agency, Ross Town Council and in-kind support from the AONB Unit.
- A full evaluation of the Festival is being undertaken to appraise lessons learned as well as a review of the on-line data analytics.
- Once the evaluation is complete future prospects for any further Wye Valley River Festivals will need to be determined.

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- The (pre-Covid-19) Business Plan aimed to establish an autonomous body to adopt the Festival and there is on-going interest in pursuing this.

We welcomed the successful accomplishments of the Wye Valley River Festival 2020. The AONB Manager would report back to the next meeting regarding progress.

10. Undergrounding Scheme

We received a report regarding the undergrounding work of overhead power lines.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- Western Power Distribution (WPD) works in collaboration with the AONB Unit on identifying a programme of undergrounding of low voltage electricity power-lines in the AONB.
- WPD require the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) to approve new undergrounding schemes prior to further investigation and evaluation work taking place.
- The new proposed scheme is for power lines across Offa's Dyke Path National Trail on the back of The Kymin.
- A further scheme at Kerne Bridge is with the Gloucestershire WPD team which is progressing the necessary permissions.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- JAC members were asked to provide details of any power lines that were considered to be located in an iconic position in the landscape that required undergrounding. These could then be put forward to WPD for consideration.
- AONB staff would provide Members of the JAC with details of the prioritisation and determination process for undergrounding power lines within the AONB.
- It was noted that the undergrounding process covers the National Parks and AONBs of the Western Power region (Midlands and South Wales Regions).
- The geology of the AONB is more amenable to undergrounding compared to some other areas.
- WPD is looking at low voltage power lines that are in or affect iconic views of landscapes.
- Proposals are put to the regional WPD steering group, which includes a member from each Designated Landscape. The proposals are discussed with a view to prioritising the list of sites for undergrounding.

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- Town and Parish Councils are periodically reminded to also submit details of power lines that are considered to be located in an iconic position in the landscape that require undergrounding.

We resolved to endorse the proposed undergrounding of overhead power lines across Offa's Dyke Path National Trail on The Kymin.

11. Review of Designated Landscapes in England and Wales

We received a report outlining progress with the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes England and Wales.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was published a year ago with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- Proposal 24 states that "AONBs should be strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, and renamed as National Landscapes."
- The formal response from Government has yet to be produced but is anticipated over the winter. Meanwhile Natural England, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) and National Parks England have published a Joint Statement.
- The NAAONB and AONB lead officers are collaborating with DEFRA on the provision of information, statistics and case studies in support of implementing the Glover Review.
- In September 2020 Welsh AONB lead officers met on-line with Deputy Welsh Government Minister Hannah Blythyn and officials to discuss the on-going implementation of 'Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs & National Parks'.
- The Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) capital funding from Welsh Government has been awarded including a decarbonisation scheme for the AONB Office.
- Welsh Government responsibility for AONBs and National Parks has subsequently moved back to Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- With regard to liaison with Malvern Hills AONB, the Wye Valley AONB office has worked closely with Malvern Hills AONB at officer level. In the past annual study tours have been shared.
- There has been a proposal for a National Park linking the Wye Valley AONB with Malvern Hills AONB but this was not raised in the Glover Review.

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- The AONB Manager would liaise with Councillor Symonds regarding his question in respect of Ross Town Council's views on replacing diesel vehicles with electric vehicles.
- The National AONB budget for DEFRA is in the region of £6 - £7 million. Therefore, doubling the AONB resources in England would equate to in the region of £12 - £15 million. In terms of impact on the national economy, the funding for AONBs is minimal. The National Parks budget equates to around £50 million.
- With regard to the White Paper on Planning for the Future, the Wye Valley AONB office did not submit its views via the consultation process. However, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) submitted a paper on behalf of all AONBs. The response by NAAONB would be circulated to the Joint Advisory Committee.

We resolved to note the report and that the AONB Manager would circulate to the Joint Advisory Committee the response by NAAONB in respect of the White Paper on Planning for the Future.

12. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) & HCF AONB Fund

We received the report regarding the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £42,056 allocated from the £100,000 offered by Welsh Government for 2020/21, meaning there remains £57,944 available for applications and projects.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has produced the latest accounts for the Wye Valley AONB Fund which was established with £10,000 for immediate funding alongside an Endowment Fund of £50,000. Current balances are £6,776.51 and £52,045.26 respectively.
- Applications are welcome for both sets of funding.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Concern was expressed regarding the integrity and sustainability of the River Wye due to phosphate pollution, climate change and the impact of droughts. It was considered that there was a need to address these issues so that we can, as suggested in the 25 Year Environment Plan, leave the river in a better condition than it currently is for future generations. Studies are ongoing with the Environment Agency which suggests that water can be stored in the upper catchments with the use of leaky dams and flood management techniques which would maintain the flow of the river, even in drought conditions.

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- It was noted that farmers in the Wye Valley take their responsibilities seriously and are encouraged to do so by the National Farmers Union (NFU). The NFU is encouraging the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales, the AONB and interested parties to identify where the phosphates are coming from.
- The AONB Manager informed the Committee that the phosphate monitoring system changed four years ago and there hasn't been consistent monitoring undertaken on the river Wye as previously carried out. About half of the issues relate to sewerage whilst the other half are coming from agriculture.
- Farming advice is being administered in Herefordshire supporting farmers and land owners in improving land management techniques to reduce phosphate and water run-off.
- Work is being undertaken to address these issues.
- The nutrient Management Board for the River Wye had recommended that both Monmouthshire County Council, Forest of Dean District Council and the AONB Manager should have some level of observer status, to be kept abreast of developments.
- Natural Resources Wales has been reviewing its phosphate monitoring procedures and will shortly be publishing its review.
- Herefordshire Council is being very proactive regarding this matter. Representatives from Herefordshire Council had met with representatives of Herefordshire NFU and there is another meeting scheduled for Tuesday 3rd November 2020 to continue that dialogue.
- The AONB Manager had planned for a representative from the Environment Agency or Natural Resources Wales to attend previous Joint Advisory Committee meetings to present information on the matter. The AONB Manager will invite a representative to present an update report at the next meeting regarding this matter.

We resolved to receive the report and that the AONB Manager arrange a report to the next Joint Advisory Committee meeting regarding the phosphate monitoring and the condition of the River Wye.

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 information was noted:

- The national AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference scheduled for early July 2020 was cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

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- The Colchester Declaration – a ‘declaration for nature’ - has been progressed through a series of on-line meetings and AONB partnerships refining proposals for their Nature Recovery Plans. A National Landscapes Nature Recovery Coordinator has been employed part time to take the initiative forward.
- The NAAONB submitted a £4.5M application to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in September 2020, which was unsuccessful.
- Landscapes for Life Week (formerly Outstanding Week) was 19th – 27th September 2020, coinciding conveniently with the Wye Valley River Festival.
- The NAAONB has been granted some resources from DEFRA to run a National Landscapes advocacy project on the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme.
- Art in the Landscape - A National Strategy, was commissioned by the NAAONB and launched in July 2020 with further training on-line this Autumn, including contributions from the Wye Valley AONB and Wye Valley River Festival team.
- The AGM for the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) is on 19th November 2020 and will be on-line, as will the Chairperson’s Conference early in the new-year.

We noted the report.

14. AONB / Partner Progress

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

- Covid-19 impacts - on AONB and AONB Unit.
- AONB 50th Anniversary 2021 & Gilpin2020+1.
- Lower Wye Catchments projects - Natural Flood Management and INNS in Monmouthshire & Valley Brook, Gloucestershire.
- Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Water Environment Grant (WEG) project.
- Riparian Trees project with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust.
- Youth Rangers.

Having received the report it was noted that in addition to the Nutrient Management Plan, Herefordshire Council is also engaging with parish councils and community hubs regarding riparian responsibilities with a view to mitigate and minimize flooding.

We noted the report.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Remote Microsoft Teams Meeting on Monday, 2nd November, 2020 at 2.00 pm**

15. Proposed dates of meetings for 2021

To be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:

Monday 1st March 2021.

Monday 5th July 2021.

Monday 1st November 2021

The venue for the meetings to be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm.

WYE WATER QUALITY

Purpose

To update members on current situation with water quality in the River Wye, pending a presentation at the next meeting.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Notes the current situation and activities of partner organisations in relation water quality issues in the River Wye and its tributaries.
- B. Welcomes the offer of the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales for a presentation at the next meeting on 5th July.

Key Issues

- The water quality of the Wye, particularly in relation to Phosphate levels, remains a critical issue in the Wye Catchment.
- The concentration of pollutants, particularly phosphates, in the Wye catchment, exacerbated by warm weather and any reduction in water quantity, can lead to algae blooms on the Wye.
- In 2019 Natural England advised that plans or projects that result in potentially damaging nutrient loading to the Wye, among other catchments in England, would require an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- Natural Resources Wales completed a review in December 2020 which confirmed that more than 60% of the Welsh Wye is now failing limits for phosphate.
- The Wye Nutrient Management Board, hosted by Herefordshire Council, is the lead body coordinating collaborative effort on the issue.
- The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales have agreed to give a presentation on water quality issues at the next JAC meeting on 5th July.

Reasons

In July 2020 the JAC received an update on the water quality and quantity issues following the extensive algal bloom on the Wye in both Spring 2020 and Summer 2019.

The Wye Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) was published in 2014 to reduce phosphate levels in the River Wye SAC to below the set limit by 2027, in line with the final date for achieving good ecological status set by the Water Framework Directive. The Wye NMP

identified that inputs from sewage treatment works typically represented the most significant source of phosphate although inputs from livestock were also significant. The Wye Nutrient Management Board was established to oversee the NMP comprising; Herefordshire Council, Powys Council, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, the Environment Agency, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, Wye and Usk Foundation, National Farmers' Union, Farm Herefordshire and the County Land and Business Association.

The River Lugg is a tributary of the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is itself an SAC for its lower reaches. The mouth of the River Lugg forms the northern extent of the Wye Valley AONB on the Wye. The River Lugg is currently exceeding its limits for phosphates, as a result of water pollution from both 'point' source (in particular sewage outlets) and 'diffuse' source (in particular agricultural run-off).

The Wye and Lugg Monitoring Dashboard contains a range of data and analysis of the situation, primarily to provide an overview for members of the Nutrient Management Board: <https://environment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=1dc5b2adc99e48b095950055f2785d7a>

Implications

Natural England concluded in 2019 that there is reasonable scientific doubt as to whether the NMP provides adequate mitigation to reduce phosphate levels and consequently there is limited scope for the approval of planning applications that give rise to additional damaging effects on the integrity of the SAC.

Herefordshire Council has set out guidance to help with planning applications and the provision of suitable information, such as requirements for mains sewers, septic tanks, treatment plants and cesspits, etc.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) recently completed a review of rivers in Wales and has confirmation that more than 60% of the Welsh Wye is now failing limits for phosphate, see: <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/news-and-events/news/nrw-issues-new-advice-to-safeguard-the-river-wye-special-area-of-conservation/?lang=en>. NRW published a Planning Position Statement (which is appended) and they are now liaising with the relevant local Planning Authorities; Monmouthshire and Powys County Councils and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to examine what impact this will have on their respective planning processes. These authorities are also now joining the Wye Nutrient Management Board.

In practice this will mean that each and every project, plan or permission within the Wye Catchment may be required to demonstrate that it has a neutral, or better, impact on reducing the phosphate levels in the Wye and its tributaries.

Meanwhile the Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF), NFU, Farm Herefordshire and partners in the agricultural supply chain and farming community have continued work on finding ways to reduce the amount of phosphate entering the rivers. In addition, WUF are monitoring closely the phosphate levels in various tributaries where the Wye's algal bloom has started in recent years. This will help better understand the problem and ensure that remedial work takes place in the right places.

In addition, RePhoKUs is a research project led by Lancaster University that aims to re-focus phosphorus use in the UK food system in order to achieve sustainable phosphorus use and deliver valued ecosystem services such as clean water and biodiversity. The project is

studying the Wye as one of three catchments in the UK that are all suffering from phosphorus pollution to varying degrees. The project will undertake the first ever phosphorus vulnerability assessment of the UK's food system, bringing together experts in catchment science, adaptive capacity and food system vulnerability. The researchers note that use of phosphorous within UK agriculture is very inefficient which leads to large wastage causing nutrient pollution or eutrophication in inland and coastal waters. For further information see <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/rephokus/> and their introductory video about the Phosphorus Story https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ia_KKj-UN0.

Welsh Water are currently working on Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMPs) that will identify sewerage and wastewater treatment needs over the next 25 years. The first iteration of the DWMPs will be completed by the end of 2022 and will be a key source of information for Welsh Water's 2025-2030 investment plans.

Wye Valley AONB staff have been active members of the Wye Catchment Partnership and there are several AONB projects that attempt to address some of the contributing factors, such as reducing soil erosion and agricultural run-off into the river:

- Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects in tributaries and sub-catchments of the Wye in Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire have a dedicated Lower Wye Project Officer, Nickie Moore, supported by the WUF Catchment Advisors, working with farmers and giving advice and grants for land management and NFM improvements.
- Two WUF Catchment Advisors have been seconded to the Wye Valley AONB Unit as part of the Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) project with WUF, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Herefordshire Rural Hub, covering Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. They have been focusing on advising farmers and preparing Farm Plans to help secure other grants to improve land management practices. Unfortunately the contract for one of the Advisors ends on March 31st.
- details of the new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and the forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme are awaited, but it is anticipated that these schemes will help address some of the issues and contribute to reducing soil erosion and agricultural run-off into the river.

The AONB Partnership will continue to collaborate with those involved with the river and those that can influence the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area, for the benefit of the people and the wildlife of the Wye Valley.

Background

Phosphorus is a key nutrient required for crop and livestock production. The silty soils of the Wye Catchment are phosphorus rich and highly dispersive meaning that runoff from the land into rivers can cause nutrient pollution or eutrophication. Such losses and the resulting pollution are expected to be exacerbated by climate change. Eutrophication is very costly to society and devalues many ecosystem services linked to water quality including water quantity for drinking, biodiversity and recreation.

The Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive are European Regulations. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 ends the supremacy of EU law in UK law, and converts directly applicable EU legislation (in particular, EU Regulations and Decisions) as it stands at the moment of exit into domestic law, and preserves legislation previously made in the UK to implement EU obligations. The legislation therefore continues to have the same effect that it had before the UK left the EU, unless or until it is changed by Parliament.

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Planning Position Statement: SAC Designated Rivers & Phosphates

Purpose of the Position Statement

This Statement sets out NRW's position on new developments which may lead to further deterioration in the condition of the Wye riverine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to the potential to increase phosphate levels within the SAC. This is required to respond to the compliance assessment undertaken which highlight the failures to achieve the standards required to meet the water quality condition for this designated river.

This position statement relates only to those developments that require screening and assessment through the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process, where the potential effects on the River Wye SAC are due to increased amounts or concentration of phosphate. Other types of issues arising from any development in the Wye catchment with the potential to affect any site previously designated pursuant to EU retained law, need to continue to be properly addressed through HRA processes .

It applies to all waterbodies within the Wye catchment north of Bigsweir Bridge, Monmouthshire.

Background

The River Wye is a SAC and is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations).

Natural Resources Wales has set new phosphate standards for the river Wye SAC following the revised [Common Standards Monitoring guidance](#) updated in 2016 by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). A compliance assessment, conducted by NRW, against these standards found widespread failures on the river Wye.

New development within any part of the catchment which will increase the amount or concentration of wastewater effluent or organic materials discharged directly or indirectly into the catchment's waterbodies has the potential to increase phosphate levels within those waterbodies.

Whilst a third of the waterbodies within the catchment satisfied the standards, the headroom within these waterbodies to accommodate increased levels of phosphates is limited. If phosphate levels are allowed to rise, the water bodies are at risk of failing the standard.

Additionally, for failing sections of the catchment there is no headroom and further increases in phosphate will further worsen the condition of the SAC.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Under the Habitats Regulations, where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and where it is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site previously (designated pursuant to EU retained law) the competent authority must carry out an appropriate assessment of the implication of the plan or project in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the compliance assessment, the competent authority may normally only approve the plan or project having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of a site (previously designated pursuant to EU retained law) if necessary taking into account any conditions or restriction which will mitigate any negative impacts of the plan or project.

Any proposed development within the Wye catchment that might increase the amount of phosphate within the catchment could lead to additional damaging effects to the SAC features and therefore such proposals should be screened through a HRA to determine whether they are likely to have a significant effect on the SAC condition. Once issued by NRW, this position statement in combination with the Compliance Assessment Report, applies to all development that is yet to be determined by the relevant planning authority

NRW's Role

We are a statutory or specialist consultee within the planning system, both during the development plan making process, and during the planning application process. Our main role is to provide advice on how planning policies and development proposals should protect and enhance the environment and allow for our natural resources to be sustainably managed. Our advice is informed by the information submitted by the applicant, our expertise, and the Welsh Government's aspirations and policies for the environment as set out in national planning policy, and relevant legislation.

It is the role of planning authorities to determine planning applications and in so doing they will consider our advice alongside information submitted to them from the applicant, and other parties including other advisors and the public. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is the competent authority under the Habitats Directive requirements for HRA and decides when an appropriate assessment is required. In its role as a Statutory Nature Conservation Body (SNCB) NRW must be consulted by the competent authority during an appropriate assessment. The competent authority must for the purposes of the appropriate assessment have regard to any representations made by the SNCB within such reasonable time as the authority may specify.

Summary of Natural Resources Wales's current position

A large number of water bodies on the Wye are failing their phosphate targets. Even where they are passing, there is generally little headroom. For this reason we are unable to rule out the possibility that additional phosphate input on any part of the River Wye SAC will further damage the SAC. We therefore recommend that any proposed new development that might otherwise result in increasing the amount of phosphate within the SAC either by direct or indirect discharges must be able to demonstrate phosphate neutrality or betterment.

Next steps

We will collaborate with partners to support the development of further advice to assist in assessing development proposals in relation to phosphates. We intend to mirror this approach for the other water quality indicators in the river and will set out clear timescales for this in the New Year.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

AONB UNIT WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022

Purpose

To seek members' approval for the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year, which is subject to new funding agreements with DEFRA and NRW.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the AONB Unit Work Programme for 2021/2022

Key Issues

- The attached table sets out the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit in the form of the Work Programme 2021/2022, including the AONB's 50th Anniversary during 2021.
- Activities are assessed for impacts of any potential on-going implications from Covid-19.
- During the year it is expected that the AONB Unit will remain with about 8 FTE posts although some staff and roles will change and capacity of the AONB Unit continues to be stretched.
- Priorities include the development of the AONB Nature Recovery Network Plan, the anticipated implementation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (in England); the delivery of a second year of projects funded through the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme, the culmination of the Restoring Our Amazing River project (on the England side of the AONB); ongoing Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management projects; and the promotion and administration of grants through the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation AONB Fund, responding to requirements and impacts from easing of Covid-19 restrictions, while continuing a range of existing activities and projects and retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.
- The core budgets in the Work Programme have yet to be confirmed as new funding agreements are awaited with NRW and DEFRA.
- The AONB Unit budget as presented to the AONB Steering Group is £271,350 and additional funding programmes, grants and match funding is anticipated to exceed £780,000 levered into the AONB during the year.

Reasons

The main tasks in the year ahead are:

- the implementation of the statutory AONB Management Plan 2021-26

- working with farmers and landowners on conservation and enhancement of the landscape through:-
 - the anticipated delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme;
 - the culmination of the Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Water Environment Grant (WEG) funded project with Catchment Advisors working through the Wye & Usk Foundation
 - continuing the AONB Farming Awards,
 - developing initiatives in the Woolhope Dome area and
 - furthering the Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management work through the Lower Wye Project Officer
- developing the AONB Nature Recovery Network Plan and initiatives with a dedicated Lower Wye Nature Recovery Project officer, funded for one year by Welsh Government.
- continuing working with diverse groups through the Youth Rangers and mindSCAPE programmes, both part funded through the Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership with ArtSpace Cinderford leading on mindSCAPE with Arts Council England funding
- delivering ongoing partnership initiatives, such as the recreation promotion work with the Wye Valley Walk Partnership and the cultural heritage legacy opportunities related to the Overlooking the Wye scheme
- developing and submitting new projects, partnership initiatives and funding bids for the future delivery of the AONB Management Plan including landscape scale partnership projects and supporting the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory
- Celebrating the Wye Valley AONB's 50th anniversary.

Implications

The AONB core budget for 2021-22 has been proposed as £271,350. New funding agreements are awaited with both Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and DEFRA. Both have reassured that the funding will continue. However, currently the details and funding allocations are yet to be confirmed. The various additional AONB funding programmes, grants and match funding initiatives are anticipated to lever in investment and expenditure in excess of £780,000 through the year.

Welsh Government have confirmed a second year of Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) capital funding and a retained level of the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) at £100,000.

The Work Programme 2021/22 is facilitated by grant funding from various sources which enables the retention of 2 short term posts; a seconded Catchment Advisor and the Lower Wye Project Officer, with a new Lower Wye Nature Recovery Project officer, additional to the core AONB Unit team of 5 staff. Two members of the core team work 4 days per week. However, over the year the AONB budgets and grant match-funding commitments will be supplemented by drawing on AONB reserves. This may be relieved or exacerbated depending on the new DEFRA & NRW settlements.

The long term security of funding for the AONB Unit and future AONB Work Programmes will depend on the way both DEFRA and Welsh Government respond to the recommendations in the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in Wales and England about appropriate levels of funding and staffing for AONBs. Welsh Government continue to offer short term funding which, while welcome, does not facilitate longer term or strategic planning.

Overall the AONB Unit business plan, based on the Work Programme, focuses on maximising the benefits for the local communities, the local economy and the outstanding landscape, while optimising the resources available. Best use is made of opportunities for collaboration and maintaining a level of flexibility and capacity to lever in funding and resources wherever possible.

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AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<p>AONB Management Plan 2021-2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise design of adopted Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Publicise and promote Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Monitor use of Management Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries and by stakeholders 	1,000	<p>WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features</p> <p>WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan</p>	AONBM, DO, IO	June 2020 ●
<p>Farming in Protected Landscapes</p> <p>Support, as directed by DEFRA, farmers and other land managers to help them diversify their income streams and lay the groundwork for Environmental Land Management (ELM) uptake.</p> <p>Provide support to farmers to help grow businesses, create green jobs, enhance biodiversity and invest in infrastructure to attract more diverse visitors to support local economies Through (A) farm level projects and (B) wider infrastructure and projects on farmland.</p>	[TBC]	<p>WV-F1 Encourage farmers and landowners to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve or enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>WV-F2 Influence policy on, and encourage the maximum uptake of, agri-environment and other appropriate schemes, including support for small-holders, where they progress the conservation or enhancement of the natural beauty, biodiversity, historic environment and Special Qualities of the AONB, particularly through Catchment Sensitive Farming and mixed farming of resilient, sustainable and low-GHG emission systems</p> <p>WV-F3 Identify good agricultural practices that are appropriate to the challenges facing the farmers of the AONB and disseminate through networks, partnerships and training.</p> <p>WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB</p> <p>WV-F5 Promote a wider understanding of the value of farming to the landscape and economy of the AONB</p> <p>WV-E2 Raise awareness of good practice and encourage local businesses in the AONB to take opportunities to become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, particularly in ways that sustain the natural beauty of the area</p>	AONBM, DO, CLO, LWVPO,	March 2022 ●
<p>AONB Farming Awards</p> <p>Promote & publicise 13th Awards for farmers, landowners and land managers that make an outstanding contribution to conserving &/or enhancing the features, special qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Awards and handle entries 	1,600	<p>WV-L5 Support measures which increase public awareness and appreciation of the natural beauty and importance of the Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>WV-F1 Encourage farmers and landowners to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve or enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>WV-F5 Promote a wider understanding of the value of farming to the landscape and economy of the AONB</p>	DO, AONBM, FAO	May/ June /July 2021 ●

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
Business Plan for 2021/2022



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visits of all farm entries for short-listing Judging Present the prizes at the Monmouthshire Show (if held) Involve winner in Open Farm Sunday event. 		<p>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</p> <p>WV-E2 Raise awareness of good practice and encourage local businesses in the AONB to take opportunities to become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, particularly in ways that sustain the natural beauty of the area</p>		
<p>Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of SDF to potential applicants Assist potential applicants with application process and project development Collate SDF project applications for the SDF Assessment Panel Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating SDF funds. Training for SDF Assessment Panel members 	<p>[£100,000 Welsh Gov + c£100k match]</p>	<p>WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features</p> <p>WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity</p> <p>WV-C1 Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment, decarbonisation and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3</p>	<p>AONBM, CLO, FAO, LWPO, LWNRO,</p>	<p>March 2022</p> <p>●</p>
<p>Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) to potential applicants Assist potential applicants with application process and project development Collate HCF AONB Fund project applications for the SDF Assessment Panel and liaise with HCF Service SDF Assessment Panel recommending allocations to HCF. Training for SDF Assessment Panel members 	<p>[£10k HCF AONB Fund + c£10k match]</p>	<p>WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features</p> <p>WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity</p> <p>WV-C1 Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment, decarbonisation and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3</p>	<p>AONBM, CLO</p>	<p>March 2022</p> <p>●</p>
<p>Landscape & Habitat Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise monthly volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves 	<p>2,400</p>	<p>WV-L2 Encourage and enhance appropriate landscape scale and green infrastructure action by all particularly on consolidating ecosystem services and positively contributing to habitat connectivity that allows wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change</p>	<p>DO, CLO, LWPO,</p>	<p>Mar 2022</p> <p>●</p>



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) and Natural Flood Management (NFM) initiatives working with local land owners, managers & stakeholders Manage control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) particularly identified stands of Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Skunk Cabbage Liaise over national roadside verge & B-Line initiatives with local authorities, Highways Agency & other stakeholders Continue collaboration with Ross Town Council over management of Ross Riverside. Develop initiatives focused on Orchards (Noble Chafer), River (Water Crowfoot), Woodland (Woodland Butterfly assemblage), Grassland (Bumblebee assemblage), General (Hedgehog) 	[20,000]	<p>WV-L4 Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change</p> <p>WV-B2 Encourage and support measures that contribute to the management of all statutory designated sites and County local/key wildlife sites so that they are in favourable condition and within robust ecological networks</p> <p>WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity</p> <p>WV-B4 Identify species and diseases considered to be detrimental to the biodiversity value of the AONB and encourage their monitoring, management and, where appropriate, their control</p> <p>WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB</p> <p>WV-W3 Support the development of employment and skills and markets for local timber and woodland produce</p> <p>WV-W4 Support the monitoring, management and where appropriate, control of diseases, pests and other threats, which may cause substantial mortality in tree species and woodland habitats and seek to mitigate the landscape impact of any loss</p>	LWNRO	
<p>Website, Public Relations and social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular press & social media releases and magazine articles / advertorial On-going updating and management of www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk and social media sites e.g. Facebook, Instagram and twitter. Maintenance of www.wyevalleywalk.org and hosting of www.overlookingthewye.org.uk & www.wyevalleyriverfestival.org.uk websites. Re-establishing 'Picturesque' as a regular on-line AONB newsletter, to provide information and interpretation to increase awareness and appreciation of the AONB 	4,000	<p>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</p> <p>WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness</p>	IO / ALL	Mar 2022 ●

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
Business Plan for 2021/2022



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ <i>[non AONB]</i>	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/ s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<p>AONB Partnership events For JAC members, AONB Ward members, representatives from partner organisations and local Town/Parish/Community Councils and stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run AONB Partnership Seminar/forum for 50th Anniversary of designation of Wye Valley AONB Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues in late September 2021 Promote & disseminate JAC contacts & processes for other organisations & individuals to feed into JAC & AONB Partnership. 	1,600	<p><i>WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-P7 Encourage partners to be champions and ambassadors for the AONB in their contact with other interests, and ensure those interests recognise and consider the Management Plan and AONB work programme when relating to the area</i></p>	AONBM / FAO	Feb 2022 ●
<p>Exhibitions, Activities & Outreach Promote the AONB through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks/presentations to local groups Stands at the Monmouthshire Show and other relevant shows. Gilpin2020+ events, local exhibitions and other local appropriate / prestigious events. AONB 50th Anniversary programme of events Promote & lead guided walks, events, children's activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB 	1,400 5,000	<p><i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i></p> <p><i>WV-E4 Raise awareness of the value of the AONB and the importance of retaining a high quality environment in attracting and retaining entrepreneurs, relocating businesses, inward investment and skilled personnel</i></p> <p><i>WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness</i></p>	ALL	Mar 2022 ●
<p>Youth Rangers – Foresters' Forest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue structured programme of activity for 5th Cohort of young people (14-16 year olds) that will increase their skill set in landscape and heritage conservation and management. Develop the next phase of the scheme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage Train new Leaders and scope for next Cohort 	1,000 <i>[4,000]</i>	<p><i>WV-F4 Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB</i></p> <p><i>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</i></p> <p><i>WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB</i></p>	CLO, LWPO, LWNRO	Mar 2022 ●
AONB Budget Sub-total	£18,000			
Tasks below covered in AONB Unit costs	£252,830			

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AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<p>AONB Strategy & Development Advisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew contract for year to support AONB Manager with planning advice. Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members 		<p>WV-D1 Ensure a consistent and coherent framework of planning policies relating to the AONB is fully reflected in the statutory land use planning documents and their effectiveness monitored</p> <p>WV-D2 Encourage and support high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage, landscaping and Green Infrastructure in all developments, including Permitted Development, to ensure greater sustainability and decarbonisation, and that they complement, conserve and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and benefit or enhance the natural environment</p> <p>WV-D3 Resist inappropriate development which will create a persistent and dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and/or if it damages Special Qualities in the AONB, including through high levels of noise and/or light pollution or any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or other sites designated as environmentally important</p>	AONBM, FAO	March 2022 ●
<p>Wye Valley River Festival 2022?</p> <p>Evaluate future prospects & governance for Festival.</p> <p>Help establish CIC to take forward Festival</p> <p>Support Research & Development for next Festival</p>	[10,000]	<p>WV-A1 Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness</p> <p>WV-L5 Support measures which increase public awareness and appreciation of the natural beauty and importance of the Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</p>	AONBM, CLO / ALL	May 2020 ● Mar 2022 ●
<p>MindSCAPE</p> <p>Initiative enabling people living with dementia to reconnect with the landscape, through arts and creative environmental activities, both in Care homes & established activity group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage project and submit reports & claims to Foresters' Forest LPS for HLF Supervise contractor, Artspace Cinderford, organising regular creative sessions, workshops and social activities for participants. Develop opportunities to expand project Share good practice with other AONBs & stakeholders 	[20,000]	<p>WV-W5 Increase understanding, awareness and enjoyment of trees and the special nature of the Wye Valley woodlands and promote them as a resource for appropriate educational, community, recreational and health opportunities</p> <p>WV-C2 Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape</p> <p>WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate</p>	DO	Mar 2022 ●



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ <i>[non AONB]</i>	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<p>Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Support Catchment Advisors (CAs) working in AONB & wider Wye catchment in partnership with Wye & Usk Foundation through Water Environment Grant (WEG) funded project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage farmers & land managers with tailored advice and produce Farm Plans Promote land management practices to reduce impacts in the Wye catchment. Improve understanding and acceptance amongst Farmers, land managers & stakeholders Host demonstrations of effective working practices 	[70,000]	<p>WV-F1 Encourage farmers and landowners to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve or enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB</p> <p>WV-F2 Influence policy on, and encourage the maximum uptake of, agri-environment and other appropriate schemes, including support for small-holders, where they progress the conservation or enhancement of the natural beauty, biodiversity, historic environment and Special Qualities of the AONB, particularly through Catchment Sensitive Farming and mixed farming of resilient, sustainable and low-GHG emission systems</p> <p>WV-F5 Promote a wider understanding of the value of farming to the landscape and economy of the AONB</p> <p>WV-B6 Promote awareness, sources of advice and involvement in biodiversity conservation by landowners, land managers, businesses, local communities, schools and the public including of impacts from outside the AONB</p>	DO / AONBM, LWPO, LWNRO + CAs	Dec 2021 ●
<p>Undergrounding Continue working with Western Power & local communities to identify power-lines within the AONB suitable for undergrounding, via Western Power South Wales Protected Landscape Undergrounding group and the West Midlands Undergrounding group.</p>	[100,000]	<p>WV-U2 Encourage further under-grounding of existing and proposed power and telephone lines, where these do not conflict with any SAC, and resist new overhead lines where skylines or important views are affected</p> <p>WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme</p>	DO	Mar 2022 ●
<p>Landscape scale conservation Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB. Potential target area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host Woolhope Dome workshop and collaborate over outputs and outcomes Support landscape connectivity initiatives including Wentwood to Wyre 'Forests without Frontiers' and collaborative projects with orchards, veteran & riverine trees. National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & others Continue work with Herefordshire Meadows Network, Monmouthshire Meadows and Parish 	[2,500]	<p>WV-L1 Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features</p> <p>WV-L2 Encourage and enhance appropriate landscape scale and green infrastructure action by all particularly on consolidating ecosystem services and positively contributing to habitat connectivity that allows wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change</p> <p>WV-B3 Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity</p> <p>WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement</p>	DO, AONBM, CLO, LWPO, LWNRO	Mar 2022 ●

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
Business Plan for 2021/2022



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<p>Grassland Project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue roll-out of Natural Flood Management & Riparian Trees initiatives throughout the AONB 		<p>the AONB Management Plan WV-P4 Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme</p>		
<p>Wye Valley Walk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage replacement of Passport scheme Launch new website www.wyevalleywalk.org Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership Audit & co-ordinate refreshing of way-marking Collate counter data along route Review Cicerone Route Guide Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge, Redbrook Bridge and Tintern Wireworks Bridge. Progress Monmouth riverbank erosion solutions Work with HC/Balfour Beatty on Wyastone landslip solutions Review & republish 'Easy Access' walks. 	[10,000]	<p>WV-S1 Encourage and promote the AONB as a sustainable tourism destination with forms of tourism activity and development that are based on the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Special Qualities and features of the AONB WV-S2 Promote the improvement of the visitor experience, particularly at the most heavily visited sites, and facilitate the opportunity for visitors to explore and discover other appropriate but less used locations throughout the AONB, thus spreading demand and balancing pressures across sites where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs WV-R1 Encourage and promote recreational pursuits and responsible access compatible with the AONB purposes, particularly linking sustainable transport and town and village facilities. Associated development and new access to land should be subject to WV-D2 & -D3 WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</p>	IO, LWPO, AONBM	<p>May 2021 ●</p> <p>Mar 2022 ●</p>
<p>Partnership</p> <p>Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Wye Catchment Partnership Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire, Visit Herefordshire and Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire Wye Valley AONB Woodland Projects group others as necessary 		<p>WV-R2 Assist the resolving of conflicts, real and perceived, between recreation, conservation and local interests, including other economic activities, and between different recreation interest groups in relation to the purposes of the AONB designation WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas WV-P6 Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB WV-P7 Encourage partners to be champions and ambassadors for the AONB in their contact with other interests, and ensure those interests recognise and consider the Management Plan and AONB work programme when relating to the area</p>	AONBM / DO	<p>Mar 2022 ●</p>

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
Business Plan for 2021/2022



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and Europarc seminars & events Work with Welsh Government and National Designated Landscapes Partnership (NDLP) in Wales Work with DEFRA and others in progressing Proposals in Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England 		<i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i> <i>WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate</i>	ALL	Mar 2022 ●
Work placements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the needs of student placements/group projects. Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities 		<i>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</i> <i>WV-P9 Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate</i>	DO, CLO	Mar 2022 ●
Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS and State of the AONB data, Complete Phase 1 Habitat Survey mapping & digitising Progress Nature Recovery Network map & Plan Investigate opportunities to update heritage, tourism and recreation monitoring. Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Action Plan Undertake Fixed point photography across the AONB 		<i>WV-L4 Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change</i> <i>WV-B5 Support the identification and monitoring of key indicator species and priority species and habitats, in partnership with conservation organisations, relevant individuals and the Local Biological Record Centres</i> <i>WV-H2 Promote establishment of baseline data to monitor change and improve the local databases of historic landscape assessments, conservation areas, locally important buildings, buildings at risk, ancient trees, heritage features and sites in the AONB in conjunction with Local Planning Authorities, local archaeological trusts and individuals</i> <i>WV-S3 Ensure adequate provision of co-ordinated tourism data and visitor engagement to inform strategic and practical decision making on conserving or enhancing the Special Qualities of the AONB</i> <i>WV-P8 Develop and co-ordinate the acquisition and analysis of data across the AONB, to inform priority setting, planning, implementation and monitoring of change affecting the natural beauty, including developing a better understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on the landscape of the Wye Valley AONB and supporting mitigation and adaption actions</i>	DO, CLO, LWNRO	Mar 2022 ●
Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and 		<i>WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB</i>	AONBM / FAO	Jun/Jul Oct/Nov

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
Business Plan for 2021/2022



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
Steering Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare grant bids and claims for Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and DEFRA, and other funding bodies as required. Continue implementation of recommendations from AONB Good Governance Review 		<i>Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB</i> WV-P2 Sustain and enhance local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit to add value to delivery of the AONB purposes		2021 Feb/Mar 2022 ●
Funding and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue pursuing funding and develop opportunities for external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects Develop fundraising campaign for Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley AONB Fund 		WV-P1 Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB WV-P2 Sustain and enhance local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit to add value to delivery of the AONB purposes WV-P3 Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan	AONBM, DO, FAO, IO	Mar 2022 ●
Projects below not identified in bids to Natural Resources Wales and Defra 2020/21				
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places Welsh Government capital investment scheme for Designated Landscapes focussed on decarbonisation, Nature-based solutions and nature recovery, Supporting more sustainable tourism and more resilient & healthy rural economies that promote a Green Recovery. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refurbishment of Old Station Tintern Cleddon Falls & Wordsworth Walk enhancements Piercefield Walk enhancements Wye Valley Villages Travel & Transport Plan implementation Engagement in small number of high impact, collaborative projects across multiple Designated Landscapes 	[300,000]	WV-C1 Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment, decarbonisation and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 WV-S2 Promote the improvement of the visitor experience, particularly at the most heavily visited sites, and facilitate the opportunity for visitors to explore and discover other appropriate but less used locations throughout the AONB, thus spreading demand and balancing pressures across sites where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs WV-S4 Encourage the mitigation and/or reduction of the adverse impacts of existing tourism activity and attractions, particularly where they are concentrated around certain locations or sites, and/or those that fall outside the aims of conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Special Qualities and features of the AONB and decarbonisation. Highest priority will be given to addressing the issues in the Symonds Yat and Tintern areas WV-R4 Assist in identifying gaps in access and recreational provision, including for under-represented and minority groups, and work with appropriate bodies and stakeholders to support and promote access enhancements and improved access for all, where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs	AONBM, DO, LWPO	Mar 2022 ●

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP
Business Plan for 2021/2022



AONB Unit Initiatives	DRAFT Budget £ [non AONB]	AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives	Key officer/s (see footer)	By when [Covid RAG]
<p>Offa's Dyke Collaboratory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for future cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological research and investigation into the landscape significance of the 8th century monument Participate in Collaboratory conferences, meetings and events Support community based research and events. 		<p>WV-H1 Initiate and encourage schemes, policy development, advice and sympathetic management through partnerships and positive action to conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment, in conjunction with landowners, national agencies and other relevant organisations</p>	AONBM	Mar 2022 ●
<p>Overlooking the Wye legacy</p> <p>Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilpin2020+ Support & promote the collaborative programme of events to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Gilpin and the Wye Tour, including walks; talks; exhibitions; and Big Draw event in October 2020. Review & reprint of Walks leaflets Audit and repair / maintenance of Overlooking the Wye infrastructure 	<p>[?]</p> <p>[8,000]</p> <p>[25,000]</p>	<p>WV-H1 Initiate and encourage schemes, policy development, advice and sympathetic management through partnerships and positive action to conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment, in conjunction with landowners, national agencies and other relevant organisations</p> <p>WV-H3 Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage and historic environment</p> <p>WV-P5 Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas</p>	AONBM, DO, IO, LWPO	Mar 2022 ●
AONB Unit costs	£252,830			
AONB core project budget Sub-total	£18,000			
TOTAL AONB Budget	£271,350			
non-AONB funding augmenting AONB output	[c£780,000+]			

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

ART IN THE LANDSCAPE AND WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL

Purpose

To seek members' endorsement of the 'Art in the Landscape' National Arts Strategy with the National Association for AONBs and inform members of progress with the future of the Wye Valley River Festival.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Formally endorses the 'Art in the Landscape' National Arts Strategy with the National Association for AONBs
- B. Welcomes and supports the progress with establishing a possible Community Interest Company (CIC) to take forward the Wye Valley River Festival, taking account of the 5 Tests previously endorsed in the Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024.

Key Issues

- The JAC had previously acknowledged the Art in the Landscape - A National Strategy, launched by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) in July 2020.
- The Wye Valley AONB Unit have been closely involved in the preparation and promotion of the Strategy, along with the Wye Valley River Festival team.
- The NAAONB are encouraging all AONB Partnerships to formally endorse and adopt the Art in the Landscape Strategy - connecting people to nature through arts and culture.
- The evaluation, accounts and grant claims for the fourth Wye Valley River Festival 2020 Re-imagined are in the final stages of completion. A summary is appended.
- The JAC had previously endorsed the Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024 and the 5 tests identified to secure the future of the Festival through the establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).
- Currently proposals are being investigated to establish a Community Interest Company (CIC) as a more appropriate and flexible autonomous body to adopt the Festival.

Reasons

The NAAONB are committed to a deeper exploration into the relationship between arts and landscape. The Art in the Landscape National Strategy, was commissioned and subsequently launched in July 2020. The objective is to actively promote the relationship between landscape and art and optimise engagement of AONB Partnerships with artists and producers

in order to ensure our most precious landscapes are more accessible and more widely understood and appreciated by the nation. The Wye Valley AONB team have been closely involved in the preparation and promotion of the Strategy with Sarah Sawyer, Wye Valley AONB Community Links Officer, on the Steering Group. The Wye Valley River Festival is nationally recognised as an exemplar of ‘art in the landscape’. The Art in the Landscape National Strategy is available to read here:

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2116/0318/0964/Art_in_the_Landscape_-_Final_Report.pdf

The Wye Valley River Festival 2020 Re-Imagined is now being concluded with the final grant funding claims and evaluation being completed. The Festival was supported and funded by the Wye Valley AONB Partnership, Arts Council England, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) from Welsh Government, Arts Council of Wales, Visit Wales, Forestry England, Foresters’ Forest Landscape Partnership supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency & Ross Town Council with in-kind support from numerous volunteers & local communities.

The Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024 set out the medium to long term prospect for the Festival. Central to this was the establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as a sustainable vehicle to take the Festival forward as a new governance, management and delivery model. Five tests were identified, and previously adopted by the JAC, to ensure this (see Appendix 2).

Implications

Endorsing and adopting the Art in the Landscape National Strategy will signal the Wye Valley AONB Partnership’s on-going strong support for both the NAAONB and engagement with the arts and connecting people to nature through arts and culture. The Wye Valley AONB is already a leader nationally in this field.

The completion of the fourth Wye Valley River Festival draws to a close a co-production period and process that tested everyone’s determination, commitment, flexibility and creativity to the limit. The consequences of postponing and re-formatting the Festival under the various Covid-19 restrictions has been significant on the work programme of the AONB Unit, displacing other planned activity throughout the year. However, generally the consensus and anecdotal feedback has been that the Festival was well received and a success, given the challenges everybody faced. Delivering the Festival at all has been a significant achievement under the circumstances.

The Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024 recognised that a new governance, management and delivery model would be the most sustainable vehicle to take the Festival forward. Business Plan proposed the establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) under Five Tests endorsed by the JAC (see Appendix 2). A CIO was recommended because of its simple reporting structure, tax benefits and charitable income generation.

However subsequent investigation has identified that a Community Interest Company (CIC) may be a more appropriate and flexible autonomous body for the Festival. Advice is being sought from local CICs & CIOs, Herefordshire Council and the Festival of Thrift CIC. It appears that a CIC would allow the creative team involvement on the Board of Directors and also allow them to be paid for their work. Given the central role of the creative team to this point it seems therefore a more appropriate route to follow. There appears to be the possibility

of a subsequent or additional move to a CIO in future years, should that prove to be a valuable option.

The establishment of an Advisory Group is also recommended, to engage a broad range of partners in helping to guide and steer the organisation, but without the legal oversight and responsibility of the Board. Work will need to be undertaken to separate out the roles and responsibilities of the Directors of the CIC from the proposed Advisory Group. This is also an opportunity to engage with target groups currently under represented in the Festival audiences and to involve key funders more actively.

The relationship between the AONB Partnership and the future organisation is clearly a crucial one and will require a clear agreement of roles and responsibilities. Some comparable Heads of Terms have been shared and advice is being sought from Herefordshire Council. Any such agreement will need to outline in a transparent way what the strategic links are and what priorities the CIC will be delivering against, with clear targets for each year and establish review points.

Wye Valley River Festival will be able to capitalise on its recent successes, but it will take hard work and commitment to establish the new organisation and then future Festivals.

Background

Wye Valley River Festivals in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 have been Wye Valley AONB Partnership projects, led by the Wye Valley AONB Unit, Desperate Men and Phillippa Haynes in a unique and creative collaboration between arts and environment professionals, who develop, produce and deliver the Festival with stakeholders and the communities in and around the Wye Valley AONB.

Appendix 1

Wye Valley River Festival

Summary of Evaluation of Wye Valley River Festival 2020 Re-Imagined

The global Covid -19 Pandemic which took hold in early spring 2020, tested everyone's determination, commitment, flexibility and creativity to the limit. We have successfully delivered an outdoor arts and environment festival online in very difficult circumstances. That is a testament to our team, partners, funders, communities and our audience base, all developed over the past three festivals. We have all learnt a lot from this year's festival which will inform many aspects of future work.

The original Wye Valley River Festival 2020 was due to take place May 2nd-17th, however the emerging global pandemic meant that we took the decision to postpone the planned May festival. During the original May dates we trialled online film presentations from some of our programmed artists via Facebook and social media, and worked with University of South Wales students to develop lockdown films as part of their course work. This content was viewed by 9,691 people, and we received many positive comments. This helped our re-framing of the programme and maintain a presence until September when the WVRF2020 Re-Imagined festival actually took place.

WVRF2020 Re-Imagined employed **222** artists, providing artists, creatives and specialists with **1207** paid days' work.

We commissioned and created **141** new pieces of work, plus the additional **19** short films which we put out in May, all of which have legacy and potential for being presented by us and others in future, one piece (Stars by Starlight) is already airing on BBC Radio Scotland. Artists were supported to explore new ways of working and presenting pieces.

We created and uploaded **92** hours of content/entertainment on the festival website, a combination of films, podcasts, music, talks, workshops and live streams.

We delivered **4** days of live (Covid compliant) theatrical and musical animations and interventions on the streets of Chepstow, Llandogo, Monmouth and Redbrook. To live audiences or around **3,500**

We provided training for **30** non-professionals in the environmental sector to make and produce short films which were showcased as part of the programme.

We successfully delivered an online version of the conference that we had planned in Partnership with Articulture.

For the period that the festival film content was available it was viewed or played **9, 881** times, a total of **533,050** hours' worth of entertainment.

The film content was downloaded to be played later **85, 273** times. Most people watched on desktops or mobiles. We can deduce from the analytics that most people watched multiple films.

We had **7,200** unique visits to the website during the festival week, 21st – 28th September, anecdotal evidence suggest people watched /listened with one or two other people, so a conservative estimate of our total audience would be **11,000** over the week.

Our social media content reached **292,287** people generating WVRF 481 new followers going forward.

The schools' projects and outreach had to be reimaged several times due to and ever changing lockdown landscape but 5 local schools received materials, info packs for teachers and a 20min video tutorial.

The feedback from audiences, artists and participants has been overwhelmingly positive with many comments expressing support, admiration, thanks, respect and an appetite for more, be it online or preferably back in a field at some point.

Our audience survey reported that

94% had enjoyed all the content that they saw

89% said that they agreed that taking part in WVRF2020 was enjoyable and that they had learnt something new.

77% said it had made them connect more to the landscape.

63% of people said it has inspired them to make their own art work.

83% would prefer the festival to come back as a live festival, however they would also attend a future on-line WVRF.

Five Tests

Five key tests are identified in the Wye Valley River Festival Business Plan 2019-2024 as necessary before progress can be made towards a new CIO as an independent entity for the governance and management of the Festival.

The Five tests are as follows:

- 1) To build up a reserve of funds before setting up a CIO. This needs to be in the region of £50,000 to enable the recruitment and training of a leadership board, recruitment and employment of a part-time employee, administration and office costs and all legal fees.
Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2023. This will be reviewed as the Business Plan is updated after the next Festival in June 2020.
- 2) Select and nurture a leadership team to become part of a future Board to run a Wye Valley River Festival CIO.
Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2022.
- 3) Formalise key partnerships with key organisations, community supporters & artists around the vision, mission, values and aims of Wye Valley River Festival set out in this Business Plan.
Time frame: aiming to have partnership agreements with those partners that have become long term supporters to achieve this by December 2019.
- 4) Legal requirements are confirmed by host authorities Monmouthshire County Council, Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Forest of Dean District Council enabling the transition of Wye Valley River Festival from a Wye Valley AONB Partnership Project to an independent entity: CIO.
Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2020.
- 5) Satisfy the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), as the Festival leadership body, that all the above tests have been met.
Time frame: aiming to achieve at the latest by December 2024, can be earlier if all other transition tests are met.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

GLOVER REVIEW AND FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Purpose

To advise members of progress with implementation of the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes in England and announcement of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The 'Glover' Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs in England was published in 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government.
- Proposal 5 states: "A central place for national landscapes in new Environmental Land Management Schemes".
- The formal response from Government has yet to be produced but is anticipated sometime this year. The delay of the Environment Bill may be related to the timing of the response.
- The NAAONB and AONB lead officers are collaborating with DEFRA on the provision of information, statistics and case studies in support of implementing the Glover Review.
- Recent collation of figures for DEFRA identified at that in 2019/20 the DEFRA core funding for the 34 AONBs in England totalled £2.05million against which the AONBs levered in an additional £9.24million.
- 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' was published in the Agricultural Transition Plan in November 2020 for establishment from April 2020. Details and clarification on implementation are awaited from DEFRA.
- The NAAONB secured funding from DEFRA for each AONB and National Park to deliver advocacy work with farmers in relation to Countryside Stewardship and the forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme.

Reasons

The Glover Review in England was broadly welcomed when published in September 2019. The Government has yet to make a formal response. Meanwhile DEFRA officials continue to work with stakeholders, including the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) on progressing preparations for the implementation of the Review.

The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 was published in November 2020. This included a 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme (see appended below and/or the full document is available to download here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024>)

To progress the advocacy work with farmers the NAAONB has arranged 3 seminars to promote Countryside Stewardship and the forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme to farmers and land managers in AONBs and National Parks in England. The flyer for these events, entitled 'Agri-environment schemes and the future: How to get the best for your business' is attached.

Implications

The NAAONB and AONB lead officers have been responding to a range of requests from DEFRA officials in support of implementing the Glover Review and preparations for the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. This has included the collation of funding which identifies AONB leverage of 450% on the DEFRA core grant. Engagement with farmers and advocacy of the Environmental Land Management scheme is progressing.

As part of the advocacy work with farmers in relation to Countryside Stewardship and the forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme, the Wye Valley AONB Unit has posted out over 100 copies of the attached flyer to farmers and land-managers in the AONB. In addition partners, including the NFU, Herefordshire Rural Hub and Herefordshire Meadows Network have also circulated the flyer electronically to their members. Unfortunately the first event, on February 22nd had to be cancelled or postponed due to ill health of the organisers.

Details are awaited from DEFRA on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. It is expected that guidance on implementation will be issued shortly. It is likely there may be some grant allocation process, potentially through the AONB Partnership. However, the funding criteria, administration, delegation, support, monitoring and distribution has yet to be clarified. Hence it is currently difficult to measure the impact on the AONB Unit and benefit for framers and land managers in the AONB.

Proposals and discussions on a National Landscapes Service for AONB s and National Parks, as outlined in the Glover Review, are on-going in government.

Background

For more information on the Review of Designated Landscapes in England visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

Appendix

Extract from (pages 44-45)

The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024>

B.6 Farming in Protected Landscapes

We want: To support farmers and other land managers in Protected Landscapes*, to help them diversify their income streams and lay the groundwork for our Environmental Land Management offer.

*The 44 Protected Landscapes include 10 National Parks and 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

We will: Provide support to farmers, via National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies, to help grow businesses, create green jobs, enhance biodiversity and invest in infrastructure to attract more diverse visitors to support local economies.

Farmers in Protected Landscapes operate in challenging agricultural conditions and are often very reliant on Direct Payments. At the same time, they provide huge environmental, social and cultural benefits.

In addition to the other policies laid out here, we are proposing a specific and time limited package to help farmers adapt during the transition. This programme will support farmers and land managers so they can work with Protected Landscapes to deliver environmental outcomes, lay the groundwork for our Environmental Land Management offer, and contribute towards the delivery of recommendations in the Glover Review of National Landscapes.

Scheme description

The scheme will deliver funding through the Protected Landscapes bodies to support farmers, particularly upland farmers (75% of whom live and work in Protected Landscapes) to make improvements to the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land.

Eligibility

Farmers and other land managers in Protected Landscapes will have the opportunity to work with their National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. More information will be provided on this scheme in early 2021.

Payments

The scheme will use existing delivery mechanisms through Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Park Authorities, who have existing infrastructure and relationships across Protected Landscapes.

The spend each year would support delivery against two complementary areas: (A) farm level projects and (B) wider infrastructure and projects on farmland.

Farmers and other land managers will benefit from:

(A) Farm level projects to diversify incomes, prepare for our Environmental Land Management offer and create more green jobs.

- Support for farmers for delivering environment/landscape outcomes. Examples might include peat restoration, planting woodland, hay meadow restoration, creation of heathland and scrub, moorland management, enhancement of wetlands, and dry-stone wall repairs
- Support to farmers on areas such as carbon capture, business planning, and skills development including apprenticeships

(B) Wider infrastructure investment and projects supporting farmers and rural economies

- Infrastructure, such as better access, clearer and simpler signage, dedicated cycling/electric bike access – to attract more diverse groups of visitors (to farm businesses, camping barns, etc.) as well as creating jobs (e.g. expansion of landscape rangers supporting farmers and visitors)
- Strengthened public engagement with landscapes to attract more, and more diverse, visitors, improving mental health outcomes and better disabled access; walking routes to better connect landscapes.

Timings

We will be providing more information about the scheme in early 2021.

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Agri-environment schemes and the future: How to get the best for your business



Photo © Paul Harris, Nidderdale AONB

Farmers, growers and land managers are custodians of the English landscape, and for generations they have helped shape and look after it as they feed the nation. There is a big positive change ahead: the Environmental Land Management Scheme (E.L.M.), which will be rolled out in 2024, will provide financial support as you continue to nurture the land you work.

2021 marks the start of a four-year transition period during which BPS payments will be phased out in the lead up to Environmental Land Management. The best way to keep payments coming in and ensure you're ready for E.L.M. is to apply for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and there is good news. The scheme is being simplified with new offers to apply for, and additional penalties have been removed (although reductions can still occur where things can't be put right). There will be advice and support to help you enhance the environment as part of a sustainable business.

From April 2021-2024, the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme will provide financial support to farmers and other land

managers in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The funding will help them support and manage the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access.

If you would like to find out more about these schemes and how to get involved you can register for a free online workshop in February or March. Turn over for further information.



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs



Landscapes for life .org.uk



Free online workshops

The start of the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme in February and Farming in Protected Landscapes in April means there are steps you can take now. Attend an online workshop and find out more:

- Find out what has changed in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme
- Hear from farmers who are already in agri-environment schemes
- Learn about the Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme.



Photo © Petra Billings

Choose one of the following dates and times:

Monday 22nd February, 5:00-6:30pm

Thursday 4th March, 5:00-6:30pm

Tuesday 23rd March, 1:00-2:30pm

Register now at www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/workshops



Or scan here

Tell your farming friends and neighbours too

What to expect

We're all having to get used to online events, and to help here is more information on what will happen. We will send you full details on how to take part before the workshops run, but in the meantime:



- The workshops will be run on Zoom. You'll need a computer, phone or tablet and a reasonable internet connection. We know that's difficult in some areas, but it's essential everyone stays safe in light of covid.
- Your camera and microphone will be switched off – all you need to do is watch and listen.
- If you would like to ask the speakers a question you'll be able to type it in, and we'll get to as many as we can in the time. Your feedback matters.



TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES IN WALES

Purpose

To advise members of progress with the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales, with additional Welsh Government funding and the establishment of the National Designated Landscapes Partnership.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- In December the inaugural Wales National Designated Landscapes Partnership meeting was held with officers from Welsh AONBs and National Parks, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and the National Association for AONBs.
- Welsh Government have confirmed a second year of Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) capital funding with some slightly revised criteria for projects.
- Welsh Government have allocated revenue funding for 2021/22 that enables the retention of one AONB post and the creation of one new post.

Reasons

Welsh Government have been working with AONB lead officers, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the NAAONB on addressing the inequality of status, profile and resourcing between National Parks and AONBs, as highlighted in 'Valued & Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for AONBs & National Parks'. The National Designated Landscapes Partnership has now been established with a secretariat. Welsh Government have provided a second year of capital funding through the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) scheme and allocated additional revenue funding to support initiatives within AONBs and National Parks.

Implications

National Designated Landscapes Partnership (NDLP) met for the first time in December and has met again following appointment of a Co-ordinator and an admin support officer. The elected chairperson of the NDLP is Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader, and vice-chair is Emyr Williams, Snowdonia National Park CEO.

Welsh Government have revised the criteria for the second year of Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) capital funding scheme. There are four main strands:

- Decarbonisation – through decarbonisation of Authority activity and assets, schemes to enable decarbonisation in communities including appropriate renewable energy, and carbon sequestration schemes in the landscape

- Nature-based solutions and nature recovery, including projects that improve connectivity and resilience of ecosystems in designated areas being mindful of climate change adaptation
- Supporting more sustainable tourism, including improving visitor facilities and infrastructure, helping landscapes recover from the impact of tourism, prepare for changing tourism patterns following Covid, and improve and protect valued cultural and heritage assets.
- Supporting more resilient and healthy local economies and communities, such as investment in public access to recreation and local green infrastructure, and, supporting the foundational economy in a way that promotes a Green Recovery.

There is up to £225k per AONB in addition there is resource for a small number of high impact, collaborative projects across multiple AONBs and National Parks. The AONB Unit is working with Monmouthshire County Council colleagues on a number of proposal, along with collaborations with the other Designated Landscapes.

The delivery of the first year of SLSP projects is underway including improving the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of the AONB Office. This includes replacing the Port-a-cabin meeting room with a more efficient building and the recent purchase of an electric van to replace a diesel van.

Welsh Government revenue funding for 2021/22 enables the retention of the Lower Wye Project Officer and the recruitment of one new post, a Lower Wye Nature Recovery Project officer. This is part of efforts to address the inequality of status, profile and resourcing between National Parks and AONBs. However, the funding is only for one year so longer term strategic planning remains curtailed.

Background

Welsh Government's statement on Priorities for AONBs & National Parks 'Valued & Resilient' (published in July 2018) is available here:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/areas-outstanding-natural-beauty-national-parks-2018-report%20.pdf>

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND AND HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION WYE VALLEY AONB FUND

Purpose

To update members on the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £69,552 allocated from the £100,000 offered by Welsh Government for 2020/21, with £30,448 remaining.
- Four potential applications are anticipated shortly which if approved would account for full allocation.
- Welsh Government have confirmed an allocation of £100,000 of SDF in 2021/22.
- Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) host the Wye Valley AONB Fund which was established with £10,000 for immediate funding alongside an Endowment Fund of £50,000. The 2020/21 Quarter Three balances were £6,779.27 and £54,578.05 respectively. Subsequently grants totalling £1,500 have been awarded.
- Applications are welcome for both sets of funding for 2021/22.

Reasons

Welsh Government have confirmed that they are able to offer an allocation of £100,000 of SDF again in 2021/22. The SDF continues to provide an exceptional opportunity for organisations, individuals and community groups to apply for grant aid for innovative, sustainable, environmental projects, which benefit the Welsh part of the AONB.

The Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) was established with a £10,000 Immediate Impact fund and a £50,000 Endowment Fund. The Endowment Fund is currently growing at a modest rate and is open to receive donations and legacies. Opportunities will be sought to grow the AONB Fund further over time.

Implications

The SDF Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on each application over £3,000. Smaller applications are determined by the AONB Manager supported by the NRW Senior People & Places Officer, South East Wales. The list of approved grants totalling £42,056 is in the table below.

The Wye Valley AONB Fund with the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has a £5,279.27 Immediate Impact fund for grants for environmental, community and cultural projects. There is also a £54,578.05 Endowment Fund from which the income generated each year can be used to award grants once the Immediate Impact fund is exhausted. The Endowment Fund is able to receive donations and legacies so it is intended that the AONB Fund will grow over time, including donations via text messages by texting 'WVAONB' to 70085 to donate £5. The SDF Assessment Panel recommends applications to the HCF for funding. Two recent grants have been issued by HCF, endorsed by the SDF Assessment Panel, both hedge-planting schemes in Fownhope under the Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement criteria, one for £1,000 and one for £500.

2020/21 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants approved

2019/20 Code	Applicant	Project Title	years		Total Cost	SDF Grant	%
			This	Total			
WV00 YR20W	Wye Valley AONB Unit	10% Admin	1	1		£10,000	
WV01 YR20W	Wye Valley AONB Partnership	Wye Valley River Festival	2	2	£106,300	£25,000	23.5
WV02 YR20W	Friends of our Lady of Tintern	Words and Landscape - Poetry workshop walk	1	1	£5,857	£1,056	18
WV03 YR20W	Wye Valley AONB Unit	Documenting Now	1	1	£4,700	£3,000	64
WV04 YR20W	Jon Dunkleman	Drystone walling	1	1	£7,660	£3,000	39
WV05 YR20W	MCC	Wye Valley Villages Plan	1	1	£50,000	£25,000	50
WV06 YR20W	Claire Catto	Hedge Planting at Common Farm Barn	1	1	£3,000	£1,807.63	60
WV07 YR20W	Mon Life (MCC)	Tintern Old Station Family Pack	1	1	£1,377	£688.50	50
TOTALS (to date)					£302,534	£69,552.13	Av43.5%
<i>Remaining from £100,000</i>						<i>£30,447.87</i>	

For more details on grants and the application process see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/>. For further advice or to discuss any project ideas, please contact Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, on community@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk.

Background

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has been available in the Wye Valley AONB for 20 years in Wales. It supports living and working more sustainably in association with enhancing natural beauty, wildlife, culture, landscape, land use and community within the context of the sustainable development goals and principles in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Wye Valley AONB Unit administer the fund on behalf of Welsh Government. The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) host and manage the Wye Valley AONB Fund on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

NAAONB UPDATE

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The NAAONB 2019/20 Annual report is published and available on line.
- The national AONB's Chairperson's Conference is to be in March jointly with National Parks to focus on the Farming in Protected Landscape programme.
- The national 'Landscapes for Life' Conference 2021 is scheduled for early July and will be on-line but 'hosted' by the five Devon AONBs.
- The NAAONB are involved in the national Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership, led by Natural England.
- The Chief Executive of the NAAONB, Howard Davises is stepping down later this year and recruitment has commenced for his replacement.
- The AGM for the NAAONB was held on-line in November 2020 with the AONB Manager representing the Wye Valley AONB.

NAAONB Annual Report 2019-2020

The NAAONB Annual Report for 2019/20 is now available through this link:

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2916/1117/5323/Annual_Report_20_FINAL.pdf

The report includes case studies demonstrating how AONBs all around the country are delivering for nature, heritage and people. There is a section covering the Welsh AONBs including a case study from the Wye Valley AONB (page 25) on the Lower Wye Valley Catchments Project. The Annual Report has been shared with DEFRA and Welsh Government Ministers and key members of the respective government Landscape teams.

Chairperson's Conference

The NAAONB is organising a Chair-level conference for AONBs and National Parks in March. The focus for this high level conference will be the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Dates are yet to be finalised but the intension is to run two, 2-hour webinars for the chairs and senior management of Protected Landscapes.

Landscapes for Life Conference 2021

Having postponed the 2020 conference, the NAAONB will be hosting its first ever online annual conference. It will be 'in' Devon, as intended for 2020, with the 5 Devon AONBs hosting, as they would have been for a face-to-face conference. The conference will be held during the week commencing the 5th July, and it is likely there will be short sessions across the week rather than one long, tiring day having to remain at a computer screen. It will be on Zoom. It is intended that the host AONBs bring the county to the attendees virtually along with networking opportunities and a social evening in a format to be confirmed.

The five hosting AONBs are Blackdown Hills, East Devon, North Devon Coast, South Devon and Tamar Valley.

Nature Recovery

Natural England lead on delivery of nature recovery. The Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership was launched at the beginning of November, the National Association are part of the partnership. Natural England are also supporting nature recovery across the sector by funding posts – Frances Winder is the National Landscapes Nature Recovery Lead for AONBs, there is a similar post for the National Parks.

In the Colchester Declaration AONB Partnerships pledged to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB by July 2020. The impacts of covid-19 have meant that deadline was unachievable but it is intended that every AONB will have a Nature Recovery Plan in 2022.

The Wye Valley AONB Unit is collaborating with the Malvern Hills AONB Unit and Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts on data and mapping for our respective AONB Nature Recovery Plans.

Chief Executive recruitment

After over 10 years as Chief Executive of the NAAONB, Howard Davises is stepping down later this year. The recruitment process has started to find his successor. Howard has led the NAAONB with considerable skill, agility and boldness since 2010, enabling AONBs collectively to punch above our weight in many spheres of influence. Some of the successes of the NAAONB under Howard's leadership include:

- Securing a protected settlement for AONBs during a period of austerity,
- Steering the NAAONB and AONB Family through a sponsorship change, from Natural England to DEFRA, and bringing them closer to Government in England and Wales,
- Delivery of a programme of leadership development and transformation that built collaborative skills across the AONB Family
- Raising ambition around nature recovery by providing vision and leadership around the Colchester Declaration – a declaration for nature in AONBs,
- Building influence and respect for AONB partnerships across a wide range of organisations including governments in England and Wales and the National Parks.

There is no shortage of challenges for the new CEO, not least the need to tackle climate change and to recover and protect nature in our landscapes. They will influence and drive

forward the implementation of the full spectrum of proposals in the Glover Review, which will incorporate the coordination of testing and delivery of post-Brexit nature-friendly farming payment systems, positioning the NAAONB in relation to the National Designated Landscape Partnership in Wales and the National Landscape Service in England, exploring new ways of sharing natural beauty with a wider and more diverse audience and maximising the opportunities for awareness and profile raising presented by the 25 Year Environment Plan, Colchester Declaration, Green Recovery, COP26 and the increasing sense of urgency around the environmental crisis.

It is intended that a successful recruitment may be announced in April.

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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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a) Forestry England update
- b) National Forest Wales
- c) Gloucestershire County Council – Wireworks Bridge Tintern

a) Forestry England update

Forestry England (FE) continues to invest in building resilience into the Nation's forests, ensuring that natural processes feature prominently in FE's forest planning and operations. In particular, the pine marten re-introduction partnership project continues in the Forest of Dean with real success, and the new Forest Waters project in partnership with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency sees four catchment management plans being drafted. These plans will recommend and evidence how the watercourses and bodies within the Forest of Dean can be protected and enhanced to improve water quality and regulation.

The pair of beavers near Lydbrook, enclosed within 6 hectares of woodland along the the Greathough Brook, continue to be carefully monitored.

Repairs and maintenance are being carried out to Biblins Bridge, necessitating its closure from 8th February for 3 – 4 weeks. This work includes replacing the timber 'U' frames along the bridge, as well as resurfacing the bridge with new anti-slip boards.

b) National Forest Wales

In March 2020 First Minister Mark Drakeford announced that Welsh Government will create a National Forest running the length and breadth of Wales. In November 2020 the first sections of the National Forest were announced, focusing on the Welsh Government estate. These include the Wye Valley Woodlands managed and maintained by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). These are recognised as among the very best woodlands in Wales and exemplars for the benefits other sites could emulate before becoming part of the National Forest. Welsh Government and NRW will work alongside partners to discuss the features and benefits which the woodlands can provide as part of the National Forest, such as existing infrastructure and connectivity including bridleways, pathways and access and how to create connected woodlands across the length and breadth of Wales.

c) Gloucestershire County Council – Wireworks Bridge Tintern

The Wireworks Bridge, Tintern spans the Wye and the England Wales border. Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire County Councils share responsibility and ownership of the bridge, however Gloucestershire County Council leads on repairs and maintenance.

A project is now underway to renovate the bridge. This commenced with some investigation works on the bridge between the 22nd and 26th February. The work included a roped access inspection, removal of some of the vegetation and scour assessment of the foundations.

The inspections will be followed by an assessment of the work required to fully refurbish the bridge. A detailed design of the preferred option will be put together later this year. Contractors will then be selected to carry out the work, which is due to get under way in 2022.

Further information, when available, will be posted on

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/tintern-wireworks-bridge-improvements/> .

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1st March 2021

AONB UNIT REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit.

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a) AONB 50th Anniversary programme
- b) AONB Nature Recovery Plan & Priority Species
- c) Water Environment Grant ROAR & Catchment Advisors (England only)
- d) Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Riparian Tree project work
- e) Wye Valley Villages Transport Plan update (verbal).
- f) Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) work (Monmouthshire)
- g) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) AONB Office refurbishment
- h) Undergrounding

a) AONB 50th Anniversary programme

Celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of the Wye Valley AONB being designated an AONB have commenced with distribution of the 2021 AONB calendar, an on-line talk by the AONB Manager on 24th February – the day the Designation Order was submitted to Government in 1971, and the first of a series of Social Media ‘take-overs’ by local AONB champions and activists.

b) AONB Nature Recovery Plan & Priority Species

Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts are co-ordinating the creation of Nature Recovery Network Maps that will cover Herefordshire, the Wye Valley AONB and the Malvern Hills AONB. Work on this commenced in January and when complete will form the basis for the AONB Nature Recovery Plan, and form part of the implementation of the Colchester Declaration.

The AONB Unit have also been working with local wildlife and conservation experts to choose a list of 5 species, or assemblage of species, around which conservation effort can be galvanized over the coming years. The species are representative of the AONB Special Qualities [SQ], as identified in the AONB Management Plan, and will benefit from positive landscape scale management. The following have been selected:

- Woodland [SQ2] - Woodland Butterfly assemblage (particularly Wood White / Pearl Bordered Fritillary)
- River [SQ3, SQ10] - Water Crowfoot

- Grassland [SQ4] - Bumblebee assemblage (particularly Shrill Carder Bee, Brown Banded Carder Bee, Redshank Carder Bee, long horned bee)
- Orchards & Veteran Trees [SQ27, SQ18] - Noble Chafer beetle
- General [SQ1, SQ4, SQ5, SQ26] - Hedgehog

c) Water Environment Grant ROAR & Catchment Advisors (England only)

The farm advice work has continued throughout the English part of the AONB, led by the Wye & Usk Foundation's Catchment Advisors, working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Wye Valley AONB Unit and Herefordshire Rural Hub. However, the Water Environment Grant (WEG) funding ceases later this year and the contract for one of the Catchment Advisors ends on 31st March.

d) Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Riparian Tree project work

Environment Agency funding has facilitated targeted farm advice and Natural Flood Management (NFM) interventions in the Valley Brook catchment, Gloucestershire - the tributary flowing through Coleford and Newland to Redbrook. A decision is awaited on funding to extend the project into next financial year.

Similarly, farm advice on riparian tree management has been carried out throughout the English part of the AONB, by one of the Wye & Usk Foundation's Catchment Advisors, working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Wye Valley AONB Unit. However, the contract for the Catchment Advisor ends on 31st March. This was a pilot project and it remains to be seen whether funding will be available to expand the initiative.

e) Wye Valley Villages Transport Plan update

The project is led by Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and a partnership made of representatives from the Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United, with local county councillors and officers from MCC and the Wye Valley AONB. In November 2020 a contract was awarded to Arup to prepare a Plan for the main villages in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB that will address and provide recommendations on a range of issues, including:

- Road (safety) and village infrastructure improvement schemes
- Active travel links within and between communities, including better integration of walking and cycling networks & leisure routes within the valley
- Public transport
- signage audit & review
- visitor experience

To date, Arup have complete Phase 1 of the study which has consisted of a document and evidence review along with consultation on stakeholder mapping and SWOT analysis. The next phases will develop a vision for an integrated and holistic strategy with proposals for each of the key focus areas and each village. It will prioritise proposals into quick wins, short, medium and long term opportunities. These will be consulted on and a final Plan prepared that will include options appraisals and development scenarios, supported by high-level delivery and funding strategies. The project should conclude in June 2021 and will be an essential precursor to determining and developing capital projects to further conserve and enhance the Wye Valley AONB. The Wye Valley Villages Plan is funded by Welsh

Government's AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding and by Monmouthshire County Council.

f) Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) work (Monmouthshire)

The Lower Wye Project Officer has been progressing with several access enhancement initiatives. Contracts and specifications are being prepared or have been let for the following works:

- enhancements to the Wordsworth Walk around Llandogo and Cleddon Falls.
- Surveying of the river bank erosion along the Wye Valley Walk between the Duke of Beaufort Bridge and the Monmouthshire Show Ground. It is hoped a viable solution can be found to maintain the riverside walk at this point.
- Natural Flood Management (NFM) interventions on Chapel Hill Lane at the southern end of Tintern. This is an Unclassified County Road (UCR), which means it is open to all users including vehicular users. It will be closed to the public for three weeks in March while contractors install a pilot NFM scheme that aims to improve the lane's drainage and halt the prolonged hydraulic erosion and degradation of its fragile surface. The project is trialling different approaches to water management than that usually adopted by Highway Authorities. These measures are low-tech, working with the natural processes and, in addition to having a low visual impact, they are low-cost compared to standard highway drainage projects. The pilot Chapel Hill Lane scheme is funded by the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) grant.

g) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) AONB Office refurbishment

The AONB Office at Hadnock Road, Monmouth is undergoing a significant refurbishment under the Decarbonisation theme of the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding, augmented by Monmouthshire County Council Disability Access funding. The AONB Office was very poorly insulated and thermally inefficient, including single glazed windows & doors, gas heaters and a Port-a-cabin with electric heaters. The refurbishment is now underway and includes

- insulated cladding & double glazing of AONB Office
- new insulated roof
- replace portacabin and building a new meeting room as part of the main building
- improved heating system
- shower for staff cycling to work
- replacement of diesel van with EV van
- installing EV charging point

It is hoped that the AONB staff will be able to return from lock-down and into the refurbished office after Easter.

h) Undergrounding

Following recent promotion of the opportunity to underground overhead electricity cables through the Town, Parish & Community Councils, the AONB Development Officer has received a range of suggestions. He is currently reviewing and assessing the power lines put forward and will making recommendation to Western Power in due course.

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