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County Hall
Rhadyr
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NP15 1GA

Monday, 28 October 2024

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm,
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High
Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence and Introductions.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Questions.	
4.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting - 8th July 2024:	1 - 10
4.1.	Matters arising (verbal update). i. [2] Wye Bridge update. ii. [4] JAC review. iii. Renewables Position Statement.	
5.	National Landscape Funding and Memorandum of Understanding.	11 - 14
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7.2.	Bumblebee Assemblage Species Action Plan.	33 - 44

8.	Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL), Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley National Landscape Fund.	45 - 48
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10.	River Wye Update.	53 - 58
11.	National Updates.	59 - 60
12.	Partner and National Landscape Team Progress Reports and Updates.	61 - 86
13.	<p>Next Meetings (to be confirmed):</p> <p>Monday 3rd March 2025 at 2.00pm. Monday 7th July 2025 at 2.00pm. Monday 3rd November 2025 at 2.00pm.</p> <p>The meetings will be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.</p>	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Local Authority Members with Voting Powers

Gloucestershire:

T. Hale
G. Morgan

Herefordshire:

B. Durkin
G. Biggs
E. O'Driscoll
S. Cole

Monmouthshire:

E. Bryn
S. Garratt
D. Rooke
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
B. Vine – Herefordshire Association Local Councils
Councillor L. Parker – One Voice Wales

Co-opted Members with Voting Powers

Vacancy – 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

C. Barron – Wye Valley Society
R. Hesketh – River Wye Preservation Trust
A. Lee – Recreation Sector
R. Clay – Local Tourism Sector
C. Spicer – 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

Our purpose

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced.
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency.
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop.
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in.
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued.

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.
- **Kindness:** We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

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Public Document Pack **Agenda Item 4**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held
at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford,
GL16 8HG on Monday, 8th July, 2024 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Elected Members (with voting powers)

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillor C. McFarling

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillor E. Bryn

Gloucestershire County Council

County Councillor T. Hale

Herefordshire Council

Councillor E. O'Driscoll

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
National Farmers Union Wales – Mr. D. Price

Technical Advice Officers

National Landscape Manager – Mr. A. Blake
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis
Wye Valley National Landscape – Mr. N. Critchley
Wye Valley National Landscape – Miss R. Ball
Gloucestershire County Council – Mr A. Deb

Others present:

Mr. M. Holland (Trail Riders Fellowship)
Cllr. M. Getgood (Coleford Town Council)

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1. Election of Chair

ML requested nominations for chair for the next year
Councillor McFarling was nominated by Councillor T. Hale, seconded by Councillor E. Bryn. Councillor McFarling elected chair.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor A. Webb nominated as vice-chair by Mr A. Thomas, seconded by Mr. M. Price. Councillor Webb elected vice chair.

3. Apologies for Absence and Introductions

Apologies:

Dr. J Hynes (Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust), Mr B. Nash (Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire), Ms. Whitehouse and Mr. M. Quine (Environment Agency), Ms. B. Vine (HALC), Cllr Lynn Parker (One Voice Wales), Cllr Ms. A. Webb and Cllr Steven Garrett (MCC), Graham Morgan (GCC), Cllr David Wheeler (FoDDC), Stuart Cox (Coleford TC), Robert Hatton (Monmouth TC).

All present introduced themselves.

It was noted that Nick Critchley will take the minutes as the usual clerk was on annual leave.

4. Declarations of Interest

None.

5. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting - 4th March 2024

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dated 4th March 2024 were confirmed by the Chair, to be signed at the next meeting.

Matters arising:

A further update on Bigsweir Bridge was requested and the impact of the road closure at Monmouth. Monmouthshire highways department have been asked, but no response received to date, most likely due to their being no programme for works. ML to raise issue and follow up.

JAC review – AB has yet to set up the task and finish group.

6. Public Question Time

No questions.

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7. Annual report 2023/24

We received an annual report for 2023/24 and noted the delay in the completion of the tabulated achievements for the Wye Valley AONB Unit/National Landscape Team.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The 2023/24 summary financial report on the delivery of the Work Programme for the AONB Unit, which rebranded as the National Landscape Team during the year, was outlined.
- There is a delay in completing the full Annual Report tabulating the achievements of the year against the annual Work Programme. This will be presented to the next JAC.
- High levels of achievement were maintained by the National Landscape Team despite the challenges of some staff turn-over and consequent reduced capacity during recruitment periods.
- The AONB Unit/National Landscape Team turnover in 2023/24 was £1,112,852 resulting in the leverage of over nearly £23 for every £1 of local authority contribution.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The expenditure appears staff heavy, but given the income generated this was considered acceptable. It was noted that Capital funding is hard to deliver without staff resources.
- There is a need to look at how we recruit and retain staff, as there appears to be a high turnover and subsequent loss of expertise. But it was noted that there is a good team currently in place and hopes for continuity. The Government Comprehensive Spending Review is key as financial uncertainty does not help staff assurance.
- All current grant funding agreements finish at the end of March 2025. Only confirmed funding presently in GCC contribution (circa £5k). New funding agreements, potentially for 3 years, are anticipated before the end of 2024.

We welcomed the Annual Report figures and await the finalised Annual Report.

8. Planning Guidance & Position Statements

We received two Position Statements to endorse, which intend to establish the position of the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership on key planning and development issues affecting the area.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

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- Position Statements help guide the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership and relevant plan-making and decision-making bodies to articulate how the Wye Valley National Landscape, designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), should be protected, conserved and enhanced, helping to uphold and deliver the vision, priorities and Strategic Objectives of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026.
- Position Statements are stand-alone documents, providing context and explain why the Partnership is taking this position.
- Both draft Position Statements have had respective formal public consultation periods, following which comments received have been considered and subsequent amendments made. Shared experience from similar Position Statements and Guidance produced by other protected landscapes has also helped inform both Position Statements.
- Position statements are referred to, where appropriate, in representations submitted by the National Landscape Team on planning consultations.
- The Partnership already has two position statements on Housing and Landscape-led Development, both of which were endorsed by the JAC in November 2023.

Both statements have previously been endorsed subject to consultation, which has now taken place.

The following points were noted:

- The Renewable Energy title may be misleading, being focused on wind and Solar, but with little weight given to other forms of renewable. It may be a shortfall of the document that these are omitted.
- It was noted that the position statements are planning documents aimed at landscape impact rather than the wider benefits of renewable energy. Wider benefits are best picked up in the AONB Management Plan.
- A Climate Action Plan is forthcoming which may also pick up the wider benefits of renewable energy. A Management Plan review is also due to start shortly.
- The issue raised is to be followed up between CE and AB outside of the meeting and any necessary amendments to the statement made, before seeking JAC endorsement of the final document via email. Deadline of July 22nd made for resolving the response, with a majority in approval needed to accept position statement.
- Dark Skies statement has been updated with comments from consultation.

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- Request that at 4.1.3. an interference to wildlife and plant species be added. Also noted that vehicle lights not considered.
- Herefordshire County Destination Business Improvement District (BID) Board promoting Dark Skies as a big tourist opportunity. A request will be made to the BID Board to endorse the position statement.
- With new government now in place and potential relaxation of planning, this statement is needed at haste.

We endorsed the position statements, subject to circulation of final edits, and all recommendations were accepted.

9. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy

We received a report to endorse the Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Strategy, an Integrated Recreational Access Strategy for the Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley National Landscape, and the associated Action Plan.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley is home to an extensive network of tracks and trails that allow residents and visitors wide-ranging access to explore the natural beauty and Special Qualities of the National Landscape.
- The tracks & trails network, forming part of Monmouthshire's Highways and Public Rights of Way, are an evolution of historic transport routes in the lower Wye Valley.
- The Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy and Action Plan is appended and was commissioned by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, with the support of Monmouthshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales and a range of other stakeholders and interested parties.
- The preparation of the Strategy included in-depth research on the extent and type of tracks and trails and the nature of visitors and users, backed up with a widespread consultation of both public and professional interests.
- The vision is for the Lower Wye Valley's Tracks & Trails to be a resilient, well managed and welcoming network for all responsible users, with the Strategy and Action Plan outlining how these routes should be looked after, enhanced for a wider audience and conserved for the longer term.
- Generally the Strategy recognises that for the vast majority of the Tracks and Trails the appropriate response is to maintain the status quo on how they are managed, whilst recognising that certain routes need more intensive management and new solutions putting in place.

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- The associated Action Plan will be an evolving document overseen by a sub-group of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum, with subsequent iterations and updates reported back to the JAC, and other groups as appropriate.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Due to the strategy being funded by Welsh Government, it only considers the Monmouthshire part of the National Landscape.
- Recommendation that coordination is made with bus companies to encourage sustainable transport in accessing the countryside. A meeting is already planned with Newport Bus who run the 69 and 65 services. The National Landscape Team are also cataloguing their walks archive and how they connect with bus routes.

We endorsed the strategy.

10. **Hedgehog Species Action Plans (SAP)**

We received the Hedgehog Species Action Plan for endorsement, the second of 5 Species Action Plans being prepared for the National Landscape under the Colchester Declaration.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Colchester Declaration – a ‘declaration for nature’ was produced by the National Association for AONBS (NAAONB) and supported by all the AONB partnerships in 2019.
- Five species, or assemblage of species, were chosen as representative of the Wye Valley National Landscape Special Qualities.
- The second Species Action Plan, for the Hedgehog, as a locally iconic species and relating to boundary habitat diversity & connectivity, has been published and is appended to the report.
- The National Landscape team is working on the production of the remaining Species Action Plans and an accompanying Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan.

The following points were noted

- In Wales the 20mph speed limit might have a positive impact on reducing road kill and increase recording as a result.

We endorsed the Species Action Plan.

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11. AONB Partnership Study Tour 2024

We received recommendation to endorse the date and outline programme for the Annual National Landscape Partnership Study Tour.

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Annual Tour will be held on Friday 20th September.
- The programme is still being finalised but will focus predominantly on projects supported through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and land management issues in the Herefordshire part of the National Landscape.
- Initial invitations for expressions of interest to attend will be sent out shortly.
- Invitations would be extended to representatives from our neighbouring Designated Landscapes and other appropriate partner organisations in the interest of sharing good practice and broadening collaboration.

We endorsed the proposals.

12. FiPL, SDF & HCF Grants update

We received an update on the progress of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

In doing so the following information was noted:

- The DEFRA funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in England has an allocation of £362,384 for 2024/25, which is currently the final year of the programme.
- The FiPL Assessment Panel has approved grants totalling £303,675 in 2023/24 with £35,387 remaining. For 2024/5, £157,270 has already been allocated, leaving £205,113 remaining in what is understood to be the last year of the programme.
- Guidance and assistance to farmers and land managers applying to the FiPL programme is provided by Anna Stankiewicz, National Landscape Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer, along with Farm Advisors from the Wye & Usk Foundation and Herefordshire Meadows.
- The Welsh Government Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £80,103.50 allocated from the £100,000 available for 202/25, leaving £19,896.50 available. This is the final year of the current funding allocation.

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- Community groups, local organisations and individuals wishing to apply for the SDF can get assistance from Lucinda James, National Landscape Community Links Officer.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Fund hosted by the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) is currently closed for applications and opportunities to grow the Fund need to be sought.

The following points were noted

- It was noted that two FiPL projects were for a disproportionately large amount. The Historic Building Restoration Grant is separate and additional funding from the main FiPL allocation. The National Landscape benefits additionally through these projects as it receives extra Advice & Guidance budget, which can offset other revenue costs.
- It is possible to see more detail on of all the approved FiPL projects on the National Landscape website.

We welcomed the report and update.

13. Partner and National Landscape Team progress reports and updates

We received a report advising members of activity of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners.

The following points were noted:

- At the National Association Conference recently National Grid provided positive feedback about the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) application. However, formal approval is yet to be received,
- There are requests for Redbrook Bridge to have signage for no motorbike and horse access. A meeting is required with MCC engineers and highways. ML will raise with MCC highways.
- Proposal for the state of the Wye to be a standing item on the JAC agenda. As a highly political issue this had not been put on the agenda before the General Election. However, a River Wye Action Plan has been produced and a new chair recently appointed to the Wye Catchment Partnership. With Labour in government in both Westminster and Cardiff now, it is hoped there may be more joined up thinking.

The report was taken as read.

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GL16 8HG on Monday, 8th July, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

14. Date of next meeting

Monday 4th November 2024 at 2.00pm.

The meeting will be held in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford.

The meeting ended at 3.59 pm

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NATIONAL LANDSCAPE FUNDING AND MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING 2025 - 2028

Purpose

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

Recommendations

That the JAC

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

Key Issues

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

Reasons

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

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

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

Implications

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Background

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

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

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

ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To present the annual reports for 2023/24 on the achievements of the Wye Valley AONB Unit / National Landscape Team.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcome the Annual Report on AONB/National Landscape achievements for 2023/24

Key Issues

- During 2023/4 all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) rebranded as National Landscapes.
- The 2023/24 Annual Report on the Work Programme is appended for the Wye Valley AONB Unit / National Landscape Team, along with the summary financial report.
- High levels of achievement were maintained despite the challenges of some staff turnover and consequent reduced capacity during recruitment periods.
- The AONB Unit/National Landscape Team turnover in 2023/24 was £1,112,852 resulting in the leverage of over nearly £23 for every £1 of local authority contribution.

Reasons

The Work Programme Report for 2023/24 tabulates the achievements of the AONB Unit, which rebranded as the National Landscape Team during the period. The Work Programme Annual Report is also presented to DEFRA and Welsh Government as contributory evidence to the National Landscape/AONB Partnership annual grant claims to the two government core funding partners.

Implications

The report to July JAC provided a summary to the 2023/24 year.

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Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol
Wye Valley
National Landscape

Annual report 2023 – 2024
 including financial summary

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

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Agenda Item 6b

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

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

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WV-H3 WV-P5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for future cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological research and investigation into the landscape significance of the 8th century monument Participate in Collaboratory conferences, meetings and events Support community based research and events. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> limited activity during this period due to other pressures in the Collaboratory (AM) AM attended 2 Collaboratory Conveners meetings
WV-C2 WV-A1	<p>Communications & social media</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Regular social media (SM) posts e.g. Facebook, Instagram and twitter On-going updating and management of https://www.wyevalleyaonb-nl.org.uk/ Regular publication of on-line AONB newsletter 'Picturesque' Revise and publish AONB Map & Guide 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Social media audiences have grown, with the addition of new LinkedIn channel (IO) Website updated www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk to www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk to reflect new National Landscapes branding (IO). Two newsletters issued Spring & Winter (IO) Map & Guide prepared but final design held back to line up with rebrand introduction and use up all old stock (IO).
WV-C2 WV-E4 WV-A1	<p>Outreach Activities</p> <p>Promote the AONB through</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Talks/presentations to local groups Stands at relevant shows. Promote, sponsor &/or lead guided walks, events, activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB Support the Wye Valley River Festival CIC 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Talks and presentations to local groups including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Conversation event Pentwyn Jan 24 (WO/DO) Goodrich LEI promotion landowner consultation Oct 23 (DO) Presentation with Hedgehog Champion Dylan Allman at the Weobley Branch of the HWT Feb 24 (CLO) Talk at Monmouth School (Jan 24) Stands at relevant shows including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 23 – Friends of the Lower Wye 'Wye July' event (sPO, FO, PO & NRO) Guided walks, events and activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dark Skies Wales Feb 2024: Planetarium x 2 Llandogo Village Hall 80 participants; Biofluorescent Walks x 2 Whitestone 33 participants (IO) Chepstow Walking Festival 2024 St Arvans Walk 15 participants, River Friendly Farm Walk 18 participants (IO, FO) Orchard management and wildlife events in conjunction with Colwall orchard, summer 23 (NRO) Hosted meetings of WVRF CIC team throughout year.
WV-F4 WV-C2 WV-P6	<p>Youth Rangers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review programme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage Train new Leaders as required/appropriate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Valley Adventurers Launch event on Saturday 23rd March 2024 at the Narth Village Hall and Manor Wood. 3 different activities organised:- a foraging walk with tea/drink making back at the hall with plants that were found; a bird ID walk and; whistle whittling & fire making with marshmallow toasting. 19 children attended the event and were asked about what activities they would like to see in the future. This event was supported by Gwent Green Grid Team and WVNL Team & Volunteers. Feedback from the children on the event was very positive and encouraging (CLO). 1 volunteer trained and DBS checked to support future events.
WV-P1 WV-P2	<p>Governance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Steering Groups, 3 TOWPs & 3 JAC's serviced (AM)

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

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

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		<p>widely, as well as contributing to multiple National Planning Policy Framework consultations and involved in the establishing of the Planning & Placemaking Community of Practice for National Landscape Teams Planning Officers across England c/o the NLA.</p> <p>4. Preparations commenced for a future training programme for LPA staff and elected members. Attendees would benefit from greater awareness and understanding of what the AONB designation is about and why the Management Plan is important, particularly in relation to plan-making and decision-making. However, this has been deferred as many Local Planning Authorities were experiencing high turnover of staff, as an event had been planned with Herefordshire Council in late 2023 and had to be postponed for this reason. However, a number of planning officers attended the National Landscape Partnership Winter Seminar held on 19 March 2024, which provided some CPD and training on planning/development management issues in the National Landscape.</p> <p>5. sPO worked jointly between the Wye Valley National Landscape and Malvern Hills National Landscape working 2.5 a week with each National Landscape. It is continually noted that when a representation is made by the sPO to a planning application, particularly on smaller scale ('full householder'), these are often ignored, whereas applications for minor dwellings/commercial/major applications, the comments will be considered and often lead to positive dialogue between the Local Planning Authority / agent / applicant & sPO, leading to amended plans to benefiting the National Landscape, although this does vary between LPAs and is dependent on resources & Terms of Reference which the National Landscape Team has with each Local Planning Authority.</p>
<p>WV-L4 WV-B5 WV-H2 WV-S3 WV-P8</p>	<p>Monitoring</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS and State of the AONB data, Complete Phase 1 Habitat Survey mapping & digitising Progress Nature Recovery Network map & ground-truthing Investigate opportunities to update heritage, tourism and recreation monitoring. Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Undertake Fixed point photography across the AONB 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> DO / NRO attended a Tirweddau Cymru habitat mapping workshop and received Wye Valley specific habitat information. National hedgerow dataset was received and will be analysed for State of the National Landscape report. Fixed Point Photography carried out across 21 sites in 23/24.
<p>WV-P1 WV-P2 WV-P3</p>	<p>Funding and resources</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare grant bids and claims for NRW, Welsh Government and DEFRA, and other funding bodies as required. Continue pursuing funding and develop opportunities for external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> All bids and claims submitted as required (AM, BSA) LEI EOI submitted for £400k project in Walford/Marstow area.

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

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

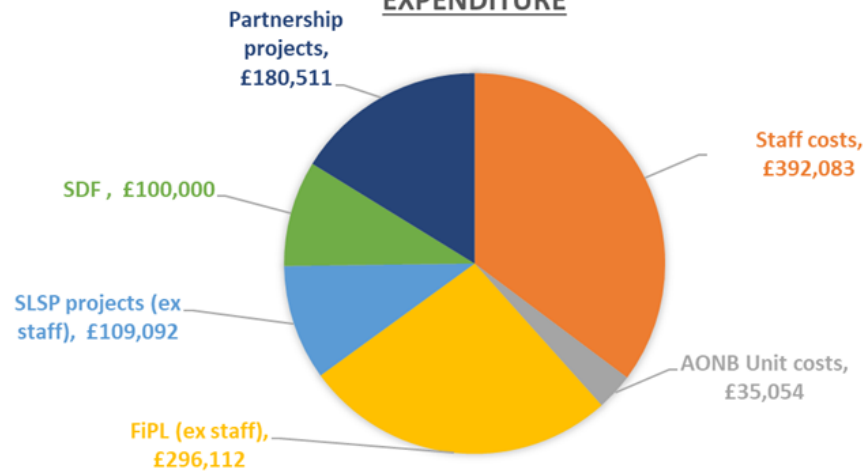
National Landscape / AONB Unit Work Programme AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 Strategic Objectives National Landscape Team / AONB Unit Initiatives		National Landscape Team / AONB Unit Achievements & Outcomes 2023-24
		1 interim report was submitted to Welsh Government 1 End of Year annual report was submitted to Welsh Government 1 SDF Monitoring tour with Delegate from Welsh Government
WV-L1 WV-B3 WV-C1	Wye Valley AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) 1. Promote Wye Valley AONB Fund with HCF to potential applicants 2. Assist potential applicants with application process and project development 3. Collate applications for the SDF Assessment Panel and liaise with HCF 4. Service SDF Assessment Panel recommending allocations to HCF.	1. The AONB Fund was included in the SDF Flyer 2. 2 applicants were supported through the application process totalling £3,500 3. 2 applications were approved via the delegated officer process
Additional not in original Work Programme		
	DEFRA Access for All Funding	7 projects were supported totalling £53,908 = 100% of the funding allocation spent (CLO,IO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Accessible barrier free walk was developed – The Willow Walk • 37 gates we purchased and installed with support from the Ross Walkers are Welcome volunteers • 1 bridge was replaced with a wheelchair accessible bridge along the WVW and Willow Walk which included tree works, bank stabilisation • 1 accessible bird hide/information hub was developed along the WVW & Willow Walk at Townsend farm • 2 accessible bench/tables were installed at Townsend farm along the WVW & Willow Walk • Improvements were made at Ross play park next to the WVW • 3 willow weaving workshops held to promote the Willow Walk

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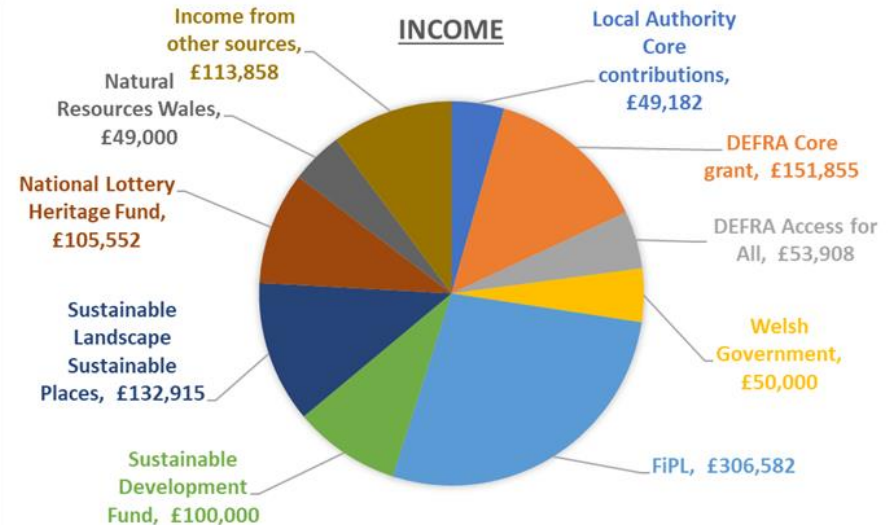
Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts		2022/23	2023/24			2022/23	2023/24
Expenditure		£	£		Income	£	£
Staff costs		298,462	392,083		Local Authorities core contributions	49,182	49,182
Unit Operating costs		40,930	35,054		DEFRA Core grant	151,855	151,855
Farming in Protected Landscapes		155,775	296,112		DEFRA Access for All	~	53,908
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places		221,132	109,092		Welsh Government	50,000	50,000
Sustainable Development Fund		100,000	100,000		Farming in Protected Landscapes	220,110	306,582
Partnership projects		256,722	180,511		Sustainable Development Fund	100,000	100,000
TOTAL		1,073,021	1,112,852		Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	233,000	132,915
					National Lottery Heritage Fund	~	105,552
					Natural Resources Wales Grant	49,000	49,000
					Income from other sources	219,874	113,858
					TOTAL	1,073,021	1,112,852

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EXPENDITURE



INCOME



Staff: AM = AONB Manager; DO = Development Officer; CLO = Community Links Officer; IO = Information Officer; BSA = Business Support Assistant; PO = Lower Wye Project Officer; NRO = Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer; FO = Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer; sPO = shared Planning Officer; WO = Wye Adapt to Climate Change Officer

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NATIONAL LANDSCAPE SPECIES ACTION PLAN & NATURE RECOVERY PLAN

Purpose

To present members with the third of the 5 National Landscape Species Action Plans, for the Bumblebee Assemblage, under the Colchester Declaration.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the Bumblebee Assemblage Species Action Plan and welcomes the on-going work on the preparation of the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and remaining Species Action Plans.

Key Issues

- The Colchester Declaration – a ‘declaration for nature’ was produced by the National Association for AONBS (NAAONB) and supported by all the AONB partnerships in 2019.
- Five species, or assemblage of species, were chosen as representative of the Wye Valley National Landscape Special Qualities.
- The second Species Action Plan, for the Hedgehog, was adopted at the last meeting, and the first Species Action Plan for Noble Chafer beetle was adopted in July 2023.
- The third Species Action Plan is published and is appended below, focusing on a bumblebee assemblage, to encourage the sustainable management of their habitat of species-rich and semi- or un-improved grasslands.
- The National Landscape Team is working on the production of the remaining Species Action Plans
- The suite of Species Action Plans accompany the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan, which will be published shortly as a public consultation draft.
- A Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is being prepared in both Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, with both counties undertaking public surveys before publishing their respective LNRS for consultation.

Reasons

Biodiversity is in decline. To reverse the declines in biodiversity and realise nature’s recovery, we need to work together and on a landscape-scale to enact the Lawton principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined Up. This means conserving and enhancing our existing natural habitats, but also making them bigger, creating new areas of species-rich habitat and, critically, ensuring they join up to create functional and resilient ecological networks that enable nature and people to thrive.

In July 2019 the Colchester Declaration was produced by the NAAONB and supported by AONB partnerships. The Declaration demonstrated the readiness of AONB partnerships to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change. The ambition was pledged for every AONB to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan and deliver Species Action Plans to reverse the decline of threatened species identified on the IUCN Red List, see: <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/the-colchester-declaration>.

The AONB Unit worked with local wildlife and conservation experts to choose 5 species, or assemblage of species, that: are representative of the AONB Special Qualities [SQ], as identified in the AONB Management Plan, and; will benefit from positive landscape scale management. The species chosen are: Noble Chafer beetle in relation to orchard habitats & Veteran Trees [SQ27, SQ18]; Hedgehog as a locally iconic species [SQ1, SQ4, SQ5, SQ26]; Bumblebee assemblage with particular focus on Shril Carder, Brown-banded Carder, and Red-shanked Carder in relation to grassland sites [SQ4]; Woodland butterfly assemblage with special interest in the Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary in relation to woodlands [SQ2]; and Water Crowfoot as an indicator for river water quality [SQ3, SQ10].

The Environment Act 2021 introduced the requirement for local bodies to take responsibility for restoring the environment within their locale, working with local groups and the local authority. This needs to be captured in a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) that draws on ecological insights and finds natural solutions that improve biodiversity. DEFRA has asked every county in England to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This will describe where and how the development of habitats could have the greatest benefit for nature.

Implications

The third of the 5 Wye Valley National Landscape Species Action Plans, has been produced and is appended below. A bumblebee assemblage was chosen to encourage the sustainable management of species-rich and un/semi improved grasslands, to support these species and increase the diversity within our grassland areas. Being habitat focused, the bumble assemblage encompasses all bumblebees, but with a particular interest in locally distinctive and rare bees including the Shril Carder Bee, Brown-banded Carder Bee and the Red-Shanked Carder Bee.

The accompanying Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan is being finalised ready for consultation. It is primarily a plan for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, to give strategic direction to nature recovery work. It can however be used by a broader audience in decision making around land management opportunities, including but not limited to landowners and managers, communities and other interest groups. The plan will also influence and help implement many of the new policies and initiatives on both sides of the national boundary.

The Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is progressing through a number of stages. Baseline mapping has been developed by the Herefordshire Biological Record Centre (HARC) which includes designated sites and irreplaceable habitat, following a criteria list shared by DEFRA. Opportunities mapping has been undertaken by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust which identifies opportunities for creating connectivity across 3 main habitat types;

grassland, woodland and wetland. The Council is now seeking to engage with stakeholders on mapping to utilise local knowledge to amend mapping, based upon best available data. A series of workshops have been undertaken with Members, Parish Councils in market towns and shortly due to commence workshops with landowners. A survey was published for members of the public seeking their views on what is important for nature recovery in the county. Mapping will shortly be published on the council webpage (see <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/conservation-1/ecology/7>).

The development of the written strategy is imminently due to be commissioned and will commence with using the survey feedback to set out what is important in Herefordshire and what the priorities and key measures will be.

Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is also producing a new and first Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the county. This will largely be done through the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP) and its members with involvement of a wide range of stakeholders across Gloucestershire. A draft version of the LNRS is likely to be circulated for public consultation in late 2024. For further information see <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/a-nature-recovery-strategy-for-gloucestershire/> .

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) have produced a Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) which, along with the Rivers & Oceans Action Plan and the Green Infrastructure Strategy, forms part of the Council's Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy adopted in May 2024. The NRAP sets out actions to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and build ecosystem resilience, For further information see <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/climate-emergency/>.

Background

In 2019 the annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference took place at the University of Essex, Colchester. The conference concluded with The Colchester Declaration – a Declaration for Nature. This was developed through a series of pre-conference discussion fora and workshop sessions during the conference. The Declaration is the pledge for nature of the AONB network: to protect what remains and restore what has been lost.

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Wye Valley
National Landscape

Bumblebee Assemblage

Species Action Plan 2022 – 2027



To Accompany the
Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan



Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol

Wye Valley
National Landscape

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Figure 6: Shrill carder bee records 2000-present (red), and pre-2000 (yellow) (Source – Bumblebee Conservation Trusts, 2024).

1. Background

In 2019, set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) set in motion plans to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's). The Wye Valley AONB Partnership, along with AONB's across the UK, signed up to the Colchester Declaration. This is an ambitious plan to recover nature in and beyond protected landscapes, build climate resilience and enhance engagement with people. Rebranding has since taken place and AONBs are now known as National Landscapes.

As part of this effort, each National Landscape has committed to adopting an IUCN threatened, or locally threatened, species and preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, in the hope that by 2030 at least 30 species relevant to AONB's can be removed from the threatened list (NAAONB, 2019). The Wye Valley National Landscape has committed to adopting 5 locally significant species, each of which represent one of the AONB's special qualities, and/or indicate the health of a well-connected landscape. A bumblebee assemblage has been chosen to encourage the sustainable management of species-rich and un/semi improved grasslands to support these species and increase the diversity within our grassland areas. Being habitat focused, our bumble assemblage encompasses all bumblebees, but with a particular interest in locally distinctive and rare bees including the Shrill Carder Bee, Brown-banded Carder Bee and the Red-Shanked Carder Bee.

2. Introduction

The Shrill carder bee is a distinctive bee which can be identified by its pale grey-yellow colouring, black band of hair between the wings and reddish-orange tail (as shown in Figure 1). It also has a noticeably high-pitched buzz. Their size ranges between 10-18mm; the queens are approximately 17mm long, whereas workers and males are generally much smaller. The distribution of Shrill carder bees has declined dramatically in the last century, making it one of the UK's rarest bumblebees. The Shrill carder bee is now only found in seven areas in southern England and Wales. These fragmented populations are found in Kent, Essex, Somerset, Wiltshire, Gwent, Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire. It is a priority species for conservation in England and Wales. The principal causes of decline are the loss of flower-rich meadows and the intensification of farming and grazing practices.

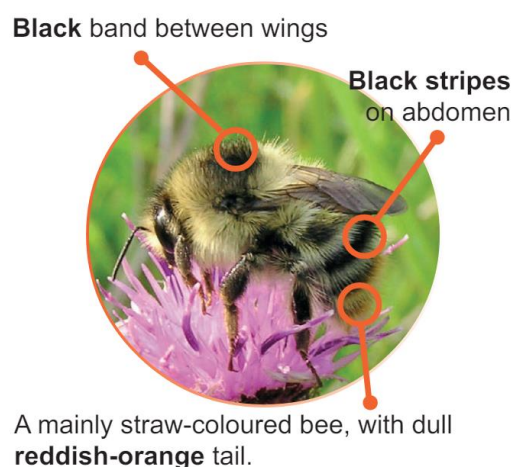


Figure 1: Identifying the Shrill carder bee (Source – Bumblebee Conservation Trust, 2019)

The Brown-banded Carder bee (*Bombus humilis*) has ginger hair on top of the thorax with paler yellow hair on the sides, under the wing bases. The hair on the abdomen is ginger-yellow, often (especially in queens) with a ginger band on the second abdominal section. There is also a scattering of black hairs on the thorax around the wing bases, but none on the abdomen. This species has a long tongue, and it often feeds on red clover and vetches. It nests on the surface of the ground amongst long grass or mossy vegetation (Bumblebee Conservation Trust, 2024).



Figure 2: Brown-banded Carder bee (left) and the Shril Carder bee (right) on a common comfrey (Source – Ciaran Clark)

The Red-Shanked Carder bee (*Bombus ruderarius*) is predominantly black with a red tail, very similar in appearance to the more common Red-tailed Bumblebee. However, the Red-Shanked Carder is smaller, rounder and females have red hairs fringing the pollen baskets on their hind legs. Unlike the females, males have two dusky straw-coloured bands on the thorax. In common with other ‘carder’ bee species the Red-Shanked Carder bee nests at ground-level, frequently in tall tussocky grass and sometimes in old mouse or vole nests, and is strongly associated with large and open areas of unimproved grasslands (Back from the Brink, 2024).



Figure 3: Red-Shanked Carder bee (Source – Back from the Brink, 2024)



Figure 4: Red-Shanked Carder Bee nest (Source – Back from the Brink, 2024)

3. Current Status

3.1 Ecology and habitat requirements

The Shrill, Brown-Banded and Red-Shanked Carder bees are late emerging species, as queens do not come out of hibernation until around May. Queens will feed on nectar and then begin to search for a suitable nest site. Nests are usually built on the ground, or just below the surface, in thick vegetation such as tall or tussocky grassland. These carder bee queens produce relatively small colonies compared to other bumblebees, with 50-200 workers in a mature nest. Workers, seen from around June onwards, collect nectar and pollen to support the nest. Later in the cycle, the queen switches from producing workers to rearing males and daughter queens, which emerge around August. After mating, daughter queens find suitable hibernation sites and will not emerge again until May the following year. Once the new queens have been produced, the rest of the colony, including the old queen, begin to die.

As these carder bees are late emerging species, it is crucial to provide forage into late September to ensure new queens are reared. Late cut meadows, field edges, hedgerow margins, sea walls and ditches can help provide this. (Bumblebee Conservation Trust, 2019).

These carder bees are long-tongued bumblebees and prefer plants with long tubular flowers. Their favourite forage plants include those that are rich in nectar and pollen including white dead-nettle and legumes such as red clover, and birds-foot trefoil. Late flowering species include red bartsia, common knapweed and scabious. 'Weed' species such as ragwort and thistles can also be important forage resources.

While there is significant overlap, each species may show particular preferences depending on the availability of local flora and habitat conditions.



Figure 5: Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and Red Bartsia (*Odontites verna*) are important foodplants and flower into late summer.

Research suggests that these carder bees are doorstep foragers with a small foraging range (on average). They require open, extensive flower rich habitats close to undisturbed nesting habitat. These bees tend to be concentrated in one patch of flowers, meaning that they are particularly susceptible if there is a sudden cut.

The Shrill, Brown-banded and Red-Shanked Carder bee species all need large, well-connected areas of flower-rich habitat in order to thrive, with forage available right through the flight season, from March until October.

3.2 Population and distribution

The Shrill Carder bee occupies varied habitats such as the dry grasslands of Salisbury Plain and Castlemartin Ranges, coastal and brownfield sites in the Thames Gateway and wet grazing marshes of the Somerset and Gwent Levels. The current distribution of the Shrill carder bee in the UK is restricted to a handful of populations in the Somerset Levels, Gwent Levels and Pembrokeshire, and along the Glamorgan coast and Thames corridor (The Wildlife Trusts, 2024).

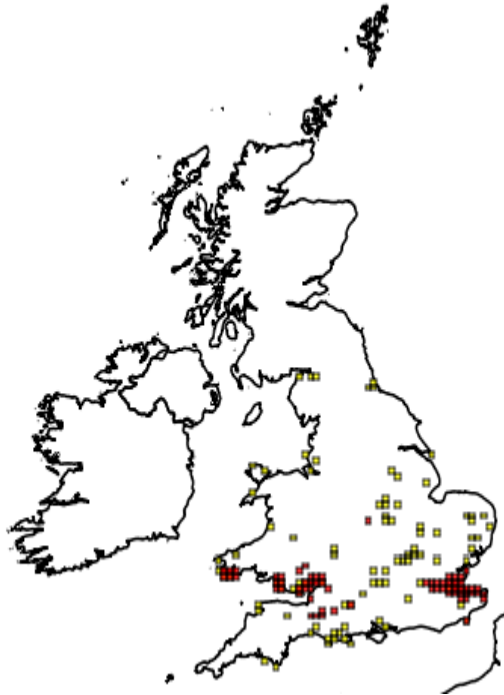


Figure 6: Shril carder bee records 2000-present (red), and pre-2000 (yellow) (Source – Bumblebee Conservation Trusts, 2024)

Following a review of the NBN Atlas data, it was indicated that there are no records of the Shril Carder Bee within the Wye Valley National Landscape; however, there are 14 records within 5km of the Wye Valley National Landscape boundary near Chepstow. Furthermore, there are no NBN Atlas records of the Red-Shanked Carder within the Wye Valley National Landscape (with the nearest approximately 4 miles west of Monmouth), and only one record of the Brown-banded Carder near St Briavels. With these species being found so close, habitat improvements within the Wye Valley National Landscape will not only create habitat for more common bumblebee species, but also increase the opportunity for population expansion of these three bee species into the throughout the National Landscape.

3.3 Legislation

The Shril, Brown-banded, and Red-Shanked Carder bees are all recognised as Priority Species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP), and experiencing various degrees of rarity and threat.

The Shril carder bee is one of the rarest bumblebees in the UK and is the rarest of the three species. It is very scarce, found only in a few scattered, isolated populations in England and Wales.

All three species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, and Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This is primarily through habitat protection and the prohibition of activities that can harm these species.

3.4 Summary of important sites

The Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve, located within the Gwent Levels, features a rich array of low-lying habitats, including wet grasslands, reedbeds, saltmarshes, and saline lagoons. This reserve is a stronghold for these vulnerable bumblebee species. It is managed through a partnership between Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Newport City Council, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

NRW oversees land management, conservation efforts, and species protection at Newport Wetlands, while the RSPB manages the Visitor Centre, educational programs, and visitor services.

The Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve is situated about 11 miles from the nearest point of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

However, there are isolated records of each of the three species closer to the Wye Valley National Landscape.

4. Current factors affecting the species

4.1 Threats

Habitat Loss

- These bumblebees have declined for reasons similar to the overall decline in abundance and biodiversity in Britain: intensive farming practices has seen 98% of flower-rich meadows in England and Wales lost over the past century (Barkham, 2024). The conversion of flower-rich meadows and grasslands to intensive agricultural land reduces available habitats and foraging resources.
- Cultivation of previously uncut field margins eliminates important nesting sites and late-season foraging resources.
- Expansion of urban areas leads to the destruction of natural habitats and fragmentation of remaining habitats.

Climate Change

- Shifts in temperature can affect the timing of flowering plants and the emergence of bumblebees, disrupting their synchrony and reducing food availability.
- Increased frequency of extreme weather events, such as heavy rains and droughts, can destroy bumblebee habitats and reduce the availability of flowers.

4.2 Barriers to conservation

All three species are active through to early autumn, so they require late-flowering plants with a plentiful supply of nectar in September – to ensure the next generation goes into hibernation well fed. Unfortunately, the intensification of farming has led to significant changes in traditional practices. The annual hay-cut in July, which previously allowed some plants to flower again in September, has been replaced by multiple cuts for silage throughout the growing season. This change has reduced the availability of late-season flowers. Additionally, previously untidy and uncut field margins, which provided late nectar and nesting grounds, have been cultivated. As a result, there is now little space left for these carder bees (Barkham, 2024).

Research indicates that these bumblebees do not forage as far from the nest as many other species and need open, extensive flower-rich habitats near undisturbed nesting areas. Therefore, any 'stepping stone' habitats that are created may need to be closer together to help these carder bees expand their range.

5. Current Initiatives

5.1 Local protection, site management and programmes of action

The Natur am Byth! partnership is Wales' flagship Green Recovery project. It unites nine environmental charities with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to deliver the country's largest natural heritage and outreach programme to save species from extinction and reconnect people to nature. The project began in September 2021 and is currently in Stage 2, ending in September 2027, with a budgeted total programme cost of £8m.

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is leading conservation efforts for the Shill Carder bee as part of this project at three critical sites in South Wales; in Pembrokeshire, The Gwent Levels, and Kenfig. This includes the Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve.

Monmouthshire Meadows, The Parish Grassland Project and Herefordshire Meadows are working with partners and stakeholders within and outside the Wye Valley National Landscape to create, restore, manage and provide management advice for meadow grasslands which ultimately benefits a range of pollinators including our bumblebee assemblage.

MonLife are responsible for several green infrastructure projects including the Nature Isn't Neat project, whereby areas of council-owned land are allowed to grow freely encouraging wildflowers along road verges and in parks.

To support the habitat of these carder bee species at the Newport Wetlands National Nature Reserve, NRW mows and bales the verges along paths and tracks around the reedbeds during the first week of October each year (as late in the season as possible). If space constraints prevent mowing and baling, these verges are flailed. Additionally, two meadow areas are cut and baled, with one meadow, approximately one hectare in size, having half of its area cut each year on a rotational basis.

The aim of this method of site management is to remove nutrients from the soil by taking the cuttings off-site, which will encourage the growth of the carder bees' food plants. This method also ensures that there is a late-foraging food source into October.

5.2 Survey, research and monitoring

Skills for bees: Cymru is a project run by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust aiming to increase knowledge and understanding of Welsh bumblebee populations. They are delivering identification and survey sessions, and training and mentoring recorders to participate in their flagship BeeWalk scheme in partnership with both organisations and individuals. Their aim is to develop a skilled community of bumblebee recorders and Beewalkers who will make a significant contribution to the understanding of bumblebees in Wales by providing the data which is essential for their future conservation.

Bees for Development are also providing bee identification training to members of the public in Monmouth and surrounding areas.

6. Conservations Visions

To enhance opportunities for this bumblebee assemblage across the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Working with partners and landowners to ensure that late-emerging bumblebee habitat is considered within all management decision making.

More potential habitat to be created and connected to enhance opportunities for this bumblebee assemblage within the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Working with partners and stakeholders to expand and join up new habitats in the Wye Valley National Landscape including wildflower meadows on improved and semi-improved-poor grassland and through arable reversion.

To see a sustainable increase in populations of this bumble assemblage across the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Encouraging stakeholders to undertake surveys to determine bumblebee populations and monitor the progress of conservation efforts.

7. Conservations Actions

ACTION	HOW
Raise awareness of the decline of late-emerging bumblebees and the potential for a recovery in their numbers through appropriate action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host events and workshops with the general public. - Work with partners and groups to spread the message. - Promote good practices relating to habitat management for bees.
Monitor the population of bee species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage partners, volunteers and the general public to carry out surveys (at known established sites and potential new sites) using methods such as the BeeWalk. - Record signs and sightings of bees, and submit records to the relevant local environmental records centre. - Continued support of training events undertaken by Bees for Development and other partners. - Monitor and record the extent of un/semi improved grassland sites to track habitat enhancements against baseline figures.
Nurture and encourage bee action groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide support through funding. - Assist with funding applications. - Facilitate meetings and promote the work of groups.
Encourage habitat improvements through creation and restoration of wildflower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage farmers and landowners to manage and restore existing, and create new wildflower

meadows and more diverse flower rich grasslands	meadows, promoting and assisting with applications for funding. - Work with farmers and landowners to encourage good land management practices to improve habitat and connectivity. - Continue to work with local meadow groups, promoting and supporting their work.
Encourage the general public to better manage their gardens and urban areas for bees.	- Produce and distribute promotional material about late-emerging bumblebees. - Signpost the general public to information sources. - Promote the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and other sources of information. - promote the importance of meadow grassland sites for bumblebees at shows and event, through talks and guided walks

8. Role of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team

- Support, advise, facilitate and co-ordinate conservation action for bees, either as lead or through partnerships with other stakeholders.
- Engage with and support landowners and land managers, encouraging best practice in managing late-emerging bumblebee habitat to enhance opportunities for their populations.
- Promote bee conservation within other wildlife conservation organisations and provide and encourage the provision of advice to the general public and practical support for landowners.
- Enthuse the general public to take part in surveying and providing records of bee sightings.
- Monitor habitat extent and bumblebee populations, to enable progress reporting.

9. Marking Progress

We will mark progress through:

- **Bee records:** When there are more records of bees in the National Landscape, indicating a population increase or an improvement in survey efforts.
- **Bee habitat:** When there is more available habitat and better connectivity in the National Landscape where bees are being recorded, indicating a population increase, an expansion in range or an improvement in survey efforts.
- **Late-emerging bumblebee measures:** When new measures are successfully implemented to support late-emerging bumblebee species e.g. late cuts/mowing (in October) or rotational cutting to ensure there is a source of pollen and nectar for late-emerging species.
- **Bee understanding and conservation efforts:** When information about bees is widely available to everybody, and bee habitat in the National Landscape is being enhanced.

10. References and further information

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Agenda Item 8

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4th November 2024

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES (FIPL), SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND (SDF) AND HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (HCF) WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE FUND

Purpose

To update members on the progress of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

Recommendation

That the JAC endorse the recent allocations of grants under the FiPL programme, SDF and HCF National Landscape Fund.

Key Issues

- DEFRA have provided additional allocations in 2024/25 for the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in England, resulting in the Wye Valley National Landscape benefiting from a FiPL total of £841,264 in this final year of the current programme.
- The FiPL Assessment Panel has approved grants utilising the full amount available, totalling £727,916 of grants and £74,526 of admin, advice and guidance, so the programme is closed for applications unless there are any unspent grants returned in time before the end of the financial year.
- DEFRA have confirmed the extension of the FiPL Officer post for 2 years but the provision of the FiPL grants programme is uncertain and dependent on the government's Budget and Spending Review.
- The Welsh Government Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) currently has £87,103.50 allocated from the £100,000 available for 202/25, leaving £10,783.50 available.
- This is the final year of the current SDF allocation but it is anticipated that Welsh Government will renew the SDF, subject to the Spending Review and Budget settlement.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Fund hosted by the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) is currently closed for applications while opportunities to grow the Fund are sought.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

The Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) grants programme currently terminates in March 2025. Wye Valley National Landscape FiPL allocation for 24/25 was originally £362,384. DEFRA offered various additional funding rounds for Protected Landscapes that had the

capacity to taken up further allocations. The Wye Valley National Landscape Team applied for and received an additional £109,304 for FiPL. The Historic Building Restoration Grant (HBRG) scheme was also launched by DEFRA and Historic England as a specific addition to FiPL. The Wye Valley FiPL Officer was able to secure £369,576 of HBRG. Consequently the total FiPL funds for 2024/25 became £841,264 of which £74,526 is allocated for programme administration including advice and guidance, through employment of the FiPL Officer and contracting of other farm advisors.

The FiPL Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding each application over £5,000. Application under £5,000 are determined by the National Landscape Manager. FiPL applications approved since the JAC in July are as follows:

Code	Applicant	Project	Grant £	Approved
WV086	The Hyde	NFM	1,200.00	Delegated
WV088	Staunton Meend	Heathland management	2,297.05	Delegated
WV089	Eastbach Court	Optimal Shelterbelt	10,402.36	Panel
WV090	Harewood End	Lake Restoration	21,431.52	Panel
WV091	Great Trewen	Milkshed	19,950.00	Panel
WV092	Mayview Farm	Optimal Shelterbelt	12,997.02	Panel
WV093	Ballingham Court	Access Trailer	15,200.00	Panel
WV094	Elvastone Farm	Pine Ring Restoration	5,488.32	Panel
WV095	Bicknor Court	Grazing infrastructure	1,242.47	Delegated
WV096	Upper Pengethley	Optimal Shelterbelt	9,693.00	Panel
WV097	Lower Witherstone	Livestock bridge	2,341.15	Delegated
WV098	Much Fawley Farm	Bird Survey	500.00	Delegated
WV099	Northgate Farm	Butchery unit	17,000.00	Panel
WV100	Mayview Farm	Water settlement tank	2,076.00	Delegated
		TOTAL this period	121,818.89	

DEFRA have not confirmed whether the FiPL grants programme will be extended beyond March 2025. However, the FiPL Officer post has been extended by 2 years to continue farm liaison and engagement, whether the grants programme is renewed or not.

The last FiPL application to be approved in Wye Valley National Landscape to date was the one hundredth.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

Welsh Government allocated £100,000 of SDF for 2024/25 for the Welsh part of the National Landscape. The SDF Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on applications over £3,000. Application under £3,000 are determined by the National Landscape Manager. The table below lists the approved grants since the last JAC in July, totalling £9,113. To date during 2024/25 a total of £89,216.50 of SDF has been approved and committed, leaving

£10,783.50 remaining for the rest of the year. The Community Links Officer is aware of a potential application in development that may apply for all the remaining funds.

Code	Applicant	Project Title	Project value	SDF Grant	Approved
WY09 YR24W	Tintern Festivals Association	Ecofest	£5,425.00	£2,425.00	Delegated
WY10 YR24W	Coed Lleol-Small Woods	Wild in the Wye	£8,532.00	£6,688.00	Panel
		TOTAL this period		£9,113.00	

The current SDF allocation ends in March 2025. However it is understood that Welsh Government intend to continue the SDF subject to the settlement of their budgets.

Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF)

The Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) was established with a £50,000 Endowment Fund. Project grants are awarded from the interest and any growth or donations above that base Fund. There is currently £10,000 also donated specifically for the Youth Rangers programme.

The HCF Wye Valley National Landscape Fund had a balance of £67,368 as of the last statement dated 30th September 2024. The fund is currently restricted to allow the value to grow. Opportunities need to be sought to augment the National Landscape Fund further. When funds allow, the National Landscape Team &/or SDF Assessment Panel, as appropriate, reviews and comments on applications to the National Landscape Fund to advise HCF on grant funding.

Background

For more details on grants and the application process see <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/grants/>.

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AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Purpose

To outline the programme for the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Requests that the four local authorities delegate the preparation and production of the next Wye Valley AONB Management Plan to the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.
- B. Endorses the programme for the review and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

Key Issues

- The existing Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) needs to be reviewed, under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act Section 89, by the end of 2026.
- The current Wye Valley AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2021-2024/25, signed by the four local authorities, delegates the Management Plan review to the AONB Partnership.
- The proposed Management Plan review programme is appended.
- Following the previous Management Plan review it was recognised that a comprehensive review was required, rather than a 'light touch' approach.
- Natural England and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are due to finalise production of guidance for AONB Management Plan reviews.

Reasons

Sections 89-90 of the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 require local authorities to review adopted and published AONB Management Plans at intervals of not more than five years. The CROW Act also requires local authorities to 'act jointly' in the preparation and review of AONB Management Plans.

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Herefordshire Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Monmouthshire County Council formally delegated the publishing, reviewing and monitoring of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan to the AONB Partnership. The MoU was extended by 12 months from 2021-2024, to March 2025. It is anticipated that the delegation will continue because it mitigates the shared risk of not delivering on statutory duties.

Implications

The review of the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) must be complete by the end of 2026. In the current Plan it was recognised that a ‘full review’ will be applicable for the preparation of the next Plan (2026-2031).

Attached below is the proposed programme for that Management Plan review. The Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) will oversee the review conducted by the National Landscape Team. The review will involve a wide range of stakeholders and public consultation. Key local authority members and officers will be closely involved in the process and each local authority will ultimately approve and adopt the final Plan individually. AONB Management Plans also fall under the requirements of Habitats Regulation Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments. Formal guidance is awaited from NRW on behalf of Welsh Government and Natural England on behalf of DEFRA.

Work will commence shortly at an officer level on the Management Plan review. It is intended that the National Landscape Partnership Winter Seminar is used to focus on the review.

Background

The previous four statutory AONB Management Plans have been produced by the AONB Unit on behalf of the local authorities, acting jointly.

The CRoW Act 2000 (Sections 89 and 90) require local authorities to publish AONB Management Plans, at not more than five years intervals, which formulate their policy for the management of their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. The current Management Plan 2021-2026 is available on the National Landscape website <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/>

Wye Valley National Landscape

AONB Management Plan (2026-31) Review Programme - DRAFT

Task No.	Task	Who	Suggested timetable
Formalities and Notification			
1.	Endorse outline Management Plan Review programme	JAC	Nov 2024
2.	Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf	NL Team	Dec 2024
3.	S90 (1) Notify Natural England & Natural Resources Wales	NL Team	Dec 2024
4.	Announce requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	NL Team	Jan 2025
5.	Finalise process and timetable of review	NL TOWP	Feb 2025
Scoping			
6.	Consider strengths and weaknesses of current Plan and new strategic priorities	NL Team with core partners	Feb 2025
7.	Endorse consultation programme	JAC	Mar 2025
8.	Online survey to gather initial comments and views	NL Team	Mar-Apr 2025
9.	Publish State of AONB Report	NL Team	Mar 2025
10.	JAC/ Partnership 'workshop' on current Plan, policies, evidence, positions and new strategic priorities	NL Team	Mar 2025
11.	Review and assess other new evidence, law, policies, strategies, plans and issues which are of relevance (including the Outcomes Framework, requirement for climate change adaptation plans etc).	NL Team	Mar-Apr 2025
12.	Identify main areas requiring update or new work	NL Team	May 2025
13.	Collate responses & views on issues from existing sources	NL Team	May-Jun 2025
14.	Start SEA Scoping Study, collation of data and evidence of other plans and programmes, seek input from the Environmental bodies.	NL Team	Jun 2025
Consultation			
15.	Undertake targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups on current Plan, policies, evidence, positions and new strategic priorities	External support to prepare content. NL team to arrange invites, hall bookings, host events etc	Jun 2025

16.	Identify key issues, aims and objectives	NL Team/Partnership	July 2025
17.	Draft new wording for consultation draft of revised Plan	NL Team	Aug 2025
18.	Write SEA report, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (Stage A). Assess effects of objectives, policies and actions and for SEA and/or SA (stage B). Collate Environmental Report for SEA/SA (stage C) plus non-technical summary	NL Team	Sept 2025
19.	Consultation Draft reviewed	TOWP	Oct 2025
20.	Run public consultation on new draft plan and SEA/SA report (Stage D). 12 weeks. Consult on scoping report for SEA	NL Team	Oct 2025 – Jan 2026
21.	Undertake specific targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups as required	External support to prepare content. NL team to arrange invites, hall bookings etc NL Team	Autumn 2025
22.	Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	NL Team	Feb-Mar 2026
23.	Initial report on consultation and suggested amendments	NL Team & JAC	Mar 2026
Adoption			
24.	Draft plan to JAC for approval	NL Team TOWP JAC	May June July
25.	Send to Natural England for formal observations	NL Team	July 2026
26.	Consider comments from formal observations and amend Plan	NL Team	Aug 2026
27.	Get new plan formally approved by Local Authorities and JAC Chair	Local Authorities	Sept 2026
28.	Design, printing and distribution	NL Team	Oct 2026
29.	Send approved plan to Secretary of State	NL Team	Oct 2026
30.	Publish statement of how SEA taken into account and changes	NL Team	Oct 2026

RIVER WYE UPDATE

Purpose

To advise members of the latest proposals and activities to improve water quality, reduce excess nutrients and help restore the River Wye.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The River Wye is not failing its nutrient target for the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) but it is close at some locations, whereas the River Lugg is, which flows into the Wye at Mordiford at the northern extent of the Wye Valley National Landscape.
- New research from Cardiff University indicate that Phosphate is not the sole or main cause of algal blooms in the catchment.
- Since the General Election there has been much renewed focus on river restoration and water quality issues including high level meetings, correspondence, setting of priorities and recognition of the need for a cross-border approach.
- Environment Agency (EA) are working on the Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP), as part of the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) for England, which is on track to be completed by end of March 2025, and Welsh Government are funding the evidence base for the NMP covering the Welsh part of the catchment.
- The Wye Catchment Management Plan, covering the whole of the Wye catchment is also intended to be completed in Spring 2025, through the Wye Catchment Partnership.
- EA & Herefordshire Rural Hub held workshops over the summer with farmers and other stakeholders to consider what additional measures and mechanisms could support nutrient reductions.
- In November, Herefordshire Council is hosting a second Rivers Conference, with a focus on sustainable practices for arable farming
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) recently launched the Upper Wye Restoration Project and is shortly holding a River Restoration Seminar.
- The March for Clean Water took place in London on 3rd November, supported by Friends of River Wye, Save the Wye, the Wye Salmon Association, CPRE and many others.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Team continues to manage partnership projects and collaborative initiatives including through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, Wye Adapt to Climate Change? and Wyescapes Landscape Recovery to support farmers and land-managers in and around the National Landscape.

Reasons

Cardiff University, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, have completed research on “Determining causes and solutions for harmful algal blooms on the Wye River” (2024). The initial report¹ indicated the overarching conclusion to date from the project that:

“Phosphorus concentrations in the River Wye are likely not the primary cause of algal blooms in the river itself (this does not include its tributaries). It is suggested that nitrogen forms are of significant importance, however the likelihood is that river flows (low summer flows and high peak winter flows), combined with high summer temperature are of high importance. This emphasizes the need for an holistic management approach addressing flow rate riparian zone management, as well as all nutrient fractions is essential, and that a focus purely on phosphorus management will not address the needs for river water quality improvement in the River Wye.”

The final thesis is due to be published in January 2025.

Since the General Election, the new Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed, has set out five new priorities for this next parliament, to:

- clean up rivers, lakes and seas;
- create a roadmap to move Britain to a zero waste economy;
- boost food security;
- ensure nature’s recovery and
- protect communities from the dangers of flooding.

These can all be related to the issues impacting the River Wye and the Wye catchment. He also commissioned a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) to be completed by the end of the year.

In October the Friends of the River Wye convened a meeting in Hay-on-Wye for the MPs in the Wye catchment to discuss the challenges facing the river. Four of the 5 MPs were able to attend, all from different parties: David Chadwick, Ellie Chowns*, Catherine Fookes* and Jesse Norman*. Matt Bishop* sent his apologies. [*constituencies include the Wye Valley National Landscape]. All agreed that we need to tackle this problem cross-border, working with the English and Welsh governments, and that we need to see far greater enforcement action against pollution. Jessie Norman also raised the question in Parliament of whether the treasury fines from enforcement action could be ring-fenced for river restoration.

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, Derek Walker, has committed to making river and water quality a priority for his role. He has written to Huw Irranca-Davies, Welsh Government Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, to provide advice and recommendations on the workings of the Rivers Summits that Welsh Government have hosted. See below for the link to the letter.

Implications

The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) has provided its independent advice on the rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). It notes that greater scale and pace is needed if government is to secure the long-term improvements to its commitments. Five actions were identified that will deliver benefits across EIP goals:

1. Get nature friendly farming right
2. Maximise the contribution of protected sites for nature

3. Speed up action in the marine environment
4. Set out clear mechanisms for reconciling competing demands for use of land and sea.
5. Develop a circular economy framework.

plus three cross-cutting areas

6. Mobilise investment at the scale needed.
7. Regulate more effectively.
8. Harness the support needed to achieve ambitions.

Steve Reed, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has said “Nature will get back its voice at the very heart of this government because, as everyone...already knows, without nature there is no economy, no food, no health and no society.” Alongside this, the UK’s first ever Special Representative for Nature has been appointed. Ruth Davis OBE, a leading environmental policy expert will take on the joint DEFRA role with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. She will work with UK Government and stakeholders to drive forward nature recovery in the UK and overseas. Meanwhile the Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board has agreed that there should be a seat on the Board for the river. These are pioneering efforts to translate into reality the concept behind rights for nature.

The Wyescapes - Food, nature, water - Landscape Recovery Project brings together 50 land holdings covering over 5000 hectares along the middle reaches of the Rivers Wye & Lugg, including about a third of the Wye Valley National Landscape. The participating farmers and land managers are working to identify actions and changes they can make to restore the river corridor, including reduced nutrient use, reverting high risk fields from arable cropping to grassland, creating new wetlands, floodplain meadows and woodlands. The project’s long-term aim is to restore as much of the Wye catchment as possible to a healthy condition, so its rivers and their tributaries can support the unique wildlife that depends on them, provide clean and plentiful water, be resilient to climate change, mitigate flood risk, provide places for people to enjoy – all while supporting sustainable food production. Wyescapes is funded by DEFRA’s Landscape Recovery Scheme and has now begun a 2-year development phase to outline how Wyescapes could be implemented over a 20-year period from April 2026. Wyescapes is run by the Herefordshire Rural Hib CIC with support from the Environment Agency, the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and local farming interests. For further information see <https://herefordshireruralhub.co.uk/5069-2/>.

The Duchy of Cornwall lead on the ‘Ridge to River’ Landscape Recovery Project centring on the Moccas Estate, near Bredwardine. It aims to unite around 20 local farms in collaborative effort to restore ecological health, enhance sustainability, and tackle critical environmental challenges in the Wye Valley. The anticipated outcome will be a resilient multi-functional landscape, boosting biodiversity, mitigating climate change and increasing social value.

The Environment Agency (EA) have identified that the River Wye is not failing its nutrient target for the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation, notably for orthophosphate, although it is close at some locations, whereas the River Lugg is. It is likely that there are Water Framework Directive (WFD) nutrient failures at the sub-catchment level, which EA are working on as part of the Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP). The DWPP will be an interactive document and will be subject to further development and review. It is specific to the SAC target which is more stringent than WFD targets. There is a recognised need to focus on River Lugg nutrient data and its failing targets compared to the River Wye, apart from some key tributaries and sub-catchments. EA hosted Options Appraisal workshops with

partner organisations in July, looking at what additional measures and mechanisms could support nutrient reductions and deliver water quality improvements. In September they held a second workshop with farmers through the Herefordshire Rural Hub. Participants considered many constructive ideas, including wanting better tools for nutrient budgeting and more information about how farms might be contributing to nutrient issues.

The Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan is currently being prepared by the EA as part of the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) for England, due in March 2025. Welsh Government have provided funding to deliver the evidence base for the Welsh catchment for the NMP. Powys County Council has awarded the tender for Enabling Nutrient Neutrality in Powys.

The Wye Catchment Management Plan (CMP) was last published in 2019. The Wye Catchment Partnership are leading on the review and preparation of the new CMP. It will cover the whole of the Wye catchment and consider the effects of all wider potential impacts upon the river, for example; flow, temperature, biodiversity and not just nutrients.

Natural England are working closely with the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme with extra targeted activity on the Wye to encourage the voluntary measures in place to provide buffers, cover crops and other appropriate measures. Similarly, the Wye & Usk Foundation Catchment Advisers are busy making farm visits and providing advice on opportunities to improve farm infrastructure and land management that are beneficial to both the business as well as the environment. They also assist with applications to funding schemes, including Countryside Stewardship and FiPL in England.

The Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Project has visited over 30 farms and landholdings in and around the Wye Valley National Landscape in the last year to provide advice on Nature-Based Solutions (NBS). These NBS are aimed at tackling and mitigating the effects of climate change, addressing biodiversity loss, and improving the sustainability of land management. A number of NBS interventions have been delivered on the back of advice provided.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has supported a wide range farm projects and land management enhancements in and around the Wye Valley National Landscape, including floodplain meadow restoration, undersowing crops, hedgerow and shelterbelt planting and natural flood management (NFM) interventions. All of these actions contribute to water and/or soil quality improvement in the Wye catchment.

In November, both Herefordshire Council and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are hosting a Rivers Conference and River Restoration Seminar respectively. Herefordshire Council's Rivers Conference will focus on sustainable practices for arable farming. NRW's River Restoration Seminar will covers issues across Wales with a range of speakers from NRW and partner organisations. Meanwhile NRW formally launched their Upper Wye Restoration Project at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show in July.

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) have published their Rivers & Oceans Action Plan as part of the Council's Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy adopted in May 2024. Herefordshire Council are preparing their Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

The Friends of the River Wye in collaboration with the Wye Catchment Partnership host a website mapping the nature recovery and river restoration projects which helps to illustrate implementation of many of the above mentioned initiatives. For the interactive map see:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1PteRW91dY08xahb3hYPw98R9DMZctfs&ll=52.127374854105206%2C-3.3238581523437523&z=9>

Background

The Wye Valley National Landscape covers the lower reaches of the Wye, downstream from the confluence with the Lugg. The National Landscape, an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), covers only about 8% of the Wye Catchment although it contains about one third of the River Wye in length. The River Wye and its tributaries are a Special Quality as identified in the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. Most of the nutrients and contributing conditions for the algal blooms originate upstream of the AONB.

The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership is committed to doing everything within its powers, purposes and resources to work with all individuals, groups and organisations to improve water quality, reduce excess nutrients and help restore the Wye Catchment, by convening, enabling and delivering on the restoration, conservation and enhancement of the River Wye, which is so central to the Wye Valley AONB.

Further reading:

Understanding algal blooms in the River Wye:

<https://environmentagency.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/19/understanding-algal-blooms-in-the-river-wye/>

¹Determining causes and solutions for harmful algal blooms on the Wye River:

<https://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Report-prepared-for-the-Wye-and-Usk-Foundation-06.24.pdf>

River Wye Water Quality: <https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engagementhq.com/hub-page/river-wye-water-quality-2>

Wye Catchment Partnership: <https://wyecatchmentpartnership.org/>

Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board:

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1161&Year=0>

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales letter to Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024-09-02-Letter-to-Huw-Irranca-Davies.pdf>

OEP letter on EIP Rapid Review: <https://www.theoep.org.uk/sites/default/files/reports-files/OEP%20EIP%20Rapid%20Review%20Advice%20Letter%2012%20September%202024.pdf>

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) Rivers & Oceans Action Plan:

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/climate-emergency/#CLIMATEEMERGENCYMONMOUTHSHIRE>

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NATIONAL UPDATES

Purpose

To advise members of activity nationally relating to National Landscapes in England and Wales.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- DEFRA officials maintain regular contact with National Landscape Lead Officers, both directly and through the National Landscape Association.
- Similarly in Wales, good relations and communication are maintained with Welsh Government, including through Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales.
- Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager currently holds the chair of Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales.
- The next Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar will be hosted in the Wye Valley, in late April 2025.
- The National Landscape Association AGM and Chairs' Conference is in London on 28th November.
- The next Lead Officers Meeting is in Birmingham in mid February.
- A meeting between the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs and the Chair of the National Landscape Association was hosted in the Wye Valley, facilitated by the National Landscape Manager.

Reasons

Both governments are broadly supportive of National Landscapes. However, public resources are likely to remain constrained. Civil servants have built effective communications channels with the National Landscape Lead Officers, both directly and through the National Landscape Association. This enables swift and efficient exchanges of information as and when required.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales has become an effective forum for collaboration and information exchange between Welsh Government, National Landscapes and National Parks lead officers, the National Landscape Association, NRW and other key stakeholders as required.

Implications

Huw Irranca-Davies, Welsh Government Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, met with Phillip Hygate, Chair of the National Landscape Association in the Wye Valley in mid August. The National Landscape Manager led the two parties on a site visit to Cleddon Falls and Cleddon Bog, before hosting a meeting at the National Landscape Office in Monmouth. It was a useful opportunity to show off some of the practical projects and achievements of the National Landscape Team as well as discuss local and strategic issues, from the success of Farming in Protected Landscapes to concerns over the state of the River Wye, from rural recreational access impacts to national funding requirements.

The Wye Valley will also be hosting the next Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar in late April/early May 2025. The full format and content is yet to be finalised. But it will be another good opportunity to demonstrate some of the achievements of the National Landscape Team, along with the outstanding natural beauty of the Wye Valley.

The National Landscape Association AGM and Chairs' Conference is in London on 28th November. The event is titled 'Leading Landscapes 24: Shaping the future of National Landscapes' and will explore the challenges and opportunities to deliver for:

- Place: Protect and enhance beautiful landscapes – for nature and for people
- People: Bring natural beauty into people's lives and give people a stake in natural beauty
- Partnerships: Inspire and empower strong coalitions to deliver

Background

The National Landscape Association, formerly the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB), is a national charity which works to make sure the UK's most outstanding landscapes are beautiful, thriving places that everyone can feel part of. It supports the UK's network of National Landscapes to help them to be as effective as possible. For more information see <https://www.national-landscapes.org.uk/>

AONB UNIT & PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners.

FOR INFORMATION

Below and attached are update reports on the following National Landscape Team & partner initiatives: -

- a. AONB Partnership Study Tour 2024 feedback
- b. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy, Action Plan & Steering Group
- c. Wye Valley Walk
- d. Off Road Wheeling weekend
- e. Volunteer activity
- f. Young Adventurers

a. AONB Partnership Study Tour 2024 feedback

The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Annual Tour was held on Friday 20th September. The programme focused on projects supported through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and land management issues in the Herefordshire part of the National Landscape. The Tour included visits to: Kilforge Farm, Bolstone, looking at the free-range egg production enterprise and FiPL maize undersowing & Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects; Ballingham Court Farm, Ballingham, looking at FiPL projects and other enterprises including agroforestry, orchards, solar panels, beef & arable production, anaerobic digester, barn restoration & glamping and; DEFRA Access for All projects & Willow Walk at Ross Riverside with Ross Walkers are Welcome, looking at new disabled parking & new bridges by the Rowing Club. A total of 34 people attended the Tour with a good spread of representation from throughout the National Landscape. Feedback from attendees has been extremely positive and the time and dedication of the speakers and hosts was greatly appreciated.

b. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy, Action Plan & Steering Group

The first Steering Group meeting has been held, to discuss and plan initial actions for implementing the Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Strategy in the Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley National Landscape. The Steering Group is constituted as a sub-group of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum. Celyn Davies has taken over the role as Lower Wye Projects Officer and is leading on co-ordinating Action Plan proposals where appropriate. The Group discussed focusing on two initial projects: improving signage and conducting route surveys. Signage efforts will target high-conflict areas like Tintern and Whitebrook to clarify legal usage. Surveys will assess route conditions, surrounding landscape features, and maintenance needs.

A site visit is planned for late November to view issues first-hand and consider potential survey methods. It was recognised that proper signage is the first step to enable both understanding and enforcement. Education and behaviour change efforts with both users and residents are needed but are a longer-term goal.

c. Wye Valley Walk Update: 50 years of the Wye Valley Walk 1975 - 2025

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the Wye Valley Walk an iconic long-distance recreational walking route, which follows the Wye for 138 miles of river and hill walking, from the rugged uplands and mountains of mid Wales to Chepstow near the mouth with the River Severn.

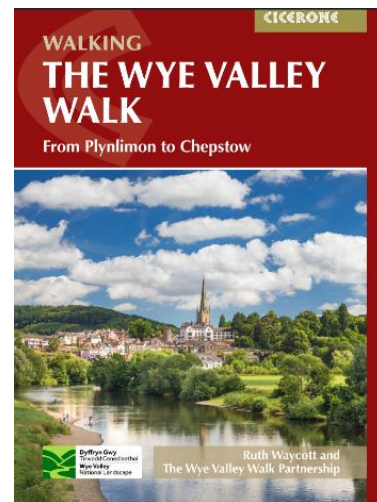


History of the walk

It is more than 50 years since the Wye Valley National Landscape was designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty. Around the same time the idea of creating a long distance walk following the River Wye was mooted and, in 1975, the first 14 mile section of the Wye Valley Walk was opened between St Arvans and Monmouth. Over the next 30 years stretches were added to reach Chepstow, Ross-on-Wye, Hereford, Hay-on-Wye and Rhayader. The final section was completed in 2002, taking the path within viewing distance of the source of the Wye on Plynlimon, with the walk finishing at Rhyd-y-benwch in Hafren Forest. This was made possible with the support and enthusiasm of the four local authorities through which the Walk passes – Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Powys – who came together to form the Wye Valley Walk Partnership, with the Wye Valley National Landscape (previously Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) taking on the role of lead partner.

New Source-to-Sea Official Guide

As the route grew incrementally upstream, various editions of the Official Route Guide started the Walk from Cheptow. In 2008 the Wye Valley Walk Partnership began working with leading walking guide publisher Cicerone, to produce a new edition of the official Wye Valley Walk route guide, running from Chepstow to the source on Plynlimon. Since then thousands of walkers have completed the route and claimed their Wye Valley Walk certificate and badge, including plenty of octogenarians and the many dogs. Following multiple requests for the walk to become a Source-to-Sea route, the decision was taken to produce a new Cicerone guide for the 50th anniversary, with directions running from Plynlimon down to Chepstow. This guide is now published and will be launched in November.

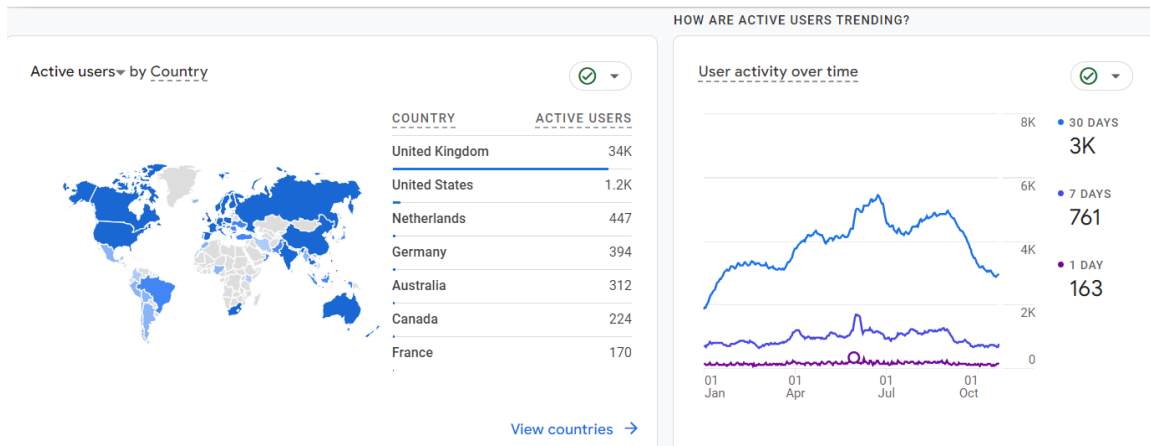


Wyevalleywalk.org

The new guidebook complements the Wye Valley Walk website <https://www.wyevalleywalk.org/> which has had so far in 2024 38,000 visits with worldwide interest.

Economic Impact

Walkers travel from around the world to enjoy the outstanding natural beauty along the trail, with at least six walking holiday operators offering Wye Valley Walk itineraries.



It is estimated more than 10,000 people use the Wye Valley Walk each year, supporting jobs in the tourism industry and benefitting the rural economy. There are several luggage transfer and taxi drop off services, as well as specialist walkers' accommodation servicing the growing market for walking holidays.

Infrastructure and interpretation

Waymarking, which was installed over 20 years ago in some places, is desperately in need of upgrading. We have been working with the Wye Valley Walk Partnership Rights of Way Officers to audit and replace waymarking. Ross Walkers are Welcome have undertaken a fantastic survey of the route from Hereford to the Monmouthshire border and in partnership with local Parish Footpaths Officers are replacing waymarkers. Staffing and budget constraints have limited work in Powys and parts of Herefordshire, but we hope to have a much better waymarked route for the start of the walking season next spring.



Along the route walkers pass places with amazing historical and cultural stories, but much of the interpretation along the route is past its prime. To bring stories to life and enhance the visitor experience, it is planned to introduce 'Wye-lights' interpretation on waymarker posts, using a mix of traditional and QR code interpretation to tell key stories.



It is also planned to install a few Wye Valley Walk benches to mark the 50th anniversary.



Events

A programme of guided walks covering each of the 17 sections of the path between Hafren Forest and Chepstow, is being organised between April and October 2025, led by local walking groups, walking holiday company staff and Wye Valley National Landscape staff.

Promotional Activity

On behalf of the Wye Valley Walk Partnership, the Wye Valley National Landscape Information Officer will be liaising with journalists and walking personalities to encourage them to try out the walk and write features for the walking press throughout 2025, including Trail magazine which will kick start the anniversary year with a feature this December.

It is planned to launch on-line activity on Christmas Day evening /Boxing Day as we know from previous years we get a big surge of hits on the website at this time. There will be content-rich social campaign running throughout the year on Instagram and Twitter.

The partnership with Cicerone is on-going with them creating two new articles for their website in January, and then featuring the Wye Valley Walk in their April/ May customer newsletter and on their social channels through the year.

Research from walkers who have completed the route shows that they are very much 'Independent Explorers' looking for freedom, a challenge, an experience away from the crowds and that they feel refreshed and relaxed after completing the Walk.

- d. **Off Road Wheeling weekend** – see attached report
- e. **Volunteer activity** – see attached report
- f. **Young Adventurers** – see attached report

d. Off Road Wheeling Weekend in the Wye Valley

During the weekend of 27th to 29th of September the Wye Valley National Landscape Team hosted an off-road wheelchair weekend. Over the past couple of years, we have been working with Craig Grimes from Experience Community to audit routes around the Wye Valley and advise us on how to help disabled users access the countryside safely.

Day 1: Have a Go at Whitestone

With Craig's expertise we organised a Have a Go day where disabled users could try out the different types off-road wheelchair equipment available. Around 60 people attended as we brought together disabled wheelchair users and their support networks, our 3 local authorities, Natural Resources Wales and local charities. Laura Anne Jones, the Minister for sport in the Welsh Senedd also attended. Three off-road wheeling equipment providers brought their wheelchairs - Mountain Trikes, the Over lander and Flatlander from Terrain Hoppers and a Tramper TWS scooter from the Disabled Ramblers. Participants were free to try out the equipment after a quick demonstration and our volunteers led them on a short ramble along the forest tracks at Whitestone, giving users a chance to get out into the Wye Valley National Landscape and enjoy what most of us take for granted.

The day was a huge success with everyone asking for more rambles and opportunities to use off-road equipment.

Welcome to Off Road Wheeling Video: C:\Users\Lucinda James\Videos\copy_1DC6EEAF-CAD2-4A00-822B-C158335504C5.MP4



Photo 1: Duncan test driving the Flatlander by Terrain Hopper



Photo 2: John from the Disabled Ramblers Explaining how to use the TWS Trumper Scooter



Photo 3: Harry (aged 16) Testing the Terrain Hopper's Overlander full off-road capability.



Photo 4: Bethany Hadley MCC LAF Member, disability activist & writer testing out a Mountain Bike with Craig Grimes, Experience Community (also pictured)



Photo 5: Bob Campbell from NRW and Bethany Hadley



Photo 6: Laura Jones MS, Sam and Debbie designers & developers of the Terrain Hoppers, Craig Grimes from Experience Community and Lucinda James WVNL Community Links Officer



Photo 7: Disabled Users enjoying the beauty of the Wye Valley at Whitestone Viewpoint

Day 2: Off Road Wheelchair Ramble at Whitestone lead by Craig Grimes

The second day was the first of our off-road rambles with Craig Grimes (Experience Community) leading the walk with NL staff, volunteers and SARA supporting.

We had 6 participants join us for the 10-mile ramble, unfortunately ill health and the previous week's wet weather meant we had 7 cancellations. We started from Whitestone Carpark and headed up towards Cleddon on the Wye Valley Walk, then into Beacon Hill and over to Trellech Common and back through Beacon Hill to the viewpoint and then continued back to Whitestone.

As part of the project, we were able to replace a narrow kissing gate on the edge of Trellech Common with an accessible gate (2-way bridle way gate) allowing us to safely reach The North Village Hall for lunch and facilities. The new gate will have lasting benefits for visitors and local residents alike, creating a safe route into the woods for wheelchair users and creating a link to the existing routes such as the Tread & Trot Trails.



Photo 8: Rest Stop in Beacon Hill



Photo 9: Nothing is too much for a Mountain Trike!



Photo 10: Quick History lesson from one of our volunteers on Trig Points and in particular Beacon Hill Trig Point.



Photo 11: Gordon a Disabled Rambler from Devon & Rik from Experience Community



Photo 12: SARA supported us throughout the weekend's events



Photo 13: New Accessible Gate at Trellech Common leading to The Narth



Photo 14: Last view of the day after a 10miles Ramble

Day 3: Off-Road Ramble Willow Walk / Townsend Farm

The third day's ramble was part of the Ross Walking Festival, taking in the new barrier free Willow Walk. However, at the last minute we had to change the route due to the weather forecast and ground conditions following extremely wet weather. The original plan was to start at the Rope Walk in Ross on Wye and travel along the river path to Townsend Farm and back. Responding to wet weather in the forecast we made a circular ramble around Townsend Farm taking in a section of the Willow Walk and farm tracks at Townsend. Led by the Taylor-Davies family who farm at Townsend, we had a fantastic ramble, with 33 people joining the walk including wheelchair users & family members, volunteers and NL staff. We heard about Regenerative Farming, admired the views and looked at the recent access projects the WVNL have been involved with around the farm. To finish, Ben generously put on a delicious hog roast washed down with his home-grown wine and juices!



Photo15: Farm talk from the Taylor Davies Family



Photo 16: Phil using the Overlander, that smile!



Photo17: Wheelers heading down to the river.



Photo 18: New accessible bird hide funded through DEFRA's Access for All Fund.



Photo 19: Enjoying Ben's hospitality!

Off Roding Weekend Feedback

As part of the funding requirement, we ask attendees to give us some feedback, here are just a few positive comments:

Sheila: 'I found the try out day really useful and informative. I have secondary prog MS and live on the borders of Monmouthshire and the Forest of Dean and feel constantly frustrated that I am not able to get out into the wonderful landscape that is on my doorstep. It was so useful to be able to try a variety of equipment and assess what is the most suitable for me at this present time. I found it truly liberating to be able to get into the woods independently and safely. I had the time of my life. Thank you so much.'

Duncan: 'Had no idea these these products were available. To trial several products on a decent length off-road route was amazing! I've really missed being in the outdoors like this!'

Marie: 'I enjoyed the Whitestone Ramble for a few different reasons. The views were beautiful. The terrain was good and definitely required my E-Trike. I could not have managed this route without it. This was my first adventure to Whitestone so I do not really know what could have been improved. To me personally, it was all fabulous and the support teams were outstanding.'

Glen 'it was very enjoyable. It was great to have access to farmland thanks to Townsend Farm and see parts of the countryside that would not normally be accessible'

What Next?

There is an unquestionable appetite for more wheelchair rambles. We will be working through some of the issues involved – finding a suitable venue to be a 'hub', where you can hire an off-road wheelchair, receive training on how to use the different types of equipment and have technical backup and support if there is a mechanical issue and most importantly have easy access to accessible paths and tracks. We are also looking at the possibility of setting up a regional off-road wheelchair rambling group.

e. Volunteer Update

Our volunteers have been busy over the past couple of months.

- June- Scything with the Tintern Angling Club at the Angidy Pools



- June- Drystone walling at Devauden Village Hall. We were also joined by a corporate group from *hp* who helped us re-build 20 meters of wall.



- July- we we're back again at Devauden Village Hall rebuilding another 30m of wall!



- September we were back at the Angidy Pools in torrential rain!



- October we were at Cleddon Bog, removing the invasive Birch trees.





f. Wye Valley Youth Adventures

Since launching in March this year our youth group has been out and about in the Wye Valley. We've did a mix of activities during the launch event in March including Whistle whittling, bird ID and anatomy, woodland foraging and the most popular, toasting marshmallows!

Following the success of the launch event we've done:

- Bushcraft with Ancient Boar Adventurers at Devauden Village Hall, the children learnt how to make a fire, chop wood, whittle tent pegs, build a shelter and cook a vegetable soup.



- All about Bee Walk, supported by Ciaran Clark from the SDF Bee of Monmouthshire project. We then visited the Monmouth Bee Festival and made bee Hotles and seed bombs.



- Bat Walk- A nighttime walk around Beacon Hill with Helena Ronicle. We had a dusk to dark walk around Beacon Hill learning about the ecology of the site, used bat detectors set a different frequency to hear what species were about and to top it off we were fortunate to see 4 Nightjars!
- Willow Weaving- a day of weaving dragon flies and hedgehogs with The Willow Bank





- Charcoal making and forestry demonstration- Wye Coppice CIC, another SDF funded project, gave us a demonstration of how an Alaskan saw works and the children were get involved with some of the forestry works. We then moved to a different sport where Joe had charcoal burners set up all at different stages.



- Biofluorescent Walk- we ran 2 walks around Beacon Hill using biofluorescent torches giving the children an unforgettable different version of the woods.



- Outdoor Cooking- We joined Tim and Emily at Bearnse Farm (FiPL Project) for some outdoor cooking. We had vegetable and chicken stew parcels, chocolate bananas, sourdough and dampers! We had so much fun no one wanted to leave!



- Our next Adventurers are fungi foraging and making Christmas crafts

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