

# Public Document Pack



County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Monday, 24 February 2025

## Notice of meeting:

### **Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee**

**Monday, 3rd March, 2025 at 2.00 pm,  
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High  
Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG**

## **AGENDA**

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3.	Public Question Time.	
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JAC: 2pm Monday				
7 <sup>th</sup> July 2025				
3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025				

**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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Chris McFarling (Chair) (Forest of Dean District Council)

### **Elected Members (with voting powers)**

#### **Monmouthshire County Council**

County Councillor Steven Garratt

#### **Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers**

National Farmers Union – Mr. M. Price

HALC – Ms. B. Vine

One Voice Wales – Councillor L. Parker

### **Co-opted Members (with voting powers)**

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas

### **Technical Advice Officers**

National Landscapes Manager – Mr. A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams

Gloucestershire County Council – Mr A. Deb

Others present:

Mr. C. Barron (Wye Valley Society - dissolved)

Mr. S. Cox (Coleford Town Council)

Mr. R. Hatton (Monmouth Town Council)

Mr. M Sweeney (Monmouth Town Council)

Mr. M. Holland (Trail Riders Fellowship)

### **APOLOGIES:**

County Councillors: Emma Bryn, Dale Rooke, Ann Webb

Mr. B. Nash, Mr. D. Price, Mr. A. Lee,. Mr. M. Quine, Dr. J. Hynes, Ms. M. Getgood,

Ms. C. Bosley.

### **1. Declarations of Interest**

None received.

## **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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

### **2. Public Questions**

It was requested that the 'Dark Skies and Artificial Light Pollution' Position Statement be shared with Parish & Community Councils. The Position Statement will shortly be uploaded to the Wye Valley National Landscape Website having been endorsed by the Joint Advisory Committee at the July 2024 meeting. Parish and Community Councils will be notified accordingly.

### **3. Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dated 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

In doing so, the following updates were received:

- It is understood that the resurfacing of the Wye Bridge will commence in the spring of 2025. This work is currently on hold to allow the road works on the A40 to be completed. Concern was expressed that the current road closures were having a negative impact on Bigsweir Bridge and on the residents of Wyesham. The Wye Valley National Landscape Manager will write to Monmouthshire County Council expressing the concerns raised.
- The task and finish group to review the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) will be established shortly with a view to convening before the end of December 2024. A report outlining its findings will be presented to the next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee in March 2025.
- The Forest of Dean District Council Chamber now has the technology in place to hold hybrid meetings. The Task and Finish Group will discuss this matter as part of its review with the option of holding future hybrid meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee.
- The National Landscape Planning Officer has reviewed the proposed amendments to the Position Statement in respect of the Renewable Energy in the Wye Valley National Landscape and its Setting. She will shortly circulate these amendments to the Joint Advisory Committee for endorsement. Once finalised the Parish Community and Town Councils will also be notified accordingly.

### **4. National Landscape Funding and Memorandum of Understanding**

We received a report regarding the Wye Valley National Landscape Funding and Memorandum of Understanding 2025 - 2028

In doing so, the following information was noted:



## **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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

- 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- DEFRA and Welsh Government provide the majority of the core funding allocations for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. However, it was noted that the funding is managed as a whole and concentrated on staff and schemes within the National Landscape which may operate on either side of the national border. Project funding tends to be more focused and restricted to administrative boundaries.

We resolved:

- (i) to endorse the acceptance of the confirmed and indicative funding awards, allocations and bids from National Grid, DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.
- (ii) to request the constituent local authorities to commit to the agreed financial contributions in a renewed Memorandum of Understanding for 2025-2028.

#### **5. Annual Report 2023/24**

We received a report regarding the annual reports for 2023/24 on the achievements of the Wye Valley AONB Unit / National Landscape Team.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- During 2023/24 all Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) rebranded as National Landscapes.

## **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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

- High levels of achievement were maintained 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 nearly £23 for every £1 of local authority contribution.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- No applications had been received via the Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement Grant element of Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). These schemes were limited to grant funding not exceeding £3000. Some landscape and biodiversity enhancement projects have been funded through other schemes.

We welcomed the Annual Report on AONB / National Landscape achievements for 2023/24.

#### **6. Species Action Plan & Nature Recovery Plan**

We received a report regarding the third of the five National Landscape Species Action Plans, for the Bumblebee Assemblage, 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 / AONB Special Qualities.
- The second Species Action Plan, for the Hedgehog, was adopted at the last Joint Advisory Committee meeting, and the first Species Action Plan for Noble Chafer beetle was adopted in July 2023.
- The third Species Action Plan has been published focusing on a bumblebee assemblage, to encourage the sustainable management of its 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 accompanies 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.

## **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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The introduction of pine marten into the Wye Valley has been very successful. Pine marten have expanded their range since being released which is being closely monitored. A further update will be presented to the Joint Advisory Committee at the next meeting.
- As outlined in the Species Action Plan, the habitat management for the the Bumblebee Assemblage requires careful attention, particularly in late summer, to ensure the network is enhanced. There is an opportunity for citizen scientists and schools to get involved in this programme which could be promoted by the National Landscape Team.
- A Hedgehog rescue programme has been established with volunteers. The promotion of hedgehog tunnels will be launched in the spring of 2025 with a view to monitoring hedgehog presence in the locality.

We resolved to endorse the Bumblebee Assemblage Species Action Plan and welcome the on-going work on the preparation of the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and remaining Species Action Plans.

#### **7. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley National Landscape Fund**

We received a report regarding 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:

- DEFRA has 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 administration, 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 has confirmed the extension of the FiPL Officer post for two years but the provision of the FiPL grants programme is uncertain and dependent on the government's Budget and Spending Review.

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

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- 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- A butchery unit has received grant funding of £17,000. This allows for local farmers to process their own meat on site helping to keep local farms viable.
- DEFRA has not confirmed whether the FiPL grants programme will be extended beyond March 2025.
- FiPL has enabled the provision of advice and guidance to farmers and land managers on a range of management practices including floodplain grassland restoration and river friendly farming.

We resolved to endorse the recent allocations of grants under the FiPL programme, SDF and HCF National Landscape Fund.

#### **8. Management Plan Review Draft Timetable**

We received a report outlining the programme for the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- 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.
- 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.

## **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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Chair suggested that the review be undertaken using the Gunning Principles.
- County Councillor Garratt stated that he would liaise with Monmouthshire County Council's Scrutiny Manager with a view to extending an invitation to the Wye Valley National Landscapes Manager to attend a Scrutiny Committee meeting in the new year, regarding this matter. The Chair stated that he would contact Gloucestershire County Council's Scrutiny Manager to consider extending a similar invitation.

We resolved:

- (i) to 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.
- (ii) to endorse the programme for the review and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

#### **9. River Wye Update**

We received a report regarding the latest proposals and activities to improve water quality, reduce excess nutrients and help restore the River Wye.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- 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 indicates 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.
- The Environment Agency (EA) is 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 the end of March 2025, and Welsh Government is 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.

## 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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

- The Environment Agency (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 2024, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2024, 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Cardiff University, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, has completed research on “Determining causes and solutions for harmful algal blooms on the Wye River” (2024) and has released its interim report. The final report will be released in the new year.
- Over the next year, the emphasis will shift to identify broader solutions with closer cross border working between Welsh Government and DEFRA.
- The National Landscape Team sits on a number of bodies relating to the river and provides feedback on river issues within the AONB.
- It is vital the Wye Valley National Landscape is represented on any boards established to improve water quality and restore the River Wye.

We noted the report.

#### **10. National Updates**

We received a report regarding activity nationally relating to National Landscapes in England and Wales.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- DEFRA officials maintain regular contact with National Landscape Lead Officers, both directly and through the National Landscapes Association.

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

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- 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 Landscapes Association AGM and Chairs' Conference is in London on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
- The next Lead Officers Meeting is in Birmingham in mid-February 2025.
- A meeting between the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs and the Chair of the National Landscapes Association was hosted in the Wye Valley, facilitated by the National Landscape Manager.

We noted the report.

#### **11. Partner and National Landscape Team Progress Reports and Updates**

We received a report regarding the activity of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners relating to:

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

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Off Road Wheeling weekend had been well received.
- With regard to the closure of Lydbrook's Black Bridge, clarification is being sought from Gloucestershire County Council regarding its refurbishment.

We noted the report.

## **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, 4th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

### **12. Next Meetings**

Monday 3rd March 2025 at 2.00pm.

Monday 7th July 2025 at 2.00pm.

Monday 3rd November 2025 at 2.00pm.

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

**The meeting ended at 3.40 pm.**



## REVIEW OF CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### ***Purpose***

To adopt recommendations from the Task and Finish Group to review co-opted membership and vacancies on the Joint Advisory Committee.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Adopt the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group to amend the current co-opted membership and seek to fill vacancies on the Joint Advisory Committee.
- B. Agree to host future meetings of the JAC at the Forest of Dean District Council Chamber as hybrid meetings to facilitate broader attendance.

### ***Key Issues***

- There are a number of vacancies that have emerged in the co-opted membership of the Joint Advisory Committee and some of the representative bodies have been dissolved.
- The Task and Finish Group established by the JAC to review co-opted membership recommends a number of changes to representation of co-opted members.
- Of the 8 Co-opted seats with voting powers, changes are proposed to the three Voluntary Conservation Sector representatives, moving from 3 'county reps' to one with national experience and two local representatives for the English & Welsh sides respectively. These will be recruited through an open nomination recruitment process.
- Of the Co-opted Members without Voting Powers, changes are proposed to invite a new representative for the River Wye and replace one vacant seat with a new Arts sector representative. Recent non-attendance by both Tourism and Recreation representatives will also be addressed. These will all be recruited through an open nomination recruitment process.
- Future JAC meetings could be managed as hybrid meetings which may encourage a broader attendance, as the Forest of Dean District Council Chamber has that facility.
- The Management Plan Review was identified as good opportunity to enable wider engagement with different sectors and communities that should have an interest in the National Landscape, such as young people and visitors from a diversity of backgrounds.
- The Task & Finish Group did not identify any changes that necessitated amendment of the 'Agreement as to the establishment and functions of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee'.
- The Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP) has also reviewed its Terms of Reference, which are attached for information.

## ***Reasons***

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is constituted under an 'Agreement' between the four constituent local authorities, which states

"The Committee shall consist of twenty voting members, twelve members of which (hereinafter referred to as "the Elected Members") shall be appointed by the Authorities, and eight members of which (hereinafter referred to as "the Co-opted Members") shall be persons nominated by such bodies or organisations as the Committee may determine to include three Parish/Town/Community Council representatives in the area. The Committee may appoint five further co-opted Members who shall not have voting rights on the Committee and who shall be persons nominated by such other bodies or organisations as the Committee may from time to time determine".

Therefore any proposed changes to Co-opted Members can be determined by the JAC.

In March 2024 the JAC resolved to establish a Task and Finish Group to review current vacancies and representation that had emerged in the co-opted membership of the JAC and report back with proposed recommendations. The following issues we noted:

- There are a number of vacancies that have emerged in the co-opted membership and some of the representative bodies have been dissolved or disbanded.
- Recent initiatives, including the Glover Review and the Diversity & Inclusion training provided through Welsh Government, have highlighted the need for increasing diversity in public sector representation.
- The Joint Agreement as to the establishment and functions of the Wye Valley AONB JAC should be reviewed from time to time.

The Review Task and Finish Group consisted of

- Chris McFarling: JAC Chair, Forest of Dean District Council Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency
- Chris Barron: Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Volunteer and former JAC co-opted member for the Wye Valley Society (now dissolved)
- Anna Jones: Inclusion, Diversity and Governance Excellence Strategic Lead - Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales
- Andrew Blake: Wye Valley National Landscape Manager

## ***Implications***

The Task and Finish Group met on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024 with the objective and ambition to refresh the JAC co-opted membership by increasing the sector range of representatives and involving a broader diversity of voices and interests in the work of the National Landscape. However it was recognised that not everyone can be involved within the existing operational structures of the JAC and further opportunities for engagement should be sought.

The table below outlines the current co-opted membership and recommendations from the Task & Finish Group.

<b>JAC Representation</b>	<b>Nominating Organisation</b>	<b>Task &amp; Finish Group Recommendation</b>
<b>Co-opted Members with Voting Powers</b>		
<b>Town / Parish / Community Councils in the area</b>	Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils (GAPTC)	No change - Continue current nominating organisation
	Herefordshire Association Local Councils (HALC)	No change - Continue current nominating organisation
	One Voice Wales	No change - Continue current nominating organisation
Voluntary Conservation Sector representatives		<i>Revise from 3 'county reps' to one rep with national experience and two local reps for the English &amp; Welsh sides of the Wye Valley National Landscape respectively</i>
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire	Open Nomination recruitment in 2009. Previous sponsorship /nominating body no longer exists	Change - <u>Open Nomination for broader role with national &amp; local experience of public / private &amp;/or 3<sup>rd</sup> sector conservation or land / landscape management</u>
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire	Open Nomination recruitment in 2009. Previous sponsorship /nominating body CPRE (Herefordshire)	Change - <u>Open Nomination for England 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Conservation rep</u> , eg. from CPRE Hfds/Glos etc.
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire	Open Nomination recruitment in 2009. Previous sponsorship /nominating body no longer exists	Change - <u>Open Nomination for Wales 3<sup>rd</sup> sector Conservation Sector rep</u> , eg. CPRW, Monmouthshire Meadows etc.
Farmer / Landowner representatives		
Country Land and Business Association (CLA)	CLA	No change - Continue current nominating organisation
National Farmers Union (NFU)	NFU	No change - Continue current nominating organisation
<b>Co-opted Members without Voting Powers</b>		
Wye Valley Society (WVS)	WVS dissolved	Change - <u>Open Nomination for new Arts representative</u> –eg. Wye Valley River Festival CIC, Canopy Creative Network, h.Art etc.
River Wye Preservation Trust (RWPT)	RWPT dissolved	Change - Invite <u>Friends of the River Wye</u> to nominate a new/local rep.
Recreation Sector	[Nomination recruitment in 2009] - No recent attendance	No change - <u>Open Nomination recruitment for same</u> , through Herefordshire, Gloucestershire & Monmouthshire Local Access Fora

<b>JAC Representation</b>	<b>Nominating Organisation</b>	<b>Task &amp; Finish Group Recommendation</b>
		(LAFs), & other local recreation groups/organisations.
Local Tourism Sector	Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association / Visit DeanWye - No recent attendance	No change - <u>Open Nomination recruitment for same</u> , from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit DeanWye</li> <li>• Visit Monmouthshire</li> <li>• Visit Herefordshire</li> </ul>
Local Wildlife Trusts	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust	No change - Continue current nominating process – rotating between Herefordshire, Gloucestershire & Gwent Wildlife Trusts.
National Farmers Union Wales	National Farmers Union Wales	No change - Continue current nominating organisation

The Task & Finish Group identified several issues to recruiting and retaining members on the JAC:

- Daytime committee meetings can exclude private sector working people unless there is clear value for them in their attendance
- Afternoon meetings can exclude people with school age children that need collecting and caring for at the end of the school day

The Group also highlighted various opportunities for recruiting and retaining JAC members:

- It's important to make the changes and be open to more change if/when needed
- Promotion of the value and benefits of JAC membership, and wider communication of the outcomes of the JAC and National Landscape Team, would increase focus and commitment of JAC members and inspire potential new members
- Representatives should have lived experience as well as and where possible increase the JAC's diversity, gender, ethnicity, age, ability/access, under representation, urban/rural, educational background, cultural links etc. Relationships and connections need to build with more diverse partners before engaging and seeking potential representatives / members
- A conscious effort to find younger people will establish a different image and may attract more diverse voices in the future. Seeking a Youth representative or establishing a Youth Council could be considered, perhaps from engagement with youth groups, local 6th Forms, Young Farmers, or through the Youth Rangers/Young Adventurers.
- The Management Plan Review should be used as an engagement opportunity for new individual & community / sector connections.

Other considerations raised by the Task & Finish Group were

- What is the succession plan for JAC members?
- What does the JAC need to focus on for the next five years?
- What skills & experience does the JAC need and at what level?

The Task & Finish Group endorsed that JAC Membership Criteria or 'Roles and responsibilities of JAC Members' included in the JAC Members Guidelines. This states:

Members of the JAC should be expected to:

- promote the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape/AONB and champion the vision set out in the AONB Management Plan;
- contribute knowledge, expertise and experience to the work of the JAC;
- support and play a full and active part in the work of the JAC in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities as set out in the Constitution/Agreement;
- assist the JAC in achieving an independent and apolitical profile in the performance of its functions;
- attend JAC meetings, Tours and Seminars whenever possible and, if no longer able to attend meetings on a regular basis, to step down from the JAC or to seek another representative from their organisation.
- read and consider JAC papers in advance of meetings;
- recognise the validity of other members' views and accept joint responsibility for the decisions of the JAC once made;

Organisations belonging to the JAC undertake in addition, to:

- keep the JAC informed of their work relevant to the National Landscape/AONB.
- be prepared to adjust their activities and work with others to improve co-ordination of activity in the National Landscape/AONB.
- report back to their organisation on the work of the JAC, and bring to the JAC or National Landscape Team appropriate and relevant updates and information.

In doing so, it was noted that there is no requirement for JAC members to live within the National Landscape, but an active interest in the area is expected. JAC members are nominated by respective organisations but serve on the JAC to benefit the National Landscape, as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and represent wider interests rather than those of a particular organisation or constituency. However, members need to take particular care to avoid prejudicing both the independence of the JAC's advice and their own position on other bodies.

Following discussions with the Forest of Dean District Council and the upgrading of their technological infrastructure in the Council Chamber, it should be possible in future to hold the JAC as a hybrid meeting, on Microsoft Teams. It is proposed to adopt this technology from the next meeting, in July, which may encourage a broader attendance at JAC meetings.

In completing the Review of JAC Membership, the Task & Finish Group did not identify any changes that required amendments to the 'Agreement as to the establishment and functions of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee'. This was last reviewed in 2009 and a Good Governance Review was undertaken in 2018.

The Technical Officers' Working Party has also reviewed its Terms of Reference, which are attached for information.

### ***Background***

The JAC is constituted under the 'Agreement As to the establishment and functions Of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee' [2000 & amended 2009]. This 'Agreement' is between the four constituent local authorities of the Wye Valley National Landscape, namely: Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council.

The 2019 Glover 'Landscape Review of National Parks and AONBs in England' included *Proposal 26: Reformed governance to inspire and secure ambition in our national landscapes and better reflect society*. The report noted that "the lack of diversity among those governing the bodies looking after our national landscapes is extremely narrow.... this is not to say there aren't brilliant and committed people doing brilliant things.... [but] they suffer from the same demographic biases as most authorities in England, lacking proper representation across age, gender, ethnicity and (dis)ability.... Every effort should be made to achieve diversity – of social background, gender, age, ethnicity, (dis)ability."

The training provided through Welsh Government for National Park and AONB members on diversity and inclusion emphasised that "there is a strong moral, legislative and business case for diversity and inclusion. The moral case is based on principles of human rights, equality, social justice, and democracy: those who govern Public Bodies should be representative of the communities that they serve. Most importantly, a whole-organisation approach to improving diversity and inclusion needs to be established."



**Dyffryn Gwy**  
**Tirwedd Cenedlaethol**  
**Wye Valley**  
**National Landscape**

## Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP)

### Terms of Reference

#### 1. Purpose:

1.1. The Wye Valley National Landscape Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) is the officer support group for the Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and oversees the preparation and delivery of the Wye Valley National Landscape/AONB Management Plan.

1.2. TOWP consist of relevant statutory organisations that have a duty, under the Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 [as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023] in exercising or performing any function that affect AONBs in England, to “seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”. In Wales relevant statutory organisations have a duty of regard to the purpose of the AONB.

#### 2. Membership:

2.1. TOWP is a collaboration of officers from the relevant statutory organisations that have responsibilities over and in the Wye Valley National Landscape.

2.2. Current organisations represented on TOWP are:

Local Authorities	Government Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forest of Dean District Council</li><li>• Gloucestershire County Council</li><li>• Herefordshire Council</li><li>• Monmouthshire County Council</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environment Agency</li><li>• Forestry Commission</li><li>• Forestry England</li><li>• Historic England</li><li>• Natural England</li><li>• Natural Resources Wales</li></ul>

2.3. Quorum for meetings is One Third of organisations+1.

2.4. The Wye Valley National Landscape Team provide the secretariat.

#### 3. Meeting cycles:

3.1. TOWP meetings are held three times per year, a month before the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). TOWP meetings are usually on the first Wednesday of February, June and October.

- 3.2. The agenda for TOWP is to consider and debate items to go on the agenda for the next JAC. Other relevant issues may be raised.
- 3.3. The JAC Chair is invited to meetings to ensure shared understanding of agendas, outcomes sought, progress made and issues arising
- 3.4. A site visit is usually arranged prior to the June meeting.
4. Roles and Responsibilities:
  - 4.1. TOWP members will appoint a chair annually from among its members.
    - 4.1.1. TOWP may appoint a deputy chair as necessary.
  - 4.2. The TOWP Chair attends JAC meetings and present reports as appropriate, alongside the National Landscape Manager.
  - 4.3. TOWP will assist and advise the National Landscape Manager is preparing and presenting information and proposed recommendations to the JAC to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.
  - 4.4. Members will collaborate, sharing both individual professional and corporate knowledge and expertise, on relevant issues to the National Landscape. This may include:-
    - a. Identifying key projects or opportunities for collaboration and/or resolving areas of alignment, efficiency or conflict between projects and partners.
    - b. Ensuring that TOWP, JAC and the National Landscape Team is informed of and by any other strategic policy or planning at local or national level.
    - 4.4.1. This does not mean members will always agree and each organisation retains accountability for decisions relating to its respective remit.
  - 4.5. TOWP will advise and support the National Landscape Manager in the statutory 5 yearly review of the Wye Valley National Landscape/AONB Management Plan
    - 4.5.1. TOWP will monitor and oversees the delivery of the Management Plan through the presentation to the JAC of an Annual Work Programme or Business Plan and an Annual Report.
  - 4.6. TOWP members are invited to the annual National Landscape Partnership Tour, usually on a Friday in late September, and the Winter/Spring Seminar, and may bring colleagues as appropriate.
  - 4.7. TOWP members should report back to their organisation on the work of the JAC and National Landscape Team, and bring to the JAC &/or Team appropriate and relevant updates and information.
5. These Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.



TECHNICAL OFFICERS'  
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

## NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM WORK PROGRAMME 2025/2026

### ***Purpose***

To seek members' approval for the proposed outline work plan for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team during the forthcoming financial year, subject to confirmation of funding with DEFRA Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC endorses the draft Wye Valley National Landscape Team Work Programme for 2025/2026

### ***Key Issues***

- The proposed Work Programme for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team for 2025/2026 is presented in draft form as budgets for the National Landscape have yet to be confirmed. The Programme is ambitious but dependent on adequate funding and resources being available.
- A new National Landscape Core Funding agreement is awaited from DEFRA with allocations currently unconfirmed, part from continuation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Officer post.
- Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have confirmed provisional National Landscape allocations for 2025/26 and 2026/27 subject to the final approval of the Welsh Government Budget in late March.
- Consequently only a draft Work Programme can be presented.
- Priorities include: the potential expansion of the farming support role, with the continuation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Officer post and the Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Programme, potentially augmented by a similar role on the Welsh side; on-going Planning advice shared jointly with the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership; the focus on Nature & Climate outcomes through the promotion and administration of Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme and Sustainable Development Fund (SDF); the on-going activities and achievements of the Volunteers and Young Adventurers led by the Community Links Officer; the development of Nature Recovery Plan and publication of the remaining Species Action Plans by the Development Officer and Nature Recovery Officer; the delivery of the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects; the review of the AONB Management Plan and publication of the Public Consultation Draft Plan; the celebratory activities for the Wye Valley Walk's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary; and continuing a range of existing activities and projects, including continuation of the control of Invasive Non-

Native Species (INNS) and advancing the Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Action Plan, led by the Projects Officer; while retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.

- The draft Wye Valley National Landscape Team core budget for 2025/26 as presented to the Steering Group is £504,028 and additional funding programmes, grants and match funding is anticipated to exceed £1,000,000 levered into the National Landscape during the year.

### ***Reasons***

For a number of years the National Landscape Team received multi-year funding agreements from DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). However, with the change of Government in Westminster last year and the Comprehensive Spending Review, DEFRA has not been able to confirm allocations yet.

Welsh Government have provisionally made 2 year allocations for National Landscape Revenue support, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme as well as for the new Welsh Designated Landscapes Farming programme. However, Welsh Government Budgets have yet to be fully signed off by the Senedd. Similarly Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has made a provisional grant funding offer for 2 years, subject to Welsh Government Budget approval.

### ***Implications***

The Wye Valley National Landscape core budget for 2025-26 has been estimated at £504,028 based on a current flat-line budget. In collaboration with the National Landscapes Association, all National Landscapes in England carried out some scenario modelling based on 5% and 10% cuts from DEFRA. Both Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have provisionally offered modest variations or flat-line allocations over 2 years. This considerably helps with medium term budgeting and work programming. Mitigation of modest cuts is likely to be made by making fuller use of cost recovery opportunities from the additional grants and funding programmes, albeit at the expense of direct on-the-ground project expenditure. Where required National Landscape budgets and grant match-funding commitments can be supplemented by drawing on National Landscape reserves. Consequently it is difficult to calculate what the impacts and implications will be for the National Landscape, its staff and delivery of the core functions. For example, if there are funds available for a Welsh Designated Landscapes Farming programme along with a farming advisor post, this would augment the capacity of the team to give farmers and landowners in and around the National Landscape targeted land management advice and guidance. This would significantly benefit farmers and land managers and the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area and help address the nature, climate and pollution emergencies.

The Work Programme is enhanced by projects and partnership initiatives with funding and grants from a variety of sources. For example the Lower Wye Project Officer will help deliver the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects between Ross-on-Wye and

Whitchurch. The range of externally funded projects, grants and match funding initiatives, adding value to the core National Landscape budgets, are anticipated to lever in investment and expenditure into the National Landscape in excess of £1,000,000 through the year.

Consequently there are a number assumptions, caveats and contingencies included in the ambitious, but draft, Work Programme outlined below. These may be relieved or exacerbated depending on the final DEFRA, Welsh Government & NRW funding settlements.

<b>AONB Unit (draft) Work Programme 2025-26 priorities</b> <i>{subject to budget confirmation &amp; resources}</i>
<b>Nature</b>
Species Actions Plans – Finish/publish & deliver actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat Creation/Restoration</li> <li>• Support Hedgehog Rescue Centre</li> </ul> Farming & land management support: advice, guidance and grants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FiPL programme (tbc) [England only]</li> <li>• Ffermio Bro programme (tbc) [Wales only]</li> <li>• Wye Adapt to Climate Change? (WACC) Programme</li> <li>• National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects x3</li> <li>• Conservation Grazing</li> <li>• River Friendly Farming</li> <li>• Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects</li> </ul> Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) control Wildlife of the Wye Valley Guide/Leaflet
<b>Climate</b>
Peatland Restoration particularly at Cleddon Bog SSSI Climate Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon &amp; Climate Assessments of Landscape Management Zones (LMZs)</li> </ul> Training & Development Climate Action Network
<b>People</b>
Volunteers Young Adventurers Training & Development of LPA staff & Cllrs including s85 Training Governance, including Joint Advisory Committee & National Landscape Partnership (inc. training, Tour & Seminar) Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) [Wales only] Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary events Farm Clusters Website update & review LA Liaison Local, Regional & National partnerships, collaborations & liaison, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• including National Landscapes Association and Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales</li> </ul>

**AONB Unit (draft) Work Programme 2025-26 priorities***{subject to budget confirmation & resources}***Place****AONB Management Plan Review**

- Nature Recovery Plan
- Climate Action Plan
- SEA, HRA
- Systems Mapping of Plans
- State of the National Landscape Report
- Public Consultation Draft

**Lower Wye Track & Trails Action Plan & Steering Group****Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) [Wales only]****Improvement to Routes & Access Work**

- Cleddon Falls & Jubilee Walk
- Wye Valley Walk including Piercefield Walk
- 65 & 69 Bus Routes/Walks

**Fixed Point Photos****Undergrounding (low voltage lines)****Planning & Development Control**

- Planning applications
- Local Plan reviews
- Position Statements on Tranquillity, Setting & Cultural Capital
- Land use Framework

**Cultural heritage projects - Overlooking the Wye legacy & Offa's Dyke Collaboratory****Landscape Connections Bid****PR, communications & outreach activities****Funding, resource management & Monitoring****Work placements****Background**

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team consists of 10 staff employed across 3 local authorities with one additional seconded member:-

- Wye Valley National Landscapes Manager
- Business Support Assistant
- Community Links Officer
- Development Officer
- Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Officer
- Information Officer
- Lower Wye Project Officer
- Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer
- Planning Officer (shared with Malvern Hills National Landscape)
- Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Programme Officer

The National Landscape Team are based at the AONB Office, Hadnock Road, Monmouth.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'  
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

**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

- A. Endorse the recent allocations of grants under the FiPL programme, SDF and HCF National Landscape Fund.
- B. Note the revised Guidelines for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) from Welsh Government and the necessity to amend the membership of the SDF Assessment Panel in line with the new Guidance.

***Key Issues***

- DEFRA have not advised whether the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in England will be renewed for 2025/26, therefore this is currently the last year of FiPL grant allocation.
- The FiPL Assessment Panel had previously approved grants utilising the full amount available, however, due to a number of project variations and unspent grants returned some additional applications have been accepted before the end of the financial year.
- The Welsh Government Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has fully committed the £100,000 available for 202/25.
- Welsh Government has provisionally allocated £95,000 for the SDF in 2025/6 and 2026/7, subject to the Spending Review and Budget settlement.
- The SDF Guidance has been updated requiring 60% of funds to be allocated towards nature and climate outcomes (appended). The membership of the SDF Panel therefore needs to be modified accordingly.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Fund hosted by the Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) remains closed for applications while opportunities to grow the Fund are sought. HCF have revised their administration fees.

### ***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 increased from £362,384 originally up to £841,264 including the Historic Building Restoration Grant (HBRG) scheme and various additional allocations from the National Pot. This was fully allocated by the Local Assessment Panel by November 2024. However a number of projects have not been able to proceed so grant monies have been released and reallocated.

The FiPL Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding each application over £5,000. Application under £5,000 are determined by the National Landscape Manager.

The FiPL Assessment Panel is meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February with 6 new applications to consider. Meanwhile the following applications have been approved since the JAC in November:

<b>Code</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Grant £</b>	<b>Approved</b>
WV101	S M Anderson	Wood Meadow Wildflower Enhancement Works	1,799.80	Delegated
WV102	J W Litchfield	Jay's Orchard - restoration and maintenance of a traditional cider and perry orchard	4,836.91	Delegated
		<b>TOTAL this period</b>	<b>6,636.71</b>	

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.

### ***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. All the funds have now been approved and committed for the Financial year. The Community Links Officer is aware of a potential application in development that may apply for all the remaining funds.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>SDF Grant</b>	<b>Approved</b>
WV11 YR24W	Grazing Management Ltd / Monmouthshire Meadows Group	Conservation Grazing at Trellech Wet Meadow	£10,783.00	Panel
		<b>TOTAL this period</b>	<b>£10,783.00</b>	

Welsh Government have confirmed the intention to continue the SDF in 2025/26 with a 5% reduction subject to the settlement of their budgets. The 'Guidance for the Operation of the

National Landscape Sustainable Development Fund' (attached) has been revised and with a key objective updated:

“To assist in tackling the Biodiversity loss and Climate Change Emergencies. To give precedence to these twin emergencies, 60% of programme funding must be ringfenced for projects whose primary aim is to address and mitigate against biodiversity loss and climate change”

The Guidance also defines the Constitution of SDF Panels (section 6.2). This necessitates some changes to the Wye Valley National Landscape SDF Assessment Panel.

### ***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 £67,628 as of the last statement dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. The fund is currently restricted to allow the value to grow.

Meanwhile HCF have requested an increase in their administration fees. Originally the Fund had reduced fees as it was intended to be managed through the AONB Unit and SDF Panel, which subsequently hosted an HCF Trustee to authorise decisions. But in recent years the HCF Board of Trustees have tended to determine applications within the wider portfolio of their grant schemes, while seeking comments on applications from the National Landscape Team. Therefore, it seems appropriate to accept the increase in HCF fees to cover their administrative work on the Fund and remove the necessity for an HCF representative on the SDF Panel, which would align with requirement to revise the SDF Panel.

### ***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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## GUIDANCE FOR THE OPERATION OF THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND (SDF) 2025-2027

Established in 2001, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) supports innovative, sustainable projects, including prototyping and piloting, in Wales's five National Landscapes<sup>1</sup> (NLs), and is open to reasonable managed risk by applicant and the NL body administering. The Fund is divided equally between the five NLs.

The SDF should support projects that aim to enhance and conserve natural beauty, wildlife, culture, landscape, land use and community within the context of the goals and sustainable development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and Welsh Government and international priorities.

This document provides guidance on how the Welsh Government co-ordinates the Fund and how it is to be administered by Local Authorities and NL Officers in Wales's NLs.

### 1. The Purposes

When administering the Fund, NL SDF Officers and governing bodies should ensure that all projects deliver on the following purposes:

- i. To explore **innovative** ways of contributing to the opportunities and challenges set out in the Welsh Government's current agenda for the environment and sustainability, including, specifically, the **Well-Being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** and the **Environment (Wales) Act 2016**
- ii. To assist in tackling the **Biodiversity loss and Climate Change Emergencies**. To give precedence to these twin emergencies, 60% of programme funding<sup>2</sup> must be ringfenced for projects whose primary aim is to address and mitigate against biodiversity loss and climate change
- iii. To build capacity in local communities, and to develop and support community-based projects promoting sustainable development objectives.
- iv. To generate greater awareness and understanding of sustainability amongst residents and visitors, and facilitate positive behaviour change through communication and promotion of the projects and fund
- v. To deliver and promote the purposes of the NL and the objectives as set out in the NL Management Plan.

### 2. Eligibility

Local Authorities, voluntary, community, and partnership groups are eligible to apply for funds as long as the proposed project meets the above purposes. Projects should be located within or should directly benefit one or more of the Welsh NLs. For organisations to receive funds they must have a formal constitution and a bank account.

Private businesses or individuals may also apply on the same basis provided they are able to demonstrate a clear benefit to the wider community and NL(s). All applications should be subject to the same rigorous assessment procedure. The applicant will be entirely responsible for identifying and obtaining any required permissions and licences, for example, planning permission and environmental consents.

From time to time SDF can be used to support an aspect of a wider project. In this circumstance

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<sup>1</sup> Following a rebranding exercise by National Landscapes Association 4 of the 5 Welsh as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) rebranded as National Landscapes for marketing purposes. The bodies remain as AONBs in legislative terms, but for brevity will be referred to throughout this document as National Landscapes (NLs).

<sup>2</sup> This will be phased in from FY 26-27 to allow pipeline projects from earlier FYs to be completed

the Welsh Government would expect associated risks to be managed. Should the wider project not complete and the funding allocated has not delivered its purpose, it would be expected that the Local Authority/NL meets the costs of the project or for the funding to be returned.

Projects must be new and funding cannot support projects that have already commenced, unless the application is for a new phase or specific element

Funding is not intended to sustain ongoing services or projects; e.g. events, infrastructure and amenities.

It is the responsibility of the NL officer to inform Welsh Government officials if a wider project does not complete, in line with the Grant Offer Letter.

### 3. Welsh Government Priorities

**3.1** Applicants must ensure that projects reference the following priorities were relevant, and should provide weighting on the specific outputs and outcomes at time of reporting.

**It is essential that all projects meet one or more priorities** set out in *Valued and Resilient: the Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks*, (2018). It sets out four key themes for the designated landscapes and the bodies that manage them.

- **Valued Places**
- **Resilient Environments**
- **Resilient Communities**
- **Resilient Ways of Working**

Implicit within all themes, and mindful of the Climate and Nature Emergencies declared by the First Minister, is that the designated landscapes must strive to identify, safeguard, and realise the benefits from the public goods they protect for all the people of Wales.

### 3.2 Well-being Goals

The seven Well-being Goals show the kind of Wales we want to see. Together they provide a shared vision for the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards. They are a set of goals and the Act makes it clear the listed public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals, not just one or two. The projects supported will need to demonstrate how they contribute to the Goals.



**3.3** The **Natural Resources Policy** facilitates the implementation of the **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** and should also be considered in developing and assessing SDF projects. It sets out three overall national priorities for the management of natural resources:

- Delivering nature-based solutions

- Increasing renewable energy and resource efficiency; and
- Taking a place-based approach

Embracing these priorities will enable us to tackle our main challenges:

- Improving ecosystem resilience
- Climate change and the decline in biological diversity

3.4 The **30x30 target** refers to protecting and effectively managing at least 30% of our land freshwater and sea for nature by 2030. It is one of a number of targets which form part of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and signed up to by UK and Welsh Government, which has carried out a Biodiversity Deep Dive to recommend how to meet this target in Wales. Central to the GBF is the concept of ecosystems with high integrity, connectivity and resilience.

3.5 The delivery of the SDF through **partnership working** is crucial to ensuring effectiveness. Projects that encompass joint working with other NLs/National Parks, the voluntary/community sector, or other partners, should be prioritised. This is a key priority for the Welsh Government, which has established Tirweddau Cymru, the national partnership for Designated Landscapes, to facilitate and promote collaboration.

3.6 Innovation is at the core of this Fund and should guide all applications. For the purposes of the Fund, innovation can be viewed as something that:

- involves the creation of new ideas, products or services.
- involves transforming creative concepts into tangible outcomes that improve efficiency, effectiveness, or address unmet needs.
- uses new or novel ideas and approaches to solve existing problems

While, projects may not always succeed in their primary outcome, the knowledge gained from failure is equally valuable. Applicants/Officers should outline both their innovative vision and how they will capture and share lessons learned, ensuring that even unsuccessful outcomes contribute to the broader advancement of knowledge and future success.

#### 4. **Promotion of the Fund**

Every NL unit must proactively promote the Fund to a wide range of stakeholders and groups within the NL.

It must maintain a web-page including but not limited to the below containing the following details and updated regularly.

- Guidance for applicants including criteria for assessment and application timescales
- Guidance on how to apply/application form examples
- Details of successful and unsuccessful projects considered by the Panel (this could be in the form of minutes/record of decisions)
- Previous SDF Annual Reports within a rolling 3 year timeframe
- Examples of good projects / case studies

#### 5. **Application Process**

Guidance and application forms must be available on an NL webpage and promoted through other means such as email contact, leaflets, posted hard copy.

Having first discussed the proposed project with the NL SDF Officer, the applicant will submit an application. Before the project is discussed by the Assessment Panel, the NL SDF Officer (in their advisory role) will initially check the application to ensure that:

- i. the application form is complete;
- ii. the individual, group or organisation is eligible to apply;
- iii. Eligible and/or suitable source of match funding has been identified and confirmed
- iv. the application meets Welsh Government priorities, NL purposes and criteria of the Fund.
- v. The application has clear and measurable outputs and outcomes identified for each project,

which will be reported upon at end of year.

Successful applications will be given a unique reference number consisting of the initial(s) of the NL(s), followed by chronological numbering, followed by year number of the Fund eg WV12YR1 (Wye Valley, twelfth application received in Year 1).

Once these validation checks are complete, the application form will be discussed at the next meeting of the Assessment Panel if the proposal is over £3,000, with a recommendation from the nominated officer as to whether the application should be accepted or rejected.

Applications of less than £3,000 will not need to go to the Panel but can be decided through delegated authority from the Assessment Panel to the NL Officer in discussion with the NRW Officer. At least 60% of the awarded funding should be considered by the Assessment Panel regardless of the level of funding provided. Officer's decisions on applications will be reported back to the Assessment Panel who should be made aware and asked to formally note all supported projects.

## **6. Application Assessment**

### **6.1 Assessment Panels**

Assessment Panels have been set up for each NL as subgroups of Joint Advisory Committees (JAC) or Partnerships. Panels should comprise public, private and voluntary representatives, and ensure a balance of interests across social, community, economic and environmental sectors and be representative of the communities they serve.

The members of the Panel will elect a Chair. The nominated Local Authority Officer will act in an advisory capacity. A Natural Resources Wales Officer will also sit on each Panel in an advisory and non-voting role. These two advisory officers will normally be in addition to the usual members of the Panel. Members should declare a conflict of interest if they have any direct and significant involvement with the proposed project, or a financial connection to the applicant, and remove themselves from any engagement with the decision making process.

Panels will meet as necessary throughout the year. The dates of meetings of the Assessment Panels will be available from the NL Officer; this will give the applicant an idea of the best time to apply for funding.

### **6.2 Constitution of SDF Panels**

- a) Panels must contain at least three members and a maximum of five.
- b) The panel must consist of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from the NL's Partnership and/or Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) where required if member numbers are needed.
- c) Panel members should serve for a minimum of 2 years but cannot serve for longer than 4 consecutive years.
- d) Membership must be reviewed biennially for the purpose of succession planning.
- e) Panel members must keep themselves abreast of the aims and purposes of Welsh Government priorities, the SDF and the NL and attend any training provided by the NL Partnership or Welsh Government. Examples are Carbon Literacy, Climate and Nature Emergencies training.
- f) Panels should keep a record of decisions made

### **6.3 Assessment Criteria**

Assessment criteria must include the extent to which the Fund priorities are met, value for money considerations, and criteria agreed by the management team based on local priorities linked to the NL Management Plan. These criteria will be provided to the applicant as an indication of how their

application will be assessed prior to submission. Any application will be potentially subject to a panel decision.

The final decision of whether to accept or reject a project is at the discretion of the Assessment Panels within the framework of the agreed objectives and criteria. The Assessment Panel must however ensure there is transparency in their decision making process. They must be accountable for decisions made and will need to be able to provide full justification for all decisions reached, with all decisions for successful and unsuccessful applications being listed on the web-page within 3 months of decision.

Applicants must be given clear reasons for why their project has been unsuccessful; this can be communicated in person if necessary. Officers can work with applicants to consider the comments made by the Panel in order to amend rejected projects for resubmission. If an applicant is concerned about an Assessment Panel decision, this can be addressed through existing Local Authority appeal procedures, or an SDF Appeals panel which may be convened within some NLs for this purpose.

## **7. Grants**

### **7.1 Type of Grant**

The Fund can provide project grants, management grants to support staff costs, and development grants to provide a catalyst for new action or partnerships. The five NLs will submit claims in line with the timetable set out in the offer letter and section 7.5 *Timetable for Claims* of this document to the Welsh Government Designated Landscapes Team before payment to the Local Authority/NL unit is made. Claim forms and guidance are also provided by the Designated Landscapes Team.

In exceptional circumstances applicants can apply for a one-off advance payment to meet set up costs at the beginning of the project. This would only be granted provided they can satisfy the Assessment Panel that the project would not proceed without advance payment.

### **7.2 Rates of Grant Aid**

The level of grant support will not usually exceed 75%. The funding requested by the applicant can include an element for appropriate overheads of up to 12% for the applicant to deliver the project. As example these may be project management, phone and internet costs. The applicant is normally expected to provide at least 25% of the total budget costs, from their own budget or from any match-funding.

Up to 10% of the Fund can be used by Local Authorities to cover costs associated in administering the Fund (e.g. staff costs, postage, administration, servicing Assessment Panels).

In general, the Fund will not provide 100% funding, although, this could be considered by the Assessment Panel in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances would be, for example, when there was a consensus by the members of the Panel that a project fully met the agreed objectives and criteria but the applicant had no other means of securing resources for the project, therefore, without 100% funding from SDF, the project would not proceed.

As part of the decision process for a project requiring 100% funding, the Assessment Panel will need to present their decision-in-principle to Welsh Government officials for final clearance.

While there is no set limitation on the minimum that applicants can apply for, it is anticipated that no single project will take up more than £25,000 from the whole Fund in any year.

Applicants may put forward projects spanning more than one year and up to three years but no longer. Panels and applicants should be aware that Welsh Government funding commitments may

not cover future years. Any project aiming to continue would do so 'at risk' and should be clarified by the LA/NL SDF officer.

### 7.3 Match Funding

One of the key objectives of the Fund is to lever in funds from other non-Welsh Government sources. SDF grants can be match funded with a range of sources, but care should be taken to avoid duplication of funding for the same activity within a single project. The source of any match funding must be clearly identified to avoid the possibility of double funding. Sources could include:

- i. Private sector
- ii. Lottery Funding (which is not counted as Exchequer funds)
- iii. Landfill Tax
- iv. Natural Resources Wales
- v. In kind - this could be officer or volunteer time and donations or loan of equipment, buildings, materials etc. Any officer time used as match funding must be recorded on timesheets, which will be provided by the NL Officer. Applicants should be aware that match funding may have a bearing on panel decisions depending on project value.
- vi. Projects must NOT use any other Welsh Government funding as match.

The volunteer rate for any grants offered will be outlined<sup>3</sup> within the most recent Wales Council for Voluntary Action "Using Volunteer Time as Match Funding" document.

### 7.4 Transfer of Funds

Welsh Government must be notified of any likely underspend in line with claim dates as set out below and at Schedule 4 of the Grant Offer Letter. Failure to do so may affect future settlements. If there is underspend in one NL's Local Authority, unspent funds may be available for other NLs for use within the SDF programme framework. Funding should not be carried over into the next financial year.

### 7.5 Timetable for Claims – relevant to National Landscape body only

Nominated officers must submit claims to Welsh Government in advance of the following dates to cover the associated periods and in line with section 6 *How to claim the Funding* of the offer letter:

- (a) The Funding will be paid by Welsh Government to NL units during the third week of December and the third week in March in arrears based on Costs Incurred in the delivery of the Purposes.
- (b) NL units must claim the Funding a week in advance of the above payment dates. We reserve the right to withdraw any part of the Funding that you do not claim promptly.
  - Officers may also submit claims on a quarterly period.

Officers must provide Welsh Government with a summary of confirmed projects for the year. A half a page summary for each project should be submitted alongside claim 1.

## 8. **Monitoring and Promotion**

Local Authority auditors will examine the Fund as part of their usual audit processes. All NL Officers should satisfy themselves that projects have been carried out in accordance with the Fund guidance as set out in this document. A sample of the projects will be monitored during the funding period by Welsh Government officials.

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<sup>3</sup> In line with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action recommendation and the living wage, the following rates will apply-

- Unskilled / admin / minimum amount £12.60 per hour
- Supervisor / technically skilled £25.20 per hour
- Professional / legal scrutiny £75.60 per hour

### 8.1 Post Payment Monitoring

Post payment monitoring should cover capital items and physical work on the ground. Local Authorities must monitor projects and ensure that the funding has been spent in accordance with the Fund framework and as set out in the applicant's proposal. The NL Officer must record and report the extent to which projects have met the objectives, outputs and outcomes as set out in the Fund guidance and how the funding awarded has been utilised. This information will be submitted to Welsh Government in the form of an annual report as outlined below. Post payment monitoring by the Local Authority should be ongoing and continue until well after the end of the Fund.

### 8.2 Promotion

NL Units should, as well as taking appropriate steps to promote the Fund, also promote the successes of the Fund to a local and national audience. This could include local publications and events and contribution to wider national information and celebration of the Fund. Project applicants should also make use of suitable channels for promotion of the fund within their project. Both groups should share project promotion materials within the wider Wales NL group.

### 8.3 Acknowledgement of Funding

Acknowledging the Welsh Government is an integral part of the contract and conditions of a grant. Information on the SDF Fund and the source of the funding of SDF-supported projects should be included on the appropriate Local Authority or NL webpage, and in any publicity about the scheme including leaflets and banners or similar promotional media.

The following guidance provides a good understanding of how Welsh Government would like to be acknowledged: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-03/wg-logo-guide-2024.pdf>. Requests for the Welsh Government logo and artwork approval should be made to [BrandingQueries@gov.wales](mailto:BrandingQueries@gov.wales)

## 9. **Reporting and Evaluation by Welsh Government**

Annual reports must be sent to Welsh Government from the five NLs by no later than 31 August following each financial year. Following approval by Welsh Government officials, bilingual reports must be published online within three months. This end of year report will outline progress against the agreed set of objectives and criteria. The report will also advise on contentious applications dealt with, as well as providing justification for any projects funded exceptionally on a 100% basis. Interim reports may also be submitted and Welsh Government Officials are happy to provide feedback on these.

Welsh Government is happy to receive reports in Welsh or English.

Reporting is the mechanism by which Welsh Government Officials provide evidence to Ministers on the success or failure of the Fund. It is not for Welsh Government Officials to argue the case for continued funding. Poorly articulated reports will be returned and could put future support of the Fund at risk.

As part of the reporting system, Local Authorities will be expected to set out what level of support they propose for future years - the level of which will also impact on future funding considerations of the Fund.

An outline structure of the information required for the annual report is attached at Annex C.

Welsh Government officials may from time to time request additional information, to assess the effectiveness of the Fund or commission evaluation of the Fund. National Landscape officials should provide any information requested in a timely manner. Grant recipients should provide contact details and information on project activities for up to 3 years post-project, subject to GDPR

regulations.

### **Further Information**

Valued and Resilient - The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks

<https://gov.wales/areas-outstanding-natural-beauty-and-national-parks-2018-report>

The Natural Resource Policy

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/natural-resources-policy.pdf>

The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) 2020

<https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/state-of-natural-resources-report-sonarr-for-wales-2020/?lang=en>

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

[Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(cbd.int\)](https://www.cbd.int/kunming)

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations

<https://www.gov.wales/biodiversity-deep-dive-recommendations-html>

Net Zero Strategic Plan

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-12/welsh-government-net-zero-strategic-plan.pdf>

Strategic Term of Government letter to National Park Authorities

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-08/national-park-authorities-term-government-remit-letter.pdf>



## Annex A: The Well-Being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The **Well-Being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** puts in place Sustainable Development Principles to guide organisations how to go about meeting their duty under the Act. There are five ways of working that will need to be considered when demonstrating the Sustainable Development Principles have been applied in administering the Fund. Following these ways of working will encourage collaborative working, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle some of the long-term challenges we are facing:

- **Long Term** - The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
- **Prevention** - How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
- **Integration** - Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
- **Collaboration** - Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
- **Involvement** - The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area.

## Annex B: Summary of Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes

Legitimacy, participation and voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acceptance in society</li><li>• Representation and participation</li><li>• Active dialogue and consensus</li><li>• Subsidiarity</li></ul>
Developing and implementing a strategic vision for the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inspiring and consistent vision</li><li>• Consistent with national outcomes</li><li>• Reflect obligations</li><li>• Adaptive management and innovation</li></ul>
Effective performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Management effectiveness</li><li>• Learning culture, skills and knowledge</li><li>• Advocacy and outreach</li><li>• Acknowledging and addressing weakness or poor performance</li><li>• Efficient use of financial resources</li></ul>
Accountability and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrity and commitment</li><li>• Decision making and reporting</li><li>• Allocation of resources</li><li>• Communication</li></ul>
Fairness and rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ethical and fair decision making</li><li>• Impartial and without discrimination</li><li>• Respectful of language and culture</li><li>• Respect rights</li><li>• Active engagement</li></ul>

## **Annex C: Suggested Reporting Structure for the NL Sustainable Development Fund**

### **1. Introduction**

- Year report covers
- Total funding awarded
- Total projects supported Number of individuals engaged with
- Types and number of environments improved
- Promotion undertaken
- Themes of projects; e.g. Nature Recovery, Biodiversity, Decarbonisation, Community Support

### **2. Publicity**

- How the Fund was advertised by the NL/Local Authority

### **3. Assessment Panel**

- Details of how many members & meeting dates
- Appendix listing members to show balance of private, public and voluntary interests

### **4. Application Process**

- How applications were considered and dealt with by the Assessment Panel/Officer, including the assessment criteria and any issues arising/contentious applications

### **5. Financial Summary**

- Funding from Welsh Government, match funding and administration costs
- Any projects funded at 100%

### **6. Breakdown of individual projects, to include;**

- Title and description of project noting if physical or theoretical (ie. Feasibility study) (including photographs)
- Total funding from SDF
- Match funding amount and source(s)
- How it met the set criteria and its own aims
- How it delivered on the Welsh Government Priorities (priority given to Valued and Resilient and the four themes within the priority statement. The Well-being Goals and Sustainable Development Principles contained within the Well-being of Future Generations Act, The Environment Act and Natural Resources Policy)
- Outputs and outcomes (hours of volunteering and jobs created etc.) these should include contact details for project lead.

### **7. Level of Support**

- Outline the level of support required for future years

### **8. Additional Information (including delivery against NL Management Plan)**

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'  
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

## DEFRA LAND USE CONSULTATION

### ***Purpose***

To advise of the Government's 12 week consultation on a Land Use Framework for England.

FOR INFORMATION

### ***Key Issues***

- DEFRA have published a 12 week consultation on a Land Use Framework until 25<sup>th</sup> April.
- The consultation invites stakeholders to give their views on 24 questions covering the type and scale of land use change needed to deliver on food production, nature recovery, climate resilience, the rural economy and housing.
- Question 10 specifically references Protected Landscapes, primarily in the context of 'making space for nature'.
- Members and respective organisations are encouraged to engage in the Consultation.
- The National Landscape Manager will collate a response on behalf of the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership and will welcome input, debate and collaboration on the consultation.

### ***Reasons***

DEFRA published the Land Use Consultation on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025. The Consultation seeks feedback from land use decision makers at different scales to understand how to shape land use policy to be most effective. The government is also consulting on the best governance structures for land use policy and how to most effectively implement it. Lasting 12 weeks, the Consultation will be accompanied by workshops around the country and will inform the publication of a Land Use Framework later this year.

### ***Implications***

DEFRA describe the Land Use Framework as setting out a vision for land use in England, and acting as a tool to drive better decision-making on how land is used and managed, by farmers and landowners right through to local authorities and developers. It is not described as a framework that will impose land use change. Rather, it aims to bring together the best and most relevant information to inform decisions about how land is used, including land

use change where appropriate, in order to maximise win-wins and avoid/mitigate competing demands on land in certain areas.

The Consultation document outlines DEFRA's indicative figures for the potential type and scale of land use change in England to 2050:

- Most (around 80%) of farmland changing how it is managed, e.g. through improved soil management, but not the primary land use.
- 1% (50kha) introducing small changes such as on farm habitat.
- 4% (370kha) introducing more substantive changes, particularly more trees alongside food production.
- 5% (430kha) introducing more substantive land use changes, primarily for nature and climate benefit, but retaining some food production.
- 9% (760kha) reflecting land use change away from farming, with land fully dedicated to delivering environmental and climate outcomes.

The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission state that "A Multifunctional Land Use Framework could mean better decisions are made about how land is used – ensuring that new housing is close to public transport, that we grow enough of the healthy food we need, that rivers are clean and flood risks – and droughts – managed, nature is restored, green energy increased, and carbon sequestered – and more."

Given the significance of the Land Use Framework for future land use, farming and landscape in England, members are encouraged to get involved in the consultation process.

The Consultation refers to Protected Landscapes (National Parks and National Landscapes) in the section 'Making space for nature' (page 24). The document states that the Government is developing a package of measures to ensure that Protected Landscapes are able to deliver the objectives in the Land Use Framework for nature, water, rural housing and climate. It subsequently asks:

**QUESTION 10: What changes are needed to accelerate 30by30 delivery, including by enabling Protected Landscapes to contribute more? Please provide any specific suggestions.**

- **Strengthened Protected Landscapes legislation (around governance and regulations or duties on key actors) with a greater focus on nature**
- **Tools: such as greater alignment of existing Defra schemes with the 30by30 criteria**
- **Resources: such as funding or guidance for those managing Protected Landscapes for nature**
- **Other (please specify)**

The National Landscape Manager will work with the National Landscape Association, fellow Lead Officers and other interested parties on compiling a suitable response on behalf of the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership. Contributions from JAC members and partner organisations will be welcomed.

The Government propose to publish a Land Use Framework for England later in the year. This will be the beginning of a likely long and difficult process of putting in place strategic and spatially explicit land use planning, that will need to work on all scales from local to

national, cutting across all government departments and supported by evidence-based decisions.

### ***Background***

The Consultation document is available here:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use-framework/land-use-consultation/>

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3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

## NATIONAL UPDATES

### ***Purpose***

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

FOR INFORMATION

### ***Key Issues***

- DEFRA have published 'Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes'. The National Landscapes Association has also produced 'Guidance for Local Planning Authorities' on applying the strengthened duty.
- DEFRA have yet to confirm the funding allocations for National Landscapes, apart from continuation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) officer posts.
- Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have confirmed provisional National Landscape allocations for 2025/26 and 2026/27 subject to final approval of Welsh Government Budget in late March.
- Welsh Government have published 'Good Practice Guidance: Planning for the Conservation and Enhancement of Dark Skies'. This also launched Wales Dark Skies Week.
- Plans are progressing for Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar at Caer Llan, Lydart on 30<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> May.
- The National Landscapes Association published its 5 year Strategy
- The National Landscapes Association hosted a Lead Officers Meeting in Birmingham in mid February, focusing on the top policy and advocacy priorities for 2025/26.
- The National Landscapes Annual Conference will be 8th – 10th July 2025 at Winchester University, on the topic of 'Are National Landscapes "Fit for the Future?"'

### ***Reasons***

December 2025 was the 75th anniversary of the passing of the landmark post-war legislation that led to the creation of National Parks and National Landscapes. DEFRA Environment Secretary has announced the commitment for new powers to be granted to the country's iconic National Parks and National Landscapes to boost nature's recovery and access to the outdoors. Both governments have expressed their on-going support for National Landscapes. However, it is recognised that public resources and the Spending Review are constrained by national and international factors.

Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 amended and Section 85 of the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, strengthening the 'duty' on relevant authorities in England, in respect of their functions which affect land in National Landscapes,

### ***Implications***

DEFRA published their Guidance for Relevant Authorities on the strengthened 'duty' on in England, in respect of their functions which affect land in National Landscapes. The DEFRA Guidance is here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-protected-landscapes-duty/guidance-for-relevant-authorities-on-seeking-to-further-the-purposes-of-protected-landscapes> . The National Landscapes Association has also produced Guidance for Local Planning Authorities, available here: <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-on-crow-s-85-duty>

The new legislation is gathering case law, with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities accepting that a failure to apply the statutory duty 'to seek to further the purposes' in Dedham Vale National Landscape was an 'error of law'. This arose through a challenge to the Manningtree Railway Station Car Park development. For more detail see <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/news/disregarding-the-protected-landscapes-duty-is-an-error-of-law> .

A recent Planning Appeal ruling in the Forest of Dean also referenced the strengthened duty, with the Planning Inspector stating "Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended (the Act) requires that I seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB." Consequently the appeal was dismissed due harmful effects on the character and appearance of the area, including the Wye Valley National Landscape [Appeal Ref: APP/P1615/W/24/3348029].

Coinciding with the start of Wales Dark Skies Week, Welsh Government published 'Good Practice Guidance: Planning for the Conservation and Enhancement of Dark Skies'. This makes Wales the first UK nation to introduce national good practice guidance to help protect its dark skies. The guidance was produced through close partnership between Welsh Government, local authorities, Wales' Designated Landscapes and Natural Resources Wales, and is endorsed by DarkSky International. The document is available here: <https://www.gov.wales/dark-skies-guidance>.

The Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar will be on 30<sup>th</sup> April & 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 in the Wye Valley National Landscape, based at Caer Llan. The programme is being finalised, but will focus on Farming in the Designated Landscapes of Wales and opportunities to address the nature and climate emergencies, panel discussions, workshops and networking opportunities. The Wye Valley National Landscape Team will host visits to 2 local farms and Cleddon Big SSSI.

The National Landscapes Association published its Strategy for 2025-2031, with the Vision of "Beautiful landscapes where nature and people thrive together". The 'one-page' strategy summary is attached, the full Strategy document is available here: <https://national-landscapes.files.svdcdn.com/production/assets/images/Documents/Strategy/Strategy-2025-to-2031-English.pdf?dm=1732892746>



In mid February the National Landscapes Association hosted the annual Lead Officers Meeting in Birmingham, which focused on the top policy and advocacy priorities for 2025/26. These included: robustly implementing the duty to 'seek to further the purpose'; better articulating the benefits of National Landscapes; leading the way on nature recovery and climate action; influencing debate on National Landscape purpose(s), and: securing 3 year funding commensurate with the tasks demanded by Government.

The National Landscapes Annual Conference is on 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at Winchester University. The conference will address the topic of 'Are National Landscapes "Fit for the Future?"' It will provide the opportunity for delegates to share insights, collaborate and inspire change in addressing the pressures on our landscapes while fostering solutions that promote both natural beauty and sustainable development for the landscapes of tomorrow.

The programme is still being finalised, but for further details see: <https://www.national-landscapes-conference.org.uk/>. Field trip hosts (with details TBC) are as follows:

- Chichester Harbour National Landscape
- Cranborne Chase National Landscape
- Isle of Wight National Landscape
- The New Forest National Park
- North Wessex Downs National Landscape
- South Downs National Park
- Surrey Hills National Landscape
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

### ***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/>

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# Welcome

## Strategy 2025 to 2031

## Strategic ambitions



### Place

Protect and restore 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

## Mission

Lead and champion activity, working with National Landscapes, to protect and restore the UK's most outstanding landscapes and make sure everyone can enjoy them

## Vision

Beautiful landscapes where nature and people thrive together

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## Values

### Ambitious

for landscapes; for the people who live in, work in, and visit them; for ourselves



### Collaborative

we work with others, through networks and across boundaries



### Inclusive

the outdoors is for everyone; we mirror this in how we work and what we do



### Empowering

we use our influence and our convening power to build confidence and equip National Landscapes to deliver



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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'  
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3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

## RIVER WYE UPDATE

### ***Purpose***

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

FOR INFORMATION

### ***Key Issues***

- Lead partners from the Wye Catchment Partnership and Wye Nutrient Management Board met with Ministers from DEFRA and Welsh Government and local MPs in December to discuss the situation in the catchment.
- The chairs of the Wye Catchment Partnership and Wye Nutrient Management Board subsequently wrote to the Ministers (letter appended), from which further cross-border discussion have been taking place.
- Monmouth MP Catherine Fookes opened a debate in Westminster Hall in January on 'water quality in rivers, lakes and seas'.
- Lancaster University continue to build on their RePhoKus research, with further studies on Phosphorus and wider nutrient loading in the Wye as one of four cross-border catchments in the joint Horizon Europe NEW-Harmonica project.
- Environment Agency (EA) are progressing with drafting the Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP), as part of the Nutrient Management Plan for England and Welsh Government are contributing with funding for the evidence base for the Welsh Nutrient Management Plan.
- More farm-based and in-field research is needed to make technical advances and significant nutrient reductions in the catchment, and particularly in specific sub catchments.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Team continue to support the Wye Catchment Partnership and manage partnership projects and collaborative initiatives including through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, Wye Adapt to Climate Change?, Landscape Enhancement Initiatives (LEI) projects and Wyescapes Landscape Recovery to support farmers and land-managers in and around the National Landscape.

### ***Reasons***

There were various roundtable meetings to discuss the state of the River Wye with interested parties in the autumn of 2024, maintaining a high political profile for the issues in

the Wye Catchment. In December, Emma Hardy MP, DEFRA Minister for Water and Flooding, and Huw Irranca-Davies SM, Deputy First Minister of Wales and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, invited key stakeholders from the Wye Catchment Partnership and Nutrient Management Board, along with local MPs, to a stakeholder meeting about the River Wye. Following that meeting the chairs of the Wye Catchment Partnership and Nutrient Management Board wrote to both Ministers reiterating the need for dedicated cross-border resources for the Wye catchment. The letter is attached below.

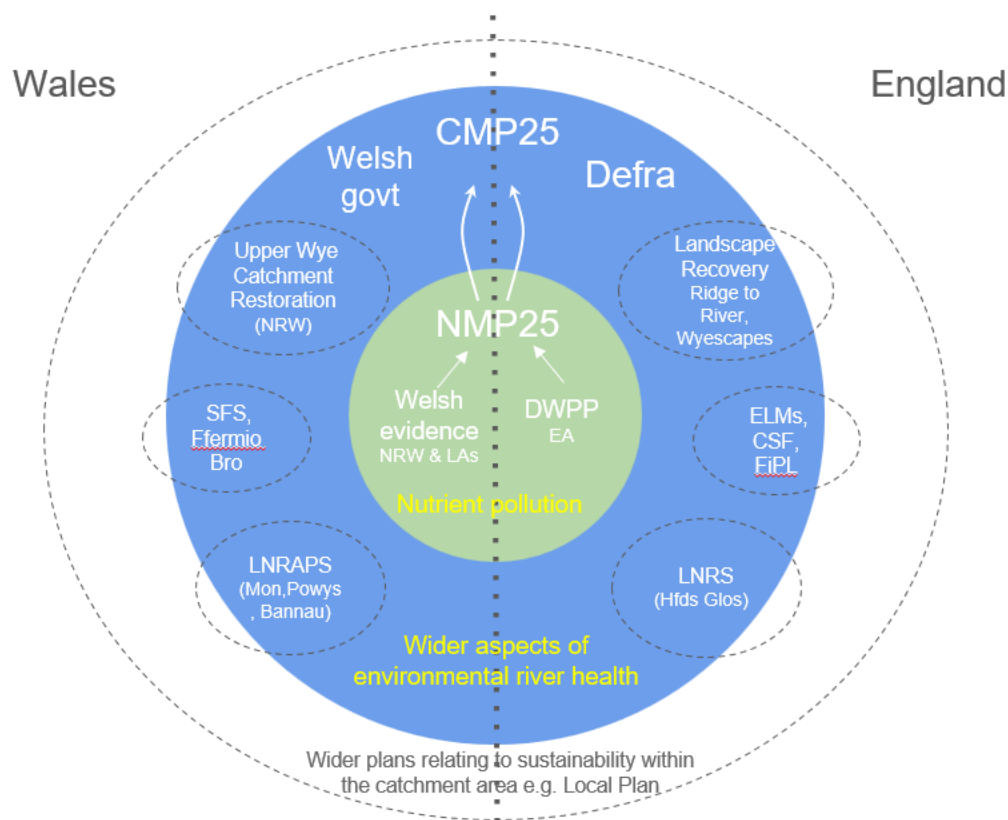
In a Westminster Hall debate in January on ‘water quality in rivers, lakes and seas’, Catherine Fookes MP for Monmouth, opened the session stating “Rivers know no boundaries. The Wye crosses four counties and two countries, so we need an integrated and coherent Wye catchment management plan that uses the best available evidence and a well-targeted programme of remedial measures to get our river cleaned up... The Government’s mission is growth. We need to see the cleaning-up of our waterways as an integral part of our growth mission.... We know that tackling diffuse pollution from agriculture will be a hard nut to crack, with farmers already under pressure, but we have examples of good practice in the Wye. For example, Avara is already shipping out 75% of the chicken waste from its Herefordshire chicken farms along the Wye. That is to be welcomed, but it does not solve the long-term problems of too much phosphate in our rivers... By 2030, over 90% of the phosphate load will be from diffuse agricultural sources. It is not sewage that is our main problem here. I know this will be a hard conversation with farmers, but we need to start having it. We need to incentivise the right fertiliser applications and the right stocking rates in our river catchments on both sides of the border in order to ensure we remove the annual accrual and legacy surplus of excess phosphates and restore our rivers back to full health. Business as usual will not work.” For the full debate see <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-01-15/debates/9D2B6284-1441-4BF8-ABC8-73A09798B551/RiversLakesAndSeasWaterQuality#main-content>

### ***Implications***

Since the Ministerial meeting in December, officials have been working cross-border on proposals to take forward research in the Wye catchment. It is anticipated that this will help identify the sorts of actions needed to tackle pollution of our iconic river and support the Wye Catchment Management Plan.

Meanwhile Lancaster University have continued to build on their RePhoKus research, on Phosphorus loading in the Wye, through the joint Horizon Europe NEW Harmonica project. The project has the goal of bringing in complementary knowledge and expertise, skills and networks to reduce nutrient emissions in four cross-border catchments: Meuse (Belgium and the Netherlands), Neagh-Bann (Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland), and Wye (England & Wales). The catchments are all commonly characterized by intensive agriculture, high N and P pressures to water and subsequent exceedance of (WFD) water quality targets. Within the project, existing models and tools are being applied and tested, Best Management Practices are being evaluated, and governance and policy scenarios are being developed and assessed to achieve multiple desired environmental outcomes. For more detail see <https://newharmonica.eu/>. The project concludes at the end of the 2025, but preliminary findings indicate that massive reductions, and even cessations, of nutrient inputs are required to restore the Wye: hence this is not just a farming problem but a food system problem.

The Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) continues towards publication (due spring 2025) and the Welsh Nutrient Management Plan is also underway. Both will need to be brought together to form a cross-border Nutrient Management Plan 2025 (NMP25). The NMP25 will synthesise current best available data and evidence, options appraisal and recommended actions to recover the nutrient balance of the catchment by stopping annual accrual and drawing down the legacy surplus of nutrients in the river and catchment soils. The Wye Catchment Management Plan (CMP25) has been scoped and costed to adopt a whole ecosystem, catchment-wide approach, integrating best available evidence into a coherent overarching plan to address all pressures on the catchment with a spatially prioritised and targeted programme of measures. However, CMP25 awaits confirmation of funding before it can progress. A schematic 'doughnut' overview of the related plans and cross-border delivery mechanisms is shown below.



Further research and farm-based testing of new management practices is needed in the catchment. Technical advances and significant nutrient reductions will only be achieved if and when farmers and land manager are confident that they can continue to live and work and be part of the landscape.

The Wye Valley National Landscape covers about one third of the River Wye in length, the lower reaches, and only about 8% of the Wye Catchment. Most of the nutrients and contributing conditions for the algal blooms originate upstream of the National Landscape. However, the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership has the opportunity to test and trial projects and collaborative initiatives including through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, Wye Adapt to Climate Change?, the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiatives (LEI) projects and the Wyescapes Landscape Recovery scheme.

## ***Background***

The River Wye and its tributaries are a Special Quality as identified in the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. 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 outstanding natural beauty of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

The Wye Nutrient Management Board (NMB) is as a cross-border democratically accountable body with a particular focus on nutrient pollution issues within the catchment. It provides the only opportunity for public scrutiny of the use of public funds in the catchment. For further details see

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1161>

The Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) is a cross-border stakeholder group with more than 70 members and a catchment wide remit which takes a holistic ecosystem view of all pressures on river catchment health. For further details see

<https://wyecatchmentpartnership.org/>

The NMB and WCP work collaboratively to avoid duplication although there will always be areas of overlap.





17<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear Minister Hardy and Deputy First Minister

We would like to extend our sincere thanks for the opportunity to present our case to you as representatives of the Wye Catchment Partnership and Wye Nutrient Management Board. We felt it was valuable to engage with you in person, and we appreciate the time and consideration you afforded us. The dialogue was constructive, and we are encouraged by the close interest you expressed in addressing the pressing issues facing our river.

We would like to take this opportunity to restate our primary ask for investment of £150,000 in the Wye Catchment Management Plan. Development of an evidence led plan which spans the entire cross border catchment and considers riverine ecosystem health as a whole is fundamental to uniting our diverse stakeholders behind an integrated and well targeted programme of measures to restore the river.

The work we have done so far has proven that this initiative is not only feasible but essential for ensuring transformational change for the river, and a fair and just transition for the farming communities who work and live alongside it. We are committed to taking ownership of the problem and working collaboratively to address the challenges ahead. With an enabling policy environment and support from Defra and Welsh Government, we believe we can deliver and implement the plan, and its identified programme of measures to create lasting, positive outcomes for the river, local communities, wider public and the economy.

Once funding is secured we are ready to commission and lead this work.

Finally, we would like to invite you to visit Herefordshire in the Spring/Summer next year so that we can provide a progress update and showcase established partnership projects already underway.

Thank you once again for your time and engagement on the future of the River Wye. We look forward to continuing this important dialogue and to working collaboratively with you and others who share our mission to restore our river and ensure a sustainable future for our agricultural sector.

Yours sincerely

James Marsden Chair WCP

Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst Chair NMB

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'  
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

## PARTNER AND NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM PROGRESS REPORTS AND UPDATES

### ***Purpose***

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

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a. Wye Bridge update
- b. Management Plan Review - Winter seminar, 19<sup>th</sup> March
- c. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects/awards
- d. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy & Steering Group
- e. Wye Valley Walk – Route Guide launch, Ross-on-Wye, 2<sup>nd</sup> April
- f. Wye Adapt to Climate Change project
  - i. Farm visits
  - ii. CAN
- g. Marches Real Food & Farming Convergence, Monmouthshire 3rd-4th October
- h. Review of Natural Flood Management in Wales: Final Report

### **a. Wye Bridge update**

Monmouthshire County Council intend to start work on the Wye Bridge on 22 April 2025, with a 10-week work schedule to resurface A466 over the Wye Bridge at Monmouth. The initial schedule of works and anticipated disruption has now been significantly reduced from that previously proposed in 2023. It is planned that the bridge will remain open to traffic during the day, with the resurfacing work taking place overnight from 8pm to 6am. Pedestrian Access will always be maintained, even when the bridge is closed to traffic at night. Workdays will be from Sunday night to Thursday night, with no work over weekends. Emergency Services access will be maintained at all time. MCC Highways Team will be hosting a drop in session at Wyesham Community Hall on Thursday March 13th to answer any questions and address any concerns. For further details see <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/wye-bridge-resurfacing/>

**b. Management Plan Review - Winter Seminar, 19th March**

The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Spring Seminar will focus on the statutory 5 year Review of the Management Plan for the Wye Valley National Landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is an all day in-person seminar and marks the start of the AONB Management Plan Review process. There will be opportunities later in the year to feed into the Public Consultation on the new draft Management Plan (when it is produced). But this is an early chance to influence the shape of that draft document. If you would like to attend &/or want to recommend a friend or colleague, please let Juliana Foster, National Landscape Business Support Assistant know [office@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk](mailto:office@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk).

**c. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects/awards**

Three applications have been submitted to the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), following developmental work with Herefordshire Meadows and landowners within a 3km buffer of the National Grid high voltage powerlines between Walford and Marstow. The first project has been approved and has just commenced, entitled 'Wye Valley Magnificent Meadows, Tremendous Trees and Wonderful Wetlands'. It is a six year project that will deliver pond restoration and management; natural flood management work; small woodland planting; standard and orchard tree planting and species rich grassland creation. Two further 6 year projects, focusing on hedgerow and boundary enhancements, are awaiting sign off by Herefordshire Council, as treasurers to the National Landscape Team.

The National Landscape partnership can have three schemes running at any one time, up to a value of £300,000 funding in each, with the aim of enhancing landscape quality, mitigating the visual impact of the high voltage electricity infrastructure and provide habitat enhancement.

**d. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy & Steering Group**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tracks and Trails Steering Group meeting was held, discussing project progress, public engagement, surveys, monitoring, signage and next steps. The main outcomes were

- An audit tender has been confirmed with Earth Science Partnership (ESP) to survey 11km of unsealed unclassified roads around Tintern and Whitebrook
- Investigations continue to implementation of new signage for trails, pending route audit, design approval and installation logistics
- Welsh Government are working on a new all-Wales digital mapping system for Rights of Way, which could significantly improve public access to trail information
- There is a recognised need to create a clear information resource to guide the public on understanding legal trail usage and how and when to report illegal use and issues.

Notes of the meeting, and subsequent further updates, will be published here:

<https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-projects/lowerwyetracksandtrails/>

**e. Wye Valley Walk – Route Guide launch, Ross-on-Wye, 2nd April**

2025 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Wye Valley Walk, which started as short sections between Chepstow, Monmouth and Ross in 1975 and gradually extended to become the 138 mile classic long distance route which attracts walkers from across the UK and round the world. The new official route guide, published by Cicerone in collaboration with the Wye Valley Walk Partnership is being launched on Wednesday 2nd April, 7.00pm in St Mary's Church, Ross-on-Wye. The new guidebook follows the Wye from source to sea, whereas previous versions went upstream. Ruth Waycott, National Landscape Information Officer, will give a presentation having walked the entire route for writing the new guide.

**f. Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Project.**

Holly Williams, the Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Programme Officer has been undertaking numerous farm visits and assisting landowners and land managers with nature based solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and help tackle climate change and biodiversity loss in and around the National Landscape. This has included advice on wetland creation, tree and hedge planting, herbal ley seeding, Natural Flood Management and grassland management. Holly works with landholders and farmers to help them secure funding for the work from sources like SLSP, SFI, Woodland Trust and FiPL. Holly has also convened the second Climate Action Network meeting.

Wye Adapt to Climate Change? is a 3 year partnership project which started in 2023, between Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust and the Wye Valley National Landscape, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The project covers the Wye Catchment across Radnorshire, Herefordshire and the Wye Valley National Landscape. Holly is one of 3 Programme Officers, one based with each project partner, and is seconded from Herefordshire Wildlife Trust to the National Landscape Team.

**g. Marches Real Food & Farming Convergence, Monmouthshire, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

The 2025 Marches Real Food & Farming Convergence will be held at Square Farm, Mitchel Troy, Monmouthshire on 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> October 2025. Square Farm is a local organic family farm, participants in the ACE Monmouth Regenerative Farming scheme and previous runners-up of the AONB Farming Awards.

The Convergence will be an interactive space to explore agroecology, regenerative farming, building strong local supply chains, policy change and food equity. It aims to foster collaboration and reimagine the local food future to create a regenerative and resilient food system. The Convergence is hosted by the Marches Real Food & Farming Network in collaboration with Monmouthshire Food Partnership and the Wye Valley National Landscape.

The programme is still in development. If you want to contribute ideas for Panel sessions, Open forums and Practical workshops - [apply here](#)

There will be Exhibitor opportunities *to share products, projects or ideas of interest to the Convergence audience, if interested you* [apply here](#).

## Marches Real Food & Farming Convergence



*Gather | Discuss | Collaborate | Feast*

**SAVE THE DATE:**

3rd & 4th Oct 2025 @ Square Farm Monmouth



**SHARE WITH US:**  
We want your Ideas !



### h. Review of Natural Flood Management in Wales: Final Report

Welsh Government have published the Review of Natural Flood Management in Wales. This overarching report seeks to summarise the findings, outputs and recommendations from recent years, bringing together the information and research to provide a picture of:

- Natural Flood Management (NFM) delivery in Wales to date
- Opportunities for NFM delivery going forward
- Recommendations of how best to deliver NFM

For the full report see

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-02/review-of-natural-flood-management-in-wales-final-report.pdf>



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