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County Hall
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Wednesday 1st July 2025

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee

**Monday, 7th July, 2025 at 2.00 pm,
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High
Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG & Hybrid on Microsoft Teams**

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Election of Chair.	
2.	Appointment of Vice-Chair.	
3.	Apologies for Absence and Hybrid introductions.	
4.	Declarations of Interest.	
5.	Public Questions: <i>"What measures is the Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee putting in place to ensure that the beauty and biodiversity of the National Landscape are not compromised?"</i>	
6.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting - 3rd March 2025.	1 - 10
6.1.	Matters arising: JAC Membership Review - verbal update.	
7.	Wye Valley National Landscape Annual Report 2024/25.	11 - 26
8.	Species Action Plan report.	27 - 28
8.1.	Woodland Butterfly Assemblage Action Plan.	29 - 46
9.	Grant Funds and Panel updates.	47 - 50
10.	Partnership Study Tour.	51 - 52

11.	River Wye update.	53 - 58
12.	National Updates.	59 - 62
13.	Dark Skies.	63 - 66
14.	Partner and National Landscape Team progress reports and updates.	67 - 82
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management Plan Review Partnership Seminar: 19th March 2025 b. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Steering Group c. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects d. Young Adventurers e. Wye Valley National Landscape Volunteers f. National Grid low voltage powerline undergrounding g. Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary events & walks h. Wye Adapt to Climate Change project i. Priority Species Update j. Wyescapes Landscape Recovery k. Phil Cutter (1945-2025) RIP l. Forest of Dean Biosphere Reserve proposal 	
15.	Date of next meetings:	
	<p>Monday 3rd November 2025 at 2.00pm.</p> <p>Monday 2nd March 2026 at 2.00pm [tbc].</p> <p>Monday 6th July 2026 at 2.00pm [tbc].</p>	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Local Authority Members with Voting Powers

Gloucestershire:

Vacancy

Vacancy

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

Vacancy – Gloucestershire Association of Parish / Town Councils

B. Jones – Herefordshire Association Local Councils

Councillor L. Parker – One Voice Wales

Co-opted Members with Voting Powers

Vacancy – Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire

Vacancy - 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

Vacancy – River Wye Preservation Trust

A. Lee – Recreation Sector

Vacancy – Local Tourism Sector

Dr. Juliet Hynes – Local Wildlife Trusts

Nerys Lewis – 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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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee
held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street,
Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 3rd March, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor C. McFarling (Chair) (Forest of Dean District Council)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors E. Bryn and D. Rooke

Gloucestershire County Council

County Councillor T. Hale

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillor D. Wheeler

Town / Parish Community Councils (with voting powers)

Gloucestershire Association of Parish / Town Councils – Mr. C Evers
One Voice Wales – Councillor L. Parker

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire – Mr. B. Nash
National Farmers Union - Mr. M. Price

Technical Advice Officers

National Landscape Manager – Mr. A. Blake
Monmouthshire County Council - Mr. R. Williams
Gloucestershire County Council – Mr. A. Deb

Others present:

Councillor R. Hatton (Monmouth Town Council)
Councillor S. Cox (Coleford Town Council)
Councillor A. McDermid (Forest of Dean District Council)

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: S. Garratt, A. Webb and G. Morgan

1. Declarations of Interest

None received.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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2. Public Question Time

None received.

3. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4th November 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4. JAC Membership Review Report

We received a report regarding recommendations from the Task and Finish Group to review co-opted membership and vacancies on the Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- There are a number of vacancies that have emerged in the co-opted membership of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) 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 three '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.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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- 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- As part of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) Membership review, the National Landscapes Manager would explore bringing students onto the JAC in a non-voting capacity.
- Future hybrid meetings of the JAC will likely improve attendance allowing Committee members to join the meeting either in person or remotely. The timing of JAC meetings could also be investigated as a means of improving attendance.
- Farming Wildlife Groups within the Herefordshire, Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire regions will be approached with a view to joining the JAC.

We resolved:

- (i) to 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.
- (ii) to agree to host future meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee at the Forest of Dean District Council Chamber as hybrid meetings to facilitate broader attendance.

5. Wye Valley National Landscape DRAFT Work Programme 2025-26

We received a report regarding 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.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- 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.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 3rd March, 2025 at 2.00 pm

- 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 2025.
- 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 50th 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Outcomes arising from decisions made by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) will be monitored and presented in future reports to the JAC outlining achievements.
- A running conversation will be maintained with Ministers regarding our position within the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation, which is anticipated to commence in the coming years.
- With regard to the Position Statements on Tranquillity, Setting and Cultural Capital, the National Landscape Manager will identify timescales and aim to present a draft report to the JAC at the November 2025 meeting.

We resolved to endorse the draft Wye Valley National Landscape Team Work Programme for 2025/2026.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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6. Grants update report

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 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 2024/25.
- 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. 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 has revised its administration fees.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question regarding Cleddon Bog, it was noted that grazing on the site is helping to improve its condition.

We resolved:

- (i) to endorse the recent allocations of grants under the FiPL programme, SDF and HCF National Landscape Fund.
- (ii) to 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.

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7. England Land Use Consultation

We received a report regarding the Government's 12 week consultation on a Land Use Framework for England.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Defra has published a 12 week consultation on a Land Use Framework until 25th April 2025.
- 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) members were asked to submit their ideas to the National Landscape Manager who will incorporate them into the response from the Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee.

We noted the report.

8. National Landscapes & National Parks update

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

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Defra has 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 has yet to confirm the funding allocations for National Landscapes, apart from continuation of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) officer posts.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee held at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG on Monday, 3rd March, 2025 at 2.00 pm

- 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 2025.
- Welsh Government has 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 30th April and 1st May 2025.
- The National Landscapes Association published its Five Year Strategy.
- The National Landscapes Association hosted a Lead Officers Meeting in Birmingham in mid-February 2025, 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?"'

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- 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 to harmful effects on the character and appearance of the area, including the Wye Valley National Landscape.
- Wales Dark skies week took place between 21st February and 2nd March 2025.
- Investment in dark skies monitors was being undertaken for use by local groups.

We noted the report.

9. River Wye update

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

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- 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 2024 to discuss the situation in the catchment.

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- The chairs of the Wye Catchment Partnership and Wye Nutrient Management Board subsequently wrote to the Ministers from which further cross-border discussion has been taking place.
- Monmouth MP Catherine Fookes opened a debate in Westminster Hall in January 2025 on 'water quality in rivers, lakes and seas'.
- Lancaster University continues to build on its 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) is progressing with drafting the Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP), as part of the Nutrient Management Plan for England and Welsh Government is 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 continues 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.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Lancaster University has continued to build on its RePhoKus research, on Phosphorus loading in the Wye, through the joint Horizon Europe NEW Harmonica project. 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.
- Dr. Jane Pearce has developed an organic phosphate removal material that acts like a sponge and absorbs harmful chemicals from rivers.

We noted the report.

10. Partner and AONB Unit progress reports and updates

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

- Wye Bridge update.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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- Management Plan Review - Winter seminar, 19th March 2025 held in Symonds Yat.
- National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects/awards.
- Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy & Steering Group.
- Wye Valley Walk – Route Guide launch, Ross-on-Wye, 2nd April 2025.
- Wye Adapt to Climate Change project:
 - Farm visits
 - Climate Action Network
- Marches Real Food & Farming Convergence, Monmouthshire 3rd-4th October 2025.
- Review of Natural Flood Management in Wales: Final Report.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Appropriate signage was required regarding the closure of Wye Bridge to ensure that heavy goods vehicles are warned well advance of the closure. The Chair stated that he would liaise with Gloucestershire County Council's Highways Department regarding this matter.
- Further monitoring of projects would be undertaken to establish progress being achieved.

We noted the report.

11. Next Meetings

Monday 7th July 2025 at 2.00pm.

Monday 3rd November 2025 at 2.00pm.

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

The meeting ended at 4.20 pm.

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ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To present the annual reports for 2024/25 on the achievements of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcome the Annual Report on National Landscape achievements for 2024/25

Key Issues

- The 2024/25 Annual Report on the Work Programme is appended for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.
- High levels of achievement were maintained despite the challenges of some staff turn-over and consequent reduced capacity during recruitment periods.
- The summary financial report will be presented at the November JAC.

Reasons

The Work Programme Report for 2024/25 tabulates the achievements of the National Landscape Team during the period. The Work Programme Annual Report is also presented to DEFRA and Welsh Government as contributory evidence to the National Landscape Partnership annual grant claims to the two government core funding partners.

Implications

There are a number of highlights outlined in the 2024/25 Annual Report of achievements from the National Landscape Work Programme. Good progress was made finalising and delivering the Species Action Plans (SAP) for Hedgehogs and Bumblebee assemblages, despite a turnover of Nature Recovery Officers. Control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) continued with 40% of sites demonstrating a decrease in abundance of Japanese Knotweed. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme invested more the £750,000 into the area. Meanwhile the Wye Adapt to Climate Change Project, in partnership with Herefordshire & Radnorshire Wildlife Trusts, provided farmers & small holders with advice on Nature Based Solutions. Restoration of Cleddon Bog SSSI continued. Access for all was enhanced at several locations and The Willow Walk was established at Ross. The new Wye Valley Walk Route Guide was finished and preparations were made for the programme of walks and events for the Wye Valley Walk's 50th anniversary in 2025. The National Landscape Volunteers completed regular task days at numerous sites throughout the year (and in all weathers). A number of funding bids and collaborations were developed including 3 successful projects under the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiatives (LEI) totalling £792,335 over the next 3 years.

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Wye Valley National Landscape Team - Work Programme 2024-2025 – Annual Report

Work Programme 2024-25 Objectives		National Landscape Team Achievements & Outcomes
Nature		
	<u>Nature Recovery & Landscape connectivity</u>	
N1	· Develop AONB Nature Recovery Plan.	National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan developed to final draft stage.
N2	· Complete Species Action Plans (SAP) for Hedgehogs, River (Water Crowfoot), Woodland (Woodland Butterfly assemblage) and Grassland (Bumblebee assemblage) [+P4.2.3]	Hedgehog and Bumblebee assemblage action plans were completed and adopted by JAC. Butterfly SAP in final draft.
N3	· Manage control of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) particularly Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and American Skunk Cabbage through Wye Invasive Species Programme (WISP) [+P4.2.1]	<p>WISP was funded by Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places grant on the Welsh side, and the Environment Agency's Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) on the English side. All INNS sites are logged on our Geographic Information System (GIS) to build an increasingly detailed picture of the extent of these species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 108 (out of a total of 200) sites of Japanese knotweed were treated using glyphosate, applied by either foliar spray or stem-injection (where feasible). Sites were treated by contractors Brooke Estate Management and Wye & Usk Foundation. Based on the DAFOR scale of abundance, approximately 40% of sites had a reduced abundance of Japanese knotweed in comparison to the previous year (2023). • We hosted two days of community Himalayan balsam bashing at Brockweir and Redbrook to relieve access issues along two public footpaths (including the Wye Valley Walk). • Due to changes in staffing, we were unable to focus our efforts in managing American Skunk Cabbage; however, we did supply two large tarps to a private landowner in Brockweir to trial a method of starving the plants of light. • After being approached by Natural England for support, we co-ordinated Cherry laurel and Rhododendron clearance at Bigsweir Woods SSSI. Following site visits from two potential contractors the best approach was considered to be cutting and burning the material, followed by glyphosate stump treatment to prevent regrowth.

N4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of Natural Flood Management (NFM), Green Infrastructure (GI) & Riparian Trees initiatives working with local land owners, managers & stakeholders [+P4.2.2] 	Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Project delivering Nature Based Solution advice with 32 farms visited and advised (advisory email or farm plan provided); advice includes NFM and wetland/pond creation [see C3 below]. NFM training day organised and run with 21 attendees including classroom session in the morning and practical leaky dam demonstration in the afternoon.
N5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise regular volunteer task days, including on partner sites and Reserves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16 volunteer task days 236 volunteers attended the task days = 1,180 volunteer hours 3 training/ information days <p>2 scything days, 2 days with Monmouthshire Meadows Group, 7 days hedge planting, 2 INNS days, 2 days drystone walling, 1 day habitat restoration.</p> <p>4 local volunteer Groups given continued support and guidance:- Cleddon & Beacon Hill Cattle Checkers; Hedgehog First Responders Unit; The North Footpath Group and Ross Walkers are Welcome.</p>
N6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate and support landscape connectivity initiatives including Wyescapes and Severn Treescapes. 	WVNL Manager sits on Wyescapes Landscape Recovery Board. Team collaboration with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust to avoid duplication of work on farms funded through LEI near Goodrich.
N7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) bids for the National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich with partners & landowners 	3 LEI application submitted and approved by National Grid. Project funding totalling £792,335 offered. 1 project (Magnificent Meadows, Tremendous Trees, Wonderful Wetlands) started. 2 Hedgerow projects due to start summer 2025. Working with 15 landowners across all projects. Application for match funding submitted.
N8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives linked to the Special Qualities within and adjoining the AONB; eg Orchard initiative & LR4, Bees for Development etc. 	<p>3 LEI projects developed [see N7 above].</p> <p>Nature Recovery projects in relation to Noble Chafer & Hedgehogs in progress and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedgehogs – Primary schools invited to be part of hedgehog project, raising awareness and monitoring populations. Noble Chafer – following FiPL funded project work, traditional orchard landowners continue to be engaged, and Noble Chafer nest boxes monitored. Noble Chafer Interpretation Panels installed in Jays Orchard, Fownhope. Noble Chafer leaflet produced <p>Development Officer on Ffermio Bro Steering Group, developing Welsh programme on funding to deliver Nature Recovery based projects on farms. Monthly meetings held from September 2024.</p>

Climate		
	Climate Emergency Action	
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare & implement Climate Action Plan from Carbon Neutral Designated Landscapes Organisation assessment & Wales Designated Landscapes Carbon Footprint Programme 	Climate Action Plan initial draft developed for inclusion in 2026 NL Management Plan.
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Peatland Restoration initiatives particularly at Cleddon Bog SSSI 	<p>Sapling control continued on Cleddon Bog, removing birch and willow saplings encroaching over bog and drying it out. One volunteer day and two days with a work parties were held in the winter. An estimated 1600 trunks of willow and birch were removed from the bog in 2024. 2024 Dec Cleddon Bog Rep 8.pdf</p> <p>Conservation grazing continued, carried out by 8 native breed cattle for 5 months from May to September. This helped break up the Molinia grass to improve the habitat for bog flora and fauna. Anecdotally this is being effective. A cattle handling yoke was purchased and set up in the handling pen to facilitate TB testing and other livestock management tasks.</p>
C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Wye Adapt to Climate Change Project, in partnership with Herefordshire & Radnorshire Wildlife Trusts [+N4] 	<p>Herefordshire Wildlife Trust Programme Officer seconded to WVNLT Team. 32 farms &/or small holders visited and written advice on Nature Based Solutions provided.</p> <p>Farm work delivered following advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 scrapes or ponds created - 95 metres of shelterbelt planted - 1 ha of species-rich grassland restored - 9 leaky dams and 3 bunds created - 470 metres of hedgerow planted or rejuvenated - 60 ha of grassland surveyed to assess potential for restoration to species-rich grassland - 1 ha of perry pear orchard planted - 530 metres of fencing installed to enable better grazing management and promote healthier grasslands. <p>2 Climate Action Network meetings organised, attended by 28 & 15 people respectively. NFM event delivered – 21 attendees [see N4 above]</p>
C4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local communities & Village Halls with Decarbonisation advice & signposting [+P4.4.1] 	4 Village halls had an energy audits in partnership Andrew David, SE Wales Energy Agency, funded through SLSP [see P5 below].
	Undergrounding	

C5	Continue working with National Grid & local communities to identify low-voltage power-lines within the AONB suitable for undergrounding, via South Wales and the West Midlands Protected Landscape Undergrounding groups	National Grid reinitiated steering group meetings in September 24. Development Officer attended 3x South Wales group meetings and 3x West Midlands meetings. South Wales: 4 schemes in development (2 awaiting steering group approval for delivery). West Midlands: 3 schemes in in development.
People / Outreach		
O1	Wye Valley Walk	
O1.1	· Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership	Hosted 2 WVV Partnership meetings.
O1.2	· Prepare for 50th Anniversary programme [P4.3.1]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50th Anniversary feature in Country Walking Magazine December 24. • Programme of 50th Anniversary Guided Walks prepared with 12 guided walks covering all sections of WVV, from source to sea, between April and October 2025. Walk leaders trained and First Aid training for back markers. • Collaboration with The Outdoors Guide – web content and ‘Waterproofs and Wellies’ packs for schools on the Wye Valley Walk. • 5 sites for new Wye Valley Walk benches agreed. • Preparations & invitations made for WVV 50th Anniversary launch on 2nd April 2025 at St Marys Church Ross-on-Wye.
O1.3	· Maintain new website www.wyevalleywalk.org	Website development to reflect 50 th Anniversary
O1.4	· Manage on-line Passport scheme	300 + walkers signed up to passport scheme
O1.5	· Continue Piercefield Walk enhancements with Gwent Wildlife Trust, MCC PRoW and landowner[P4.3.1]	Gwent Wildlife Trust undertook tree safety & route enhancement work along path. MCC pursued options & liaison for path diversion and PRoW adoption. Significant landslip by The Alcove in July closed section of WVV and diversion negotiated with MCC, GWT, NRW & landowner.
O1.6	· Develop Pathcare / Friends of the Wye Valley Walk scheme of volunteers in liaison with PRoW teams....}	Proposal investigated but focused on supporting existing groups rather than establishment of new groups.
O1.7	· Audit & co-ordinate enhancement of way-marking, interpretation and route infrastructure....}	Ross Walkers are Welcome completed audit of south Herefordshire section Monmouthshire Pathcare wardens completed audit of Monmouthshire section
O1.8	· Collate route counter data & review options	MCC PRoW collated route counter data for Piercefield: average usage was 13,338 over year.

O1.9	· Complete review Cicerone Route Guide	All works and drafting completed and new guide book published ready for official launch on 2 nd April 2025.
O1.10	· Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge and Redbrook Bridge.	Lydbrook Bridge was closed by Gloucestershire County Council in October 24 due to bats preventing repair works. The bridge is a critical crossing for the WVV and closure necessitate a substantial diversion for the route that WVN staff signposted, both on the ground and on-line, in collaboration with GCC & Herefordshire Council PROW teams.
O1.11	· Progress Wyesham riverbank revetment [+P4.3.1]	Turnover of Project Officer staff delayed progress. But further surveys and specifications were about to be commissioned in late November when a landslip took a new section of the WVV into the river. This necessitated a path closure, diversion and a reappraisal of the viability of the proposals with MCC PROW.
O2	<u>Removing Barriers & Access for All</u>	[with DEFRA Access for all funding and Welsh Government SLSP as appropriate]
O2.1	· Review & republish 'Easy Access' walks	All-terrain wheelchair accessible routes audited in Haugh Woods and Chepstow Park Woods.
O2.2	· Develop Willow Walk for all terrain wheelchairs from Ross to Brampton Abbots.	Completion of a 7 mile circular barrier free route from Ross-on-Wye to Townsend Farm, Brampton Abbots. The route is suitable for all terrain wheelchairs and part of the walk was tested by 16 wheelchair users during the Off Road Wheelchair Weekend. New disabled parking space in Homs Road Car Park created and two wheelchair accessible bridges were installed over streams, having secured all permissions and consents. The installation of 3 access-for-all benches, 1 in Ross-on-Wye, 2 at Townsend Farm, were planned, along with a Willow Man sculpture, tactile discs on the bridges and a Willow Walk illustrated map.
O2.3	· Support 'Miles without Stiles' replacement of footpath stiles with kissing-gates by volunteers and local walking groups	48 stiles replaced with gates along WVV, Herefordshire Trail and local circular and bus walks. Delivered in partnership with Ross Walkers are Welcome, respective Parish Councils and Herefordshire Council PROW.
O2.4	Generation Green 2.	DEFRA funding, channelled through the National Landscapes Association, aimed to connect young people who live in areas of social disadvantage in England with nature in a protected landscape. Community Links Officer led on organisation and coordination of outputs:- 30 children visited Ballingham Court Farm, 60 children in residential visits to Biblins Campsite (1 overnight stay and 2 days of activities), 18 children visited Butterfly Park with Marches Family Network, 50 children took part in Day Activities at Biblins.
O3	<u>Overlooking the Wye legacy</u>	

O3.1	Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme	Overlooking the Wye (OLW) archives were used to inform the management of the landslip by The Alcove viewpoint Scheduled Monument, restored as part of OLW (see O1.5 above)
O3.2	· Continue Cleddon Falls & Wordsworth Walk enhancements with landowner(s)	Options were reviewed where the lower 2 bridges on the Permissive Path remained closed for safety reasons, and another landslip and flood further damaged this section.
O3.3	· Review & prepare new Walks leaflets	Drafts were prepared for Wordsworth Walk and Piercefield, but both delayed subject to resolution of the landslips (see O3.1 & O3.2 above)
O3.4	· Audit and repair &/or replace Overlooking the Wye infrastructure &/or design & install new as appropriate	Audit initiated. Proposal submitted to Swansea University for undergraduate project to complete audit but no students came forward to deliver project.
O3.5	· Enhance access from Tintern to Devil's Pulpit	Surfaced Wye Valley Greenway between Wireworks Bridge Tintern and Monks Way path, leading to Devil's Pulpit. Near Brockwier 45 meter section of Offa's Dyke Path, 1.2 meters wide, surfaced and enhanced with stabilised bank and french drain.
O4	<u>Offa's Dyke Collaboratory</u>	
O4.1	· Investigate opportunities for future cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological research and investigation into the landscape significance of the 8th century monument	WVNL Manager sat on Editorial Board of Offa's Dyke Journal: A Journal for Linear Monuments, Frontiers and Borderlands Research, but Volume 6 (for 2024–2025) delayed.
O4.2	· Participate in Collaboratory conferences, meetings and events	WVNL unable to attend the 1st June day conference 'Conflict, Collaboration and Early Medieval Frontiers' in Wrexham.
O4.3	· Support community based research and events.	No action locally.
O5	<u>Communications & social media</u>	
O5.1	· Regular social media (SM) posts e.g. Facebook, Instagram and X (twitter)	Regular posts, averaging 2 per week, covering all aspects of WVNL work on all platforms.
O5.2	· On-going updating and revision of https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/ .	Website updated as required. Stakeholder Mapping review undertaken as preparation for development of new website.
O5.3	· Regular publication of on-line National Landscape Partnership newsletter 'Picturesque'	No publication due to other work pressures.

O5.4	· Revise and publish National Landscape Map & Guide	Draft publication worked on.
O6	Outreach & Promotion of the National Landscape through	
O6.1	· Talks/presentations to local groups	Lower Wye Climate Action Network
O6.2	· Stands at relevant shows.	Monmouth Show. Herefordshire Wildlife Trust 'Apple Day' at Queenswood Park.
O6.3	· Promote, sponsor &/or lead guided walks, events, activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB	3 Willow Weaving workshops, Ross-On-Wye 3 Day Off Road Wheelchair Weekend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 40 participants join the taster session on Friday to try out 3 different off-road wheelchairs (Terrain Hopper, Mountain Trike & Trumper). – 12 participants joined the 10 miles Whitestone ramble. – 16 participants joined the 3-mile ramble around Townsend Farm- part of the Willow Walk. Also taking in the accessible bird hide funded though WVNLC. – 48 of the participants came from outside of the NL. Dark Skies Planetarium at Fownhope Village Hall – 80 attendees Dark Skies Biofluorescent Walks at Whitestone September 2024 (30 attendees) and February 2025 as part of Dark Skies Wales Week (60 attendees) Bat walk at Penallt Old Church (25 attendees) Ross Walkers are Welcome Walking Festival Sept 2024 Flower Patch Walk (22 attendees)
O6.4	· Support the Wye Valley River Festival CIC [+O9.8]	WVRF team use WVNLC Meeting Room usually weekly for Festival planning. Use of printing/stationary as required.
O7	Youth Rangers	
O7.1	· Review programme and further opportunities to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage	12 activities delivered for Young Adventurers youth programme. 130 young people engaged in activities. 60% of children engaged had SEN
O7.2	· Train new Leaders as required/appropriate	1 new volunteer recruited for Young Adventurers and trained in outdoor first aid, food hygiene, safeguarding and DBS checked. 1 existing volunteer DBS checked
O8	Governance	
O8.1	· Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group	3x TOWP meetings at WVNLC office & hybrid/online: February, June & October 3x JAC meetings at Forest of Dean District Council Offices: March, July & November 2x Steering Group at WVNLC office & hybrid/online: February & October

O8.2	· Organise National Landscape Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues in late September 2024	20 th September 2024 (32 Attendees) visited Kilforge Farm, Ballingham Court Farm, Ross Homs Road Car Park & Ross Riverside, focusing on projects supported through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and land management issues in the Herefordshire part of the National Landscape.
O8.3	· Run National Landscape Partnership Seminar/forum in winter/spring 2025	19 th March 2025 (28 Attendees) on Management Plan Review, at The Paddocks Hotel, Symonds Yat West.
O8.4	· Complete Good Governance Review	Task & Finish group established by JAC to review Co-opted Members and representatives on JAC. Met in December, with recommendations reported back to JAC in March.
O8.5	Team management, Team meetings, 1:1s & Staff reviews	WVNL Team Meetings bi-weekly. Site meeting monthly, Strategic meeting monthly, 1:1s held regularly (4-6weeks) and Staff reviews annually.
O9	<u>Local Partnerships & Collaboration</u>	
	Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg:	
O9.1	· Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire	1 meeting of LNP Nature Recovery group attended by Nature Recovery Officer. 2 meetings of Herefordshire LNP attended by Development Officer. DO and NRO presented Noble Chafer project on LNP site visit to traditional orchards in Much Marcle. Development Officer attended 2 meetings of Monmouthshire LNP.
O9.2	· Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Steering Group	WVNL Manager on LNRS Steering Group attending monthly meetings, also representing Malvern Hills National Landscape.
O9.3	· Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) & WCP Steering Group	WVNL Manager on WCP Steering Group, attending bi-monthly meetings. Team members attend WCP as appropriate/able. WVNL Manager on WCP Chair Recruitment Task & Finish group and Interview Panel.
O9.4	· Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (NAC)	WVNL Manager attends bi-annual meetings.
O9.5	· Farm Herefordshire Steering Group	Development Officer attends, or FiPL Officer as appropriate.
O9.6	· Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire and Visit Herefordshire	WVNL Manager attends Cotswolds Plus LVEP WVNL Manager & Information Officer receive papers form South East Wales Tourism Forum, Visit Monmouthshire and Visit Herefordshire and attend as appropriate.
O9.7	· Herefordshire Meadows , Monmouthshire Meadows and Parish Grassland Project	Collaboration with Herefordshire Meadows on development of LEI applications and subsequent project delivery. FiPL Officer attended Herefordshire Meadows annual forum.

		WACC Project working with Herefordshire Meadows to provide grassland surveys and advice on 2 landholdings.
O9.8	· Wye Valley River Festival CIC Advisory Board	WVNL Manager on board and regular liaison when WVRF team using WNVL office.
O9.9	· Gwent Green Grid Partnership	DO attended Monmouthshire Nature & Sustainable Food Celebration September 24. DO attended Gwent Green Grid mapping project consultation meetings.
O9.10	· Monmouthshire Local Access Forum	Project Officer attended to present Tracks & Trail Strategy & updates.
O9.11	· Monmouthshire Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group	WVNL Manager attends and reports/updates on projects, activities and River issues.
O9.12	HC Greener Footprints & Herefordshire Food Alliance	Minimal engagement
O9.13	· Support Town, Parish & Community Councils with advice & guidance as appropriate	Respond to enquiries and provide advice as/when requested.
O10	<u>National Collaboration</u>	
O10.1	· Support and engage with the National Landscapes Association (NLA) and attend appropriate seminars & events, including Lead Officers' Meeting, National Conference, Chairs' Conference & AGM.	WVNL had a stand at NLA event at the Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay in April 'Celebrating Wales' National Landscapes' that was attended by 2 Welsh Government (WG) Ministers. WVNL Manager attended NLA AGM & Chairs' Conference entitled 'Leading Landscapes 24: Shaping the future of National Landscapes'. 5 staff attended National Conference, 5th – 7th July 2024, at Harper Adams, Shropshire with theme 'Changing Landscapes: Changing Minds'. In August hosted meeting in Wye Valley between NLA Chair and WG Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs. WVNL Manager attended Lead Officers' Meeting, Birmingham in February.
O10.2	· Work with Welsh Government and Tirweddau Cymru Landscape Wales (National Designated Landscapes Partnership) and other stakeholders, including NRW & NLA	WVNL Manager attended Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) Seminar in Bangor, 16th-17th May, on 'Decarbonising the Welsh Designated Landscapes and working with our communities to achieve Net Zero'. WVNL Manager appointed chair of TCLW in June 2024. Chaired regular TCLW meetings and also sat on Biodiversity Deep Dive Designated Landscapes Group.
O10.3	· Work with DEFRA, Natural England, NLA and others to progress the Action Plan for Protected Landscapes and the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23).	DEFRA officials maintained regular contact with National Landscape Lead Officers, both directly and through the National Landscape Association.
Place		

P1	<u>AONB Management Plan 2021-2026</u>	
P1.1	· Publicise and promote Wye Valley AONB Management Plan	Management Plan promoted and quoted in responses and advice highlighting the vision for the designation and the Special Qualities, as necessary.
P1.2	· Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan	Management Plan monitoring continued, identifying where the National Landscape Team has made reference and representation.
P1.3	· Commence review of the AONB Management Plan	In November JAC endorsed the programme for the review and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031. 19 th March one day in-person seminar focused on Management Plan Review.
P1.4	· Monitor use of Management Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries and by stakeholders	Reference to Management Plan continued to be made in all planning application and strategic planning representations. Generally reflective of national trends that saw a decline in planning applications in 2024 compared to 2023.
P2	<u>AONB Planning & Development Control</u>	
P2.1	· Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents	SPO continued to oversee all applications within the WVNLC and its setting and filtered those applications which require a formal review / site visit / representation. Representations made on 88 applications. Reduction to the previous year, possibly due in part to change in staffing of SPO post and two months over the summer with no SPO in post (new SPO since Sept 2024.) Consultation response provided for the MCC Replacement Local Plan (deposit stage).
P2.2	· Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB	SPO continued consistent monitoring, identifying and tracking applications where representation was made and followed through to subsequent decision-making and, where relevant, monitoring of conditions. 10 objections were made. Three of the planning applications objected to are undecided and 2 withdrawn. For those rejected by the LPA, harm to the National Landscape was generally cited as a reason for refusal in the officer's report, while for the two applications approved, either harm to landscape was not deemed to occur, or concerns covered by conditions. The SPO submitted representation to an appeal for the Forest and Wye Valley Campsite application (refused by FoDDC, P0308/23/FUL). This was dismissed based on harmful effects on the character and appearance of the area, including the National Landscape.
P2.3	· Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NLA	The SPO continued to engage with NLA consultations and contributed as appropriate (e.g. Welsh Gov trees & woodland protection; England planning reforms, Land Use Framework). Continued engagement with NLA Planning & Placemaking Forum for National Landscape

		Planning Officers across England; South Protected Landscapes Planning Officers Group, and Wales Landscape Group.
P2.4	· Prepare, consult on and finalise Position Statements on Renewables and Dark Skies	Dark Skies and Light Pollution Position Statement published to National Landscape website and referred to in consultation responses. Renewables Position Statement in final draft.
P2.5	· Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members	Training delivered to HC staff summer 2024. Provided framework and template for delivering future sessions.
P2.6	· Monitor Planning support & activity jointly with Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership.	SPO worked jointly between the Wye Valley National Landscape and Malvern Hills National Landscape working approx 2.5 days per week with each National Landscape, with flexibility to meet changing workload and demands for each Team.
P3	<u>Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme</u>	
P3.1	· Provide advice & guidance, as directed by DEFRA, to farmers and land managers to develop applications to help deliver bigger and better outcomes under the themes of Climate, Nature, People and Place.	55 enquiries resulting in 43 successful FiPL applications, delivering £767,585 project spend (including final year of multi year projects) in FY 24/25. List of successful FiPL project published on website: https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Approved-FiPL-projects-Wye-Valley-National-Landscape-2021-25.pdf
P3.2	· Service the Local Assessment Panel in determining applications and allocating funding.	6 LAP meetings held
P3.3	· Manage delegated grants (<£5k)	13 grants approved through delegated grants process
P3.4	· Administer grant payments and monitor and report to DEFRA	Monthly programme monitoring form submitted to DEFRA. Annual monitoring of outputs undertaken and submitted to DEFRA.
P3.5	· Review the AONB Farming Award and present to a notable project or land manager.	Not progress as priority on delivery of FiPL grants.
P4	<u>Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP)</u>	
P4.1	Deliver & manage scheme:	Turnover of WVNL staff hampered full delivery of some aspects of scheme.
P4.2	· Lower Wye Valley Nature Recovery Initiatives:	
P4.2.1	o Invasive non-native species (INNS) control	See N3 above.
P4.2.2	o Landscape Connectivity	100m hedgerow planted near Redbrook – 10 vols. 450m of hedgerow planted near St Arvans.

		<p>Lydart: 1ha meadow restoration, 200m of hedge laying & fencing, 3 scrapes created, 95 m shelterbelt planted, 1ha perry pear orchard planted, 126m of fencing to allow better grazing management and promote healthier grasslands</p> <p>Trellech: 275m of hedge laying</p> <p>Tintern: 300m of fencing installed to protect new woodland from deer</p> <p>Mitchel Troy: 130 m of hedge rejuvenated (laid & coppiced) and gapped up.</p>
P4.2.3	o Species Action Plans esp. Orchards project	<p>16 Orchard trees planted Lydart (1ha)</p> <p>Meadow restoration/grassland work contributed towards Bumblebee Species Action Plan (SAP). Hedge restoration and planting working towards hedgehog SAP. Woodland protection working towards Butterfly SAP.</p>
P4.3	· Lower Wye Valley Tourism & Access Improvements	
P4.3.1	o Wye Valley Walk enhancements: Wyesham, Piercefield & 50th anniversary programme	See O1 above
P4.3.2	o Lower Wye Track & Trails - Integrated Recreation Access Strategy	Tracks & Trails Strategy published. Steering Group established as sub-group of Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (LAF) and 3 meetings held, discussing project progress, public engagement, surveys, monitoring, signage and next steps.
P4.4	· Lower Wye Valley Village Halls	
P4.4.1	o Energy efficiency & Hub development	<p>4 halls received an Energy Audit from Andrew David, SE Wales Energy Agency.</p> <p>4 hall received grants to implements some of the energy saving recommendations set out in the audits.</p>
P4.5	Engagement in collaborative projects across multiple Designated Landscapes:-	
P4.5.1	o Wales Dark Skies	<p>Celebrated Wales Dark Skies Week, February half-term, with a programme of events and activities, co-ordinated locally by Information Officer (see O6.3 above): Planetarium at Fownhope Village Hall (80 attendees), Biofluorescent Walks at Whitestone (60 attendees) and Bat walk at Penallt Old Church.</p> <p>Undertook surveys of light pollution and funded retrofitting of lighting at Llandogo Village Hall and Trellech Primary School [saving an estimated 528 kg/CO2e]</p>
P4.5.2	o Education Resources Programme	<p>Bilingual digital resource 'Tirlun' developed through consultants and workshops with local schools. Tirlun aimed to provide high quality resources that focus for learning in and about Wales Designated Landscapes. Work led by the Learning Team from Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, see https://tirlun.wales/</p> <p>WVNL Manager, as TCLW Chair, a key speaker at Tirlun launch in the Senedd 13th March.</p>

P5	<u>Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)</u>	
P5.1	· Promotion of SDF to potential applicants	Little promotion required due to pipeline of projects and established knowledge of SDF.
P5.2	· Assist potential applicants with application process and project development	5 applicants have been assisted with project development and application process
P5.3	· Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating SDF funds.	All SDF funds we allocated
P5.4	· Service HC Management Board monitoring SDF as capital spend.	Monthly Project Boards attended by WVN Manager and Business Support Assistant with oversight by HC corporate accountants and project management staff.
P5.5	· Manage delegated grants and Landscape & Biodiversity Enhancement Grants (<£3k)	2 grants were delegated, 1 of which was a Landscape & Biodiversity Enhancement Grant
P5.6	· Training for SDF Assessment Panel members	WG drafted new SDF Guidance for 2025/26 with a focus on Nature Recovery and Climate Emergencies, necessitating a review of Panel members and selecting some replacements.
P5.7	· Administration of grant scheme and reporting to Welsh Government	Claims and Reports submitted to WG
P6	<u>Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF)</u>	
P6.1	· Promote Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with HCF to potential applicants	HCF fund was closed due allow Endowment Fund to accrue, so no activity took place.
P6.2	· Assist potential applicants with application process and project development	HCF fund closed so no activity took place.
P6.3	· Collate applications for the SDF Assessment Panel and liaise with HCF	HCF fund closed so no activity took place.
P6.4	· Service SDF Assessment Panel recommending allocations to HCF.	WG new draft SDF Guidance for 2025/26 has focus on Nature Recovery and Climate Emergencies, necessitating a review of HCF membership on SDF Panel.
P7	<u>Monitoring</u>	
P7.1	· Ongoing updating of the National Landscape GIS and State of the AONB data,	Data continues to be gathered and stored in preparation for reviewing State of the AONB Report and production of revised State of the National Landscape Report to accompany Management Plan.
P7.2	· Complete Phase 1 Habitat Survey mapping & digitising	Not progressed due to staff turnover and other priorities.

P7.3	· Use the Nature Recovery Network map, and review as appropriate	NRN map used in development and assessment of projects, including LEI, WACC and FiPL.
P7.4	· Investigate opportunities to update heritage, tourism and recreation monitoring.	Not progressed due to staff turnover and other priorities.
P7.5	· Undertake Fixed point photography across the National Landscape	Summer and winter fixed point photography carried out on 20 locations.
P8	<u>Funding and resources</u>	
P8.1	· Prepare grant bids and claims for NRW, Welsh Government and DEFRA, and other funding bodies as required.	All bids and funds claimed as necessary, although some claims delayed due to completing deadlines.
P8.2	· Continue pursuing funding and develop opportunities for external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects	Meetings held & workshops attended with National Lottery over Landscape Connections programme, and with NLA Nature Based Solutions team and Wye & Usk Transition Lab on blended / Green Finance opportunities.
P8.3	· Develop fundraising campaign for HCF Wye Valley National Landscape Fund	Not progressed.
P9	<u>Work placements</u>	
P9.1	Support the needs of student placements/group projects.	Hosted annual Worcester University Environmental Management and Sustainability undergraduate field visits at Redbrook. Hosted 6 week placement of Worcester University student, from Environmental Management and Sustainability course, who undertook a review of the published walks associated with the 65 & 69 bus routes.
P9.2	· Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities	Draft proposals developed but finalised.

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE WOODLAND BUTTERFLY ASSEMBLAGE SPECIES ACTION PLAN

Purpose

To present members with the fourth of the 5 National Landscape Species Action Plans, for Woodland Butterfly Assemblage, under the Colchester Declaration.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the Woodland Butterfly Assemblage Species Action Plan and welcomes the on-going work on the preparation of the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and the final Species Action Plan.

Key Issues

- The Colchester Declaration – a ‘declaration for nature’ was produced in 2019 supported by all the AONB partnerships and the National Association for AONBs (now known as the National Landscapes Association).
- Five species, or assemblage of species, were chosen as representative of the Wye Valley National Landscape Special Qualities.
- The Bumblebee Assemblage Species Action Plan (SAP) was adopted at the November JAC, prior to that Species Action Plans for Hedgehogs and Noble Chafer beetles had been adopted in July 2024 and November 2022 respectively.
- The fourth Species Action Plan is published and appended below, focusing on a Woodland Butterfly Assemblage, to encourage the sustainable management of their habitat of ancient and semi-natural woodlands.
- The National Landscape Team is working on the production of the final Species Action Plan, for *Ranunculus* Water Crowfoot in the River Wye.
- The suite of Species Action Plans accompany the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan, which will be published shortly as a public consultation draft.

Reasons

During 2019-2022 the AONB Unit (now National Landscape Team) worked with local wildlife and conservation experts to choose 5 species, or assemblage of species, that: are representative of the AONB Special Qualities [SQ], as identified in the AONB Management Plan, and; will benefit from positive landscape scale management. The species chosen are: Noble Chafer beetle in relation to orchard habitats & Veteran Trees [SQ27, SQ18]; Hedgehog as a locally iconic species [SQ1, SQ4, SQ5, SQ26]; Bumblebee assemblage with particular focus on Shril Carder, Brown-banded Carder, and Red-shanked Carder in relation to grassland sites [SQ4]; Woodland butterfly assemblage with special interest in the Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary in relation to woodlands [SQ2]; and Water Crowfoot as an indicator for river water quality and quantity [SQ3, SQ10].

Implications

The fourth of the 5 Wye Valley National Landscape Species Action Plans, has been produced and is appended below. A Woodland Butterfly Assemblage was chosen to encourage the sustainable management of their habitat of ancient and semi-natural woodlands. Being habitat focused, the Woodland Butterfly Assemblage encompasses all butterflies, but with a particular interest in locally distinctive and rare Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary.

A recent 'Grassland bee identification training day for volunteers and landowners' found the first recorded Red-Shanked Carder Bee in the Wye Valley National Landscape, in Monmouthshire. This is one of the target species in the Bumblebee assemblage SAP.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Part 1) especially Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty which requires that: "A public authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales".

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

Background

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

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

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

Wye Valley
National Landscape

Woodland Butterfly Assemblage

Species Action Plan 2024 – 2029



To Accompany the
Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan



Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol
Wye Valley
National Landscape

Table of Contents

List of Figures & Maps	5.3 Key Practices and Considerations
1. Background	
2. Introduction	
3. Current Status	6. Conservation Visions
4. Current factors affecting the species	7. Conservation Actions
4.1 Haugh Wood Study	8. Role of Wye Valley National Landscape Team
5. Current Initiatives	9. Marking Progress
5.1 Local protection, site management and programs of action	10. References and Further Information
5.2 Surveys, research and monitoring	

List of Figures & Maps

- Figure 1:** The Wood white (Source – Butterfly Conservation, 2024)
- Figure 2:** The Wood white lifecycle (Source – Butterfly Conservation, 2024)
- Figure 3:** The Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Source – Butterfly Conservation, 2024)
- Figure 4:** Change in average species’ abundance in the UK (Source – State of Nature Report, 2023)
- Figure 5:** Woodland ride in Haugh Wood, Herefordshire created for conservation purposes.
- Figure 6:** Distribution map of the Wood white butterfly at Haugh Wood (Source – Google)
- Figure 7:** Volunteers managing woodland ride edges (Source – Butterfly Conservation, Saving the Wood white butterfly in the South East, 2024)
- Figure 8:** Community engagement (Source – Butterfly Conservation, Saving the Wood white butterfly in the South East, 2024)
- Figure 9:** Guided walks (Source – Butterfly Conservation, Saving the Wood white butterfly in the South East, 2024)

1. Background

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

As part of this effort, each National Landscape has committed to adopting an IUCN threatened, or locally threatened, species and preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, in the hope that by 2030 at least 30 species relevant to AONB's can be removed from the threatened list (NAAONB, 2019). The Wye Valley National Landscape has committed to adopting 5 locally significant species, each of which represent one of the AONB's Special Qualities, and/or indicate the health of a well-connected landscape. A woodland butterfly assemblage has been chosen to encourage sustainable woodland management, to support these species and increase the diversity within our wooded areas. Our woodland butterfly assemblage encompasses all woodland butterflies, but with a particular interest in locally distinctive and rare butterflies including the Wood white and pearl-bordered fritillary.

2. Introduction

The Wood white butterfly (*Leptidea sinapis*) is an endangered species which has faced an 82% decline in abundance between 1979 and 2019 and a 77% decline in its distribution (Butterfly Conservation, 2022). It is distinguished by its delicate white wings with subtle markings (as seen in figure 1). This butterfly inhabits sheltered environments, such as woodland glades or scrub and has been found in a few known locations across the Wye Valley National Landscape; notably Haugh Wood near Woolhope. The Wood white, like many other woodland butterfly species, faces significant threats such as habitat loss, degradation, and climate change.



Figure 1: The Wood white (Source – Butterfly Conservation, 2024)

The Wood white is a double-brooded species in the UK, producing two generations each year. The first brood typically emerges from late May to early June, with a second brood appearing in late July

to early August, particularly in southern regions. These broods can be distinguished by subtle differences in size and wing markings. The presence and success of the second brood can vary depending on location and weather conditions (UK Butterflies, n.d. 2025). Land management activities such as ride and glade management have important implications for the Wood White’s bivoltine lifecycle, as poorly timed interventions can disrupt the second brood during key flight or breeding periods.

The Wood white’s lifecycle (as seen within Figure 2) begins with the female laying her eggs on the caterpillar (larval) foodplant, which includes meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), bitter vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*), greater bird’s foot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), bird’s foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and other leguminous plants (Warren and Bourn, 1998). The caterpillars grow from the eggs before overwintering in the chrysalis stage. In May the adult butterflies emerge, their upper wings are white with rounded edges and the males have a black mark on the edge of the forewing. Their undersides are white, with indistinct grey markings.



Figure 2: The Wood white lifecycle (Source – Butterfly Conservation, 2024)

The Wood white has a distinctive, slow flight pattern and stays close to the ground. It flutters delicately amongst woodland ride vegetation and scrub edges. The Wood white breeds in tall grassland or light scrub, in partially shaded or edge habitats. In Britain, most colonies breed in woodland rides and clearings, though a few large colonies occur on coastal undercliffs. A few smaller colonies also occur on disused railway lines and around rough, overgrown field edges (Butterfly Conservation, 2024).

The other butterfly specifically considered within this action plan is the Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*). This species is one of the earliest fritillaries to emerge, typically on the wing from late April to June, and can be found in woodland clearings, sunny glades, or rough hillsides with bracken (Butterfly Conservation, 2024). The butterfly is often observed flying low to the ground, pausing to feed on nectar from spring flowers such as Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*). It can be distinguished by its two large silver 'pearls' and a row of seven outer 'pearls' on the underside of the hind wing, with red chevrons around the outer pearls and a small central spot on the hind wing.



Figure 3: The Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Source – Butterfly Conservation, 2024)

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary is distributed across western and northern England, Wales, and Scotland, thriving in ancient woodland and upland habitats. Within Wales, it is primarily associated with habitats such as well-drained woodlands and coppiced areas where bracken and violets coexist. Its distribution in Wales has been increasingly fragmented due to habitat loss and changes in land management, including the decline of traditional woodland practices such as coppicing and controlled grazing.

The species' lifecycle is closely tied to its habitat and larval food plants. Adults emerge in spring to lay pale-yellow eggs near the common dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*), a key larval food plant. The eggs hatch after 10 to 14 days, and the caterpillars feed on violet leaves before hibernating in leaf litter during the winter. They resume feeding in early spring and pupate among the litter, with adults emerging shortly thereafter to begin the next generation.

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary faces several conservation challenges, including the degradation and loss of suitable habitats due to afforestation, changes in woodland management, and agricultural intensification. The re-establishment of traditional management practices, such as coppicing and rotational grazing, is vital for maintaining the open, sunny conditions required by the species and violets. The Pearl-bordered Fritillary was known as the woodman's friend, as it used to follow the woodworkers in the woods as they cleared areas for coppice. This butterfly is often confused with the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria selene*), which has smaller, more uniform silver markings and prefers wetter habitats like marshy grasslands. The Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary also emerges slightly later in the season.

3. Current Status

The State of Nature Report 2023 demonstrates that the specialist butterflies indicator ended 18% below its starting value with the greatest change in the 1970s.

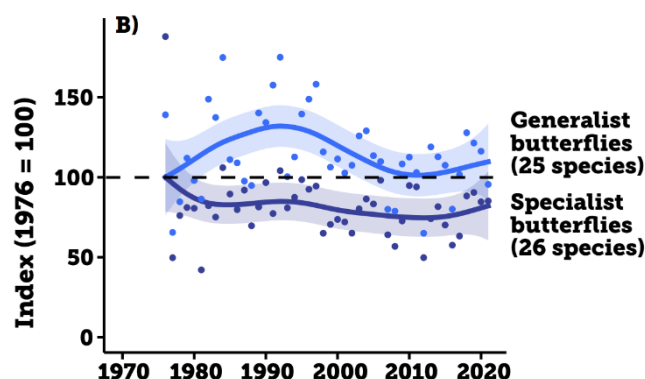


Figure 4: Change in average species' abundance in the UK (Source – State of Nature Report, 2023)

We have 55 species of butterfly in the UK (with a few more, occasional migrants), and the Wood white butterfly is one of the rarest and most threatened species (Butterfly Conservation, 2024). According to the revised Red List of British Butterflies (Fox et al., 2022) the Wood white is classified as endangered.

In Britain, the Wood white was formerly widely distributed in England as far north as Cumbria and in parts of south-east and north-west Wales. However, it has undergone a serious decline over the last 150 years and is now extinct in many northern and eastern counties (Warren and Bourn, 1998). As previously mentioned the Wood white butterfly has faced an 88% decline in abundance between 1976 and 2014, and an 89% decline in its distribution. Concern about the plight of the Wood white led to the production of a dossier in 2010, giving a snapshot of the species' status. Worryingly just 50 extant sites were identified, of which 13 may already have lost their colonies (Butterfly Conservation, 2024).

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary is classified as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red list for Britain. While it is not currently considered endangered, it has experienced significant declines in distribution and abundance due to habitat loss, changes in woodland management and the abandonment of traditional grazing practices. Between 1976 and 2019, its abundance decreased by approximately 34%, and its distribution at 88% (Butterfly Conservation, 2024). Historically widespread across the United Kingdom, the Pearl-bordered fritillary is now primarily found in western Scotland, parts of Wales, and localised areas in England, reflecting a significant decline in its distribution (Trees for Life, 2024).

4. Current Factors Affecting the Species

The Wood white and other woodland butterflies have suffered significant habitat loss and fragmentation, with the decline of traditional coppicing in woodlands which has led to increased shade levels, following neglect or conversion to high forest systems. In the past, it seems likely that the Wood white was associated with coppicing which naturally created a range of shade conditions and a continuity of suitable edge habitat (Warren and Bourn, 1998). However, most woods where the butterfly survives are no longer coppiced and suitable habitat is only perpetuated in larger woods where there is a regular cycle of clear-felling and re-planting, or deliberate conservation management of wide rides (as seen in Figure 5).



Figure 5: Woodland ride in Haugh Wood, Herefordshire created for conservation purposes.

In Britain the Wood white traditionally bred in ancient deciduous woodland that had a long history of coppicing. The number of Wood white colonies rapidly declined in size and number as traditional coppicing ceased at most woodland sites (Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership, 2018). The loss of ancient woodland and re-planting of ancient woodland with conifers has also affected the population. The even-aged nature of many existing woodland sites (the majority of which were extensively re-planted in the 1950s and 1960s) has increased shade levels in woodland rides above the Wood white's 50% threshold.

This fragmentation of woodland habitats (from densely shaded areas) can isolate populations of the Wood white butterfly, reduce genetic diversity, and hinder dispersal between suitable habitat patches due to their limited flight distance (further discussed below). Fragmentation can also increase the vulnerability of populations to environmental disturbances and limit their ability to adapt to changing conditions.

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*) in the UK is also significantly affected by habitat loss and fragmentation, particularly due to the decline of traditional woodland management practices such as coppicing. Similar to the Wood white, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary historically thrived in woodlands with a range of habitat conditions created by periodic coppicing. The cessation of coppicing has resulted in increased shading of woodland clearings, reducing the availability of sunny areas required for the butterfly's life cycle, particularly for egg-laying and larval feeding on dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*) (Butterfly Conservation, 2024).

Much like the Wood white, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary now survives mainly in larger woodlands where there is either a regular cycle of clear-felling and replanting or deliberate conservation management of wide rides to maintain appropriate light levels (Warren and Bourn, 1998). The loss of ancient deciduous woodlands, combined with the re-planting of these areas with conifers, has further reduced suitable habitats, as conifer plantations create dense, shaded environments unsuitable for the fritillary. The increased shade in many re-planted woods, particularly those created in the 1950s and 1960s, has led to a reduction in available habitat and further fragmentation of populations.

This fragmentation can isolate colonies, reducing genetic diversity and hindering dispersal due to the butterfly's limited flight range. Populations in isolated patches are more vulnerable to environmental

disturbances and face challenges adapting to changing conditions, which further threatens their survival. In addition to habitat degradation, other factors such as agricultural intensification, the loss of unimproved grassland, and insufficient management of woodland rides for long-term habitat continuity compound the challenges faced by the Pearl-bordered Fritillary (UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, 2024). Effective conservation efforts are therefore critical in reversing these trends and maintaining suitable habitats for the species.

4.1 Haugh Wood Study

A study into the Wood white was conducted at Haugh Wood in the north of the Wye Valley National Landscape in Herefordshire (Clarke et al., 2011) which looked into the egg-laying habitat and adult dispersal in the area. Haugh Wood is a 350-hectare mixed woodland and designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Research was also conducted at the Wigmore Rolls woodland in the north of Herefordshire (outside of the Wye Valley National Landscape).

At Haugh Wood the population of adults were concentrated in one area in the north and one area in the very south of the wood. These areas were approximately 850 m apart at the closest point and much of the intervening habitat consisted of mature closed-canopy plantations with shady rides which supported only limited potential food-plants. A well shaded public road was a further potential habitat barrier, separating the north and south of the wood.

The results of a mark-recapture study which was undertaken as part of this research concluded that 75% of all individuals have observed ranges less than 400 m, suggesting that most individuals seem to remain within a limited area. Nevertheless, some individuals (mainly males) do undertake long directional movements (with a maximum distance of 2 km measured during this study), searching for mating opportunities.

A key objective for this study was to assess the ability of the Wood white to reach patches of new habitat. These findings at Haugh Wood suggest that although there is a strong tendency for adults to remain within a habitat patch, a proportion of both sexes do disperse. Potential habitat barriers such as shaded rides without nectar or food-plants, mature woodland or roads can be crossed, although the potential for crossing areas of totally unsuitable landscape such as arable land was not investigated.

Males seem to be able to move between areas that are 2 km or more apart, but females may have a more limited range. This study suggests that any newly available habitat within 400 or 500 m of present habitat will probably be found quickly by both males and females, but areas more than 1 km from suitable habitat would have a lower probability of rapid colonisation. Almost certainly much would depend on the intervening habitat, but this study suggests that if, even sub-optimal habitat, can be created to make “stepping stones” then the Wood white is very capable of colonising areas more than 1 km in distance.

The study observed that newly created clearings at Haugh Wood had a low abundance of larval food-plants, particularly violets, which are essential for the survival of the Wood white butterfly. This limited availability of food-plants likely restricted the ability of these areas to support a viable population. However, the study suggested that as these clearings continue to develop and vegetation regenerates, the abundance of food-plants could increase, making the areas more suitable for future

colonisation by the butterfly. Effective habitat management, including promoting the growth of larval food-plants and creating stepping stones, will be crucial for the long-term survival and expansion of the Wood white population at Haugh Wood.

5. Current Initiatives

5.1 Local protection, site management and programs of action

Butterfly Conservation have run several Wood white conservation projects across the UK, notably the Woodland Wings Project (2017-2020) and Saving the Wood white butterfly in the South East (2019-2022). These projects concentrated on managing the existing habitat of Wood white hotspots as seen in Figure 6 (including sites in the ancient woodlands of the Yardley Whittlewood Ridge in Northamptonshire, and the Weald area in South East England), creating new suitable habitat and raising awareness through public engagement (Figures 7 & 8). There was also a focus on monitoring the butterfly and moth populations as the projects progressed to enhance understanding of the Wood white and its dispersal and colonisation ability.

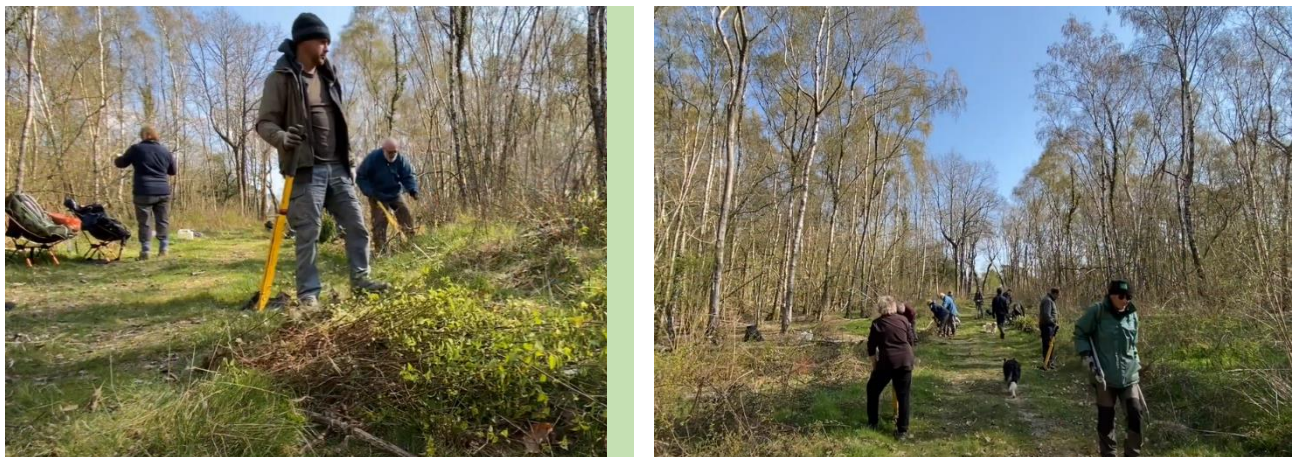


Figure 7: Volunteers managing woodland ride edges (Source – Butterfly Conservation, Saving the Wood white butterfly in the South East, 2024)



Figure 8: Community engagement (Source – Butterfly Conservation, Saving the Wood white butterfly in the South East, 2024)



Figure 9: Guided walks (Source – Butterfly Conservation, Saving the Wood white butterfly in the South East, 2024)

The 'Making A Stand For The Wood white' project employs several key methods to restore habitats. These include creating sunny woodland rides and glades for egg-laying and feeding, coppicing, and clearing overgrown areas to prevent shade and promote the growth of food plants like violets. The project also creates "stepping stones" of suitable habitat to improve connectivity between fragmented populations, allowing for easier dispersal and colonization of new areas. Regular monitoring tracks population success, and the project engages local landowners to ensure compatibility with land use. Additionally, it aims to oversee the reintroduction of the Wood white at four woodland sites over the next three years, further supporting recovery and expansion (Butterfly Conservation, 2024).

Forestry England has undertaken several important conservation projects at Haugh Wood. The projects primarily focus on habitat restoration and management to support rare butterfly species, including the Wood white. Key activities include coppicing and the creation of sunny woodland rides and glades, which are vital for butterflies that need open, sunny areas for egg-laying and feeding. By restoring these habitats, Forestry England enhances the conditions for butterfly species that rely on specific vegetation, such as violets, for survival. The creation of waymarked butterfly trails also encourages public engagement and education about the woodland's biodiversity.

5.2. Surveys, research and monitoring

The United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) is a long-running national monitoring initiative designed to track butterfly populations across the UK. Established in 1976, the scheme involves a network of trained volunteers who conduct regular butterfly counts at specific sites throughout the country. The monitoring takes place at standard locations, known as transects, where volunteers walk predetermined routes and count butterflies during the summer months. The data collected through the UKBMS provides detailed information on the abundance and distribution of butterfly species, allowing scientists to monitor population trends over time. This long-term dataset is crucial for understanding how environmental factors, such as climate change and habitat loss, affect butterfly populations. The UKBMS is widely regarded as one of the most comprehensive butterfly monitoring schemes in the world and plays a central role in informing conservation efforts. The results help guide habitat management practices and support the identification of species and areas in need of protection.

The Butterflies for the New Millennium (BNM) recording scheme is a long-term citizen science project launched in 1995 by Butterfly Conservation, aimed at monitoring butterfly populations across the UK. The scheme focuses on collecting data about the distribution and abundance of butterflies, providing valuable information on species trends and supporting conservation efforts. Volunteers across the country are encouraged to record sightings of butterflies, contributing to a nationwide effort to map species distribution and monitor changes over time. The data collected through the BNM scheme has been used to track the impacts of climate change, habitat loss, and other environmental factors on butterfly populations. The scheme also helps to identify conservation priorities, informing habitat restoration efforts and species protection strategies. As one of the largest and most comprehensive butterfly recording initiatives in the UK, the BNM scheme has played a crucial role in advancing butterfly conservation by providing insights into the state of butterfly populations and the health of the broader environment.

The iRecord Butterflies app is a mobile application developed by Butterfly Conservation, in partnership with other organizations, to facilitate the recording and reporting of butterfly sightings across the UK. Launched to support citizen science, the app allows users to easily submit their butterfly observations, contributing valuable data to monitoring programs like the BNM recording scheme. The app provides users with an accessible way to log their sightings, including details on species, location, and date, helping to build an up-to-date picture of butterfly distribution and abundance. The iRecord Butterflies app also offers identification guides, making it easier for both amateur and experienced butterfly watchers to report accurate information. The data gathered through the app is used to inform conservation efforts, track population trends, and support the identification of areas where targeted habitat management may be needed to protect vulnerable species.

The Garden Butterfly Survey is a citizen science initiative run by Butterfly Conservation, aimed at monitoring butterfly populations in garden environments across the UK. Launched in 2009, the survey encourages individuals to observe and record butterflies in their gardens during the summer months. Participants are asked to count and identify butterflies in their gardens over a set period, typically once a week, and report their findings through an online portal. The data collected through the Garden Butterfly Survey provides valuable insights into how butterfly populations are responding to changes in urban and suburban habitats, such as shifts in plant availability, climate, and garden management practices. By focusing on gardens, the survey helps to fill gaps in national monitoring efforts, especially for species that thrive in human-modified landscapes. The survey also helps to raise awareness about the importance of creating butterfly-friendly habitats and promotes actions such as planting nectar-rich flowers and reducing pesticide use.

5.3. Key Practices and Considerations

5.3.1 Bracken Management for Pearl-bordered Fritillary Habitat

Bracken is a vital component of suitable habitat for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and should be managed carefully, not eradicated. In woodland settings, Bracken-dominated clearings and rides provide ideal breeding conditions, especially when the Bracken is sparse and interspersed with violets—particularly Common Dog-violet, the butterfly's primary larval food plant. The Pearl-bordered Fritillary requires areas with warm, dry microclimates, and Bracken litter plays a key role in creating these conditions by forming insulating layers of dead fronds that retain warmth and shelter the violets

used by caterpillars. While dense Bracken stands can suppress ground flora and reduce habitat quality, light Bracken cover in sunlit areas can offer an excellent structural matrix for both food plants and shelter. Management should aim to thin Bracken mechanically or by grazing, avoiding total removal, to create a patchy sward of Bracken, grasses, and violets. Ensuring a mosaic of vegetation height and maintaining leaf litter continuity is essential. This approach supports larval development, aids adult thermoregulation, and encourages connectivity between breeding sites—critical for sustaining metapopulations across woodland landscapes.

5.3.2 Coppicing and Deer Management

Coppicing is a traditional woodland management technique that creates a dynamic, structural diversity within woodlands—essential for many threatened butterflies such as the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and the Wood White. These species rely on the open, sunny conditions found in early-stage coppice, where nectar sources and larval food plants can thrive. However, in areas with high deer populations, the regrowth of coppiced stools is often severely hindered by browsing, which can undermine habitat restoration efforts. Deer can strip young shoots before they establish, reducing ground flora diversity and shading out vital food plants like violets and legumes. To ensure successful coppice regeneration, protective measures must be integrated into management efforts. These can include deer fencing, the strategic placement of brash over stools, or the use of natural barriers. Funding for coppicing must also account for these additional measures, as they are critical to maintaining habitat quality over time. Without adequate deer management, coppicing may fail to deliver the conditions required for butterflies to breed, feed, and disperse effectively within woodland landscapes (Clark et al, 2011).

Beyond coppiced areas, deer influence the broader woodland ecosystem in ways that can significantly affect butterflies and other wildlife. High deer densities can lead to the removal of the shrub layer, altered tree species composition, and suppressed natural regeneration—consequences that reduce the structural and botanical diversity essential for woodland Lepidoptera. In contrast, low levels of browsing can sometimes be beneficial, particularly in maintaining open glades or suppressing dense scrub. In some cases, slower regrowth in lightly browsed coppice can extend the period during which conditions remain suitable for species like the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. However, these outcomes require careful monitoring, as prolonged browsing can also shift vegetation towards species-poor, grass-dominated swards. Additionally, deer grazing on key nectar and larval plants—such as Bramble for many invertebrates and Honeysuckle for the White Admiral—can directly reduce butterfly breeding success. Where impacts are severe, integrated strategies may be necessary, including large-coupe cutting to deter browsing, coordinated action across landholdings, selective culling, and well-designed fencing. Ultimately, deer management should be tailored to support woodland habitat goals, ensuring the delicate balance needed to sustain diverse butterfly communities (Clark et al, 2011).

5.3.3 Bramble Management

As a prolific nectar source, Bramble flowers support a wide array of pollinators and are frequently visited by adult butterflies throughout the summer. The plant also provides essential cover and foraging habitat for other woodland species, including Dormice. However, without careful management, Bramble can quickly become dominant—particularly in the years following coppicing—forming dense thickets that outcompete key ground flora such as violets, which are critical larval food plants for both the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Wood White (Clark et al., 2011).

To prevent Bramble from suppressing these important food plants, it is essential to include Bramble control within wider woodland management plans. This is particularly important in coppice coupes and along rides and glades, where Bramble can quickly colonise newly open ground and reduce floral diversity. Rotational cutting of Bramble, ideally timed to avoid the flowering period, can help maintain a mosaic of low, flower-rich vegetation and open conditions needed by early successional butterfly species. Ride and glade management should similarly be informed by Bramble growth, ensuring these linear features remain open, sunny, and diverse in ground flora. While high deer densities can cause damage to woodland structure, light browsing may incidentally help suppress excessive Bramble growth, providing a useful ecological service in some contexts. As with all components of butterfly habitat management, the goal is not eradication but balance—ensuring that Bramble remains part of a diverse, structured woodland landscape that supports a wide range of Lepidoptera and associated species.

5.3.4 Invasive Species Management

Invasive species pose a significant threat to woodland biodiversity in the Wye Valley National Landscape, particularly impacting specialist butterflies like the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and the Wood White. Invasive non-native plants such as *Rhododendron ponticum*, Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) can rapidly outcompete native ground flora, including violets and legumes essential for butterfly larvae (Natural Resources Wales, 2023). These dense, shade-casting species suppress light levels and limit floral diversity, undermining the early successional conditions vital for many woodland butterflies (Wye Valley National Landscape, 2025).

Invasive animals also contribute to habitat degradation. Grey Squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) strip bark and damage regrowth in coppice woodlands, while Muntjac Deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*) browse heavily on young vegetation, disrupting natural regeneration processes. Such pressures can drastically alter woodland structure, delaying or preventing the development of open glades and rides that butterflies depend on (Woodland Trust, 2025).

To mitigate these impacts, coordinated, landscape-scale action is essential. Active monitoring and targeted removal of invasive species, combined with ongoing habitat management, will help ensure that butterfly populations can thrive within this nationally important landscape.

5.3.5 Scalping and Ride and Glade Management

Effective ride and glade management is a cornerstone of woodland butterfly conservation in the Wye Valley National Landscape, providing the warm, sheltered conditions and diverse vegetation structure required by species such as the Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Wood White, and other specialist invertebrates. To maximise the ecological value of these features, scalping—cutting wide, gently curving bays into the edges of rides and glades—should be incorporated into management plans. This approach breaks up harsh, linear woodland edges, creating a greater variety of microhabitats and increasing edge length, which in turn supports a wider range of nectar sources, larval food plants, and basking sites.

Furthermore, connecting rides and glades within a woodland is highly beneficial, as continuous or linked open habitat allows butterflies to disperse more easily between breeding areas, enhancing metapopulation resilience. Joined networks of open space also benefit other invertebrates, birds, and flora that depend on light and structural diversity. Management should therefore aim to create and

maintain a mosaic of scalloped rides and interconnected glades through rotational cutting, selective tree removal, and control of aggressive vegetation such as Bramble where it threatens floral diversity. This targeted habitat connectivity strengthens ecological networks and ensures woodland butterflies can thrive in a changing landscape (Clark et al., 2011).

6. Conservation Visions

To enhance opportunities for the Wood white, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and other woodland butterflies across the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Working with partners and landowners to ensure that woodland butterfly habitat is considered within all management decision making.

More potential habitat to be created and connected to enhance opportunities for the Wood white, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and other woodland butterflies within the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Working with partners, landowners and stakeholders to expand and join up new habitat in the Wye Valley National Landscape including establishing rides and glades in new and existing woodland, and managing scrub.

To see a sustainable increase in the Wood white, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and other woodland butterfly populations across the Wye Valley National Landscape:

- Encouraging stakeholders to undertake surveys to determine woodland butterfly populations and monitor the progress of conservation efforts. Collate survey data in map format.

7. Conservation Actions

ACTION	HOW
Raise awareness of the decline of woodland butterflies and the potential for a recovery in their numbers through appropriate action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host events, visits, talks and workshops for the general public, schools and/or established community groups. - Work with partners and groups to spread the message. - Use butterflies as the indicators of good woodland management. - Promote good practices relating to habitat management for woodland butterflies.
Monitor the population of the Wood white, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and other woodland butterflies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer training programs to equip volunteers and landowners with necessary skills for effective monitoring. - Encourage partners, volunteers and the general public to carry out surveys (at known established sites and potential new sites). - Record signs and sightings of butterflies, and submit records to the relevant local environmental records centre.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Incorporate specialist surveys targeting the Wood white and Pearl-bordered Fritillary. -Explore opportunities to conduct eDNA surveys to identify the various species present before and after restoration and enhancement work. -Collaborate with researchers and conservationists to assess quality of habitats for target species. -Map and demonstrate current distribution of Wood White, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and other Woodland butterflies to get baseline data.
Encourage habitat connection through management of woodland ride edges, creation of new woodland rides and glades and encouraging suitable habitat into new woodland planting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with farmers and landowners to encourage good woodland management practices to improve habitat connectivity. -Provide farmers and landowners with guidance and advisory resources. -Encourage landowners to create new woodland rides and glades to connect isolated habitats. -Collaborate with experts to design and implement effective ride and glade management strategies. -Encourage and facilitate long term management to prevent overgrowth. -Run awareness campaigns to educate farmers, landowners and the public about the importance of managing ridge edges and glade creation. - Encourage the inclusion of rides, glades and open habitats into new woodland design plans.
Encourage farmers and landowners to adopt good woodland management practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide farmers and landowners with woodland management guidance and advisory resources. -Signpost towards grants and other financial support for landowners interested in environmentally friendly woodland management practices. -Foster collaboration between landowners, conservation organisations and local authorities. -Offer practical training sessions on the implementation of good woodland management techniques. -Recognise and celebrate landowners who adopt sustainable woodland practices through awards, certification schemes or publicity. Use sites as case studies for other landowners to visit.
Encourage communities to better manage their gardens and urban areas for butterflies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engage local media to highlight conservation efforts and the importance of woodland butterfly populations. -Develop and distribute a local butterfly guide that highlights key species. -Establish a 'butterfly champions' network to encourage community engagement.

8. Role of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team

- Support, advise, facilitate and co-ordinate conservation action for the Wood white, Pearl bordered fritillary and other woodland butterflies, both leading on and through partnerships with other stakeholders.
- Engage with and support landowners and managers, encouraging best practice in managing and creating butterfly habitat to enhance opportunities for populations.
- Promote woodland butterfly conservation within other wildlife conservation organisations and encourage the provision of advice to the general public and practical support for landowners.
- Enthuse the general public to take part in surveying and providing records of butterfly sightings.
- Monitor habitat extent and butterfly populations, to enable progress reporting.
- Encourage the planting of new woodland where it doesn't conflict with other Special Qualities of the National Landscape, and encourage the creation of suitable woodland butterfly habitat within it.

9. Marking Progress

We will mark progress through:

- **Woodland butterfly records:** When there are more records of woodland butterflies in the National Landscape, indicating a population increase or an improvement in survey efforts.
- **Woodland butterfly habitat:** When there is more available habitat and better connectivity in the National Landscape where woodland butterflies are being recorded, indicating opportunities for the expansion in range of woodland butterfly species.
- **Woodland butterfly measures:** When new measures are successfully implemented to support woodland butterflies e.g. more woodland rides restored and created.
- **Woodland butterfly understanding and conservation efforts:** When information about woodland butterflies is widely available to everybody, and their habitat in the National Landscape is being enhanced.

10. References and further information

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

7th July 2025

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES (FIPL), FFERMIO BRO, 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) and Ffermio Bro programmes, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Wye Valley National Landscape Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF).

Recommendation

That the JAC

A. Welcomes the new members and Local Assessment Panel for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) and Ffermio Bro programmes, and the new FiPL and Ffermio Bro Officers

B. Endorses the recent allocations of FiPL and SDF grants.

Key Issues

- DEFRA have confirmed a one year allocation for the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme in England for 2025/26, with the Wye Valley National Landscape being offered a FiPL total of £339,063 including advice and administration.
- The FiPL Assessment Panel has recently approved grants totalling £62,052.02.
- The revised Welsh Government Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has an allocation of £95,000 for 2025/26 and the new SDF Panel met for the first time recently and approved 2 projects giving a total of £46,365.80 granted to date.
- The new Welsh Government Ffermio Bro programme has an allocation of £95,000 for grants for farmers in the Wye Valley National Landscape (Wales only).
- A successful recruitment process filled both the replacement FiPL Officer post and the new Ffermio Bro Officer.
- The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley National Landscape Fund is currently closed for applications while opportunities to grow the Fund are sought.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

The Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) grants programme has been extended initially until March 2026. Wye Valley National Landscape FiPL allocation for 25/26 is £339,063

including advice and administration. The Wye Valley FiPL Officer, Anna Stankiewicz, decided to leave in April following 3 very successful years running the programme. A recruitment process has brought Richie Alford into the post. He hosted a recent FiPL Panel meeting and the following grants were awarded:

Code	Applicant	Project	Grant £	Approved
WV 112	L Squire & Herefordshire Meadows	Broomy Green Meadow restoration	£2,956.80	Delegated
WV 090	Duchy of Cornwall	Harewood End Lake restoration	£14,000.00	Panel
WV 109	J W Simmons and Son	Hewelsfield Court Manure Store Walls	£13,394.00	Panel
WV 110	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust	Severn Treescapes Orchards Connect	£4,884.60	Panel
WV 111	J & M Lyons	The Cotes Meadow restoration	£9,062.00	Panel
WV 114	T & E Matthews	Bearse Farm Educational Visits	£6,368.62	Panel
WV 115	J Hoddell and partners	Lewstone Farm Meadow restoration	£1,970.00	Panel
WV 116	Mark Jones	Upper End Farm Meadow restoration	£9,416.00	Panel
		TOTAL this period	£62,052.02	

DEFRA have not confirmed whether the FiPL grants programme will be extended beyond March 2026. However, the FiPL Officer post is currently to continue to March 2027, with farm liaison and engagement, whether the grants programme is renewed or not.

Ffermio Bro

The new Welsh Government Ffermio Bro programme, focused on encouraging nature-friendly farming practices in Wales' National Parks and National Landscapes, was launched by Deputy First Minister with responsibility for Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies, while visiting the Wye Valley in May 2025 [see <https://www.gov.wales/support-nature-friendly-farming-across-wales-most-treasured-landscapes>].

The Ffermio Bro programme in the Wye Valley National Landscape has an allocation of £95,000 for grants for farmers (in the Welsh part of the National Landscape). Chris Knight has been recruited to provide advice for farmers and landowners and help them apply to deliver the programme, he started on 1st July. Guidance and application documents have been finalised, along national guidelines, and the Local Assessment Panel has been appointed as follows:-

Cllr Ann Webb, Monmouthshire County Council & JAC
 Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager
 Anna Stankiewicz, Herefordshire Meadows (& former FiPL Officer)
 Dan Smith, Tŷ-Mawr Dingestow & Nuffield Farming Scholar
 Joe Ryder, Gwent Wildlife Trust

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

Welsh Government has allocated £95,000 of SDF for 2025/26 for the Welsh part of the National Landscape. New Guidance for the SDF was issued for 2025/26 with the key objectives of tackling the Biodiversity and Climate Emergencies. To address and mitigate against biodiversity loss and climate change 60% of programme funding must be ring-fenced for projects which further these objectives.

The SDF Assessment Panel has also been revised in line with the Guidance:

Membership is as follows:-

Sector Representatives:

Private Sector	David Price, NFU Wales
Voluntary Sector	Charles Emes, ACE Monmouth
Voluntary Sector	Gemma Bode, Gwent Wildlife
Public Sector	Kate Stinchcombe, Monmouthshire County Council
Public Sector	Cllr Emma Bryn, Monmouthshire County Council & JAC

Advisory:

Statutory Agency officer	Sarah Tindal, Natural Resources Wales
	Andrew Blake, WVNLC Manager
	Lucinda James, WVNLC Community Links Officer

The new Panel met for the first time and, following some induction training, determined 2 applications. The table below lists the approved grants including those carried over from last year.

Code	Applicant	Project Title	SDF Grant	Approved
WV00 YR25W	WVNLC Team	10% admin	£9,500.00	~
WY01 YR25W	Grazing Management Ltd	Conservation Grazing at Wet Meadow (Year 2 of 2)	£13,742.00	Panel
WV02 YR25W	Marches Real Food & Farming Network	Marches Real Food and Farming Convergence 2025	£4,000.00	Panel
WV03 YR25W	Dylan Allman, Hedgehog Aware	The Prickly Patch: Hedgehog Rehabilitation Unit	£19,123.80	Panel
		TOTAL this period	£46,365.80	

The SDF Assessment Panel is delegated with deciding on applications over £3,000.

Application under £3,000 are determined by the National Landscape Manager.

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 31st December 2024. The fund is currently restricted to allow the value to grow. Opportunities need to be sought to augment the National Landscape Fund further. When funds allow, the National Landscape Team assists and comments on applications to the National Landscape Fund to advise HCF on grant funding.

Background

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

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

7th July 2025

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL STUDY TOUR

Purpose

To endorse the date and outline programme for the Annual National Landscape Partnership Study Tour.

Recommendations

That the JAC

A. Note the date of Friday 26th September 2025 for the Study Tour, with a focus on the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative and other projects between Ross and Monmouth.

B. Encourage a good attendance, and invite representatives from our neighbouring Shropshire Hills and Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnerships and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority and other appropriate partners.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Annual Tour will be held on Friday 26th September.
- The programme is still being finalised but will focus predominantly on projects supported through the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative and other projects and other land management issues between Ross and Monmouth.
- Initial invitations for expressions of interest to attend will be sent out shortly.
- Invitations should be extended to representatives from our neighbouring Designated Landscapes and other appropriate partner organisations in the interest of sharing good practice and broadening collaboration.

Reasons

The Annual Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Tour is hosted by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and has a good reputation as both an information exchange and networking opportunity, with good attendance from the wider National Landscape Partnership. The invitation to attend the Tour is extended to all members of the JAC, to Senior Officers and County and District Councillors whose wards fall within the Wye Valley National Landscape along with representatives from all the constituent Town/Parish/Community Councils. It is thus a key tool in the transfer of information to the wider partners and interested parties in and around the National Landscape.

Implications

The date of 26th September is proposed for the 2025 Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Tour. In the interests of wider collaboration invitations will be made to other appropriate partner organisations and neighbouring Designated Landscapes; including the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority, the Malvern Hills and Shropshire Hills National Landscape Partnerships, the National Landscapes Association, Welsh Government and DEFRA.

The programme for the Tour is still being finalised, but will include visiting one or two locations benefiting from the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) funded projects. Other sites visited are likely to include landscape management, access and river issues in the area around between Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth, in the middle section of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

The event reaches a wide audience of National Landscape partners and interested parties and always proves to be very popular and informative for those who attend. Lunch and transport will be included in the modest charge to attendees.

Background

Each year the JAC hosts the Annual Study Tour.

In 2024 the tour focused on Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) projects and land management issues in the Herefordshire part of the National Landscape. Visits included looking at a free-range egg production enterprise; maize undersowing & Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects; agroforestry, orchards, solar panels, beef & arable production, an anaerobic digester, barn restoration & glamping; DEFRA Access for All projects including t Ross Riverside & Willow Walk with new disabled parking & bridges.

In 2023 the Tour was focused around the lower Wye Valley between Monmouth and Tintern. The tour visited a range of sites and initiatives associated with visitor, social and/or land-use management, supported in various ways by the AONB Unit and designation, including Tintern Visitor Experience signage, a One Planet Development, a decarbonising Village Hall, 2 farms - one a Nature Reserve and the other a youth farm charity, and Old Station Tintern.

The 2022 Tour visited a variety of sites associated with land-use and land management and various AONB projects and initiatives, with regenerative farming and recreation, including variously football, fishing and hostel accommodation, in and around Ross-on-Wye, Brampton Abbots, Lydbrook & Welsh Bicknor in the south Herefordshire and Gloucestershire parts of the AONB.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

7th July 2025

RIVER WYE UPDATE

Purpose

To advise members of the latest activities to help restore the River Wye.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- DEFRA and Welsh Government ministers have committed over £1million towards research in the Wye Catchment and production of the Wye Catchment Management Plan.
- There is anecdotal evidence of some modest recovery of *Ranunculus*, Water Crowfoot, in the Wye. Friends of the River Wye have launched the 'Big *Ranunculus* Watch' to find out.
- DEFRA have published amendments to the Farming Rules for Water.
- There are numerous collaborative initiatives involving public, private and 3rd sector parties progressing surveying and practical projects to monitor and deliver water quality and river health improvements.
- The national launch of Welsh Government's new Ffermio Bro programme was launched in the Wye Valley National Landscape. Ffermio Bro augments other partnership work by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team to support farmers and land-managers including the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, Wye Adapt to Climate Change?, Landscape Enhancement Initiatives (LEI) and Wyescapes Landscape Recovery.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Team are collaborating with the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership on 'Forest to Sea - A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for water in the Forest of Dean'.

Reasons

Declines in water quality in the Wye are attributable to rural land use, predominantly diffuse pollution from agriculture, and a smaller contribution from domestic waste water treatment. The River Wye is meeting its nutrient targets and many of the pressures exist in the sub-catchment, particularly the River Lugg. Targeted farm inspections are carried out by the Environment Agency (EA) in England and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). However, it is difficult to quantify nutrient reductions with scientific certainty, unlike point source discharges from water treatment processing.

Recent research by Lancaster University indicates that the over application of nutrients can be seen as far back as 1870, which has led to a build-up of legacy phosphates. There is also an increase of climatic impacts from high and low flows and river temperatures. High flows have contributed to the loss of Ranunculus, Water Crowfoot, and increased river temperatures impact salmon and support algal blooms.

In mid March the Chairs of the Nutrient Management Board (NMB) and Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP), Cllr Swinglehurst & James Marsden respectively, issued a joint Briefing Note for NMB & WCP Members:-

On the morning of Tuesday, 11 March 2025, Minister Emma Hardy and Welsh Government Deputy First Minister Huw Irranca Davies held a roundtable meeting at Bridges Community Centre in Monmouth. Both ministers shared a strong, unified commitment to restoring the River Wye and its catchment to good health.

This was the second joint meeting between the Wye NMB Chair and WCP Steering Group members with the ministers in three months. Since the first meeting on 12 December 2024, significant progress has been made, including the extension of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, funding for Ffermio Bro, and the expansion of the Wyescapes Landscape Recovery 2 project area.

Ministers are actively engaged and making progress based on what they hear and see on the ground. During the meeting, they announced £1 million in new funding to develop the Wye Catchment Management Plan 2025 (CMP25) and to support a cross-border research programme. This research will help farmers understand how to stop the annual build-up of surplus nutrients, draw down legacy surplus, reverse biodiversity decline, and address other issues like water flow, temperature, and CO2 emissions.

The CMP25, along with a related programme of measures, will be evidence-led and subject to public consultation. Funding for these measures will need to align with the plan, be spatially prioritised, and well-targeted. It will also require baseline regulation and robust monitoring and enforcement. A schematic overview of CMP25 and its delivery mechanisms is included below. CMP25 and its targeted programme of measures will use the best available evidence to define actions needed to address known pressures, where to focus them, and by when to meet legally binding targets. Farm businesses will be directly involved in the research to gather data and test solutions, with the findings helping to review and refine CMP25 and its delivery measures.

Key Opportunities:

Thanks to the maturity of the partnerships working to restore the catchment, we now have a unique opportunity to make meaningful progress:

- *A wealth of knowledge from passionate citizen scientists and community campaigners*
- *A growing number of farmers leading the way in sustainable, river-friendly farming*
- *An engaged supply chain working with partners to drive change*
- *An innovative rivers trust pushing for new solutions*
- *Academic partners contributing valuable insights and understanding*
- *A water company that has invested over £80 million in AMP7 (2020-2025) and will invest £115 million in AMP8 (2025-2030) to meet compliance targets*
- *Statutory agency officers who are personally committed and work closely with partners to support change*
- *Political commitment at all levels, with ministers and local authorities collaborating across the catchment, supported by the NMB and WCP*

- *A shared determination to restore the river, protect nature, and fulfill our obligations to future generations*

Together, we have a strong foundation to achieve lasting, positive change for the Wye.

Implications

DEFRA have confirmed that the £1million offered for in the Wye catchment will focus on land based research. The brief is being co-designed drawing on local knowledge and national expertise and will go out for formal tender in early autumn.

Meanwhile Welsh Government has offered £150,000 to fund the production of the Wye Catchment Management Plan. The Plan will encompass all aspects of river health including impacts of human activity, climate change and biodiversity loss. Production of the Catchment Management Plan will be overseen by the Catchment Management Partnership (CMP) and the CMP Steering Group. A brief for the Plan was drafted in the spring and tendering for the Plan production will be through Herefordshire Council, which should start shortly. It is intended that the Catchment Management Plan, when finalised and published, will present a series of costed opportunities identified on a catchment-wide scale to enable delivery of solutions and funding that address the following issues, among others:

- Flood and droughts - Increasing frequency of extreme high and low flows, and elevated water temperature, compounded by land management issues and abstraction;
- Water quality - influenced by sediment, nutrients, pesticides, herbicides and acidity;
- Biodiversity loss - declines in species abundance, distribution, habitat quality and connectivity, and invasive non-native species;
- Geomorphological limitations - weirs, overgrazed channels, channel straightening of the tributary network and restricted sediment supply;
- Elevated water temperatures – both summer and winter.

For further information on these issues, see <https://wyeuskfoundation.org/issues/>.

Over the summer, DEFRA has convened a task group to look at farming regulation and is expected to report in the autumn. The group has Ministerial support and includes agency and sector representatives. Government ambition is to improve the situation of the impact of agricultural pollution on water and air quality. Issues include Agricultural requirements regarding production; habitat creation and restoration; Water company distribution of sewage sludge; potential use of spot fines and agency remits, targets and systems.

Meanwhile, DEFRA has published new 'Statutory guidance on Enforcing the Farming Rules for Water'. The guidance relates to 'The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018', also known as the 'Farming Rules for Water'. These were introduced to reduce and prevent diffuse water pollution from agricultural sources. It covers applying and storing fertilisers and the management of soil and livestock. The guidance is for the Environment Agency, with respect to the Agency's functions under these regulations. For further information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-the-farming-rules-for-water/applying-the-farming-rules-for-water>

Citizen Science monitoring by volunteers in the Wye catchment continues with an active network of 333 sites co-ordinated through the Wye Alliance. This is the collaborative partnership of the Friends of the River Wye (FORW), the Wye Salmon Association (WSA) and

the Campaign for Rural England (CPRE) – Herefordshire Branch. Monitoring includes regular surveying of river water samples and measurement of the following:-

- Soluble Reactive Phosphate
- Total Oxidised Nitrate
- Turbidity
- Electrical Conductivity
- Temperature
- SAC species observations, &
- Fixed-point photography

These are all available on the WyeViz open-source interactive dashboard, with entries logged and quality assured before being published in weekly updates. The dashboard is here:-

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/mcarpenter/viz/WyeVizWyeAllianceCitizenSciencedashboard/riverhealthmeasures>. This can be searched by river and tributary, and by specific data measure, from July 2020 to the present. Consequently there is a huge amount of data that is now being utilised by the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The agencies are now able to follow up alerts of significant spikes in data and make investigations where appropriate and as necessary.

The EA surveys algae and water chemistry in the River Wye (in England) every month between April and September. The data suggests that algal blooms are not being caused by eutrophication or phosphate pollution, but water temperature and slower flows have much greater influence on the abundance of algae in the Wye. Generally the Wye meets its phosphate targets for both annual and growing season compliance, as monitored at 13 sites by the EA. However, the River Lugg consistently fails downstream of Leominster, at the 5 sites monitored. The Lugg is now being surveyed for algae and water chemistry to provide comparison with conditions in the Wye where nutrients are much lower. Currently in both the Wye and Lugg nothing toxic has been identified. Abundances of toxic algae in the Wye were recorded in a study in the 1980s.

Ranunculus, Water Crowfoot, in the River Wye almost completely disappeared following the floods in 2020. However, for the first time in 5 years flowering Ranunculus has been seen in a few places along the Wye. The recovery of this key species is important for the ecology of the river. The status of the Wye as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is partly due to the presence of this keystone species which provides rich habitat for many fresh water species to flourish. Consequently, Ranunculus is one of the Wye Valley National Landscape's target species with a Species Action Plan being prepared. Previously, before 2020, Ranunculus beds covered large parts of the river, with their long fronds of green weed flowing under the surface and the carpets of white flowers sticking out of the water. Monmouth and Ross Rowing Clubs had special dispensation to cut the Ranunculus to open up their stretches for rowing races. That is no longer necessary, but the reasons for its decline in recent years are not well understood. What data there is suggests that the decline is not associated with nutrient pollution. But there is little information on where the Ranunculus beds were that have disappeared. Friends of the River Wye have therefore launch the 'Big Ranunculus Watch' and are asking people to share photos of Ranunculus, past or present, from anywhere in the Wye catchment. Much like the other Citizen Science data, this will be used to map the presence of Ranunculus through time to enable a better understanding of where it was and where, and whether, it is recovering or if it is still in decline. For more information see:- <https://friendsoftheriverwey.org.uk/news/big-ranunculus-watch>

Meanwhile the Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) continue their advice and project work with farmers and landowners across the catchment. In partnership with EA and WSA and various landowners, WUF are testing and developing a tool to map the risk of erosion and soil loss in the Garren and Gamber sub-catchment, which comes into the Wye Valley National Landscape at Marstow. It is intended that the tool can assess the majority of the sub-catchment with the potential to risk score individual fields. Farmers can then use the information to determine the soil loss risk of each field, specific to particular crop times and land use management. This can also be used or presented to buyers in the supply chain, eg. to complement or augment assurance schemes. The tool is currently undergoing ground-truthing with the intention of further testing and roll out.

NRW's Upper Wye Catchment Restoration Project is funded by Welsh Government's Nature and Climate Emergency Fund, part of the Water Capital Programme, to restore the condition of the upper River Wye. The project is working to protect species and enhance habitats by addressing a range of pressures affecting the river. For the Project's latest newsletter, see: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKNRW/bulletins/3d928c3>

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 Valley National Landscape Team delivers 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. Staff are also actively engaged in the Wye Catchment Partnership and Farm Herefordshire.

On behalf of the Wye Catchment Partnership, the Wye Valley National Landscape Team are collaborating with EA staff and the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership on the 'Forest to Sea - A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for water in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire'. The Forest to Sea strategic document covers the tributaries that rise in the Forest of Dean and flow into the Severn and Wye within the Forest of Dean. It therefore covers the Gloucestershire part of the National Landscape. The document sets out the environmental priorities and objectives for these rivers, brooks and streams through consultation with stakeholders. The plan seeks to include ambitious and specific objectives to be delivered by 2035, while allowing flexibility to consider other opportunities when they arise.

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 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.

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 opportunity for public scrutiny 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.

NATIONAL UPDATES

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- In order to test the strengthened duty on relevant authorities who 'must seek to further the purpose' of Protected Landscapes, the Campaign for National Parks supporting a Judicial Review challenging a Secretary of State's decision to allow a significant housing development in the High Weald National Landscape.
- The National Landscapes Annual Conference is 7th – 10th July on the theme of 'Landscapes for Tomorrow - Are National Landscapes "Fit for the Future?"', with good attendance from the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.
- The Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar was hosted at Caer Llan, Lydart on 30th April and 1st May, along with the Ministerial launch of Ffermio Bro at Meend Farm.
- DEFRA have launched a 'Call for evidence' to seek insights into how best to support and incentivise business sector investment in nature recovery, especially those sectors which impact or depend upon nature the most. The Call for Evidence is open until 10 August.
- The Spending Review has imposed an overall 2.3% cut to DEFRA over the period to 2029. Confirmation of National Landscape funding beyond the current allocation to March 2026 is awaited.

Reasons

Both governments have expressed their on-going support for National Landscapes. However, the Spending Review, that sets out the government's plans to invest in Britain's renewal: its security, health and economy, has constrained the ambition of DEFRA.

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, so that they "must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty". The new legislation is starting to gather case law.

Implications

The High Court is considering a Judicial Review brought by CPRE Kent that challenges a Secretary of State's decision to greenlight a significant housing development on the meadows of the High Weald National Landscape. The case will be a fundamental test of what the new Protected Landscapes duty means in practice. This is one of the first legal cases to consider what the strengthened duty means and will therefore set a legally binding precedent on interpreting the duty in future for all of England's 10 National Parks and 34 National Landscapes. Consequently the Campaign for National Parks has intervened to put the argument before the court that this duty is about action not words: it is a proactive duty that should make a material and significant difference to the outcome. The outcome is awaited.

The National Landscapes Annual Conference is on 7th – 10th July 2025 at Winchester University. The conference will address the topic of 'Are National Landscapes "Fit for the Future?"' It provides 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 Wye Valley National Landscape Team will have a strong attendance this year, enabling new Team members to gain a perspective on the depth and breadth of the network of National Landscapes. The programme is available to here: <https://www.national-landscapes-conference.org.uk/>, and includes a Ministerial address by Mary Creagh, DEFRA Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

Field trip hosts 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
- 101 Outdoor Arts

The Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar was hosted in the Wye Valley on 30th April & 1st May 2025. Caer Llan provided a stunning venue, aided by fine weather, for the 60 delegates from across Wales' 5 National Landscapes and 3 National Parks. The programme focused 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 hosted site visits to Meend Farm, Lower Gockett Farm and Cleddon Big SSSI. The event incorporated the official launch of Ffermio Bro by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies, at Meend Farm, Penallt.

DEFRA has launched a Call for Evidence on boosting private sector investment in nature recovery. Environment Secretary Steve Reed brought business leaders and investors together to launch the initiative to scale up private investment in nature, delivering a key recommendation of the Corry Review. The Call for Evidence is open for responses until 10 August 2025. For further details see <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/expanding-the-role-of-the-private-sector-in-nature-recovery>.

The Spending Review 2025 has set out Government's plans to invest in Britain's renewal: its security, health and economy. SR25 sets departmental budgets for day-to-day spending until 2028-29, and until 2029-30 for capital investment, with total departmental budgets growing by 2.3% across the Spending Review (SR) period. It also sets devolved government block grants for the same period.

However, overall DEFRA received a 2.3% reduction. Meanwhile the Government reiterated its steadfast commitment to farming, food security, and nature's recovery. It will invest over £2.7 billion per year in sustainable farming and nature recovery from 2026-27 until 2028-29. Farmers will benefit from an average of £2.3 billion through the Farming and Countryside Programme and up to £400 million from additional nature schemes. This is aimed to boost productivity and protect the natural ecosystems underpinning food production and broader economic activity, supporting food and economic security. This includes increasing support for nature-friendly farming through Environmental Land Management schemes from £800 million in 2023-24 to £2 billion by 2028-29, sustained by rapidly winding down subsidy payments that do not provide a return on investment. This will make a significant contribution to the Environment Act targets, including improving the quality of water, air, and spaces for wildlife so biodiversity can thrive. DEFRA has also committed to delivering at least 5% savings and efficiencies over Phase 2 of the SR period.

Commenting on the Spending Review, Belinda Gordon, Director of Policy & Public Affairs at the Landscape Institute, said:

"The need to make every pound go further underlines the vital role taking a landscape-led approach needs to play in delivering efficiently across government agendas in housing, health and the environment.

"Through landscape-led approaches to development, we can deliver economic growth and long-term value as well as benefits for the environment and local communities. Placing landscape at the heart of the planning and development process creates enhanced value. The government must recognise this to make the most of public spending."

"The revised Environmental Improvement Plan will be published in 2025, with delivery information on Environment Act targets. The government's response to the OEP's progress report from January will be published this summer, a welcome speeding up.

"Implementing the recommendations from the Dan Corry review will fundamentally reform and re-wire Defra and its arm's-length bodies so will need the input of external stakeholders to help test and shape the plans."

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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DARK SKIES

Purpose

To update members on current policies and projects relating to Dark Skies and light pollution.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Wales is the first UK nation to introduce national good practice planning guidance to protect its dark skies.
- Retrofitting of dark-skies compliant lighting has been completed at Llandogo Village Hall and Trellech Primary School, saving an estimated 528 kg/CO₂e.
- Welsh Government funding has been secured to continue the Dark Skies initiative with a focus on ecological networks associated with dark skies.
- CPRE Herefordshire's Dark Skies project has been raising awareness of Artificial Light At Night (ALAN) and the need for Responsible Outdoor Lighting At Night (ROLAN).
- A recent Dark Sky Partnership webinar on 'What makes a good external lighting plan' provided links to useful legislation & guidance.

Reasons

The Wye Valley National Landscape has a significant proportion of dark skies, some of which are amongst the darkest in the UK. Dark skies add to natural beauty, tranquillity and a sense of remoteness. Looking up at starry skies or across moonlit landscapes can be a memorable, magical experience. Dark skies are important for landscape, heritage, wildlife, recreation, tourism, health and well-being. The more of us whom experience the magic of dark night skies, the more value we place on it and want to protect.

Whilst the land has legal protection, the sky above does not in the same manner. Many people rely on light to live their lives. However, misdirected light wastes energy, money, and contributes to climate change. Unintended artificial light pollution takes a silent toll, increasingly eradicating access to the wonder of beautiful night skies. Excessive artificial light can disrupt sleep, potentially leading to serious health issues. It upsets the feeding and breeding cycles of bats, birds, insects and nocturnal animals. Inappropriate lighting, bad design and incremental development is reducing our ability to appreciate the benefit of dark skies. Poorly positioned lighting on rural roads, village streets, houses and other associated development has the potential to contribute to artificial light pollution. It impacts on our experience of the landscape by altering the naturally changing light levels that occur at dusk and before dawn.

There is a need for artificial lighting for safety and security reasons. But such requirements can be met within proactive light management approaches that are both sensitive and effective, and other means to avoid, minimise and reduce unnecessary artificial light pollution. Lighting needs to be in the right place, of the right amount and on for the right length of time.

Implications

In February 2025, Wales became the first UK nation to introduce national good practice planning guidance to protect its dark skies. This guidance, designed for use in the planning system, was produced collaboratively by a working group of multi-disciplinary experts 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 Welsh National Parks & National Landscapes have been running a collaborative Dark Skies project over the last 3 years, which delivered retrofitting of dark skies compliant lighting and community outreach events, including an annual Welsh Dark Skies Week, usually in late February. In the Wye Valley National Landscape (in Wales) a survey of excess lighting was undertaken retrofitting completed at Llandogo Village Hall and Trellech Primary School, saving an estimated 528 kg/CO₂e.

Welsh Government funding has been secured to continue the Dark Skies initiative with a focus on ecological networks associated with dark skies. This project will improve the condition and resilience of Dark Ecological Networks (DEN), focussing on night-time connectivity of protected sites across all 8 Designated Landscapes. The project will use the Priority Ecological Network mapping to identify target areas, identifying areas and species where the most significant gains can be achieved. This mapping will be used together with further sky quality surveys to identify where Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) is causing breaks in connectivity. The project will target areas where nocturnal connectivity is broken and promote the significant impact that ALAN has on a wide range of species and the associated trophic cascading effects on whole ecosystems. Reduced light pollution and increased connectivity will improve the prevalence and resilience of a wide range of species.

CPRE Herefordshire's Dark Skies project has been raising awareness of Artificial Light At Night (ALAN) and the need for Responsible Outdoor Lighting At Night (ROLAN). A citizen-science is also providing training for local Parish Councils and other groups to carry out light pollution surveys. More information about the project is here: [Dark Skies in Herefordshire - CPRE Herefordshire](#).

Catherine Laidlaw, the shared Planning Officer with Wye Valley and Malvern Hills National Landscapes, recently attended a webinar from the Dark Sky Partnership on 'What makes a good external lighting plan'. The event provided the following links to useful legislation & guidance:

- Clean Neighbourhoods Act 2005 includes nuisance from artificial light.
- Planning Policy Wales Section 6.8 Lighting (for England NPPF Para 198 (c))
- BSI standards:
 - BS EN 12464-2:2024 Outdoor Workplaces
 - BS EN 12193:2018 Sports Lighting
 - BS EN 5489:2020 Road Lighting
 - BS EN 40-3:2013 Lighting Columns
 - BS EN 13032 Photometric Lighting

- International Commission on Illumination (CIE):
 - 150:2017 Obtrusive Light
 - 126:1997 Minimising Sky Glow
 - 115:2020 Lighting of the Roads
- [SLL Code for Lighting \(2022\) | CIBSE](#) recommended publication for understanding principles of lighting and lighting plans. Paid for document, but some free resources related to it available: [SLL Free Downloads](#).
- Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP):
 - GN01:2021 Reduction of Obtrusive Light
 - GN08:2024 Bats and Artificial Lighting
 - GN09:2019 Domestic Exterior Lighting
 - PLG04 Undertaking Lighting Impact Assessments
 - PLG05 Brightness of Signs
 - PLG23 Lighting for Cycling Infrastructure

The Malvern Hills National Landscape (AONB) Partnership produced Guidance on Lighting in 2023, available here: <https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Malvern-AONB-Lighting-Guidance-Final-1.pdf>

Background

Darkness is not given the recognition, nor protection, deserving of a vital habitat. Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) is expanding at an alarming rate – at least 49% over 25 years. It has not been monitored, nor considered from an ecological perspective despite growing evidence it impacts almost all biodiversity.

ALAN currently accounts for 15% of the global electricity resource and 5% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions, while light pollution costs the UK Government £1 billion annually. Reducing ALAN reduces electricity usage and any consequent carbon emissions. As an example, as part of the first phase of Wales Dark Skies project, tennis courts and a rugby club at Llanfwrog have seen a huge carbon reduction and energy saving by retrofitting dark skies compliant lighting. The tennis club are saving 31.2KW/h which is a saving of 61.9% in electricity and carbon emissions. The rugby club are saving 15.8KW/h which is a 45% energy saving. For further reductions the light can be dimmed to 60% which is a saving of 23kW/h; a 66% energy saving plus the option for half pitch lighting if that is all that is required.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

7th July 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. Management Plan Review Partnership Seminar: 19th March 2025
- b. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Steering Group
- c. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects
- d. Young Adventurers
- e. Wye Valley National Landscape Volunteers
- f. National Grid low voltage powerline undergrounding
- g. Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary events & walks
- h. Wye Adapt to Climate Change project
- i. Priority Species Update
- j. Wyescapes Landscape Recovery
- k. Phil Cutter (1945-2025) RIP
- l. Forest of Dean Biosphere Reserve proposal

a. Management Plan Review Partnership Seminar: 19th March 2025

The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Seminar was held at the Paddocks Hotel, Symonds Yat West on 19th March 2025, focusing on the Management Plan Review. 30 people attended with a presentation from Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager, on AONB Management Plans; and their context as statutory documents, with new guidance in Wales & England, and the strengthened 'Duty' on Relevant Authorities for National Landscapes in England, and other legislation. Shropshire Hills National Landscape Manager, Phil Holden, gave a talk on the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan - Thriving in balance with nature. In the afternoon there were two Breakout sessions, one on 'The current Management Plan - what works, what doesn't, what's worth keeping', and the second on 'The next Management Plan - Items & issues essential for the review of the new Plan'. This has provided valuable feedback for the progression of the Management Plan Review. It is intended that a public consultation draft Management Plan will be published later in the year.

b. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Steering Group

Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Steering Group is a Sub-group of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (LAF), set up to deliver the Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy and Action Plan. The Steering Group held a well-attended site visit in Whitebrook in late March, to look at the Horse Way, an unsealed Unclassified County Road (UCR) with excessive erosion and known user conflict. The group discussed key issues and considered potential solutions.

A contract was let to carry out an audit of approximately 11 km of unsealed UCRs across two areas around Tintern and Whitebrook. The audit focuses on the condition and management of each unsealed UCR, including a habitat survey, along with proposed options for practical interventions to address identified issues, including surface repairs, improved drainage, and restoration of natural and cultural/historical features. The consultant's report is currently being finalised. Once ready it will be presented to the Steering Group and then published.

Meanwhile, new signage is being prepared for the tracks & trails in the two target areas around Tintern and Whitebrook. It is intended that these will clearly mark the status of each track and trail and thus make it easier for users to understand the respective rights of other users. It will also facilitate any enforcement necessary over illegal use or trespass. The format of the new signs is being checked to ensure they are correct and legally compliant.

c. Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects

National Grid have approved and offered funding for three LEI projects in the Walford, Goodrich, Marstow and Whitchurch area of the National Landscape, totalling £792,505.

The 'Magnificent Meadows, Tremendous Trees and Wonderful Wetlands' project began in January 2025. Working with 9 landowners, work so far has focused on securing necessary consents for ponds, scrapes and leaky dams, and working with Herefordshire Meadows preparing for meadow restoration work this summer. In addition, the project will see small woodlands and copses planted, and orchard and in-field trees planted. Project work will be delivered over 3 years, with a further 3 years of maintenance.

The 'Marstow and Pencraig Landscape Connections' project and 'Whitchurch to Howle Hill' Landscape Enhancements project were approved for funding by National Grid in January, and we are awaiting the signing off of budgets before commencing work. Focussing on boundary features, these projects will see 5,500m of hedgerows planted, plus standard trees in new and existing hedges, working with 14 landowners. Work will be delivered over 3 years with a further 3 years maintenance.

d. Young Adventurers

The monthly Young Adventurers sessions, led by Community Links Officer, Lucinda James, are going really well, with 10-15 children attending most sessions. Many of the children have SEN and it is great to see them gain confidence and be comfortable with us and the activities we are doing. We also have a fantastic volunteer Woody, who been trained up to help with the sessions. Recent activities include: foraging along the saltmarsh at Beachley; whittling candles; making stools; cooking outdoors; building hedgehog houses; touring the Beaver enclosure and lots more!

Hedgehog House Building



Whittling at Bearse Farm



Outdoor Cooking

Beaver Enclosure with Forestry England



e. **Wye Valley National Landscape Volunteers**

The National Landscape Volunteers have been coming out in force, come rain or shine, to help local landowners, partner organisations and local communities conserve and enhance our beautiful landscape. Led by Community Links Officer, Lucinda James, regular groups of between 20-30 volunteers come together each month, always ready to tackle the task of the day. The secret seems to be tea and cake! There are also several other successful volunteer groups including the Hedgehog First Response Unit, Wet Meadow Cattle Checkers and Cleddon and Beacon Hill Cattle Checkers.

Extensive vegetation clearance at St Mary Church, Tintern is an example of a recent task:



f. **National Grid low voltage powerline undergrounding**

The National Landscape Team are working with National Grid in both South Wales and the West Midlands region to develop schemes for the undergrounding of 11kv and low voltage powerlines, for visual enhancement of the landscape.

Two schemes have been approved by the South Wales regional steering group and are being progressed in the Monmouthshire part of the National Landscape. National Grid are currently developing detailed plans and working with landowners to secure the necessary approvals. If all necessary consents and permissions are secured, approximately 1km of overhead line will be installed underground.

In the West Midlands region, three schemes are being developed in the Herefordshire part of the National Landscape. Nick Critchley, the National Landscape Development Officer, is working with National Grid to design and cost up proposals, and working with Catherine Laidlaw, the National Landscape Planning Officer, and the regional steering group to work through queries about landscape benefit and network impact.

g. Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary events and walks

It is more than 50 years since the idea of creating a long distance walk, following the River Wye, was mooted. In 1975 the first 14 mile section of the Wye Valley Walk opened between St Arvans and Monmouth. Over the years stretches were added to reach Chepstow, Ross-on-Wye, Hereford, Hay-on-Wye and Rhayader. The final section was completed in 2002, taking the path within viewing distance of the source of the Wye on Plynlimon, with the walk finishing at Rhyd-y-benwch in Hafren Forest. Over the last 50 years thousands of people have come from all over the UK and around the world, to complete the Walk and proudly claim their badge and certificate.

In the run up to this golden anniversary year the Wye Valley Walk Partnership has launched a new website www.wyevalleywalk.org and taken the decision to publish a new Cicerone Official Guide Book describing the route from source to sea, in response to customer requests to walk in this direction. Ruth Waycott, Wye Valley National Landscape Information Officer walked the entire route and worked with Cicerone on the publication of the new Guide - see: <https://www.cicerone.co.uk/the-wye-valley-walk>

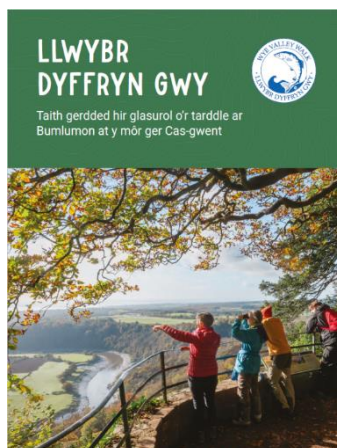
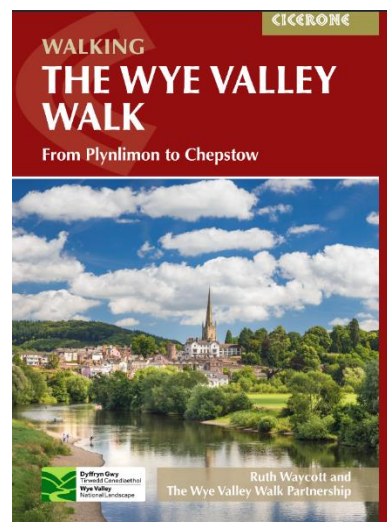
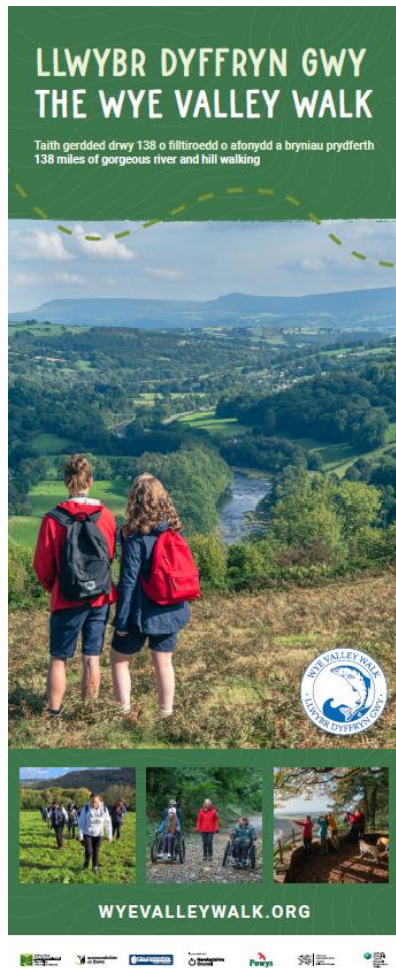
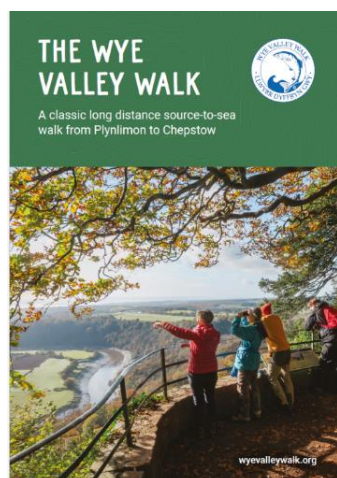
Launch of the Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary Year

The new guide and anniversary year was launched on April 2nd at a Book Launch and Illustrated Talk by Ruth Waycott, with around 100 people attending. Our partners were Rossiters Books and St Mary's Church, Ross-on-Wye where the launch was held, a fitting location as the Wye Valley Walk passes the church's front door.

New materials to promote the walk have been produced including a leaflet available in English and

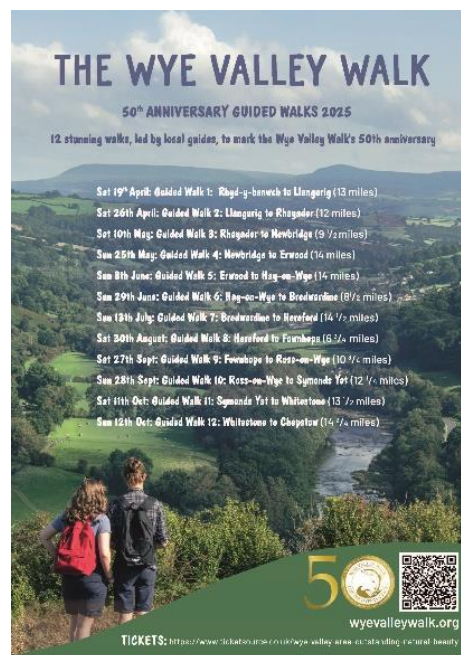


Welsh and a banner stand. A second book launch and talk was held in Chepstow in partnership with Chepstow Bookshop.



12 Stunning Walks, led by local guides, to mark the Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary

To mark the 50th anniversary in 2025 we have been running a series of 12 guided walks covering all 138 miles of the Walk from source-to-sea. We've made it nice and easy by arranging transport to the start and taken away the worry of getting lost by having a lovely mix of guides, who share their knowledge and love for the Wye Valley Walk, for nature and wildlife, and for their local area. We are now half way through the anniversary year and half way through the walk. Tickets have sold out quickly with only a handful of tickets remaining for the final weekend of walking in October, as we near the end of the walk at Chepstow.



We have a core group of walkers who have signed up for all 12 walks and will receive their Wye Valley Walk badge and certificate when they reach Chepstow on the final day of walking. We are planning a small celebratory event in Chepstow, possibly including art and poetry featuring the River Wye to mark their achievements and the end of the walk.

Bringing together guides from many different areas and interests has helped to build a community around the Wye Valley Walk and has been very much appreciated by participants. Guides include Nia Lloyd Knott from Wild Trails Wales, Jill Probert from Embark Walking Holidays based in Abergavenny, Holly Williams who is the Wye Adapt to Climate Change Officer with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Ruth Waycott from the Wye Valley National Landscape Team (and author of the Cicerone guide to the Wye Valley Walk), Ceri Belli (Rights of Way Officer with Herefordshire Council), Holly Robertson from Celtic Trails walking holidays based in Tintern, Graham Taylor Walk (Leader and Footpath Secretary for Powys Ramblers), Peter Loughran (Pathcare Volunteer from Powys County Council), and Walkers are Welcome Walk Leaders from Ross-on-Wye and Chepstow.

Other Walking Opportunities

Monlife Countryside have also programmed a series of circular walks featuring the Wye Valley Walk in Monmouthshire and other shorter walks are planned with Ross Walkers are Welcome and the National Landscape Team delivering. We held a very successful Evening Walk with Jim Hepburn from Natural Resources Wales talking about forestry management along the Duchess's Ride section of the Wye Valley Walk and Beacon Hill, where as darkness fell walkers were treated to a wonderful experience by the nightjars who sang as we arrived!

Details of all the walks and 50th anniversary events can be found below (and will be added to throughout the year):

<https://www.wyevalleywalk.org/celebrating-50-years-of-the-wye-valley-walk>

Other Activities

We are collaborating with The Outdoors Guide with the Wye Valley Walk being featured and with Waterproofs and Wellies being donated to 10 schools which are located along the Wye Valley Walk to encourage children to walk along their local sections.

CIRCULAR GUIDED WALKS ALONG THE WYE VALLEY WALK IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

A series of shorter guided walks taking in sections of the Wye Valley Walk in Monmouthshire, with the Monlife Countryside Access Team.



Sunday 4th May 2025

Wye Valley 50th Anniversary Walk - Monmouth to Biblos Bridge

10.30am (approx. 4.5 hours)

On this 8 mile (13km) walk we will be following the Peregrine Trail from Monmouth north to the Biblos suspension bridge, crossing the River Wye and returning on the Wye Valley Walk back to the start in Monmouth.



Sunday 1st June 2025

Wye Valley 50th Anniversary Walk - Redbrook to Bigsweir Bridge Circular

10.30am (Approx. 4.5 hours)

On this 7 mile (11.25km) walk we will be following the Offa's Dyke Path south from Redbrook to Bigsweir Bridge and returning via the banks of the Wye and the Wye Valley Walk.



Sunday 6th July 2025

Wye Valley 50th Anniversary Walk - Beacon Hill to Llandogo Circular

10.30am (Approx 4 hours)

On this 7 mile (11.25km) walk we will be walking from Beacon Hill above Trellech, through woodland and lanes to pick up the Wye Valley Walk at the hamlet of Pen-y-Fan. We follow the Wye Valley Walk south passing above Llandogo before returning along footpaths and country lanes back to the start.

A Wye Valley Walk feature also appeared in Countryside Walking magazine earlier in the year.

New benches along the Wye Valley Walk



Above: new bench at Rhyd-y-Benwch.



Left: new bench at Fownhope, above Caplor

Below: bench at Townsend Farm,

Below: bench at Duchess's Ride



h. Wye Adapt to Climate Change

Farm visits

Since the start of the project in October 2023, Holly Williams, Wye Adapt to Climate Change Project Officer has visited over 40 farms and provided advice on Nature Based Solutions to help tackle climate change and biodiversity loss. This includes advice on sustainable farming practices, habitat creation and restoration, and Natural Flood Management. The advice has been well received and so far, £46,010.56 of grants have been awarded to farmers and landholders to carry out projects (from Welsh Government's SLSP and DEFRA Capital budgets).

These projects have included the creation of ponds and scrapes, meadow restoration, leaky dams, herbal ley seeding, fencing to allow rotational grazing and protect meadows, hedge laying, and planting of a shelterbelt. Additionally, two of the farms supported through the project were referred to Herefordshire Meadows for specialist advice on meadow restoration. Both have since secured Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grants, which will enable the restoration of 25.39 hectares of species-rich grassland this autumn.

Community work

Through the Wye Adapt project, efforts to form a Climate Action Network are in motion. This Network is open to any individual, organisation, or group interested in climate change, with the aim of sharing ideas and promoting climate action. There have been three meetings since November last year, with a good level of interest (over 30 people at the first meeting). The next goal is to hold a 'Climate Day of Action' in September this year, with Network members taking part and organising their own events to raise awareness of climate change and hopefully engage with local communities. Planning for the Climate Day of Action is currently taking place.

i. Priority Species Update

Hedgehogs

A variety of activities have been delivered by Molly Boyce, National Landscape Nature Recovery Officer, to support hedgehog conservation. A particular highlight has been the Hedgehog Education Project at Walford, Trellech, and Whitchurch Primary Schools. Each class took part in a one-hour indoor lesson on hedgehog ecology and care, followed by an outdoor nature session. Nine pupils per school received tracking tunnels and wildlife cameras to monitor hedgehog presence at home for a week, with a tenth set used on school grounds. Hedgehog sightings have been captured on cameras and footprints through tunnels. The project concluded with a celebration assembly featuring young conservationist Dylan Allman and a showcase of footage gathered by the children. Around 300 pupils were engaged through assemblies and outreach, with 90 participating in the full project. Each school was also provided with a hedgehog care package to support ongoing learning and action. Additional community engagement included hedgehog activity events in Ross-on-Wye, a hedgehog house-building workshop, and the organisation of a self-guided hedgehog-themed trail at St Mary's Church.

Bumblebee Assemblage

To support bumblebee conservation, a bumblebee training workshop was held, resulting in the creation of a new 'BuzzWatch' volunteer group who will support future monitoring efforts. During the training workshop a Red-shanked Carder bee was recorded, one of the National Landscape Priority species and a new record for the area. Additionally, we have begun eDNA surveying across our LEI (Landscape Enhancement Initiative) meadow restoration sites to detect the presence of key pollinator species, prior to habitat restoration. This baseline data will help

us assess the effectiveness of our restoration work in enhancing habitat for these priority pollinators.

Noble Chafer

Conservation work for the noble chafer beetle has involved attending several orchard pruning and restoration events to help maintain the veteran and decaying wood habitat this species relies on. An educational talk was delivered at one of our known noble chafer orchard sites to raise awareness and encourage community involvement. Additionally, all existing noble chafer survey boxes were re-checked to ensure they remain securely in place and in good condition, maintaining survey readiness for future monitoring seasons.

j. **Wyescapes Landscape Recovery**

The Wyescapes project continues to develop ready for submission of plans to DEFRA in January 2026. The project plans and proposals will then be reviewed by DEFRA in a competitive assessment. Meanwhile as the summer progresses the partner organisations, Herefordshire Meadows, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the Wye & Usk Foundation, led by Herefordshire Rural Hub, are busy continuing the work supporting landowners along the River Wye and Lugg. The project brings together 49 farms and landholdings covering a total of 5,125ha of project land and 80km of riverbank.

Herefordshire Meadows is working to support those landowners who have a desire to create or restore floodplain meadows as part of the 20 year implementation phase of the project. So far they have engaged with 35 landholdings and collectively there is an ambition to create almost 900ha of species rich floodplain meadow. The Floodplain Meadows Partnership, the national experts on this habitat, are also involved providing their additional skills and expertise at 8 of the landholdings.

k. **Phil Cutter (1945-2025) RIP**

It was with sadness that we heard of Phillip Cutter's passing. Phil was a Herefords hire Councillor and Ross Town Council member and sat on the JAC for many years. He chaired the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership from 2008-2012, overseeing the distribution of over £3million on heritage conservation in the Wye Valley. He was then JAC Chair from 2013-2019. He will always be remembered for his humour and efficiency as a chairman.

We send our condolences to Phil's family and friends.

Andrew Blake represented the JAC at Phil's funeral on Thursday 22nd May at St Mary's Church, Ross-on-Wye.

l. **Forest of Dean Biosphere Reserve proposal** (see attached documents)

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The UN are working towards a sustainable future through looking towards achieving these 17 goals to help make the planet sustainable. Becoming a Biosphere helps us work towards not only environmental goals but also socio-economic goals as people and enterprise are at the heart of the Biosphere.

Page 79

What is a Biosphere?

Biospheres are 'learning places for sustainable development'. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges.

Biospheres are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located. Biospheres are designated under the intergovernmental MAB Programme by the Director-General of UNESCO following the decisions of the MAB International Coordinating Council (MAB-ICC). Their status is internationally recognised.



Why is Biosphere Status important?

What are the functions of a biosphere?

Each biosphere should fulfil three interconnected functions that work together and reinforce one another.

Conservation of biodiversity - to preserve genetic variation, species, ecosystems and landscapes.

Sustainable development – for a sustainable future that sustains our economy, environment and society.

Learning, research and monitoring - to support research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.

What are the benefits of biospheres?

Biospheres provide a framework for projects that improve people's lives and protect the environment in a sustainable way. Communities, local stakeholders and government officials gain an increased awareness of environmental and development issues. Biospheres may attract funding to demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development that can provide lessons to be applied elsewhere.

Who is in charge?

The Biosphere is run and governed through a partnership of key stakeholders. Local communities are integral element ensuring the Biosphere meets its functions and objectives.

The Three Areas of a Biosphere

Different designations allow for different approaches within areas of the Biosphere.

Core area

They comprise a strictly protected zone that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation

Care (buffer) area

They surround or adjoin the core area(s) and are used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.

Sustainable Development (Transition) area

The transition area is where communities' foster socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities.



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The Forest of Dean UNESCO Biosphere Application



Sustainable Development and Prosperity for Forest of Dean

Biosphere designation is not about stopping growth and development but is a way of making sure that development acknowledges and recognises the value of the natural world and works with it. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) worked with Forest Economic Partnership to research the economic effects of adopting a Forest Biosphere. The ONS report indicated that for every £1 spent creating a Biosphere there would be a £3.89 return over a 30-year period. This includes developing industries such as use of timber products and premiums local products. It has been reported that the UNESCO designations added a minimum of £151 million of financial benefit to the UK economy in one year. Biosphere status helps to attract additional funding to the area. Money also goes back into the local economy through the visitor economy which is working to promote slow tourism and sustainable tourism.

To Support Resilience, Adaptation & Self-Sufficiency

Designated Biospheres are “learning places for sustainable development”. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes. The links being made between researchers and nature conservation bodies will provide a new framework for projects that seek local solutions. Biosphere status also opens up opportunities for socio-economic benefits by accessing funding streams to support work on new approaches to conservation and sustainable development.

To Facilitate Community and Stakeholder Participation

In 2019 the Forest Economic Partnership started work on answering the question “What if the Forest of Dean became a Forest Biosphere”. They sought feedback in a public survey “The Forest we Want” on the principles of pursuing UNESCO Biosphere Designation. Over six hundred people and forty businesses took part in the ‘Forest We Want’ survey. The survey found broad community interest for the designation and concluded that “the data shows clear support for a number of initiatives and concepts that respondents would back which aligns with both the economic and environmental aims of a Biosphere”.

Support for designation has been received from stakeholders such as Forestry England, Forest Economic Partnership, The RSPB and many more. The wider consensus from stakeholders is the need to continue to protect the environment and cultural heritage of the Forest of Dean district to ensure a sustainable future. A more collaborative approach is recommended where groups are more united and working together to achieve common aims.

Universities both locally and internationally are keen to partner with the Biosphere initiative to work collaboratively, contributing towards building a synergy between all parties and work towards a sustainable future.

Forest of Dean District Council unanimously voted to apply for UNESCO Biosphere status on the 20 March 2025. This decision allows the district to celebrate its unique qualities. A Biosphere is a celebration of the socio-economic, environmental and cultural heritage of an area.

To Recognise what is Special and Valued about the Forest of Dean

The value of the natural environment in Forest of Dean is widely recognised and has existing conservation protections such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar sites (wetland sites of international importance). The unique geology, historical land use, woodlands and the location of the rivers has helped establish the landscape and biodiversity we have today. The rich mosaic of habitats makes the district a stronghold for nature and a range of species, including the international significance of the largest colonies of Greater and Lesser Horseshoe Bats in Europe. It is also a nourishing environment that is recognised for its value in supporting people’s health and wellbeing. Biosphere designation also responds to the call to action to address environmental degradation and the poor state of the natural environment. Concerns about river pollution, loss of species, pressure from leisure activities and responding to a changing climate are current and pressing issues.

Cultural Heritage

In addition to the unique environment, the identity and character of the Forest of Dean has a rich cultural heritage including Verderers, Freeminers and Commoners and has a local dialect. The area has a long history of resilience and community led campaigns such as ‘Hands off Our Forest’. The area has a rich heritage of creatives including artists, writers, musicians and composers.

