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County Hall
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Monday, 27 October 2025

Notice of meeting:

Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee

**Monday, 3rd November, 2025 at 2.00 pm,
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High
Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG & Hybrid on Microsoft Teams**

AGENDA

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2.	Declarations of Interest.	
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4.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting - 7th July 2025.	
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13.	Provisional dates of meetings for 2026: Monday 2nd March 2026 at 2.00pm. Monday 6th July 2026 at 2.00pm. Monday 2 nd November 2026 at 2.00pm.	

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:

B. Hoyland
G. Moseley

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 & Hybrid on Microsoft Teams on Monday, 7th July, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors E. Bryn, S. Garratt, D. Rooke and A. Webb

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillor C. McFarling (Chair) (Forest of Dean District Council)
Councillor D. Wheeler

Town / Parish Community Councils (with voting powers)

One Voice Wales – Councillor L. Parker
HALC - Councillor B. Jones

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

NFU - M. Price,

Technical Advice Officers

National Landscape Manager – Mr. A. Blake
Monmouthshire County Council - Mrs. W. Barnard
Gloucestershire County Council – Mr. A. Deb
Monmouthshire County Council – Ms. C. Bosley

Others present:

Councillor R. Hatton (Monmouth Town Council)
Councillor M. Getgood (Coleford Town Council)

APOLOGIES:

Councillors B. Durkin, A. Lee and M. Sweeney

1. Election of Chair.

Councillor Chris McFarling was elected as Chair (nominated by Councillor David Wheeler, seconded by County Councillor Emma Bryn).

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair.

County Councillor Ann Webb was appointed as Vice Chair (nominated by County Councillor Steven Garratt with multiple seconders).

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3. Declarations of Interest.

None received.

4. Public Questions:

A question was received from a member of the public, Jonty Pearce: *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?*

The following information was noted:

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee objected to the allocation of the site Dixon Rd (HA4 Leasbrook) in the deposit plan consultation draft in December 2024 and that was based on its setting being so close to the national landscape boundary.
- The review of the Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) is due to go to Monmouthshire County Council scrutiny in September followed by full Council in October. If passed by full Council the deposit plan will be submitted to Welsh Government.
- Monmouthshire County Council is waiting for a new ecological report from the consultants, which forms part of the evidence of the for the Habitats Regulation Assessment. Examination in public would take place in the winter 2025 or spring 2026, when there will be further opportunity to comment and submit evidence.
- All Council local development plans have to increase the number of allocations for houses.
- Wye Valley National Landscape Team has a (shared) Planning Officer, who has been working in liaison with Officers in Monmouthshire County Council.
- In answer to a question about the extent of Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee's influence, it was noted that there is legislation and statements in Planning Policy Wales which relate to the protection of the National Landscape plus policies written within the LDP itself. Interpretation by Officers and the Committee helps remind the relevant authorities of those obligations and public policy.
- Regarding the variation in policy between England and Wales, a consistent approach should be applied both sides of the national boundary.

It was agreed it would be more appropriate to come back with a further, fuller report at the next meeting in November when the ecological reports have been received.

5. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting - 3rd March 2025.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd March 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

5.1. Matters arising: JAC Membership Review - verbal update.

The two vacancies for representatives of Gloucestershire County Council remain unfilled.

There has been some progress in distributing requests for new members and to new organisations, but it is still necessary to initiate open public recruitment, the details for which are being finalised.

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It is hoped that the move to hybrid meetings will encourage and enable better attendance going forward.

6. Wye Valley National Landscape Annual Report 2024/25.

The Wye Valley National Landscape Annual Report for 2024/25 was received with thanks. The report included a comprehensive record of progress against the work programme. In doing so, we noted:

- The creation and development of the Ffermio Bro programme on the Welsh side and that FiPL, the Farming in Protected Landscapes funding on the English side, was in its fourth year.
- There was some turnover of staff, which created a little delay in some projects, but it has been possible to mitigate the impact and successfully recruit new staff.

Final budget figures will be presented at the next meeting in November.

Following presentation of the report, questions were invited from Committee Members:

- Referring to invasive species and the interventions to combat them, a Committee Member was disappointed to read that only 40% of sites showed a decrease in abundance of Japanese knotweed where glyphosate has been injected or sprayed and queried plans to tackle such species. It was responded that this monitoring outcome is based on a subjective assessment by the contractors on site and a more objective monitoring would be preferred. The team will be checking whether there are anomalies in the methodology and if different contractors are assessing it differently. Secondly, the team will be checking that the overall programme is effective enough. It was noted that the number of sites is increasing which may be skewing the statistics.
- An update on the collapse of the footpath on Wyesham side of the Wye Valley Walk and any repair plans was requested. It was responded that a contractor is being engaged to assess the previous work with a view to progressing repairs if feasible and in discussion with Monmouthshire Rights of Way team. A further section at the bottom end of the showground is of concern which could involve major disruption and diversion. The consultant will consider this stretch too. Updates will be provided on both sections of the footpath. It was noted that a stile is broken and needs repair. Concern was also raised about the roadside section of the Wye Valley Walk between Redbrook and Monmouth.
- It was queried what the future options for Redbrook Bridge are. It was responded that ten years ago it was estimated that approximately £2M would be required to refurbish the bridge which could be inflated to as much as £5M at the current time. Gloucestershire County Council has been contacted and advised that there is some capital money this year to assist progressing the scheme. Restoration of the Wireworks Bridge involved major, costly engineering works so it is a question of securing adequate resources. Lydbrook Bridge also needs approximately £2M spent on it.
- A Committee Member queried the section of the report referring to *Audit and repair and/or replace Overlooking the Wye infrastructure &/or design & install new as appropriate*. It was confirmed that the audit was initiated and a proposal submitted to

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Swansea University as an undergraduate project, but no students came forward to deliver the project. This is still a job that needs to be completed.

- A Committee Member was happy to note that 130 young people have engaged in activities and 60% of those children had special educational needs.

The Team was thanked for its work over the year.

7. Species Action Plan report.

The Species Action Plan was received. The purpose being to present members with the fourth of the 5 National Landscape Species Action Plans, for Woodland Butterfly Assemblage, under the Colchester Declaration.

It was noted that such action plans are a key focus of the team's work and at the office there is a mural on the storage container depicting the 5 species.

- A Member referred to muntjac deer and their effect on the woodland butterfly assemblage, and questioned if there has been any action to tackle them in the Forest of Dean. It was explained that muntjac and other deer are culled. Muntjac deer, as an invasive species, don't have a closed season. Stalkers hunt them so they are controlled to an extent, but they are small and difficult to shoot. The impact of their browsing includes a loss of understory, which affects the insect population and consequently insectivorous birds in the area such as nightingales, pied and spotted flycatchers, wood warblers etc. It was requested that the Forestry England and NRW should be requested to provide numbers of muntjac culled over the past 12 months.
- A Member suggested protecting patches of understory with fencing to provide a safe haven for insects.
- A Member asked if local records of butterfly sightings can be extracted from national records and queried where sightings can be logged. It was confirmed that there are apps available to record sightings, details to be provided. The Chair suggested participating in the Garden Butterfly Survey, organised by Butterfly Conservation. More in-depth surveying includes butterfly transects recording butterflies seen on a specific stretch on a fortnightly basis throughout the season.

The JAC endorsed the Woodland Butterfly Assemblage Species Action Plan and welcomed the on-going work on the preparation of the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and the final Species Action Plan.

8. Grant Funds and Panel updates.

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

In doing so the following information was noted.

- FiPL has been extended for another (5th) year. A member of staff left because of uncertainty about the continuation of the funding. The vacancy has been

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successfully filled and the first panel meeting has taken place at which £62,000 was allocated to various farming grants.

- The criteria for the Sustainable Development Fund have changed this year. The new panel met recently and allocated £46,000 of the £95,000 available. The new panel membership is listed in the report.
- The Ffermio Bro programme has started. A new officer has been recruited.
- The Herefordshire Community Foundation Fund is closed waiting for funds to grow. A Member queried how much interest is being made on £67,000 and was informed that it is managed through the Herefordshire Community Foundation, and interest is in the region of 3 or 4% from which management fees are taken. Any ideas on augmenting the funds are always welcomed.

The Joint Advisory Committee:

- Welcomed 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; and
- Endorsed the recent allocations of FiPL and SDF grants.

9. Partnership Study Tour.

We received the date and outline programme for the Annual National Landscape Partnership Study Tour. In doing so, it was noted:

- It is proposed to visit the middle section of the National Landscape, between Monmouth and Ross to focus on the new National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) project.
- The programme is still being developed but could incorporate sites such as Kerne Bridge to see canoeing, recreation and river issues; Goodrich Castle and café to look at the English Heritage site and management of the castle, and other projects in the area.
- Details will be distributed by e-mail to all Members plus the clerks to town, parish and community councils.

The JAC:

- Noted 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: and
- Encouraged a good attendance and invited representatives from our neighbouring Shropshire Hills and Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnerships and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority and other appropriate partners.

10. River Wye update.

The Joint Advisory Committee received a report for information to advise members of the latest activities to help restore the River Wye. In doing so the following points were noted:

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- There is £1m from the government following ministerial meetings. Details of the research brief to be managed by DEFRA and co-produced by local stakeholders including ourselves via the Wye Catchment Partnership.
- There is anecdotal evidence that Ranunculus is recovering, and a Big Ranunculus Watch has been launched to gather evidence on its progress. A drone survey may be commissioned to evaluate the presence and the abundance of Ranunculus.
- There has been an announcement from Defra about amendments to the farming rules for water to tighten up and consolidate the regulation and effective management of farming water management.
- The team is working with the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership (the part of the Forest of Dean that drains into the Severn) to draw up a strategy and action plan for the rivers and tributaries in the Forest of Dean that flow into the Wye. This work will be useful for future projects on the tributaries that flow into the Wye, such as a Lottery Landscapes Connection bid.
- Work continues with FiPL and Ffermio Bro and we continue to work in the National Landscape on collaborations in terms of water management and land use.

Members raised the following points:

- In the Herefordshire local plan, a case on the inclusion of animal by-products as controlled waste was heard by a judge and deemed to be sound. This means that chicken manure must be regarded as a controlled waste as a stricter means to protect the environment. Further clarity is needed to define what this means for the whole sector e.g. what animal by-products are waste and not.
- Regarding the control of pollution regulation which looks at how farmers apply nutrients to the land, there is legislation and the Secretary of State's guidance which has changed. The Environment Agency enforces where appropriate in England. If nutrients are being applied, they should be based on the what the crops need and should be applied at the right time. Further guidance is awaited.
- We considered the state of the watertable under the National Landscape and the aquifers underneath the Forest of Dean during the current heat waves. Licences to abstract water could be withdrawn, particularly from the River Wye. The main reason for having a licenced abstraction is so that the River Wye can be maintained at a level where it, and the biodiversity in it, can survive. If the flow rate and volume goes down, it heats up and is prone to algal blooms and toxicity. The River is currently low and it was urged that abstraction licences should be monitored and withdrawn as needed.

11. National Updates.

We received a report for information to advise members of activity relating to National Landscapes in England and Wales. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The Campaign for National Parks has been promoting a judicial review of a housing development application in relation to High Weald National Landscape. Further clarification will be sought on the outcome.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape hosted a very successful Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar at the end of April & beginning of May, held at the spectacular location of Caer Llan. The event was used for the ministerial launch of the Ffermio Bro.

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- DEFRA has called for evidence on green finance, and how to involve the business sector in funding more environmental work. The National Landscapes Association is gathering evidence accordingly. DEFRA had a cut made in the recent spending review and the implications on funding are being worked through.

12. Dark Skies.

We received a report for information to update members on current policies and projects relating to Dark Skies and light pollution. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The Wales Darks Skies project influenced planning guidance published by Welsh Government which is generating some good outputs. There has also been a seminar on what makes a good external lighting plan. The project has another two years of funding to continue this work on the Welsh side and it is hoped to complement similar work in Herefordshire.
- A Member advocating that lighting is better considered asked what is being done to target housing within the AONB and to raise awareness of poor lighting choices. It was responded that it is difficult to intervene in time tell people when their lighting choices could be improved. Following a light pollution survey of some commercial and farming properties in Wales, limited funding allowed retrofit lighting at Llandogo Village Hall and Trellech Primary School. It was agreed that the message and opportunities need to be better communicated.
- The Green Infrastructure Manager commended the Welsh Government's *Dark skies: planning guidance* as an excellent document. Leaflets are available that can be targeted towards communities and others to follow. There are opportunities to work collaboratively to get the message out.

13. Partner and National Landscape Team progress reports and updates.

We received a report for information to advise members of activity of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners. The amount of work carried out was acknowledged. In receiving the report, the following points were noted:

- The Joint Advisory Committee was informed of the passing of Phil Cutter, former Chair of JAC for several years. He had previously been Chair of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme. The Committee remembered Phil with great fondness.
- Ruth Waycott, AONB Information Officer is leading walks down the whole length of the Wye Valley Walk in celebration of its fiftieth anniversary. The walks started at Plynlimon.
- The JAC was informed of a bid by Forest of Dean District Council to be designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve with a view to reconnect people with nature, wildlife and for sustainable development. The nomination form must be completed by September 2026. It was agreed to consider the application further at the next meeting in November.

14. Date of next meetings:

The meeting ended at 4.18 pm

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From: [Catherine Laidlaw](#)
To: [McGowan, Robert](#)
Cc: [Andrew Blake](#)
Subject: Re: FAO: Catherine Laidlaw re: Dixon Bat Project and MCC RLDP
Date: 23 September 2025 18:24:55
Attachments: [Outlook-eqrg34dl.png](#)

Dear Robert,

Thank you for inviting the Wye Valley National Landscape Team to attend Thursday's Place Scrutiny Committee meeting and for the opportunity to submit further information for consideration.

We continue to uphold our objection to the inclusion of the HA4 residential site allocation. However, at this stage, we do not have any additional comments beyond those set out in our representation on the Deposit Plan Consultation, which incorporated PPW policies, the setting the Wye Valley National Landscape and damage to SACs and Special Qualities of the National Landscape. We intend to reserve further comments for the Examination, so that we can incorporate any response to the findings of the assessments currently underway, as well as any additional information provided in the period leading up to the Examination. We note that less sensitive candidate sites have not been progressed.

Yours sincerely,
Catherine

Catherine Laidlaw

National Landscape Planning Officer
Wye Valley National Landscape Team
Tel: 01600 710845/ 07852 635073

(Please note this role is shared with the Malvern Hills National Landscape Team. I am generally available for matters regarding the Wye Valley National Landscape on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, but can still be contacted throughout the week.)



Dyffryn Gwy
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol
Wye Valley
National Landscape

On 22 November 2023, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty rebranded as National Landscapes. This captures the essence of our work – the ambition, collaboration, commitment and readiness to serve and share for the good of our landscapes; for nature, climate, people and place. We will continue to convene powerful coalitions, enable partners and communities to vision the change they agree through the democratically derived AONB Management Plan, and empower everyone to deliver in partnership across the entirety of a landscape, our nationally designated Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The change to National Landscapes is an opportunity to broadcast this work clearly and loudly.

www: <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/> FB: <https://www.facebook.com/wyevalley.aonb> X: @wyebeauty

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From: McGowan, Robert [REDACTED]@monmouthshire.gov.uk>

Sent: Thursday, August 07, 2025 4:49 PM

To: Catherine Laidlaw <planning@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk>

Cc: MCC - Scrutiny <scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk>

Subject: FAO: Catherine Laidlaw re: Dixon Bat Project and MCC RLDP

Dear Catherine,

I am writing from the Scrutiny team at Monmouthshire County Council, regarding the upcoming scrutiny of the council's Replacement Local Development Plan at our Place Scrutiny committee on 25th September.

You have likely already been in contact with MCC's Planning team about the RLDP, but we wanted to check if there is anything you would like to add in writing in relation to the proposed development site HA4 at Leasbrook in Monmouth - specifically, in relation to bat species at the site, following the continued work of the Dixon Bat Project. Their representative, Jonty Pearce, suggested that we contact you (I think you have already been in contact with him.)

Please let us know if you have any comment or information that the committee members can consider as part of their scrutiny.

Kind regards,

Robert

Robert McGowan

Swyddog Polisi Craffu | Scrutiny and Policy Officer
Cyngor Sir Fynwy | Monmouthshire County Council



[REDACTED]@monmouthshire.gov.uk

www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/scrutiny

https://twitter.com/Mon_CC_Scrutiny

Gweithio gyda dinasyddion Sir Fynwy

Working with the Citizens of Monmouthshire

Mae'r e-bost hwn ac unrhyw ffeiliau a drosglwyddir gydag ef yn gyfrinachol ac wedi'u

bwriadu at ddefnydd yr unigolyn neu'r endid y maent wedi'u cyfeirio ato yn unig. Gall gynnwys gwybodaeth freintiedig a chyfrinachol ac os nad chi yw'r derbynnydd arfaethedig, ni ddylech ei chopïo, ei dosbarthu na chymryd unrhyw gamau pellach o ran y wybodaeth. Os ydych wedi derbyn yr e-bost hwn mewn camgymeriad, rhowch wybod i ni cyn gynted â phosibl drwy ffonio 01633 644644.

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TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3rd November 2025

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE / AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

Purpose

To outline the revised programme for the preparation and publication of the Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Provides comment on the proposed draft Vision for the Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan.
- B. Endorses the revised programme for the review and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

Key Issues

- The existing Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) needs to be reviewed, under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act Section 89, by the end of 2026.
- The Management Plan review programme was endorsed in November 2024.
- There has been some slight slippage in the review programme but the deadline remains unchanged in the revised timetable which is appended.
- The proposed Vision for the new Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan is outlined below and comments are welcome before consolidation into the Public Consultation Draft version.

Reasons

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

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

Implications

Appended below is the revised programme for the Management Plan review. There have been delays in the preparation of the draft Management Plan due to other work pressures within the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. The original timetable had capacity for some slippage and the amended timetable will enable completion of the Management Plan within the original deadline of the next 12 months. It is proposed that the National Landscape Partnership Winter Seminar is utilised and incorporated as part of the Public Consultation process. It will enable a range of stakeholders to engage face to face as part of the public consultation.

The proposed Vision for the National Landscape Management Plan 2026-2031 is as follows:-

The 20-year vision for the Wye Valley National Landscape is:-

- **Nature is flourishing and connected**, with more, better and joined-up grassland, wetland and tree cover, along with a heathy River Wye and tributaries.
- **The resilient landscape** stores more carbon and water and vibrant soils sustain nature friendly farm businesses producing nutrient dense food.
- **The Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Qualities** continue to inspire people to conserve and enhance them.
- **Everyone can experience and care for the National Landscape**, with inclusive access and more sustainable ways to visit and get around.
- **Communities and businesses thrive** with a nature positive, low-carbon rural economy providing local skilled work.

The previous vision for the 2021-2026 Plan is appended below.

Background

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

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Herefordshire Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Monmouthshire County Council formally delegates the publishing, reviewing and monitoring of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan to the AONB Partnership. This was reiterated and formally endorsed by the Joint Advisory Committee in November 2024.

Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2021-2026

2.2 The Vision for the Wye Valley AONB

2.2.1 The following was developed for the 2009-14 AONB Management Plan as a 20 year vision and remains a true encapsulation of how we want the AONB to be in 15 years' time and beyond:-

The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be a landscape

- *that continues to evoke inspiration in a wide range of people*
- *where some degree of change is accepted and its impacts accommodated through positive management including effective adaptation to and mitigation of climate change*
- *where the distinctive mix of steep valley sides and rolling hills, covered with ancient and semi-natural woodland, mixed farmland, and scattered settlement dominate the landscape along with the meandering river*
- *where the natural and heritage assets are in good order, well-understood and accessible where appropriate, in fully compatible uses and adapted and changed in ways which respect and enhance their significance*
- *with a robust mosaic of inter-connected semi natural habitats for native wildlife, particularly around grassland, wetland and woodland*
- *providing functioning services and resources for society, including flood storage, food, timber, tourism and minerals*
- *which provides work for local people, who make good use of the varied resources the area has to offer*
- *where both visitors and residents are able to enjoy the area, particularly for sustainable tourism, recreation and informed appreciation of the historic and natural environment, with minimal conflict or disturbance from other users*
- *where association with the Wye Valley continues to benefit the surrounding villages, market towns and counties*
- *supported by the good will, pride and endeavour of local people, visitors, and the public, private and voluntary sectors*
- *worthy of its designation as an internationally important protected landscape.*

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Wye Valley National Landscape AONB Management Plan (2026-31) Review Programme

Task No.	Task	Suggested timetable	Progress
	Formalities and Notification		
1.	Endorse outline Management Plan Review programme	Nov 2024	Achieved
2.	Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf	Dec 2024	In MoU 2021-24
3.	S90 (1) Notify Natural England & Natural Resources Wales	Dec 2024	Verbal
4.	Announce requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Jan 2025	TBC
5.	Finalise process and timetable of review	Feb 2025	Achieved
	Scoping		
6.	Consider strengths and weaknesses of current Plan and new strategic priorities	Feb 2025	19 th March Seminar
7.	Endorse consultation programme	Mar 2025	JAC 3 rd March
8.	Online survey to gather initial comments and views	Mar-Apr 2025	
9.	Publish State of AONB Report	Mar 2025	TBC
10.	JAC/ Partnership 'workshop' on current Plan, policies, evidence, positions and new strategic priorities	Mar 2025	19 th March Seminar
11.	Review and assess other new evidence, law, policies, strategies, plans and issues which are of relevance (including the Outcomes Framework, requirement for climate change adaptation plans etc).	Mar-Apr 2025	On-going
12.	Identify main areas requiring update or new work	May 2025	On-going
13.	Collate responses & views on issues from existing sources	May-Jun 2025	On-going
14.	Start SEA Scoping Study, collation of data and evidence of other plans and programmes, seek input from the Environmental bodies.	Jun 2025	
	Consultation		
15.	Undertake targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups on current Plan, policies, evidence, positions and new strategic priorities	Jun 2025	19 th March Seminar & on-going
16.	Identify key issues, aims and objectives	July 2025	

Task No.	Task	Suggested timetable	Progress
17.	Draft new wording for consultation draft of revised Plan	Aug 2025	
18.	Write SEA report, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (Stage A). Assess effects of objectives, policies and actions and for SEA and/or SA (stage B). Collate Environmental Report for SEA/SA (stage C) plus non-technical summary	Sept 2025	
19.	Consultation Draft reviewed	Oct 2025 Nov /Dec 2025	
20.	Run public consultation on new draft plan and SEA/SA report (Stage D). 12 weeks. Consult on scoping report for SEA	Oct 2025 – Jan 26 Delay to Jan 2026 for 10 weeks (as avoids Christmas)	
21.	Undertake specific targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups as required	Autumn 2025 JAC Seminar during 10 week consultation	
22.	Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	Feb-Mar 2026 April-May 2026	
23.	Initial report on consultation and suggested amendments	Mar 2026 TOWP June 2026	
	Adoption		
24.	Draft plan to JAC for approval	July 2026	
25.	Send to Natural England for formal observations	July 2026	
26.	Consider comments from formal observations and amend Plan	Aug 2026	
27.	Get new plan formally approved by Local Authorities and JAC Chair	Sept 2026	
28.	Design, printing and distribution	Oct 2026	
29.	Send approved plan to Secretary of State	Oct 2026	
30.	Publish statement of how SEA taken into account and changes	Oct 2026	
31.	Confirmation of full adoption of Plan	JAC Nov 2026	

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3rd November 2025

ANNUAL REPORT FIGURES AND FUTURE LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Purpose

To present the financial summary for 2024/25 to accompany the previously presented Wye Valley National Landscape Annual Report 2024/25 and request the existing contributions from the four constituent local authorities are continued and contained in the new Memorandum of Understanding between the four local authorities.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. welcomes the Annual Report figures for 2024/25.
- B. Request the constituent local authorities commit to the agreed financial contributions and a renewed Memorandum of Understanding for 2026-2029.

Key Issues

- The summary financial report is outlined below on the delivery of the Work Programme for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team during 2024/25.
- There was a delay in completing these figures which will now be appended to the previously presented Annual Report on the achievements of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team for 2024/25.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the continued effective operation, management and governance of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, with the next MoU proposed to run between 2026-2029.
- The contributions from the local authorities form the foundation to the Wye Valley National Landscape budgets which lever in and match-fund various allocations and grants.
- The National Landscape Team turnover in 2024/25 was £1,597,971 resulting in the leverage of over £32 for every £1 of local authority contribution.

Reasons

The Annual Work Programme Report for 2024/25 tabulates the achievements of the Wye Valley 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.

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was extended from 2021-2024, to March 2026. The MoU provides a framework for the delivery of duties and obligations in the

Wye Valley National Landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), arising from Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 including the operation and management of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. The MoU is intended to give medium term security to the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership and sets out a shared vision for, and commitment to, National Landscape/AONB management by the funding local authority partners. The MoU helps mitigate shared risks between the local authorities including jointly delegating the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan to the National Landscape Team. The MoU complements the JAC Agreement, which constitutes the JAC, signed between the four local authorities.

Implications

The Annual Report figures of Expenditure & Income for 2024/25, summarised below, were not available in time for the previous JAC in July. Therefore these figures are to accompany the previously presented Annual Report on the achievements of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team for 2024/25.

The overall turnover of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team increased from 2023/24, mostly accounted for by the income and expenditure of the DEFRA Farming in Protected Landscape programme. Total turnover in 2024/25 was £1,597,971. The leverage of the AONB Partnership means that for every £1 of local authority contribution, the AONB Unit brought in £32.24.

The following Local Authority partner contributions are requested for the next 3 years with a 0% flat rate proposed. These contributions will be included the forthcoming MoU 2026-2029. They are based on land area in the AONB in an established historical formula. This equates to a reduction in local authority funding as salary and materials costs increase with inflation. However the local authorities retain the discretion to index link and/or increase contributions, if or when appropriate.

Local Authority Partner	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Herefordshire Council	£23,860	£23,860	£23,860	£23,860
Monmouthshire County Council	£15,716	£15,716	£15,716	£15,716
Forest of Dean District Council	£5,826	£5,826	£5,826	£5,826
Gloucestershire County Council	£4,158	£4,158	£4,158	£4,158
Total LA contributions	£49,560	£49,560	£49,560	£49,560

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

Background

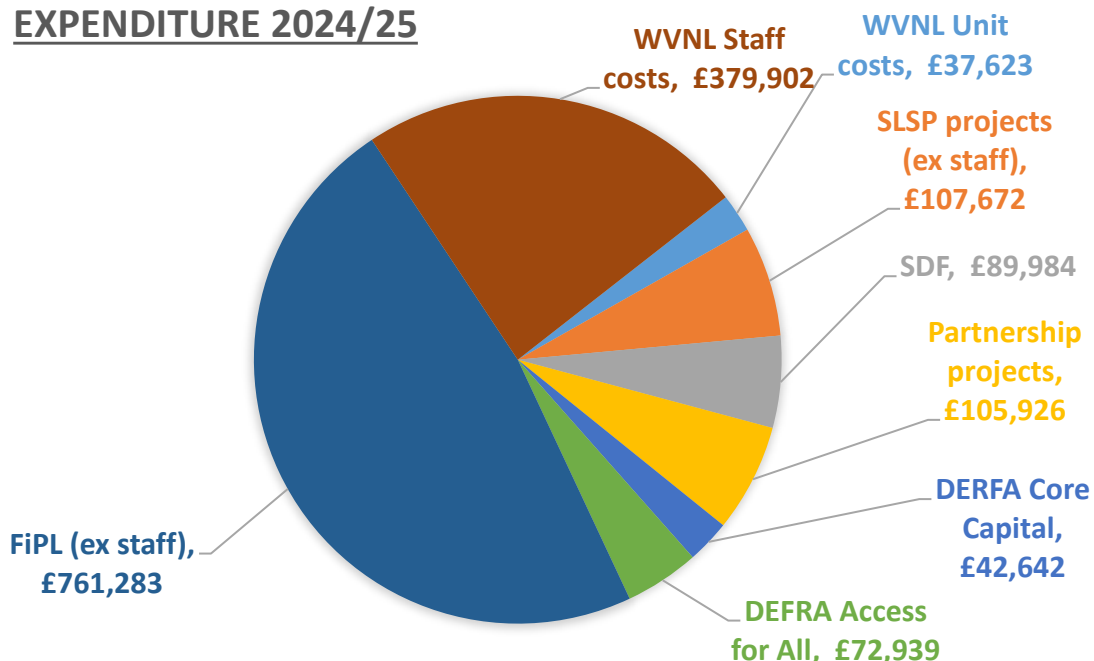
The Wye Valley National Landscape Team Work Programme is monitored by the Technical Officers' Working Party (TOWP). Budgets are monitored by the Steering Group, of core funding partner, and Herefordshire Council, as treasurer to the National Landscape Partnership.

Wye Valley National Landscape Annual Report figures for 2024/25
Expenditure & Income tables

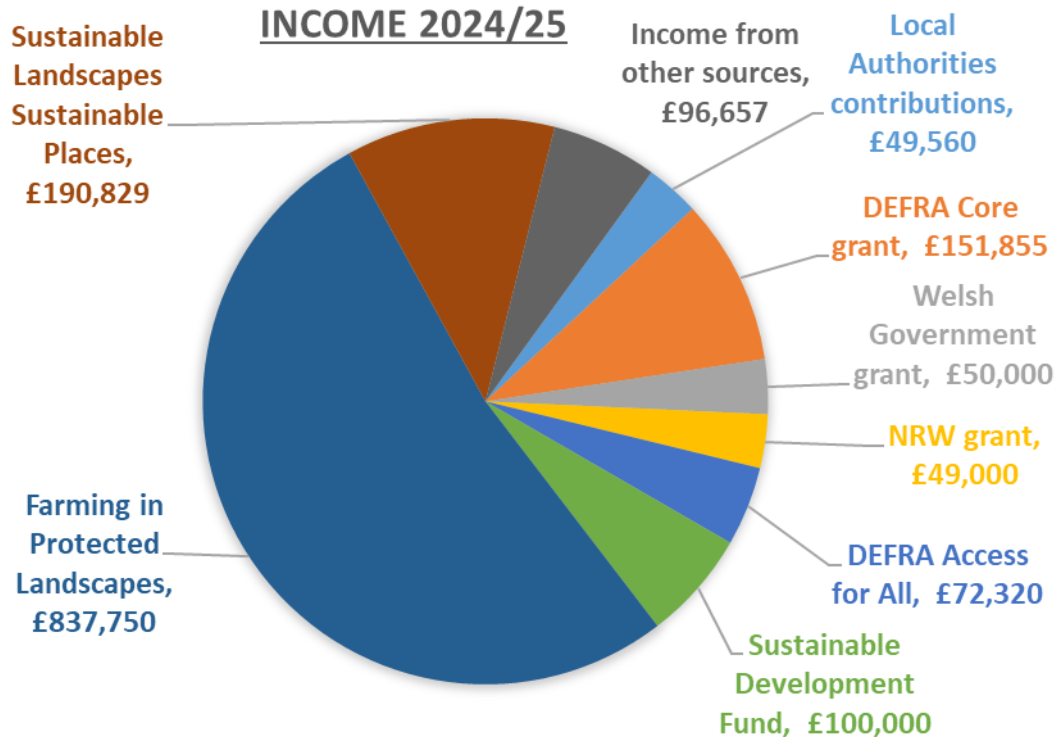
Wye Valley National Landscape Accounts	2023/24	2024/25
<u>Expenditure</u>	£	£
Staff costs	392,083	379,902
Unit Operating costs	35,054	37,623
Farming in Protected Landscapes (ex staff costs)	296,112	761,283
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (ex staff)	109,092	107,672
Sustainable Development Fund (ex staff costs)	90,000	89,984
Partnership projects	190,511	105,926
DERFA Core Capital	0	42,642
DEFRA Access for All	0	72,320
TOTAL	1,112,852	1,597,971
<u>Income</u>		
Local Authorities core contributions	49,182	49,560
DEFRA Core revenue grant	151,855	151,855
Welsh Government revenue grant	50,000	50,000
Natural Resources Wales Grant	49,000	49,000
DEFRA Access for All	53,908	72,320
Sustainable Development Fund	100,000	100,000
Farming in Protected Landscapes	306,582	837,750
Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places	132,915	190,829
National Lottery Heritage Fund	105,552	0
Income from other sources	113,858	96,657
TOTAL	1,112,852	1,597,971

Wye Valley National Landscape Annual Report figures for 2024/25
Expenditure & Income charts

EXPENDITURE 2024/25



INCOME 2024/25



LANDSCAPE CONNECTIONS LOTTERY BID EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Purpose

To seek members' support for the submission of an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections programme.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the preparation and submission by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team of an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Landscape Connections programme.

Key Issues

- Landscape Connections is a competitive grant programme open to National Landscapes and National Parks provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).
- Projects can be up to 10 years (with 2 years development plus 8 years delivery) and up to a maximum of £10million.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Team intend to submit an Expression of Interest for a project that would work with farmers and landowners and local communities to deliver transformative change across (sub)catchments flowing directly into the Wye Valley National Landscape.
- The proposal has been discussed with various partners at the Wye Catchment Partnership, Farm Herefordshire, The Marches Real Food and Farming Convergence, Herefordshire Council Natural Environment Team, Woodland Trust, Wye & Usk Foundation and Wyescapes Project Board.
- If the Expression of Interest is successful the Development Phase would refine the project area and outputs.
- The project name of 'Ergyng Landscape Connections' is proposed, as the project area aligns with the ancient kingdom of Ergyng, covering most of the catchments in the lower Wye Valley.

Reasons

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) 'Landscape Connections' is a grant programme open to those who care for or partner with National Landscapes and National Parks. Projects can be up to 10 years with a development phase of up to 2 years development and

subsequent 8 years of project delivery. Grants can be between £250,000 up to £10million. Funding is to:

- Support long-term projects which boost nature recovery and connect more people to our most treasured landscapes,
- Drive systematic change across the UK's Protected Landscapes,
- Put Landscapes into recovery; supporting habitats and species alongside rich cultural heritage in better connected, working landscapes,
- Landscapes strengthened as working landscapes, alive with nature and providing space for people to relax and connect with the environment.

Lottery guidance advises that projects:

- Have a Protected Landscape (PL) as a key partner and have a core area of PL at their heart.
- Deliver work over a contiguous landscape, not on a theme over a wider area.
- Delivery for Nature Recovery, following the 'protect the environment' investment principle.
- Area can be any size but advised to focus on impact rather than scale.
- Address a problem and support systematic change
- Farm advice as well as capital work is viable
- NLHF want to see demonstrable change, where they can go to a project area at the end of the project and see lasting change.

Implications

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team consider this an opportunity to work cross-border at landscape scale to address key challenges facing the Wye Valley National Landscape. Through a number of focused sessions, the Team identified two main and interconnected issues: the health of the River Wye and its tributaries and the disconnection between farms, local communities and consumers. Within this, family farms are recognised as an essential functioning part of both the landscape and the local community. Consequently, the Team developed the proposal for a Landscape Connections project that would **work with farmers and landowners and local communities to deliver transformative change across (sub)catchments flowing directly into the Wye Valley National Landscape, monitoring impact and acting as a catalyst to actions in the wider Wye catchment.**

The tributaries of the Wye and their catchments were mapped, creating an effective buffer area around the Wye Valley National Landscape – see map below. However the River Monnow and its catchment was excluded on 3 counts:- a) the catchment is large and extends into the Black Mountains and Golden Valley, b) this would almost double the project's area into distinctly different landscapes, potentially diluting resources and thus diminishing the overall project, c) the confluence of the Wye and the Monnow is not actually within the Wye Valley National Landscape.

However, if an Expression of Interest was successful, the Development Phase would test and define the exact project boundary. There are also currently a number of projects and programmes which will conclude before this project would reach Delivery Stage, or may run concurrently with it. Some of these will lay excellent foundations through landowner

engagement and identification of opportunities, and others will complement and work in parallel. The Wyescapes programme has the potential to deliver tremendous change focussing on the floodplain between Leominster and Symonds Yat, with farmers signing up to deliver dramatic change over the next 20 years. The Farming in Protected Landscapes and Ffermio Bro programmes are engaging farmers at a scale not previously possible in the National Landscape. The Wye Adapt to Climate Change project is building climate action networks and identifying Nature Based Solutions for future planning. The National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects are encouraging landscape change and mitigation across a defined corridor impacted by pylons. The intention of a Landscape Connections project would be to learn from, complement and augment these projects, rather than duplicate or compete.

Outline proposal (to be refined through the Development Phase):

- Over 8 years, work with landowners and farmers across catchments flowing directly into the Wye Valley National Landscape, in England and Wales, to deliver interventions which align with the Farm Herefordshire River Friendly Farming Standards.
- Provide advice, guidance, peer to peer knowledge sharing and funding for farmers on nature based solutions and carbon audits, including providing assistance accessing DEFRA & Welsh Government schemes and natural capital funding where suitable.
- Develop a greater connection between farms and communities, including schools, developing a better understanding of where our food comes from and how to make good use of it.
- Promote the connections and benefits of local supply chains and the importance of food production which sustains family farm businesses and enhances the landscape.
- Establish robust monitoring of water quality and quantity, with Citizen Science and remote sensing, to demonstrate the achievements of interventions and the benefit of the project funding on the river and tributaries.
- Support Public, Private & Voluntary sectors working in partnership to support farmers and local communities to deliver transformative change, highlighting achievements and acting as a catalyst for actions, locally, regionally and (inter)nationally.
- Potentially reintroduce key species in suitable agreed locations.
- Promote Dark Skies and reduce light pollution, enhancing appreciation of the night sky and connection and celebration of place.

The ambition is to reconnect people with their landscape, closing the current disconnect between people, food and place, whilst supporting a more river friendly system of farming in the target sub-catchments in and adjacent to the Wye Valley National Landscape. There are opportunities to both develop local markets for food produced in an environmentally friendly way, which support nature and the landscape, and nurture a greater understanding and appreciation of the benefits such land management brings.

These proposals have been further discussed with various partners, collectively or individually, including at the Wye Catchment Partnership, Farm Herefordshire, The Marches Real Food and Farming Convergence, Herefordshire Council Natural Environment Team, Woodland Trust, Wye & Usk Foundation and Wyescapes Project Board.

Project outcomes

The Landscape Connections project must achieve against a known problem and support systematic change. The issues are:

- Degraded condition of the River Wye, both designation features and water quality,
- A disconnect between farms, food production and communities, within a wider disconnection of people with the natural environment.

The project will

- deliver against the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and Wye Catchment Management Plan,
- bring together partners cross border working towards a common goal.

As a result of the project:-

- Farmers will be producing food that regenerates rather than degenerates soil and water in the sub catchments of the lower Wye
- water quality in each sub-catchment will be measurably improved where it enters the Wye.
- Wetland, woodland and connectivity habitats will have been created, contributing towards Wye Valley National Landscape Species Action Plans and Nature Recovery Plan, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Local Nature Recovery Action Plans.
- People will have a greater understanding of food production where they live and
- farms will be connected with the community, including potentially through the development of branding and supply chains.
- The approach of working with the community and in partnership with farmers will demonstrate how improvements can be delivered throughout the Wye Catchment, leading to an improvement in water quality over the length of the river.

Project name

The proposed name of the project is '**Ergyng Landscape Connections**', as the project area aligns with the ancient kingdom of Ergyng¹, which covered most of the catchments in the lower Wye Valley.

Ergyng was the post-Roman and early medieval Celtic/British kingdom that covered south Herefordshire, eastern Monmouthshire and the Forest of Dean between the 5th and 7th centuries. It became the buffer state between the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia and the British kingdoms of Powys & Gwent. The old Roman town of Ariconium at Weston under Penyard is believed to have been its first capital.

In the 8th & 9th century, Mercia expanded into eastern and northern Ergyng and the British inhabitants became 'foreigners' or "Welsh" in the English/Anglo-Saxon language, in their own land. The remaining area of southwest Herefordshire became known by the English name of Archenfield². However, the area and its inhabitants continued to retain special status and rights until relatively recent times.

¹ [Ergyng - Wikipedia](#)

² [Archenfield - Wikipedia](#)

Project Area

(for further discussion during Development phase)

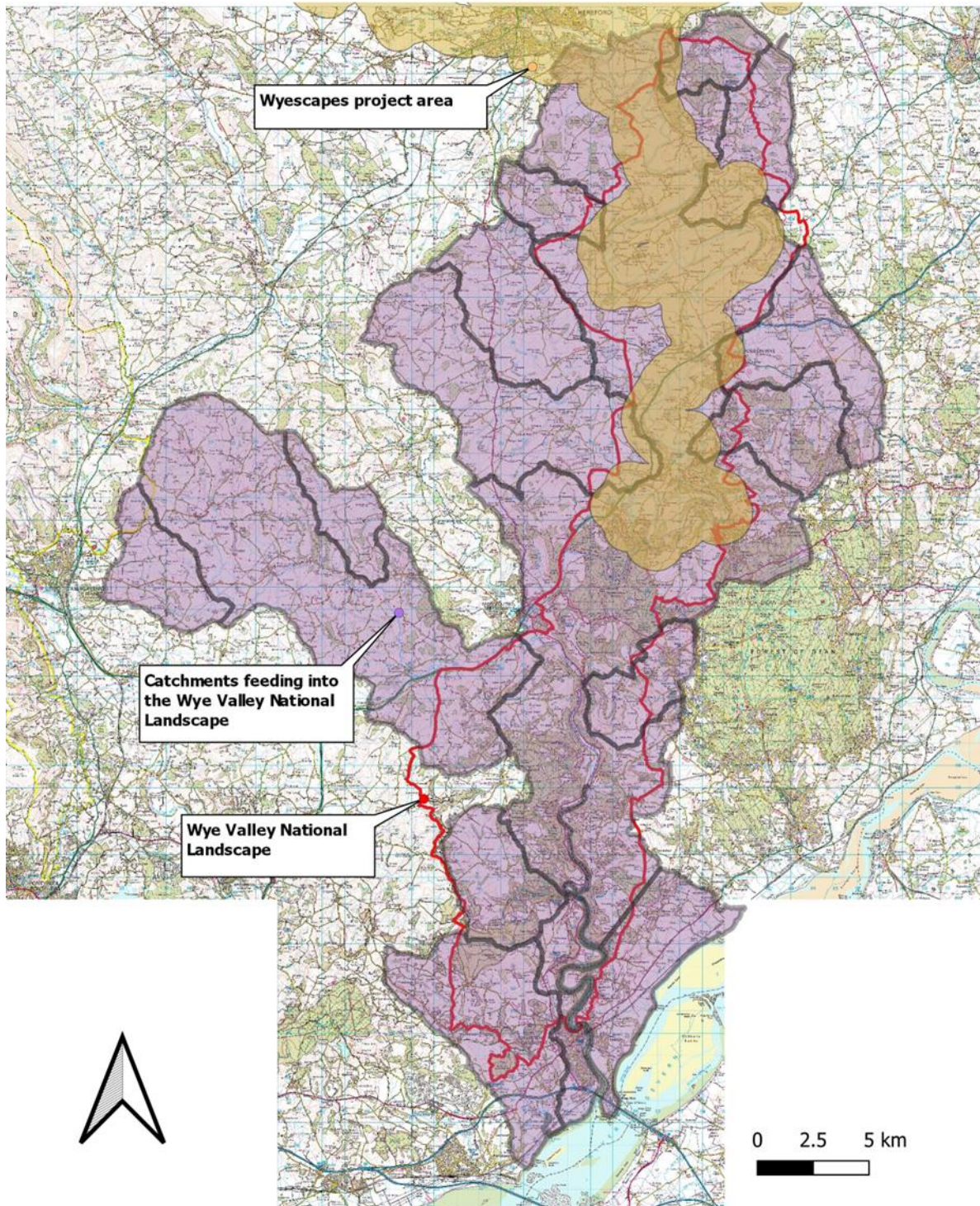
Sub catchments that drain into the Wye in the Wye Valley National Landscape = purple area

Wye Valley National Landscape boundary = red line

Wyescapes project area = brown area, extending up stream

Landscape Connections

Catchments where confluence with the Wye is within the National Landscape boundary



Potential timetable

- Dec 2025 Expression of Interest (EOI) submission to National Lottery Heritage Fund
- 2026-28 2 year Development phase, including:
 - Partnership development – establish a strong partnership of organisations, landowners and individuals to help shape, guide and deliver both the development and delivery stages.
 - Project scope, geography and detail - Work with partners to develop in detail the scope of constituent projects, geography, delivery model and outputs/objectives.
 - Full Application – Prepare and submit all documents required for a full application submission to the NLHF.
- 2029-2037 8 year Delivery phase

Background

NLHF ambition by 2033 is to have supported around 20 Landscape Connections projects that:

- enable everyone in the UK to have access to landscapes rich in nature, clean water and fresh air, places that are inspiring in their beauty and cultural heritage
- help these landscapes to become better for nature and more able to welcome people from all backgrounds, including those who rarely visit them now
- deliver longer-term projects that are bold in ambition and create measurable outcomes for Protected Landscapes
- support those who live in and care for these places to strengthen them as working landscapes based on a clear diagnosis of why the landscape is currently failing to deliver for nature and people and how that will be addressed
- accelerate systemic and lasting nature recovery across whole landscapes, creating and sharing exemplars for how landscape conservation and nature recovery can be delivered with, by and for people who live and work there
- create innovative frameworks for ways in which communities, landowners, organisations and those that manage the land can work equitably together to agree how to influence and drive change to ensure a lasting legacy.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3rd November 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 endorses the recent allocations of FiPL, Ffermio Bro and SDF grants.

Key Issues

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Local Assessment Panel has recently approved grants totalling nearly £150,000 for 13 projects, with over £251,000 allocated so far in 2025/26 on behalf of DEFRA and 26% remaining.
- The Ffermio Bro Assessment Panel met for the first time and approved 4 grants for £33,262 on behalf of Rural Payments Wales, with 65% remaining.
- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Assessment Panel recently approved 3 projects giving a total of £67,210 granted to date on behalf of Welsh Government with 29% remaining.
- The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley National Landscape Fund is currently closed for applications while opportunities to grow the Fund are sought.
- The continuation of FiPL grant allocation in 2026/27 is currently unknown and is dependent on the outcome of the Budget and subsequent DEFRA settlement.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)

Wye Valley National Landscape FiPL allocation for 25/26 is £339,063 including advice and administration. The Wye Valley FiPL Officer, Richie Alford, has hosted two FiPL Panel meetings since the last JAC and the grants totalling £149,044.60 were awarded (see table below). The total grants awarded this year amount to £251,212 which leaves £87,851 (26%) remaining including advice and administration up to March 2026. Applications under £10,000 may be determined by the National Landscape Manager.

DEFRA have yet to confirm whether the FiPL grants programme will be extended beyond March 2026. This will be dependent on the DEFRA settlement following the Autumn Budget

on 26th November. However, the FiPL Officer post does continue to March 2027, enabling opportunities for farm liaison and engagement, even if the grants programme ends.

Number	Applicant	Project	Grant £	Approved
WV 119	Model Farm	Milking Parlour	7,049.60	Panel
WV 120	Broome Farm	Orchard enhancements	16,330.80	Panel
WV121	Pasture for Life	Advice & events	29,130.00	
WV 122	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust	Hoarthorn Farm Arable reversion & grazing infrastructure	25,764.70	Panel
WV 123	Clay Farms	No-fence Collars	8,820.00	Panel
WV 124	Caradoc Estate	Wye and Usk Sustainable Soils Pilot for Potatoes	4,913.70	Delegated
WV 125	Flanesford Priory	Information Boards	4,534.00	Delegated
WV 126	Caradoc Estate	Meadow restoration	2,970.00	Panel
WV 128	Cowmeadow Farm	Historical Pond restoration	13,355.00	Panel
WV 130	Alfords Mill	Orchard restoration	14,729.73	Panel
WV 131	Caplor Farm	Pond restoration	7,093.07	Panel
WV 132	Eastwood Coppice	Pond creation	2,610.00	Panel
WV 134	Ballingham Court Farm	Silage Pit Floor	11,744.00	Panel
		TOTAL this period	149,044.60	

Ffermio Bro

Welsh Government's Ffermio Bro programme, focused on encouraging nature-friendly farming in Wales' National Parks and National Landscapes, has got off to a good start in its first year, both locally and nationally. The allocation for the Wye Valley National Landscape in 2025/26 is £95,000 for grants for farmers in the Welsh part of the National Landscape.

Chris Knight, the Ffermio Bro Officer has been providing advice and guidance to farmers and landowners and helping them apply to the programme for grants. The new Assessment Panel has met once and approved £33,262 of grants to the following 4 projects:

Number	Applicant	Project	Grant £	Approved
WVNL0001	Noddfa	Hedging & grazing infrastructure	£6,000.00	Panel
WVNL0002	Parva Wood	Fencing & Meadow restoration	£9,262.65	Panel
WVNL0003	Lower Gockett Farm	Hedging, fencing & pond creation	£7,479.00	Panel
WVNL0004	Little Penarth Farm	Hedging, fencing & leaky dams	£10,520.54	Panel
		TOTAL this period	£33,262.19	

Applications under £10,000 may be determined by the National Landscape Manager.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

Welsh Government allocated £95,000 of SDF in 2025/26 for the Welsh part of the Wye Valley National Landscape. Programme funding must ring-fence 60% for projects that further the objectives of tackling the Biodiversity and Climate Emergencies. The total grants awarded this year amount to £67,210 which leaves £27,790 (29%) remaining.

The SDF Panel met in September and approved the following 3 applications:-

Code	Applicant	Project Title	SDF Grant	Approved
WV04 YR25W	Chepstow Boat Club	Pontoon enhancement	£5,000	Panel
WV06 YR25W	Wye Valley River Festival CIC	Daear Prin/Rare Earth Festival 2026 (Yr 1 of 2)	£12,500	Panel
WV07 YR25W	Dol Wen One Planet	Biochar training course (Yr 1 of 3)	£3,344	Panel
		TOTAL this period	£20,844.00	

Applications 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 £65,420 as of the last statement dated 30th September 2025. 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 determining grant allocations.

Background

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

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FOREST OF DEAN BIOSPHERE INITIATIVE

Purpose

To seek support for the application to have the Forest of Dean designated as a UNESCO Biosphere.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Formally endorses and supports the Forest of Dean Biosphere initiative.
- B. Sends a letter of support for a Forest of Dean Biosphere to the Forest of Dean District Council for inclusion in the UNESCO application.
- C. The JAC to nominate a member or officer to be the point of contact to act as the liaison between the JAC and the Forest of Dean Biosphere initiative.

Key Issues

- A partnership led by the Forest of Dean District Council (FoDDC) and the Forest Economic Partnership is making an application to UNESCO for the Forest of Dean to be designated a UNESCO Biosphere.
- The proposal is for the designation to cover the FoDDC administrative area, including the Wye Valley National Landscape within the Forest of Dean District.
- The proposal to date has received candidate status from the UK Man and Biosphere committee.
- Biospheres overlap or are integrated into a number of National Landscapes in the UK, for example, North Devon Coast, Isle of Wight, Brighton and the South Downs.
- The draft application will be made in April 2026 with Final submission to UNESCO in September 2026 and a letter of support is requested from the Wye Valley National Landscape to be included in the application submission.

Reasons

Over a long period of time there has been extensive and repeated debate regarding considerations and efforts to secure formal recognition for the Forest of Dean's special qualities and value. The area remains on the long list to be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but national progress to advance the list has effectively stalled. The application for Biosphere designation is intended to secure formal recognition of the special and unique natural and cultural heritage of the Forest of Dean, enable socio-economic benefits, including greater employment opportunities, and support the sustainability of our communities,

environment and economy. The designation as a Biosphere will enable a partnership approach for a long-term framework vision for “People and the Forest Thriving Together”.

The five objectives for the Forest of Dean Biosphere are:

1. 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), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) 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.

2. To celebrate the social and cultural heritage of the area

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.

The cultural heritage is of such significance that it joins with nature as being worthy of recognition. Biosphere status provides an opportunity to protect and promote local cultural heritage. The public and stakeholder engagement has shown a need for a joined-up approach which provides the overarching coordination and local focus for a wide range of groups and organisations.

There is also a growing desire to ensure that formal designation in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. The prospect of administration at a much larger scale makes the case for safeguarding local identity. A new authority would be able to take on responsibility for the Biosphere and continue the initiative.

The Forest of Dean District Council has a fantastic opportunity to leave a legacy in securing Biosphere status. The designation recognises and celebrates the biodiversity and cultural identity of the area for future generations.

3. 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. The survey found broad community interest for the designation and so we have already progressed with working towards community buy-in. Over six hundred people and forty businesses took part in the ‘Forest We Want’ survey. The survey 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". Some survey respondents sought reassurance around: the economic effect on those already living within the district; what effects it will have on first time buyers; the affordability of suitable housing; the restrictions it might place on publicly accessible Forestry England land; overtourism and the effect it may have on road and parking infrastructure.

The evidence from other designated Biospheres and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) report for the Forest of Dean is that there are benefits to the local economy with a clear return on investment in setting up a Biosphere, including supporting job creation. Biosphere designation also aligns with promoting sustainable tourism where visitors make broader use of a destination for a richer experience. However, designation does not introduce any new legislation or statutory controls. It does not have powers to remove access rights and does not have powers to stop development.

Forestry England have written to confirm their support for designation. 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.

4. To Support 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 and premium local products.

There is evidence from other locations with Biosphere designation that premium products from within the Biosphere can be sold for a higher price than areas without designation through creating a Biosphere brand. With increase value in business activities there is an opportunity to grow and create new jobs.

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.

Biosphere designation also links with work being developed by Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism to promote sustainable tourism and encourage people to learn more about the area's cultural history during their stay. Visitors are increasingly wanting to connect with a location, its heritage and culture and are mindful of their environmental impact. Many jobs in associated sectors, such as retail, hospitality and attractions benefit from an increase in visitor spend.

5. 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 made between researchers and nature conservation bodies will provide a new framework for projects that seek local solutions.

Work has been taking place with schools to raise awareness of what is special about the Forest of Dean and how to improve people's lives and protect the environment in a sustainable way. A primary school competition was completed asking students what they believe makes the Forest of Dean as a wider area unique in terms of its environment and cultural heritage.

Biosphere status also opens up opportunities for socio-economic benefits by accessing funding streams to support work on innovative approaches to conservation and sustainable development.

National Landscape and the Biosphere

There is a strong relationship between National Landscapes and Biospheres that co locate in the England (see Isle of Wight, North Devon Coast and South Downs and Brighton Living Coast). There is good alignment in objectives and management plan alignment between designations, focused around shared objectives of sustainable development, local communities and the natural environment. Where both designations co-exist there is a considerable amount of joint working and collaboration. It is likely that, through its management plan, the Biosphere will draw attention to and support the Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan.

There are no additional legal constraints or 'rules' that come with the designation. It is very much about agreeing shared long-term sustainable objectives through partnership working and aligning organisational goals. The Wye Valley National Landscape could be a member of the Biosphere Partnership and likewise, once established the JAC could invite the Biosphere to be a place on the JAC and/or TOWP as appropriate.

Organisationally the Forest of Dean Biosphere proposes to have a partnership and steering group consisting of relevant national, local and community representatives and stakeholders which will formulate a management plan or joint framework to support the objectives of the Biosphere. Operationally it is expected that there will initially be 1-3 staff who would co-ordinate the work of the Biosphere supporting the partnership, projects and long-term monitoring. The partnership will seek some core 'start up' funding with increasing partner, project and income streams progressively supporting the secretariate over time.

Background

UNESCO Biosphere designation is a way of valuing the natural environment and cultural heritage where people and nature can work together with future generations in mind. It acknowledges existing protections and supports sustainable development, recognising the natural world and working with it. It is a way of supporting a thriving economy by bringing money back into the local economy.

An important starting point is to understand that UNESCO designation does not add any new legislation or controls to an area. It is about recognising and celebrating what is unique and special about an area in terms of the environment, culture, heritage, and economy. Biospheres are seen as 'learning places for sustainable development'.

Biosphere Boundary and Zones

Biosphere designation is an accolade for locations with a strong sense of identity, where biodiversity and the environment are globally recognised for its quality and where there is a commitment of a wide range of stakeholders to work together towards a sustainable future.

There are three linked functions of a Biosphere:

- Conservation of biodiversity – including culture, heritage, community, and sense of place,
- Sustainable development – for a sustainable future for people – that sustains economy, environment, and society,
- Learning – research and monitoring. Learning about the natural environment, culture and heritage and the interdependent relationship between nature and people.

Biospheres are focused on three zones known as the core zone, buffer or care zone and the transition or sustainable development zone. A Biosphere and its identified zones are not a restriction imposed from the UN or from UK government. A Biosphere is not a statutory protection measure and therefore does not provide additional protection, it is just a status designation. Instead, existing designations help to make up the zones.

Core zones must be of bioregional significance and protected for biodiversity in the long term. They comprise of existing designations such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Ramsar Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) for example, which contribute to the conservation of landscape, ecosystems, species, and genetic variation. For the Forest of Dean, the existing SACs, SSSIs and Ramsar Sites within the district, are the starting point for the Biosphere designation.

Buffer zones ideally are designated for the long term and should surround or adjoin the core zones. Within these areas activities which are compatible with sound ecological practices such as scientific research, monitoring, training, and education are encouraged. For the Forest of Dean this would look for instance at the Statutory Forest of Dean, National Landscapes, Flood risk zones, other SSSIs and SSSI buffer/consultation zones.

Lastly, transition zones are areas where communities' foster socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activity, and that forms the remainder of the designated area. The boundary of the Forest of Dean Biosphere follows that of the Council District boundary.

UNESCO are not prescriptive of the language used in terms of the naming of the Biosphere, with locations deciding to drop the word 'Reserve'. The descriptive language of the three zones is also adapted to suit local context and sensitivities. The Isle of Man renamed the buffer zone the 'care' area and the transition zone as the 'sustainable development' area. The buffer zone can also be known as the support zone. This is all about responding to the local context and connecting with what makes sense to a locality.

Further Reading

FoDDC Council Report:

<https://meetings.fdean.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MID=4433#AI28357>

The Forest We Want: <https://foresteconomicpartnership.co.uk/projects/previous-fep-projects/the-forest-we-want/>

UK Man & Biosphere: <https://www.unesco.org/en/mab>

UNESCO: <https://unesco.org.uk/>



FOREST OF DEAN BIOSPHERE

Candidate Biosphere—Forest of Dean

UNESCO Biosphere designation is a way of valuing the natural environment and cultural heritage where people and nature can work together with future generations in mind. It acknowledges existing protections and supports sustainable development, recognising the natural world and working with it. It is a way of supporting a thriving economy by bringing money back into the local economy.

UNESCO designation does not add any new legislation or controls to an area. It is about promoting and celebrating what is unique and special about an area in terms of the environment, culture, heritage and economy. Biospheres are seen as 'learning places for sustainable development'.

Biospheres are focused on three zones or areas known as the Core zone, Buffer or Care Zone and the Transition or Sustainable Development Zone. A Biosphere and its identified zones are not a restriction imposed from the UN or from UK government, they are selected locally based on a set of biosphere criteria. A Biosphere is not a statutory protection measure and therefore does not provide additional protection, it is a designation recognises the special qualities and ambitions of an area.

Key objectives of Forest of Dean Biosphere

- Recognise and safeguard what is Special and Valued about the Forest of Dean
- Celebrate the natural, social and cultural heritage of the area
- Facilitate Community and Stakeholder Participation in the future
- Support Sustainable Development and Prosperity for Forest of Dean
- Respond to the Climate Emergency supporting Resilience, Adaptation & Self-Sufficiency



Zones or Areas

Core areas—Comprise existing strictly protected zone that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) etc.)

Care (buffer) areas— Surround or adjoin the core area(s) and are used for activities compatible with safeguarding core areas and are areas that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education (e.g. Statutory Forest, AONB (National Landscapes) Floodplains, Local wildlife sites)

Sustainable Development (Transition) — Areas where communities' foster socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities (The District).



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.

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.

The Forest of Dean UNESCO Biosphere Application



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.

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.



TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3rd November 2025

RIVER WYE UPDATE

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Herefordshire Council have published the tender for the production of the Wye Catchment Management Plan. The Council has also taken up the secretariat of the Wye Catchment Partnership.
- At the recent Wye Catchment Partnership evidence was presented that the main drivers of algal blooms in the River Wye are Flow rates (water quantity) and water temperature (weather/climate change) with nutrients being lesser drivers, with nitrates more so than phosphates.
- The Wye & Usk Foundation is working with a range of partners and funders to develop Catchment Land & Ecosystem Approach for Resilience (CLEAR) to deliver systematic changes that will restore soils and water flows, reducing floods and helping the rural economy and ecology thrive.
- Herefordshire Rural Hub have been piloting a Wye Nutrient Balance programme with Farm Herefordshire members, helping identify and reduce farm nutrient imports and exports, while feeding into further research, knowledge sharing and business support.
- Trials of Water Crowfoot drone filming along the Wye during August produced some good results, to be developed for a wider survey next year.
- Friends of the River Wye 'Big Ranunculus Watch' generated more than 90 responses since launching in July.
- DEFRA and Welsh Government are refining the £1million research programme for the Wye to be tendered early in 2026.
- 'Forest to Sea - A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for water in the Forest of Dean' is being finalised for public consultation by Severn Vale Catchment Partnership in collaboration with the Wye Valley National Landscape Team
- The Wyescapes – food, nature, water - programme is reaching the final stages of preparation before submitting proposal to DEFRA early in 2026.
- The Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) for England and the Welsh Evidence is due to be published shortly, to feed into the review of the Catchment Management Plan.
- In November NRW, Herefordshire Council and the Forest Forum are all hosting conferences on rivers and water quality.

- Possibly the largest legal claim over environmental pollution in the UK has been filed at the High Court challenging three companies over river pollution in the Wye and Usk catchments.

Reasons

Declines in water quality in the Wye are affected by climate change and rural land use. Climatic impacts produce more intense winter rainfall and dryer hotter summers, creating potentially greater variations in high and low flows. High rainfall can lead to soil loss and nutrient enrichment of waterways, whereas low flows and hotter weather lead to increased river temperatures impacting fish, particularly salmon, and supporting algal blooms. For a summary of the issues facing the River Wye and its Catchment see <https://wyeuskfoundation.org/issues/>.

Implications

The Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) met on 18th September at Brockhampton Village Hall, with an afternoon site visit at Much Fawley. The morning was chaired by the incoming chair Stephen Ware, with appreciation and thanks extended to James Marsden for his many contributions to the Partnership in his time as chair.

The WCP meeting received a presentation on the Summary of key findings using combined biological monitoring and water data on the River Wye, by; Thom Bellamy, Peter Kille and Rupert Perkins of Cardiff University. The headline of the presentation was *Algal Biomass in the River Wye is Primarily controlled by River Flow and Temperature*. In 2020, an algal bloom along the River Wye raised concerns that phosphorus levels were driving more frequent and severe blooms. Co-funded by the Wye & Usk Foundation (WUF) and Cardiff University, the drivers for algal biomass and productivity along the River Wye were investigated using:-

- a) Biological monitoring – eDNA of bacteria, cyanobacteria and algae
- b) Water chemistry (nutrient fractions including organic P)
- c) Environmental data (flow rate, temperature)

Samples were collected every two weeks from 14 sites along the River Wye between June–Nov in 2022 and 2023 (362 samples in total). Nutrient fractions were measured and eDNA extracted by Cardiff University. The researchers determined the bacterial and algal communities from the eDNA and investigated relationships between algae and nutrients and other variables. They then investigated microbial ecological function as a function of river flow and impacts of nutrient pollution. The main findings have been:-

- Key drivers of algal biomass were river flow rate and temperature: flow regime controlled algal and bacterial community composition; algal biomass only increased with lower flows and higher temperatures.
- Algal biomass showed little link to nutrients; but Nitrogen was more important than Phosphorous.
- Under low flows during summer growth periods, bacteria indicated low levels of phosphorus in the river as a whole.
- Phosphorus in the Upper Wye exceeds Water Framework Directive limits; the Lower Wye is within limits; both nutrients (N & P) show spikes usually outside of the summer growth season.

- Phosphorus fractions are lower than historically, while nitrate is higher but still within regulatory limits.

The key conclusions at this stage are:-

- ❖ Flow rate and temperature are the primary controls requiring management for algal blooms in the River Wye.
- ❖ Phosphorus only causes legislative failures in the Upper Wye with peak values during moderate to high flows. In summer the availability (scarcity) of phosphorus, as a key nutrient for algae, appears insufficient to support further algal growth, even though other conditions like temperature and flow may be favourable.
- ❖ Further phosphorus reductions alone are unlikely to control algal growth.
- ❖ A holistic approach is needed, addressing flow regimes and riparian shading (to cool the river).
- ❖ Nutrient regulation in rivers needs a different approach if it is to contribute to improving river health.

The researchers emphasised the need to monitor the biology of the river rather than just nutrients, and that their conclusion indicate that functional biology and ecosystems are needed rather than just nutrient reductions, to restore the river's health.

The Invitation to Tender for the production of the Wye Catchment Management Plan (CMP) closed on 22nd October, with Herefordshire Council managing the procurement process. The tender advertisement was posted on the Supplying the South West contract portal. The successful contractor will consider wider aspects of catchment health, including climatic change, biodiversity loss, and geomorphology impacts. The Catchment Management Plan follows [Understanding the Wye](#) a participatory systems mapping approach that concluded in July 2024, a summary of the project can be found [here](#). The Wye CMP will be developed and drafted over the winter and should be available for implementation by the Wye Catchment Partnership by next summer.

DEFRA recently updated the Wye Nutrient Management Board on the £1million offered for in the Wye catchment to focus on land based research. The procurement process is underway to define the research criteria and the literature review to ensure there is no duplication of existing evidence. A stakeholder workshop early in the New Year will help develop the co-design of the living-laboratory approach.

The Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) for the English part of the Wye Catchment and the Welsh Evidence will be published shortly, having both been through peer review. These documents will provide an update to the current evidence of nutrient pollution in the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and evaluate the extent to which measures and mechanisms are likely to achieve the water quality improvements needed to meet conservation objectives. The DWPP will constitute the updated Wye Nutrient Management Plan. This and the Welsh Evidence documents will feed into the review of the Catchment Management Plan. The DWPP is commissioned by the Environment Agency supported by Natural England. The Welsh Evidence has been produced by Ricardo, commissioned by Herefordshire Council with funding from Welsh Government and in consultation with Natural Resources Wales.

The Wye & Usk Foundation, in partnership with two other Rivers Trusts, is developing the vision to deliver systematic change through the Catchment Land & Ecosystem Approach for Resilience (CLEAR) initiative. The project aims to restore the potential of soils in the catchment to ensure clean, cool water flows down our rivers, floods are reduced, summer

flows are stronger, the rural economy and ecology thrives, mitigating rather than exacerbating the effects of climate change. Changing the systems that are intensifying these effects is essential if we are to ensure long term resilience of our catchment's functions and services. Currently no one party can deliver this on its own, but partnership collaboration will enable this to happen. The intention is that through data, evidence and linking existing work, the initiative will create multi-product/multi-seller/multi-buyer catchment markets by converting land-use change and restoring soil infiltration into investable metrics. This would link those impacted by flooding, drought, poor water quality and environmental decline with those who manage the land (who are generating/exacerbating these issues). Investors in flood, nature and climate mitigation along with food and drink producers will be able to act together in supporting system change in land use to increase the resilience of our catchments and the infrastructure within them. For the last 3 years WUF have been working with over 120 farmers in the upper Usk and Monnow catchments researching and testing the methodology for CLEAR. The next step is to approach the market with viable products.

The Wye Nutrient Balance programme is being piloted by the Herefordshire Rural Hub, with funding from the Environment Agency. The programme has provided dedicated advice to farmers and carried out nutrient balances for over 60 farm holdings, covering more than 14,000ha. This has involved a range of farm sizes and enterprises including arable, beef, dairy, poultry and sheep. PLANET's Farmgate tool is used to record data of imports of: fertiliser or manures, Livestock bought on to holding and Feed or bedding. Likewise data of farm exports of: Manures, Livestock sold off the holding, Crops and products are similarly recorded. This provides a 'Balance of Total Nutrient Load' and 'Load per hectare' for the holding. This has produced some interesting and surprising results that are confidential to the individual farmer and advisor. However, the results are being aggregated in to a locally-owned dataset that will inform future REPHOKUS studies.

For example, REPHOKUS currently estimates an average surplus of +6.2kg P/ha, whereas the Pilot average is -14kg P/ha, but the Pilot average identified +99kg N/ha. The Pilot data differs enough that it justifies further investigation.

Herefordshire Rural Hub has also surveyed farmers involved in the Wye Nutrient Balance programme. Five key questions and the prioritised responses are as follows:

- *What barriers prevent you from making improvements to nutrient management?*
'Lack of clear, practical guidance' & 'Difficulty accessing reliable advice' were top, followed by 'Concerns about the impact on productivity' & 'Financial constraints', and then 'Uncertainty about regulations'.
- *What were the most interesting aspects for you?*
Top 2 were 'Being involved in creation of a farmer-led locally owned dataset' and 'Understanding nutrient flows on my farm' with lesser responses on 'Understanding what affects the P levels in my soils' and 'Identifying cost-saving opportunities'.
- *Have you made changes on farm as a result of your nutrient balance?* 35% Yes
- *Will you make changes in future?* 45% Yes
- *Would you repeat the process in 5 years of after management changes to quantify impact?* 100% Yes.

Further business support is available to enable reductions in nutrient load and ensure compliance with regulations. The programme also offers peer to peer skill transfer opportunities through events and Farmer led knowledge exchange groups. Clusters of farmers are also undertaking Total P testing and monitoring of land drain outfalls. The Rural Hub aims to complete at least an additional 100 farm Nutrient Balances this year.

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team has been leading on a collaborative proto-type project to test and establish a robust methodology for drone surveying of the current extent of Water Crowfoot in the Wye Catchment. The project partners include Friends of the River Wye - bringing their Citizen Science knowledge and expertise and the results to date of the 'Big Ranunculus Watch' with more than 90 responses since launching in July; CPRE Herefordshire – with their own drone; Angling Dreams – experienced riverine drone pilot; and Worcester University – with research on mapping of macrophytes including Ranunculus and use of Near Infrared drone photography. Four drone flights were completed in August with some excellent results eg. image below *[Fownhope - August 6th - 15.13pm – Eamon Bourke]*.



During the winter the results will be analysed and a project proposal submitted for funding of a complete river survey next year. The pilot was funded by the Environment Agency Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF).

'Forest to Sea - A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for water in the Forest of Dean' is being finalised for public consultation by Severn Vale Catchment Partnership in collaboration with the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners. The document sets out the environmental priorities developed with a wide range of stakeholders through the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership. The Plan seeks to include ambitious and specific objectives to be delivered by 2035 and includes the tributaries of the Wye within the Forest of Dean District. The main Environmental Priorities and Objectives are:-

- Making it easier for fish to migrate, spawn, and thrive in the Forest of Dean
- Making space for wildlife along our rivers and their floodplains
- Working in the wider landscape
- Cleaning up our rivers
- Restoring healthy flows and reducing flood risk
- Monitoring and Data
- Community engagement and partnership

The consultation is expected to run for 8 weeks, including over the Christmas holiday period, hosted by the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership.

The Wyescapes Landscape Recovery programme, covering 49 land holdings across 5,125ha between Leominster and Goodrich, is reaching the final stages of preparation before

submitting the proposal to DEFRA early in 2026. Wyescapes aims to secure 20 year Landscape Recovery funding to

- Improve resilience of farm businesses & food production
- Reduce emissions and nutrient load
- Recover habitats and species
- Restore hydrological and ecological function
- Enhance access and engagement

Once submitted it is hoped that DEFRA may determine the application within about six months. For further information see <https://herefordshireruralhub.co.uk/wyescapes/>.

In November there are 3 conferences on rivers and water quality:

- NRW River Restoration Seminar, entitled “Catchment collaborations: is it working yet?”.
- This year’s theme for the Annual Herefordshire Rivers Conference is ‘Tributaries of the Wye: Arrow, Lugg and Frome.’
- The Forest of Dean Forum theme is still being finalised on rivers and water quality.

Possibly the largest legal claim over environmental pollution in the UK has been filed at the High Court challenging three companies over river pollution in the Wye and Usk catchments. For more information see <https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2025-news/wye-pollution-legal-claim-filed-at-high-court/>

Background

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. The River Wye and its tributaries are a Special Quality as identified in the statutory Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. Most of the nutrients and contributing conditions for the algal blooms originate outside and upstream of the National Landscape.

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, Ffermio Bro, 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.

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/>.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3rd November 2025

NATIONAL UPDATES

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- DEFRA and Welsh Government officials maintain regular contact with National Landscape Lead Officers, both directly and through the National Landscapes Association and Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales.
- Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager holds the chair of Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales until June 2026.
- Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales hosted 3 events at the Royal Welsh Show, including a debate on Ffermio Bro in the NFU marquee with the deputy First Minister.
- The National Landscapes Annual Conference was 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 National Landscapes Association and Campaign for National Parks recently led a campaign to protect the strengthened duty on relevant authorities in England who 'must seek to further the purpose' of Protected Landscapes, which the Westminster Government were considering repealing.
- A new All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks and National Landscapes was launched in Westminster on 21st October 2025.
- The National Landscapes Association AGM and Chairs' Conference is in London on 20th November.
- The National Landscapes Association recently undertook a members' satisfaction survey which identified high levels of overall satisfaction with membership.
- The next National Landscapes Lead Officers Meeting is in Birmingham in mid February.
- Future funding allocations for National Landscapes from DEFRA will be determined following the Autumn Budget on 26th November.

Reasons

Both governments are broadly supportive of National Landscapes. However, public resources are likely to remain constrained. Civil servants have built effective communications channels with the National Landscape Lead Officers, both directly and

through the National Landscape Association and Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales. This enables swift and efficient exchanges of information as and when required.

In September the Campaign for National Parks heard rumours that the UK Government was considering repealing the duty on public bodies in England to “seek to further the purposes” of National Park and National Landscapes, through an amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. This was reported in The Times on 24th September.

Implications

The National Landscapes Annual Conference was on 7th – 10th July 2025 at Winchester University. The conference addressed the topic of ‘Are National Landscapes “Fit for the Future?”’ It provided 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. Nine members of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team attended. This helped new members of the Team meet colleagues from other National Landscapes and gain a perspective on the depth and breadth of the network. The programme included a range of keynote speakers and site visits to local National Landscapes and National Parks. The Ministerial address was made by Mary Creagh, DEFRA Parliamentary Under-Secretary. For more detail see <https://national-landscapes.org.uk/news/a-reflection-on-our-annual-conference-landscapes-for-the-future>. Ismail Kholwadia of Focal Elements, giving his insight and expertise in the area of race and faith in Protected Landscapes, noted, “The conference allowed for opportunities of inspiration to explore learning and engagement through shared experiences. This builds for stronger and meaningful relationships with different communities and groups that can inform positive action towards behavioural change in creating a welcoming natural world which is thriving and reflective of society. Change takes time and is gradual with consistent work.”

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) hosted 3 events at the Royal Welsh Show, 21st-24th July 2025. Andrew Blake, as current chair of TCLW, chaired a debate on the Ffermio Bro programme in the NFU marquee with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Changes and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies.

In September the National Landscapes Association, National Parks England and Campaign for National Parks became concerned by suggestions that the Government was seeking to water down or repeal the Protected Landscapes duty. The strengthened duty only became law at the end of 2023 and requires public bodies and utility companies to take an active, rather than passive, role in the environmental stewardship of National Landscapes and National Parks. The Chairs of the National Landscapes Association and National Parks England wrote to Rt Hon Steve Reed MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, stating

“Environmental and landscape protections are not a ‘brake on growth’ – they are what make our country worth living in and worth visiting for the 245 million visitors per year that visit National Landscapes and National Parks, and who generate at least £36 billion in visitor spend. Moreover, the health of our environment silently and powerfully underpins the health of our economy.....We respectfully urge both your departments (DEFRA and MHCLG) to:

- Rule out repeal or dilution of the duty as a policy option;
- Commit publicly to robust implementation, guidance, and regulations;
- Engage with stakeholders (Protected Landscape bodies; Local Authorities; relevant authorities, including planning bodies and developers; environmental NGOs) to codesign practicable approaches to implementation;
- Ensure transparency and accountability in the application of the duty in future relevant authority, infrastructure and planning decisions.”

However, following further rumours and concerns, the Campaign for National Parks co-ordinated a letter to the Prime Minister. This is appended below and was signed by over 200 organisations & individuals, including the Cllr McFarling, JAC Chair:-



On 13th October, the Westminster government published its long list of amendments for the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. This was the final opportunity for Ministers to include any legal changes: it did not contain any proposals to weaken protections for National Parks and National Landscapes.

The challenge now will be to work over the coming months to ensure that plans to weaken protections do not re-emerge. But it is also recognised that urgent progress is needed to change things for the better: to better support farmers and landowners and make our National Parks and National Landscapes richer in nature; to foster change in leadership and culture to ensure that these landscapes feel accessible and welcoming to all. In December 2025, in recognition of the 75th anniversary of the passing of the landmark post-war legislation that led to the creation of National Parks and National Landscapes, the then DEFRA Environment Secretary – Rt Hon Steve Reed MP - announced the commitment for new powers to be granted to National Parks and National Landscapes to boost nature recovery and access to the outdoors. It is hoped now that DEFRA Ministers will turn towards fulfilling this commitment. The significant support for these outstanding landscapes demonstrated through this campaign shows the potential and offer to government to work with the breadth of organisations to conserve and enhance these nationally designated landscapes and make them even better for the future.

The new All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on National Parks and National Landscapes was launched on 21st October 2025. John Watkins, Chief Executive, and Ruth Larbey, Head of Policy, at the National Landscapes Association attended the launch, along with National Parks England, Campaign for National Parks (CNP) and CPRE. Barry Gardiner MP was nominated as the new Chair with CNP being the secretariat. There was good cross-party attendance of Parliamentarians and broad discussions on Nature and Climate; the communities that live within these spaces, and how to make them thrive; inclusive access; how young people can grow their interest in these places; green jobs and rural skills of tomorrow; homes for people to live in and the impact of development across the Country were high on MPs' interests. The aims of the APPG include developing and promoting a shared parliamentary agenda based around the issues affecting National Parks and National Landscapes, and creating opportunities for MPs and Peers to experience National Parks and Landscapes first-hand, through visits and on-site briefings.

The National Landscapes Association AGM and Chairs' Conference is in London on 20th November. The annual 'Leading Landscapes' conference is an opportunity for National Landscape Chairs and Lead Officers to discuss key policy and political issues shaping the future of landscape management and conservation. As a strategic forum it provides updates, insights, and collaborative opportunities to strengthen National Landscapes individually and collectively. Keynote speakers, who will inspire exploration of issues and responses, include Mary-Ann Ochota, President of CPRE, on landscape conservation and community engagement; Natalie Prosser, Chief Executive of the Office for Environment Protection, on environmental policy developments; and Richard Hebditch, Coordinator of the Better Planning Coalition, on planning reforms and strategic land use. Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager will attend on behalf of the JAC Chair.

A National Landscapes Association member satisfaction survey was sent to all National Landscapes in England and Wales, supplemented by two workshops open to staff members of National Landscape teams. The main findings arising from the survey were:

- High levels of overall satisfaction with membership;

- Recognition and value of the growth in influence and activity of the Association in recent years;
- National Landscape teams sometimes struggle to find capacity to engage with everything on offer;
- Across key areas of member benefit, satisfaction is strongest for Policy & Advocacy and for Events;
- Voice with DEFRA, the rebrand and the annual conference are considered the delivery highlights from the last 12-18 months;
- Wish to see advocacy extending to other government departments, notably Treasury and MHCLG

The Autumn Budget on 26th November will determine the settlement for DEFRA and subsequent future funding allocations for National Landscapes.

John Watkins, National Landscapes Association Chief Executive, stated

“With government spending on landscape chronically low (all 34 National Landscapes in England share the same funding as a single medium-sized secondary school), National Landscapes’ teams have still managed to do the job. They’ve become adept at pulling in money from other sources, at convening powerful partnerships in their local areas to get the work done, and at sharing best practice across the network. For every £1 invested in us by central government, our fundraising and convening skills mean we can spend at least £4 on the ground. But rising expectations along with cost increases means continually doing even more with even less. If National Landscapes can’t keep the staff who are trusted in the local area, know the projects and apply for the external funding, we can’t bring in that additional money that means the local work gets done.

“At a time when most people are feeling the pinch of the cost of living, and society seems more divided than ever, it can be a challenge to remember that landscape is not a nice to have, but the thing that underpins everything else; without a functioning environment, we don’t have a functioning economy.”

Background

The National Landscapes Association 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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The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

CC: Darren Jones MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Steve Reed OBE MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Emma Reynolds MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Mary Creagh CBE MP, Minister for Nature

7th October 2025

Dear Prime Minister,

Do not weaken the laws protecting National Parks and National Landscapes

The British public loves our National Parks and National Landscapes. Like you, millions have beloved memories of family holidays and days out enjoying their natural beauty and wildlife. Alongside the NHS, National Parks and National Landscapes are among the most successful and popular British institutions. They were established after the Second World War as part of national renewal, driven by a Labour Government who understood the value of such places for the nation and that the simple joy of beautiful landscapes was part of what makes a good life which should be the right of every citizen, whether they live in a town, city or the countryside.

Now, we understand some in your government intend to significantly weaken protections by amending or removing the protected landscapes duty (s.245 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) a move at odds with this proud history and values. Considering such a significant change to the law at the very end of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill process, without any consultation, would undermine parliamentary conventions and public trust, creating serious uncertainty for businesses and public authorities.

Such a change would betray those values and constitute a serious backward step environmentally, socially and economically. National Parks and National Landscapes are enjoyed by 245 million visitors per year, generating at least £36bn in visitor spend. Time spent in these landscapes is scientifically proven to boost physical and mental health (annual savings to the NHS from outdoor exercise is an estimated £8bn). Their natural beauty supports thriving businesses, from local food producers to outdoor recreation, tourism, and green finance.

National Parks and National Landscapes are essential to delivering the UK's international commitment to protect and manage 30% of land for nature by 2030 and England's legally binding biodiversity targets. Removing or weakening the legal duty on public bodies to help

make these landscapes deliver more for people and for nature will erode what makes them special and undermine their economic and environmental potential.

The health of our environment underpins the health of our economy. Clement Attlee's post-war Government understood this: it is why they created National Parks and National Landscapes as part of post-war economic renewal, protecting landscapes alongside rapid housebuilding. They understood that people need places to live, and we also need places to thrive, to enjoy, to immerse ourselves in the wonders of nature.

Just ten months ago, your government celebrated 75 years of National Parks and National Landscapes, championing the protected landscapes duty. Reversing course now would set back nature recovery, economic growth, and your government's historic relationship with these special areas.

We urge you to reconsider.

Yours sincerely

Rose O'Neill, Chief Executive, Campaign for National Parks
Hilary McGrady, Director General, National Trust
Beccy Speight, Chief Executive, RSPB
Richard Benwell, Chief Executive, Wildlife and Countryside Link
Craig Bennett, Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts
Roger Mortlock, Chief Executive, CPRE, the Countryside Charity
Vanessa Rowlands, Chair, National Parks England
John Watkins, Chief Executive, National Landscapes Association
Paul Ratcliffe, Chief Executive, British Mountaineering Council
Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary, Open Spaces Society
Ross Maloney, Chief Executive, Ramblers
James Blake, Chief Executive, Youth Hostel Association
Julia Aglionby, Executive Director, Foundation for Common Land
Judy Ling Wong CBE, Honorary President, Black Environment Network
Rebecca Wrigley, Chief Executive, Rewilding Britain
Tom Usher, Chief Executive, Dartmoor Preservation Association
Jonathan Riley, Chair, Friends of the Dales
Kate O'Sullivan, Chair, Exmoor Society
Michael Hill, Chief Executive, Friends of the Lake District
Sarah Nield, Chair, New Forest Association
George Winn-Darley, Chair, North Yorkshire Moors Association
Dr Mark Collins, Chair, The Broads Society
David Green, Chair, Friends of the South Downs
Julian Glover OBE, Chair of the Independent Review of Protected Landscapes
Professor Sir John Lawton, Chair of Making Space For Nature.
Chris Smith, Lord Smith of Finsbury, Former Labour Secretary of State
Chris Mullin, Former Labour Secretary of State
Guy Shrubsole, campaigner, author of The Lie of the Land and The Lost Rainforests of Britain
Mike Bevens, Managing Director, Sawday's Canopy & Stars

Alex Beasley, Regional Manager – Northern Europe, Patagonia
 Richard Leedham, Chief Executive Officer, Rab
 Daniel Szor, Founder, Cotswold Distillery
 Dan Yates, Executive Director, European Outdoor Conservation Association
 Clare Brook, Chief Executive, Blue Marine Foundation
 Peter Brooke, Chief Executive, British Orienteering
 Kit Stoner, Chief Executive, Bat Conservation Trust
 Julie Williams, Chief Executive, Butterfly Conservation
 Hendrikus van Hensbergen, Chief Executive, Action for Conservation
 Gill Perkins, Chief Executive, Bumblebee Conservation Trust
 Paula Brunt, Trustee, Disabled Ramblers
 Hazel Norman, Chief Executive, British Ecological Society
 Mark Castle OBE, Chief Executive, Field Studies Council
 Charles Clover, Chair, Dedham Vale Society
 James Wallace, Chief Executive, River Action UK
 Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive, The Rivers Trust
 Bob Elliot, Chief Executive, Wild Justice
 Craig Macadam, Co-Leader and Director of Conservation, Buglife
 Professor Alastair Driver, Senior Advisor, Global Rewilding Alliance
 Dani Jordan, Director of Campaigns and Communities, Surfers Against Sewage
 Liz Webster, Founder, Save British Farming
 Richard Hebditch, Coordinator, Better Planning Coalition
 Professor Jeremy Biggs, Chief Executive, Freshwater Habitats Trust
 Jason Reeves, Head of Policy, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
 Nadia Shaikh and Jon Moses, co-director of the Right to Roam campaign
 Lizzie Glithero-West, Chief Executive, The Heritage Alliance
 Mary-Ann Ochota, Broadcaster and author, President CPRE the countryside charity and Patron, the Ridgeway Trail.
 Kate Jennings, Co-chair, IUCN-UK Protected Areas Working Group
 Neil Heseltine, Hill Top Farm and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority board member
 Howard Davies, Independent Environmental Advisor and member of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas
 Professor Kevin J. Gaston, Professor of Biodiversity and Conservation, University of Exeter
 David Stroud MBE, Former Chair of Ramsar Convention Science Panel
 Dr Joseph J. Bailey, Senior Lecturer in Ecology & Conservation, Anglia Ruskin University
 Charlotte A Roberts, Emeritus Professor, Durham University
 Adrian Phillips, Formerly Director General of the Countryside Commission and Chair of the World Commission of Protected Areas (IUCN), vice-president of Campaign for National Parks.
 Chris Baines, vice-president, The Wildlife Trusts
 Lisa Norton, Senior Scientist, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
 Professor Dame EJ Milner-Gulland, Tasso Leventis Professor of Biodiversity, Department of Biology, Oxford University
 Professor Rosie Hails MBE, Nature & Science Director, National Trust and University of Exeter
 Professor Dave Goulson, Professor of Life Sciences, University of Sussex
 Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive, Chilterns National Landscape

Adam King, CEO, Harvey Maps
 Kerry Humphreys, Editor, Countryside Jobs Service
 Ance Bentjen, Corporate Officer, Unterwegs
 Jørge Bartling, Managing Director, Gear Aid Europe and Gear Aid UK
 Hannah Worthington, Legal and Managing Director, Astraia Collective
 David Ekelund, Co-founder and Co-CEO, Icebug AB
 Christian Schneidermeier, Director, European Outdoor Group
 Massimo Malavasi, Co-CEO, Aquapac
 Ricky Green, Director, Sealskinz
 Jo Dawson, Chief Executive, HDWool Ltd, H Dawson Wool and Woolkeepers Ltd
 Eddy Codega, Chief Executive, C.A.M.P.
 Sophie Mather, Director, Biov8tion
 Martin Esslinger, Chief Executive, OTLIEB
 Jake Tindall, Head of Marketing, RE ZRO®
 Mathew Wilkinson, Marketing Manager, Pyranha / P&H / Venture Canoes & Kayaks
 Paul Robertson, Marketing Manager, Palm Equipment
 Andrew Wyborn, Director, Hampton Court Paddle Sports
 Chris Brain, Chris Brain Kayak Coaching
 Sam Starkie, Director, Vertical Descents Cornwall
 Sara Jones, Centre Owner/Manager, Rhos y Gwalia Outdoor Education Centre
 Nick Liley, Centre Director, Bendrigg Trust
 Tom Beeston, Chief Officer, The Chiltern Society
 Laura Burrows, Chief Executive, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
 Estelle Bailey MBE, Chief Executive, Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust
 Brian Eversham, Chief Executive Officer, The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire
 Julian Woolford, Chief Executive, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
 Jason Reeves, Head of Policy, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
 Paul Coulson, Chief Executive, Institute of Fisheries Management
 Kathy Wormald, Chief Executive, Froglife
 Nicola Hutchinson, Director of Conservation/Deputy Chief Executive, Plantlife
 David Fleetwood, Director of Land and Policy, John Muir Trust
 Nick Collinson, Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape Partnership Chair
 Cllr Andrew Reid, Chair, Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee
 Cllr Chris McFarling, Chair, Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership
 Cllr Richard Jefferies, Chair, East Devon National Landscape Management Partnership
 Matthew Arnold, Trust Operations Manager, East Yorkshire Rivers Trust
 Stuart Fraser, Director, Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre
 Sarah Carr, Chief Executive, Nature Watch Foundation
 Claire Bass, Senior director of campaigns and public affairs, Humane World for Animals UK
 Anna Hughes, Director, Flight Free UK
 Hugh Warmington, Chair, Quantock Hills National Landscape Partnership
 Tony Gent, Chief Executive, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation
 Connie Duxbury, Chief Executive, Croydon Community Energy

Robin Stamp, Chair, Friends of the Quantocks
 Chris Todd, Founder, Transport Action Network
 Bridget McKenzie, Climate Museum UK
 Cat Ainsworth, CEO, Protect Our Winters
 Sue Sayer MBE, Seal Research Trust
 Dom Ferris, Chief Executive, Trash Free Trails
 Carrie Cort, Founder, Sussex Green Living
 Patrick Norris, Footsteps in Northumberland
 Steph Bleach, Outreach and Partnership Lead, Zero Carbon Guildford
 Nigel Palmer, Chief Executive, Badger Trust
 Nick Bruce-White, Chief Executive, Devon Wildlife Trust
 Eleanor Monk, Project Leader, Green Arts Oxfordshire Network
 Dr Sarah Eglington, group coordinator, Norwich Friends of the Earth
 Hazel Draper, Co-founder, Wild Card
 Karine Decorne, National Coordinator, Culture Declares Emergency
 Eliot Line, Chief Executive, Norfolk Wildlife Trust
 Rosie Pearson, Chairman, Community Planning Alliance
 Matt Walpole, Chief Executive, Cornwall Wildlife Trust
 Adam Murray, Director of Action for Nature, Somerset Wildlife Trust
 Becca Clark, Director, Green Squirrel
 Claire Moodie, Chief Executive, Earth Action North Devon
 Jon Parkes-Withers, Public Affairs and Advocacy Lead, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
 The Viscount Addison, Campaign for National Parks Vice-President
 Janet Cochrane, Director, Ride Yorkshire
 Graham Burns, Head of Centre, Lledr Outdoor Education Centre
 Tim Taylor, Director, Patterdale Hall Residential Adventure Learning Centre
 Jonathan Sullivan, Chair, Sussex Area Ramblers
 Jo McDonald, Chair, Croyde Area Residents Association
 Tom Burditt, Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Mersey
 Jo Smith, Chief Executive, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
 Debbie Tann, Chief Executive, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
 Jim Glover, Friends of the Wildbrooks
 Steve Crowther, Chairman, Devon CPRE
 Jamie Cayzer-Colvin - Chair, North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust
 Christopher Musgrave - Chair, Marlborough Downs Nature Enhancement Farming Partnership
 Jemma Batten - Founder, Black Sheep Countryside Management
 Tony Pratt, Chair, Taw Torridge Estuary Form
 Tina Bath, Chair, Mendip Society
 David Turner, Chairman, Mendip Hills National Landscape Partnership
 Gillian Taylor, Secretary, Friends of Hollingbury & Burstead Woods
 Suzy Russell, Network Coordinator, Community Supported Agriculture
 Michael Shaw, Secretary, Association for Rural Marley
 Cllr Bob Nelson, Chair, Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Partnership
 Alan Cooke, Secretary, Friends of Craven Wood
 Dr Eirene Williams, Chair, North Devon Coast National Landscape Partnership

Paul Steedman, Director, CPRE Sussex
David Gaussen, Birmingham Friends of the Earth
Brian Bleese, Chief Executive, Dorset Wildlife Trust
Giles Watts, Chair, Dorset Climate Action Network
Jill Sutcliffe, Co-founder, Manhood and Wildlife Group
Paula Gardner, Chair, Stanmer Preservation Society
Liesje Birchenough, Chair, Coastwise North Devon
Phil Belden, Vice Chair, South Downs Network
Steve Randles, Head of Delivery, Brathay Trust
Tom Laws, Campaign Manager, Save Our Rivers
Cllr John Barrow, Chair, Dunkeswell Parish Council in Black Down Hills National Landscape
Laura Ward, Chair, EcoDewi
John Ward MBE, former Chair of the New Forest Association
Keith Howe, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Rural Policy Research, Exeter University (former Exmoor Society Vice Chair and board member of the New Forest Association)
Revd Dr Darrell Hannah, Chair, Operation Noah
David McDonald, Chair, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation
Linda Austin, Secretary, The Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens
Robert Cheesman, Secretary, CPRE Lewes District Branch
Ian Crawford, Chair, SERA South West
Richard Yates, Chief Executive, Essex Wildlife Trust
Tina Luxton, Chair, Georgeham Parish Community Land Trust
Margaret Feetham, Secretary, Sustainable Swaledale
Paul Johnson, Chair, Wildflower Conservation Society
Sophie Robinson, Land Use Plus Project Manager, Brighton and Hove Food Partnership
Linden Groves, Director, The Gardens Trust
Cllr Pete Bradbury, Chair, High Weald National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee
Pete Ward, Owner, The Real Adventure Company, Pembrokeshire
Richard Buxton, Partner, Richard Buxton Solicitors

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

3rd November 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. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects
- b. Annual Partnership Study Tour – 26th Sept 2025
- c. Marches Food Convergence, Square Farm: 3rd & 4th October 2025.
- d. Lower Wye Track & Trails
- e. Species Action Plans
- f. Cleddon Bog SSSI
- g. Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary events & walks
- h. Wye Adapt to Climate Change project
- i. Undergrounding

a. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects

The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) is a national grant scheme funded by National Grid to help reduce the visual impact of high-voltage electricity infrastructure within Protected Landscapes.

In the Wye Valley, the National Landscape Team is delivering three LEI projects within a 3km buffer of the National Grid's high-voltage powerlines, which run through Coughton, Goodrich and Marstow. This work is being carried out in partnership with Herefordshire Meadows, who undertook much of the initial groundwork to scope and plan potential projects.

Over the next three years, working with 16 landholdings, we aim to plant 5.5 km of new hedgerow and create or restore 19.5 hectares of species-rich wildflower meadows. Complementing this, we will also be installing leaky dams and creating ponds and scrapes to slow surface water flow and enhance natural flood management.

Since the first project began in January 2025, we have already:

- Installed 8 leaky dams
- Created 7 new scrapes and ponds
- Desilted a large sediment pond and built a 116m bund to divert runoff
- Harrowed and seeded 3 new meadows
- Installed 1km of fencing ahead of hedge planting this winter

b. Annual Partnership Study Tour – 26th Sept 2025

The Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership Annual Tour was held on Friday 26th September. The programme focused on projects around the Goodrich, between Ross and Monmouth. The tour included visits to: Bishopswood Village Hall, looking at undergrounding of electricity lines; Kerne Bridge Canoe launch site, talking about and seeing canoe hire operations and site management issues; Hen and Dot café, Flanesford Priory, for refreshments and to experience farm diversification in action; Priory Farm, discussing planned work under the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) and Wyescapes project. After lunch at The Hostellerie, Goodrich; Ashe Farm, Pencraig, looking at irrigation reservoirs and farm water management; below Glewstone Boat, looking at Floodplain meadow restoration and other land management issues, including glamping; finally Newhouse Farm, Brelston Green, looking at LEI work: creating ponds, scrapes & leaky dams, meadow restoration and eDNA monitoring.



A total of 31 people attended the Tour with a good spread of representation from throughout the National Landscape. Feedback from attendees has been extremely positive and the time and dedication of the speakers and hosts was greatly appreciated.

c. Marches Real Food & Farming Convergence, Square Farm: 3rd & 4th October 2025

The Marches Real Food and Farming Convergence 2025 was hosted at Square Farm, Mitchel Troy, near Monmouth on 3rd & 4th October. It was the third Convergence but the first visit to Monmouthshire, and was supported by the Wye Valley National Landscape Sustainable

Development Fund (SDF), Monmouthshire Food Partnership and The Marches Forward Partnership. Over the two days more than 150 people explored the future of local food while fostering collaborations through a variety of fascinating presentations, walks, learning circles and practical sessions. The issues of food resilience and the interconnectedness of soil, plant, animal, and human health were discussed and innovative practices shared with others actively working at the forefront of these vital topics, from across The Marches and Wales. Speakers, workshops and panel discussions focused on key themes such as agroecology, regenerative farming, and the development of strong local supply chains.

The National Landscape Team had a stand, along with other organisations and exhibitors showcasing local initiatives and resources. There was also delicious local food and live entertainment on the evening of Friday, 3 October, along with some blustery weather. For more information and photos of the event see <https://www.mrffc.uk/>.

Sadly, on Friday 17th October there was a fire at Square Farm which destroyed some of the main buildings and livestock handling area. Luckily no people or animals were hurt. But this has been devastating for the farm. They have now launched a Crowdfunder to help recover and build back something better, with the ambition to include educational and community facilities – see [Help Square Farm Rebuild From Fire to Future - a Food and Drink crowdfunding project in Monmouth by Square farm shop](#).

d. Lower Wye Track & Trails

An audit of the unsealed Unclassified County Roads (UCRs) around Tintern and Whitebrook was carried out by Earth Science Partnership (ESP) in March. Following two revisions, the final report was completed and shared with the Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Steering Group members in October. The audit examines the condition and management of approximately 11 km of unsealed UCRs, identifying issues such as environmental damage, user conflicts, and safety concerns, as well as opportunities for improvement.

A facilitated workshop will be held with the Steering Group on 17th November to present and discuss the findings ahead of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting on 26th November. Next steps include exploring a range of solutions including potential Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), identifying drainage and maintenance improvements, surface repairs, signage and conservation of natural and historical features.

New route signage has been designed for the two target areas around Tintern and Whitebrook. These are awaiting approval from Welsh Government. The signage will clearly mark the status of each track and trail, thus making it easier for users to understand the respective rights of users. They will also facilitate any enforcement necessary over illegal use or trespass. Further work is also being investigated into monitoring and surveying usage of the tracks & trails.

e. Species Action Plans

Good progress has been made on the Wye Valley's Species Action Plans over the past few months. The Water Crowfoot Action Plan is currently in an early draft stage and is on track for completion by the end of the year. Actions from the Bumblebee Action Plan are already being implemented, including the launch of BuzzWatch, a citizen science project encouraging volunteers to record bumblebee sightings and contribute valuable data on local pollinator populations. The Hedgehog Action Plan has also seen progress through a successful pilot schools monitoring project, which engaged pupils and families in using hedgehog tunnels and wildlife cameras to record activity both at school and at home. These initiatives have generated strong community participation and valuable baseline data to inform future conservation work.

f. Cleddon Bog SSSI

2025 marked the fourth year of ongoing birch and willow clearance at Cleddon Bog. Trees were stem-bored in June and later felled and cleared on 2–3 September. In total, 660 manhours were spent clearing approximately 1,800m² of bog, with four chainsaw operators and 25 labourers removing around 4,500 stems.

The GPS-collared cattle also returned for a four-month grazing period (May–August), targeting the dominant *Molinia* grass. This year, eight cattle (four Belted Galloways and four Australian Lowlines) grazed the site. Owing to the unusually dry summer, the bog remained drier than normal, and supplementary water was provided using bowsers.

A vegetation survey—the first since 2008—was carried out this summer. It confirmed the continued presence of several locally scarce or rare plants and recorded a new species for Monmouthshire: the liverwort *Kurzia sylvatica*. The bog remains of high conservation value for its mire communities. However, recommendations were made to adjust the grazing regime to limit trampling impacts on *Sphagna* and ericoid vegetation. Next year, the grazer will trial a shorter grazing period and digitally fenced zones to protect sensitive areas.

Unfortunately, some fly-tipping was also dealt with this year, including the removal of several bags of asbestos and over a hundred glass bottles.

g. Wye Valley Walk 50th Anniversary events & walks

Guided Wye Valley Walk from Source to Sea in 13 Day Walks

We wanted to do something memorable to mark the 50th anniversary of the Wye Valley Walk, which would encourage new people to take on this 138 mile long distance trail and raise awareness of it amongst walkers and walking holiday operators.

Ruth Waycott, Wye Valley National Landscape Information Officer co-ordinated, and largely led, the source to sea adventure, starting on April 19th on the windswept moorland of Plynlimon, near the source of the Wye. She led guided walks of a new section of the Wye Valley Walk roughly every two weeks, covering between 8 miles and 16 miles on each stage. This saw Spring turn to Summer (with 28 degree temperatures for 2 walks) and enjoying the vibrant autumnal colours of the Wye Valley National Landscape as walkers completed the final 25 miles in October. A heady mix of romantic viewpoints (the Lover's Leap and the Giant's Cave), the haunting ruins of Piercefield House, and the cheers and shouts of punters enjoying a day at Chepstow Races, created a spectacular finale as we arrived in Chepstow.

Completing the 138 mile Wye Valley Walk is no mean feat and we held a small celebration in Chepstow Museum, to award Wye Valley Walk badges and certificates to completers. 100 or so people joined us on the different stages along the way, some walking the whole route whilst others dipped in and out or joined us as part of Ross Walking Festival such as Fownhope Parish Footpaths Officer Will Morris. We had a walk artist, whose paintings we enjoyed in the Wyeside Arts Centre as we passed through Builth Wells. We had a geology expert who added much to our understanding of the changing landscapes we walked through. An enthusiastic amateur videographer captured the spirit of each walk, including the surprises as we stopped for tea and cake at walkers' homes we passed along the way.

We reached out to people who know and love the Wye Valley Walk and asked them if they would like to lead a section of the walk through their patch. This brought a wealth of local knowledge to each walk. Our thanks go to Graham Taylor and Peter Couchran from Powys Ramblers, Nia Lloyd Knot from Wild Trails Wales, Jill Probert from Embark Walking Holidays, Ceri Belli from Herefordshire Council Rights of Way Team, Holly Robertson from Celtic Trails and Phil, Helen and Alan from Chepstow Walkers are Welcome.

We have also been running some shorter circular walks, following sections of the Wye Valley Walk, including a nighttime walk in July where walkers heard and spotted rare nightjars, and a community walk visiting the new Wye Valley Walk benches on the Duchess's Ride.

The Outdoor Guide Collaboration

We have been working with The Outdoor Guide on a collaboration putting the Wye Valley Walk onto this popular walking platform. The first phase of this is now live here:

<https://theoutdoorguide.co.uk/walking-routes/long-distance-walks/wye-valley-walk/> and will continue to be developed this autumn. With The Outdoor Guide we will also be rolling out 'Waterproofs and Wellies' packs for schools near the Wye Valley Walk this Autumn.

Travel Lightly – Public Transport Map for the Wye Valley Walk

We are producing a map showing the public transport options for Wye Valley Walkers.

Wye Valley Walk Benches

Five eye catching benches, installed this summer at some of the best viewpoints along the Wye Valley Walk, have been enthusiastically received. One was placed at the start of the Walk in

Hafren Forest with the others dotted through the National Landscape in Fownhope, at Caplor Viewpoint, Townsend Farm and Duchess's Ride. We are hoping to secure funding for five more benches for locations on the path in Wales.



Anniversary bench at Duchess's Ride



Nearing journey's end at the Eagle's Nest
Certificates & badges mark 138 miles!



Feedback – a selection of the feedback we have had from the 50th Anniversary Walks

"I just feel pure joy knowing I'll have finally completed the whole of the Wye Valley Walk."

"My highlights have definitely been the connection I have made with the area that I now live in, the walk has really brought to life everything that is great and beautiful about the Wye Valley. I have hugely enjoyed the diversity of people doing the walks and have learnt a great deal about the regional flora & fauna, farming practices, history and of course geology! It has also been good to widen my knowledge of political and environmental actions (or non-actions) and how

the many organisations in the area who are passionate about preserving and enhancing our countryside are working towards a common goal.”

“Eating watermelon in a quiet churchyard has to be one of the most memorable moments!”

“A surprising aspect of these walks is how people who were once strangers have become friends who I am genuinely happy to see each time. There’s something special about sharing the journey together, the chats, the laughter, and the quiet moments along the way. Thank you for making it happen.”

“It has certainly uncovered many hidden gems which I will explore further. It's further impressed upon me what a special and sacred place the Wye Valley is. Walking the whole route has given me such a place of pride, it's really felt like I have inhabited it and fully put down roots here.”

“As a neurodivergent person, I can find route planning and logistics a bit complicated, and whilst I can work it all out myself it can become an inhibiting factor. Also as a solo walker, I usually stick to circular routes so this was a real change. Having the logistics taken care of was a welcome relief and definitely made the route more accessible. I can also find large group activities quite tiring but it's been a pleasure and I feel I've made friends, especially with people I may not have met organically so it has been enriching and interesting - you created such a warm and supportive atmosphere which really elevated the experience for all of us. A kind and thoughtful guide, creating a magical experience for us all and I will be forever glad that I signed up.”

“A terrific collection of great people each with their interesting life experiences and stories to share. I have learned about other walks of life, eccentric recipes, ethical investment, the realities of farming, running a travel company etc. I have genuinely enjoyed being with a floating population of fellow walkers, some did just one walk, others a couple, all were a delight and added to the fun of the whole endeavour. Everyone ‘bought something to the table’ and in times when the world around us seems so troubled it has been the antithesis. I have LOVED the whole darn thing.”

“I just wanted to congratulate you on a fantastic 50th anniversary celebration of walking the river wye. I particularly want to highlight to you the outstanding work of Ruth Waycott. She was amazing and went above and beyond in her role and must be congratulated on doing the most fantastic work. Congratulations to you all.”

h. Wye Adapt to Climate Change project

In September, the Wye Adapt project hosted a successful ‘Day of Action’, bringing together around 20 events across the Wye Valley National Landscape and Hereford. Delivered in partnership with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (HWT), the day featured activities led by staff

from the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, HWT and a range of community groups and organisations.

Events focused on climate action, nature recovery, and sustainability, with highlights including free travel on the 65 and 69 bus routes between Monmouth and Chepstow—sponsored in collaboration with Monmouthshire County Council—to encourage sustainable transport. Other activities included farm walks showcasing climate-friendly farming, a tour of an off-grid smallholding, and river surveys exploring local biodiversity. Around 150 people took part in events throughout the day (not including bus passengers – which increased), and overall feedback was positive.

Farm advice and delivery (July to October): Seven new farms were visited to provide advice on Nature-Based Solutions. Recommendations from visits earlier in the year have led to on-the-ground action, including the restoration of one pond, creation of three new ponds, seeding of 4 hectares of herbal ley, and around 25 hectares of meadow restoration at various sites, many of these actions have been funded through a WVNL grant e.g. FiPL or SLSP.

In addition, the installation of eight leaky dams, creation of a new pond and bund, and desilting of an existing sediment pond was overseen across three landholdings in Marstow, funded through the Landscape Enhancement Initiative.

i. Undergrounding

Working in partnership with National Grid and the West Midlands Protected Landscapes, five schemes are now approved and with local National Grid teams for landowner consultation and delivery. Three schemes in the Herefordshire part of the National Landscape will see 3.2km of overhead lines removed and placed underground. Two schemes in Monmouthshire will see 1.4km of overhead line undergrounded. The feasibility of an additional scheme is being assessed in the Gloucestershire part of the National Landscape. Should all schemes progress to delivery, work should be completed by the end of March 2028.