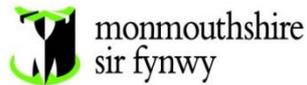


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County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Monday, 2 March 2026

## Notice of meeting:

### Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee

Monday, 9th March, 2026 at 2.00 pm,  
The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, High Street, Coleford, GL16 8HG & Hybrid on Microsoft Teams

## AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Hybrid Introductions, new members and apologies for absence.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Question Time.	
4.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	1 - 14
4.1.	Matters arising (verbal update):	
4.2.	Dixton Housing & Monmouthshire RLDP delay.	
4.3.	Wyesham A466 Wye Valley Walk footway.	
4.4.	JAC Membership Review.	
5.	Pre-Consultation Draft Management Plan Framework.	15 - 44
6.	Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan.	45 - 92
7.	Wye Valley National Landscape Funding & Work Programme 2026-27.	93 - 98
8.	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Proposed Reforms.	99 - 102
9.	Updates on Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL), Ffermio Bro, Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) Wye Valley National Landscape Fund.	103 - 108

<b>10.</b>	<b>River Wye Charter and Update.</b>	109 - 120
<b>11.</b>	<b>National and Local Updates.</b>	121 - 124
<b>12.</b>	<b>Dates of meetings for 2026:</b> Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> July 2026 at 2.00pm. Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> 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**

Councillor C. Rees – 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  
C. Hinds – 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

Gofynnir i chi nodi y bydd Cyngor Sir Fynwy yn ffilmio'r cyfarfod hwn ac y bydd ar gael i'w weld ar-lein ar ffurf fyw ac archif. Mae'n bosibl y gellid ffilmio ardaloedd lle mae'r cyhoedd yn eistedd a drwy fynd i mewn i'r Siambr rydych yn cydsynio i gael eich ffilmio a defnydd posibl y delweddau hynny a recordiad sain ar gyfer dibenion gwe-ddarlledu. Os ydych yn gwneud sylw i'r cyfarfod bernir eich bod wedi cydsynio i gael eich ffilmio.

Caiff recordiadau o'r cyfarfod eu cadw yn unol â pholisi'r Cyngor ar gadw data. Dim ond os yw'r Swyddog Monitro yn ystyried bod angen hynny oherwydd bod y cyfan neu ran o gynnwys y gwe-ddarllediad yn neu'n debygol o fod yn groes i unrhyw ddarpariaeth statudol neu athrawiaeth cyfraith gyffredin, er enghraifft deddfwriaeth Diogelu Data a Hawliau Dynol neu ddarpariaethau yn ymwneud â gwybodaeth gyfrinachol neu eithriedig, y caiff gwe-darllediadau neu rannau o we-ddarllediadau a archifwyd eu tynnu o wefan y Cyngor.

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### **Welsh Language**

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# 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, 3rd November, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

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

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

#### **Monmouthshire County Council**

County Councillors E. Bryn and A. Webb

#### **Gloucestershire County Council**

County Councillor B. Hoyland and G. Moseley

#### **Herefordshire Council**

Councillor S. Cole

#### **Forest of Dean District Council**

Councillor D. Wheeler

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

Herefordshire of Local Councils – Councillor B. Jones

One Voice Wales – Councillor L. Parker

### **Co-opted Members (without voting powers)**

Local Wildlife Trusts – Dr. J. Hynes

Ms. H. O’Kane – Local Tourism Sector

### **Technical Advice Officers**

National Landscape Manager – Mr. A. Blake

National Landscape Team – Ms. C. Laidlaw

National Landscape Team – Mr. N. Critchley

National Landscape Team – Mr. C. Davies

Monmouthshire County Council - Mr. R. Williams

Gloucestershire County Council – Mr. A. Deb

Forest of Dean District Council – Alistair Chapman

### **Others present:**

Councillor R. Hatton (Monmouth Town Council)

Councillor M. Getgood (Coleford Town Council)

Mr. J. Pearce – Member of the Public

## 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 Teamson Monday, 3rd November, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

### **APOLOGIES:**

Councillors: D. Rooke, E. O'Driscoll, B. Durkin, M. Price

Mr. A. Lee, Mr. M. Price, Ms. C. Bosley, Mr. I. Williams, Mr. M. Quine

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

None received.

### **2. Public Questions**

We received the following question from Jonty Pearce:

“Monmouthshire County Council has approved a controversial plan to build 270 houses at Dixon Road in Monmouth, within the setting of the Wye Valley National Landscape. The decision passed by the narrowest margin—23 votes for and 23 against—only succeeding due to the chairman’s casting vote. The council had two choices to build houses in Monmouth but have chosen the most sensitive and ecologically damaging site, despite having alternative locations available.

“The development poses two threats to the Wye Valley National Landscape. Firstly, it will be highly visible from iconic viewpoints such as the Kymin, Naval Temple, Little Doward Hill Fort, and parts of Offa’s Dyke National Path, creating a significant visual intrusion for visitors. Secondly, it will destroy a vital foraging area used by 13 of the 15 bat species found in Wales, including the rare greater horseshoe bat. This site supports more bat species than the entire county of Pembrokeshire and lies close to Newton Court, a designated SSSI maternity roost.

“Despite strong objections from the Wye Valley National Landscape Team, nearly 950 residents and organizations during the RLDP consultation, Monmouthshire County Council dismissed these concerns with a standard “no change needed” response. Notably, while the plan includes a green wedge for the Brecon Beacons National Park, no such protection was offered for the Wye Valley, even though both designations carry equal legal weight. Cadw also objected, citing the development’s proximity to scheduled monuments and the Dixon Conservation Area, warning of unacceptable harm to these heritage assets.”

In response to the public question, the Joint Advisory Committee Chair confirmed that the Wye Valley National Landscape Team has opposed the allocation at every stage and will continue to do so during the upcoming public inquiry. However, writing to Welsh Ministers is unlikely to influence the outcome, as they typically refrain from intervening in formal planning processes. The National Landscape Team plans to participate actively in the examination by submitting hearing statements, attending hearings, and negotiating statements of common ground with Monmouthshire County Council to challenge the allocation.

## 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 Teamson Monday, 3rd November, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

During the discussion on matters arising, concern was raised regarding the collapsed footpath on the Wyesham riverside of the Wye Valley Walk and also the dangerous roadside section between Redbrook and Monmouth was highlighted. A question was asked if there had been any progress from Monmouthshire County Council in providing a proper footpath for that section of the Wye Valley Walk. The response confirmed that the issue remains unresolved. While communication lines with Monmouthshire County Council are open, officers are not currently aware of any plans to install a pavement for the footpath. It was agreed that this matter should be brought to the Council's attention again, given the significant safety risk to walkers. It was noted that the section is hazardous because fast-moving vehicles encounter walkers with no safe space to walk, creating a serious accident risk.

With regard to the Overlooking the Wye infrastructure, it was confirmed that this work has not progressed and remains on the National Landscapes Team's schedule. Although a small budget is available and can be carried forward, the delay is due to a lack of officer time rather than funding. The audit will likely not happen in the current financial year but may be scheduled for the next. In the meantime, monitoring is taking place to ensure safety, particularly at high-risk sites such as the Wye Valley Walk through Piercefield, where a recent landslide near the Alcove viewpoint has been addressed. The team also acknowledged that some interpretation boards are now illegible after 15 years and will need replacing or redesigning as part of a larger maintenance project.

### **Dixton Housing proposed site response**

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) discussed alternative sites to the Dixon Road development in Monmouth. It was noted that the Council's landscape sensitivity and capacity study rated Dixon Road as having medium to high sensitivity to development. While other potential sites were assessed, an alternative candidate site on Wonastow Road was identified. This site is adjacent to existing developments and it was considered that it could accommodate 175 houses plus two hectares of employment land and lies on a national cycle route. It is largely screened from the Wye Valley by natural landforms and is relatively flat, making visual mitigation easier. Bat surveys showed significant differences. Dixon Road recorded 206 greater horseshoe bat passes in two weeks, compared to just six at Wonastow Road, indicating a far less ecological impact on the SSSI.

However, it was noted that the Wonastow Road site poses flooding concerns, as it is accessed via Watery Lane or Wonastow Road which are both prone to flooding. This has worsened with recent housing developments. This highlights that all sites have trade-offs. The JAC agreed that these issues will be examined during the public inquiry, where the

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Inspector will weigh environmental, biodiversity, and practical considerations before making a decision.

#### **Joint Advisory Committee Review**

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is currently reviewing several vacant seats and working to recruit new members. Efforts have been made to approach various organizations for nominees, but the response so far has been disappointing. Two organizations have been contacted: one attempted to find new members but was unsuccessful, and the other has yet to respond. Initially, these were considered the easier options, with plans to expand outreach to a broader range of organizations afterward. However, the process has proven more challenging than expected.

Despite these challenges, efforts will continue to be made to strengthen and expand the membership of the Joint Advisory Committee. Progress is unlikely before the next scheduled meeting in March 2026. Members were encouraged to suggest potential candidates or contacts who might be suitable for the vacant roles.

#### **4. Forest of Dean Biosphere Initiative**

We received a report seeking support for the application to have the Forest of Dean designated as a UNESCO Biosphere.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- 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.

The Forest of Dean District Council is preparing an application to UNESCO to designate the Forest of Dean as a Biosphere Reserve. This initiative aims to reconcile nature conservation with sustainable use, enhance biodiversity, promote education and research, and foster a cultural shift toward living harmoniously with nature. The UK is

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among the most nature-depleted countries globally, so this designation is seen as a significant step toward reversing that trend.

The biosphere designation will not introduce new legislation but will act as an umbrella framework to align existing efforts and plans. It will include three zones:

- **Core Zone:** Areas with statutory protection (e.g., SSSIs and SACs).
- **Care Zone:** Buffer areas supporting conservation and public access.
- **Transition Zone:** The wider Forest of Dean administrative area promoting sustainable development.

The application process involves submitting a formal bid by September next year, with preparatory work completed by April 2026. The Forest of Dean is already recognized as a candidate site and is supported by the UK Man and Biosphere Committee, with North Devon Biosphere acting as a critical friend. The initiative will complement, not replace, the Wye Valley National Landscape, and both will work in partnership.

It is anticipated that the Forest of Dean Biosphere will be established before Local Government Reorganisation takes place in England.

We resolved:

- (i) To formally endorse and support the Forest of Dean Biosphere initiative.
- (ii) To send a letter of support for a Forest of Dean Biosphere to the Forest of Dean District Council for inclusion in the UNESCO application.
- (iii) To nominate Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape Manager, to be the point of contact to act as the liaison between the Joint Advisory Committee and the Forest of Dean Biosphere initiative.

#### **5. Management Plan Review**

We received a report regarding the revised programme for the preparation and publication of the Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The existing Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) needs to be reviewed, under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act Section 89, by the end of 2026.
- The 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.

## 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, 3rd November, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

- The proposed Vision for the new Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan is outlined in the report and comments are welcome before consolidation into the Public Consultation Draft version.

The review of the Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan is progressing, though there has been some slippage in the original timetable. A draft version is expected to go out for public consultation early in the new year. The proposed new 20-year vision for the area, intended for inclusion in the next five-year management plan, is outlined in the report with the previous vision from 2009 shown for comparison. The updated vision has been simplified without losing its core meaning, and feedback is welcomed before the consultation document is finalised.

The revised timetable for the review is detailed within the report. The next critical step is completing the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which depends on the draft management plan being ready for consultation. Despite delays, the Wye Valley National Landscape Team anticipates delivering the final management plan by this time next year. To ensure robust public engagement, the Joint Advisory Committee emphasized adherence to the Gunning Principles, which require consultation at a formative stage, provision of sufficient information, adequate time for responses, and conscientious consideration of feedback.

A winter seminar, likely to be held in late January or early February 2026, will coincide with the consultation period and serve as an open event for stakeholders to discuss the plan in depth. Additional public-facing activities are being considered as well as collaboration with local groups to maximize participation. The aim is to achieve broad engagement and avoid minimal turnout, ensuring the consultation process is meaningful and inclusive.

We resolved to endorse the revised programme for the review and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

#### **6. Annual report 2024/25 figures and future Local Authority contributions**

We received a report regarding 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.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The summary financial report outlines the delivery of the Work Programme for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team during 2024/25.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the continued effective

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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.

The discussion centred on how funding is managed across different areas and projects. Multiple pots of money from various sources are pooled together, offering some flexibility in spending. However, there are restrictions. Funds allocated for England cannot be spent in Wales and vice versa. Each grant comes with its own criteria, making administration complex. Core contributions go toward revenue, while other funds are designated for capital projects. Staff salaries and operational costs are also covered from these funds.

A significant portion of expenditure relates to the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, which accounted for nearly half of last year's spending. Differences between income and expenditure often arise because certain posts are funded from these allocations. Managing these funds requires considerable administrative effort due to the complexity of rules and processes.

Infrastructure projects, such as bridge repairs were noted. Support is being provided to Gloucestershire County Council with preliminary investigations for Redbrook and Lydbrook bridges, though securing funding remains challenging given the high costs involved. Other bridges, such as Foy Bridge, have recently closed due to structural issues, highlighting the urgency of maintenance.

Concerns were raised about stagnant core funding from local authorities, which has not increased for many years. A flat rate is proposed for the next three years, for example, Forest of Dean District Council will continue contributing £5,826 annually. It was suggested that a 5–10% increase in core funding be sought to strengthen this vital funding, which currently leverages 32 times its value in additional income. This increase would demonstrate a stronger commitment to sustaining essential projects and infrastructure.

We resolved:

- (i) To welcome the Annual Report figures for 2024/25.
- (ii) To request the constituent local authorities commit to the agreed financial contributions and a renewed Memorandum of Understanding for 2026-2029.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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- (iii) The Chair will write to the constituent local authorities asking for consideration to be given to increasing core funding by 5 - 10%.

#### **7. NLHF Landscape Connections Expression of Interest**

We received a report seeking members' support for the submission of an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections programme.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- 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 intends 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.

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team is preparing an expression of interest for the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Landscape Connections programme. This competitive scheme is open to National Parks and National Landscapes, with around 20 projects expected to be funded over the next decade. The Team's proposal focuses on improving the health of the River Wye by targeting its tributaries, farming practices, and land use, while also strengthening local community connections to these landscapes. Collaboration with partners such as the Wye and Usk Foundation, the Marches Food and Farming Convention, and the Herefordshire Rural Hub has shaped the proposal.

If accepted, the project will enter a two-year development phase followed by an eight-year delivery programme. The plan excludes the River Monnow catchment because of its size and location outside the designated landscape, though the Team intends to work

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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closely with existing projects there to share best practices. The initiative will also complement other programmes like Wyescapes and avoid duplication of efforts.

This project could secure up to £10 million in funding and run until 2037.

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) supported the submission of the expression of interest. The JAC also emphasized the importance of collaboration with groups addressing issues in the Monnow catchment, given its significant impact on the Wye's water quality.

We resolved to endorse 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.

#### **8. Grant Funds and Panels Update**

We received a report updating 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).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- 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.

The Joint Advisory Committee discussed the administration of several delegated grant schemes aimed at supporting environmental and community projects. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) program, funded by Defra, has a budget of £339,000 for the year, with approximately two-thirds already allocated. This scheme helps farmers and landowners meet criteria focused on nature, climate, people, and place, with applications assessed by an independent Local Assessment Panel and monitored for compliance.

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Similarly, the Welsh Government's Ffermio Bro scheme, in its first year, has a smaller budget of £95,000. So far, £46,000 has been approved, and further applications are under review, potentially bringing the spend to 74%. Both FiPL and Ffermio Bro operate on a reimbursement basis, paying grants after project completion and verification.

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), also from Welsh Government, provides £95,000 for community and individual projects, with a strong emphasis on climate and nature initiatives. Around 30% of this fund remains available for allocation before the end of the financial year. The Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) fund is currently closed to allow consolidation, as its balance is too low for significant grants. Members emphasized the need for greater clarity and requested more detailed narratives on funded projects, including outputs and value for money. Examples such as hedgerow restoration were highlighted, with calls for data on the total length of hedging replanted. The team agreed to provide these details in future reports and annual summaries, noting that many projects serve as pilot schemes that inspire wider adoption beyond their immediate scope.

We resolved to endorse the recent allocations of FiPL, Ffermio Bro and SDF grants.

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

We received a report regarding the latest activities to help restore the River Wye.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Herefordshire Council has 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 has 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.

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- 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 Natural Resources Wales (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.

Recent scientific research has revealed that phosphates and nitrates, previously thought to be the main drivers of toxic algal blooms in the River Wye, are not the primary cause. Instead, climate change factors such as reduced summer river flows and rising water temperatures are now understood to be the key contributors to these ecological problems.

Legal actions, such as the Leigh Day case, are addressing historic pollution issues, but these cases do not necessarily help move forward with practical solutions. Companies like Avara and Welsh Water have acknowledged past problems and invested in improvements. Welsh Water is committing around £50 million to upgrade treatment plants. The emphasis now is on collaborative, forward-looking approaches. Many stakeholders, including the Wye and Usk Foundation, are working on catchment-based strategies to reduce flood peaks and improve water retention in upstream areas. This involves engaging landowners to adopt practices that make land more absorbent, thereby reducing runoff and mitigating flooding downstream.

Future plans include installing monitoring systems on tributaries to identify problem areas and target interventions effectively. Additionally, there are discussions about managing water abstraction and negotiations over reservoir releases to maintain river levels and control temperature, which is critical for species like salmon. Overall, the focus is shifting toward integrated catchment management, climate adaptation, and partnership-driven solutions to restore the health of the River Wye.

We noted the report.

## 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 Teamson Monday, 3rd November, 2025 at 2.00 pm

#### 10. National Updates

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

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- DEFRA 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 was considering repealing.
- A new All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks and National Landscapes was launched in Westminster on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025.
- The National Landscapes Association AGM and Chairs' Conference is in London on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025.
- 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 2026.
- Future funding allocations for National Landscapes from DEFRA will be determined following the Autumn Budget on 26th November 2025.

A key theme is the growing concern over continued funding cuts, which threaten the ability of National Landscapes and National Parks to maintain staff and deliver essential services. The National Landscapes Association, along with its partners, is actively negotiating with the government to sustain or increase funding, emphasizing the significant benefits these areas provide to the country.

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Additionally, the Infrastructure and Planning Bill is currently progressing through Parliament. The bill, now in the House of Lords, has sparked widespread criticism because it could weaken protections for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation SACs. This change would make it easier for developers to build on ecologically sensitive land, posing a serious threat to wildlife and natural habitats. Environmental organizations have expressed strong opposition, urging stakeholders to submit objections and propose amendments before the bill reaches the House of Commons for a vote in the coming weeks. The urgency of this response reflects the UK's status as one of the most nature-depleted countries globally, underscoring the importance of safeguarding existing protections.

We noted the report.

#### **11. Partner and AONB Unit progress reports and updates**

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

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

The Wye Valley National Landscapes Manager highlighted several ongoing initiatives within the Wye Valley National Landscape. The Landscape Enhancement Initiative is progressing well, with practical work underway such as species-rich meadow restoration, new hedgerow planting, and natural flood management measures. These efforts are part of a three-year program, ensuring continued activity over the coming years. The Annual Partnership Study Tour successfully showcased many of these projects, drawing strong attendance and engagement.

Another key event was the Marches Real Food and Farming Convergence at Square Farm, Mitchel Troy, which focused on sustainable food systems and resilience. The

## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Tracks and Trails project is advancing, with a steering group meeting scheduled to review a new report and plan next steps.

Further updates include species action plans work with hedgehogs, conservation tasks at Cleddon Bog, and celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Wye Valley Walk, which featured a series of guided walks from April to October. The Wye Adapt Climate Change Project is also making good progress, integrating with other initiatives to promote pond creation and flood management interventions, and hosting a successful Climate Action Day that included subsidized bus services to encourage sustainable travel.

Work continues on undergrounding low-voltage power lines in partnership with National Grid, aimed at reducing visual impact and improving landscape quality.

We noted the report.

#### **12. Provisional dates of meetings for 2026**

Monday 2nd March 2026 at 2.00pm.

Monday 6th July 2026 at 2.00pm.

Monday 2nd November 2026 at 2.00pm.

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

**The meeting ended at 3.59 pm.**

## PRE-CONSULTATION DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

### ***Purpose***

To present the pre-consultation draft framework for the Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan and the revised programme.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Provides initial comment and feedback on the pre-consultation draft framework for the Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan before 31<sup>st</sup> March.
- B. Endorses the revised programme for the review and publication of the National Landscape Management Plan.
- C. Recognise that the revised Management Plan is unlikely to be finalised and adopted in 2026, and therefore set the new Management Plan for 2027-2032.

### ***Key Issues***

- The proposed Vision for the National Landscape Management Plan 2026-2031 was agreed at the last meeting.
- The pre-consultation draft framework for the revised Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan is appended and comments can be accommodated if received by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.
- The Public Consultation Draft Management Plan will then be finalised and published with a 10 week consultation period, including 3 public events.
- There is some slippage in the review programme with the likelihood that the new Management Plan will not be formally approved by the Local Authorities and JAC before the end of 2026. Therefore the 5 year period of the new Management Plan should be realigned to cover 2027-2032.
- The current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) will remain valid until the new National Landscape Management Plan is adopted.

### ***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.

### ***Implications***

The appended document 'Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan Framework Structure and draft policies for review' includes the proposed Special Qualities and Policies for the new Management Plan. These have been reviewed and rationalised with the Special Qualities condensed from 27 down to 18, and the Policies reduced from 71 Strategic Objectives to 50 Policies, across the Themes of Nature, Climate, Water, People and Place. Under each Theme is a series of Outcomes for the Plan period, with respective Policies.

The five-theme structure reflects Natural England's and Natural Resource Wales' respective Management Plan guidance, aligns with DEFRA's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, and ensures cross-border policy responsibilities are addressed. Water is treated as a standalone theme to reflect the central importance of the River Wye and catchment pressures for the National Landscape and its communities.

Appended below is the revised programme for the Management Plan review. There have been further delays in the preparation of the draft Management Plan due to other work pressures within the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. The attached updated timetable identifies that completion of the Management Plan review is unlikely to conclude before the end of 2026. However, the statutory 5 year review of the Plan is underway and the current Management Plan (2021-2026) will remain valid until the new Plan is formally adopted by the Local Authorities and JAC. Therefore the 5 year period of the new Management Plan should be realigned to cover 2027-2032.

The Public Consultation process will last for 10 weeks and include 3 open events at different locations and times across the National Landscape. This will enable a range of stakeholders to engage face to face as part of the public consultation.

### ***Background***

The CRoW Act 2000 (Sections 89 and 90) require local authorities to review AONB Management Plans within five years of the publication of a Plan. The Management Plan formulates 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/>



**Dyffryn Gwy**  
Tirwedd Cenedlaethol

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**Wye Valley**  
National Landscape

## **Management Plan 2026-2031**

### **Framework Structure and draft policies for review**

January 2026

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# Proposed Management Plan document structure

## **FRONT MATTER**

Title, map, forewords, executive summary

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

About Plan; The WVNL, Review 2021-26; Delivery; Monitoring; How to use (policy cascade/framework)

## **2. THE WVNL TODAY**

Special Qualities; Statement of Significant; Condition; Key Issues; Setting

## **3. VISION**

Vision; Vision to Outcomes; Outcomes to actions/policies

## **4. NATURE**

6 policies; Background; Special Features; Key Issues

## **5. CLIMATE**

5 policies; Background; Special Features; Key Issues

## **6. WATER**

3 policies; Background; Special Features; Key Issues

## **7. PEOPLE**

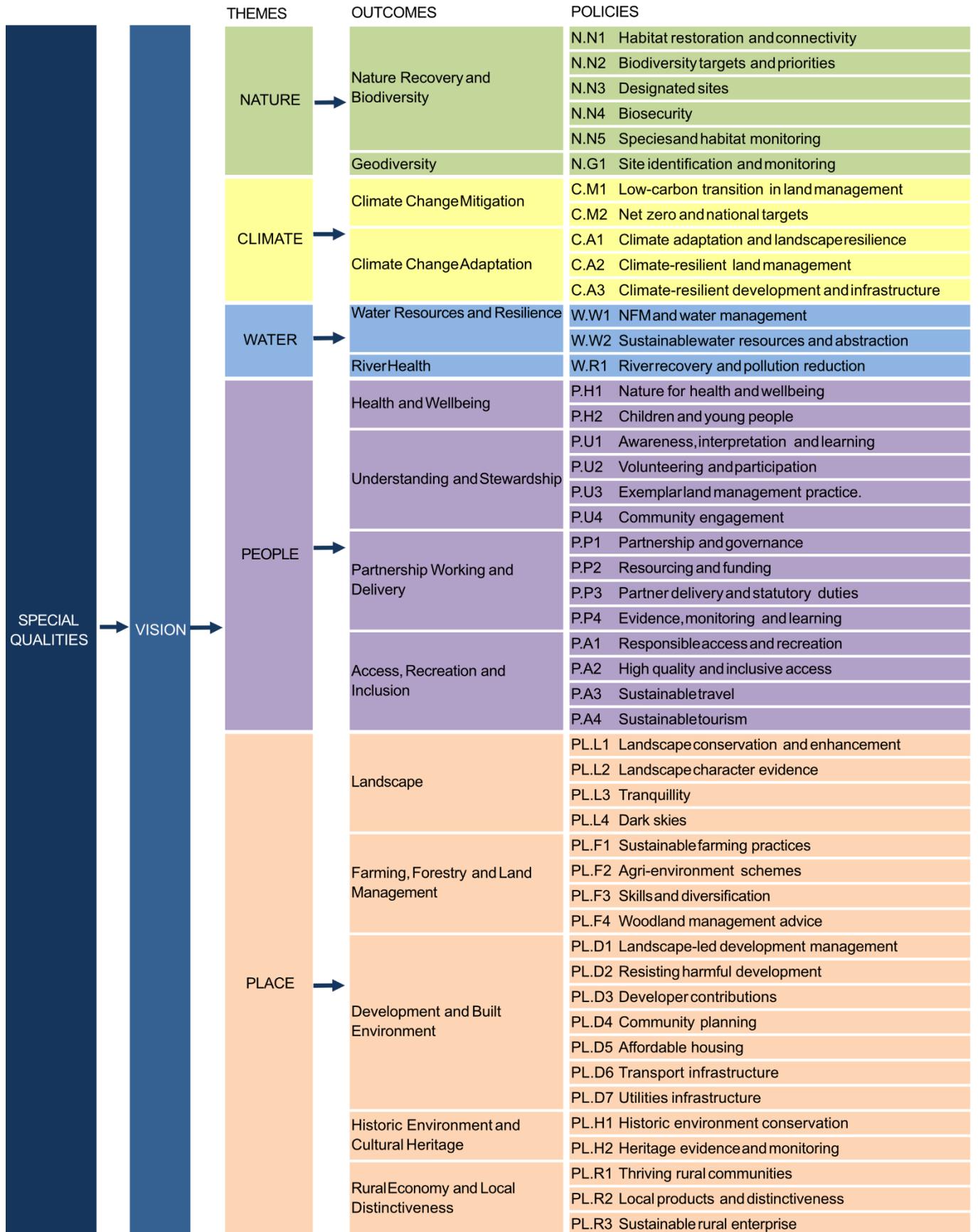
14 policies; Background; Special Features; Key Issues

## **8. PLACE**

20 policies; Background; Special Features; Key Issues

## **9. APPENDICES**

SEA; HRA; Glossary



# Special Qualities

\*\*Statistics/data to be updated

Special Quality	Extent	Recognition	Condition	Changes or Threats	
<b>Overall</b>					
1	<b>Overall Landscape - 16 Landscape Management Zones with key features</b>	Whole National Landscape	Nationally designated protected landscape: Outstanding (see county Landscape Character Assessments and LandMap)	Purpose of National Landscape designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty	Sustainable land management &/or ownership that conserves or enhances key landscape characteristics and features; Inappropriate land management may degrade or destroy landscape features (including neglect, addition of inappropriate features, ongoing loss & decline of elements that define landscape character resulting in increased uniformity and loss of distinctiveness)
<b>Biodiversity</b>					
2	<b>Woodlands - Diversity of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) including 35 SSSIs and many ancient/veteran trees</b>	**27.5% woodland cover in National Landscape. c6685 ha of Ancient woodland covers 20.42% of National Landscape. SSSIs cover 1587 ha, 4.85% of National Landscape. Public Forest Estate (PFE) cover 15.3% of National Landscape	Diversity of ASNW and PAWS including 35 SSSIs and many ancient/veteran trees. Some plantation and other woodland.	**Varied; much ASNW under managed, some PAWS being restored [in English part of National Landscape 71% of woodland SSSIs in favourable condition]	Inappropriate management may degrade or destroy habitat or species; Lack of management may result in loss of habitat for light-demanding species and coppice/understorey; Disease may decimate key species (eg. Ash dieback,

Special Quality	Extent	Recognition	Condition	Changes or Threats
				Phytophthora); Invasive non-native species (eg. Rhododendron, Laurel); Climate change
3	<b>The river &amp; tributaries, and associated floodplains, wetlands and geomorphology</b>	c40km of main river, plus numerous minor tributaries and floodplains and wetlands throughout the National Landscape	River Wye SAC/SSSI plus other SSSIs	<p>**Range of issues affecting condition including: siltation, pollution, invasive species, bankside management. River Wye SAC: England 0% favourable, Wales 0.36% favourable [NRW/NE assessment 2020]</p> <p>Unsympathetic land management may degrade or destroy habitat and species, including river engineering for flood control, recreational interest or development; Pollution and siltation from agriculture, development and storm water overflow; Invasive non-native species (eg. Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, signal crayfish); Loss of fish, including salmon and eels; Barriers to fish migration; Climate change - drought or flood; Disease</p>
4	<b>Species-rich grassland, including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland, often bounded by drystone walls or old hedges</b>	Scattered through-out National Landscape	Numerous local sites and some SSSIs	Variable; some SSSIs in favourable condition, much semi-improved grassland in unfavourable declining condition

Special Quality		Extent	Recognition	Condition	Changes or Threats
5	<b>Boundary habitat diversity &amp; connectivity, e.g. between grassland &amp; woodland, farmland &amp; heathland, tidal river &amp; ASNW, hedges &amp;/or drystone walls, lanes, banks, verges and fields &amp; woods</b>	Throughout National Landscape	Recognised locally and some national recognition	Variable	Inappropriate management may degrade or destroy habitat, including over-cutting or neglect of hedges, removal of hedgerow trees, neglect or removal of drystone walls, widening of lanes; Agricultural intensification; Development
6	<b>Orchards - Traditional orchards mostly cider apples and perry pear also commercial apple standard and bush orchards</b>	Throughout National Landscapes, dependant on geology and topography. New commercial orchards being planted.	Traditional orchards mostly cider apples and perry pear also commercial apple standard and bush orchards	Many traditional orchards redundant or underused. New commercial planting of bush orchards	Lack of, or inappropriate, management practices, may damage or destroy trees, including weather damage or harmful grazing by stock, particularly horses; Development of land for housing
<b>Geological</b>					
7	<b>Dramatic geology and geomorphology – Silurian limestones, Old Red Sandstones, Quartz Conglomerate, full sequence of Carboniferous limestones, and active and past geomorphology</b>	Whole National Landscape	Silurian Rocks and Carboniferous Limestone internationally important; Lower Devonian Old Red Sandstone and Quartz Conglomerate nationally important; several RIGS and SSSIs; Good, incised river meanders & superimposed drainage globally important examples for educational purposes	Good	Inappropriate development or land management may degrade or destroy features; Quarrying; Natural weathering

Special Quality	Extent	Recognition	Condition	Changes or Threats	
<b>Visual and Sensory</b>					
8	<b>Picturesque, extensive &amp; dramatic views</b>	Throughout National Landscape but majority overlooking the Wye	72 viewpoints identified. 20 included in Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme including 4 SMs at Piercefield	Varied; some spectacular, some overgrown, some inaccessible, health & safety poor at some [Assessment of Historic & Picturesque Viewpoints in National Landscape, 2001]. Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme conserved &/or enhanced	Changes in ownership &/or land management may degrade or block both physical access to viewpoints and/or the view window; Inappropriate land management may degrade or destroy the landscape viewed from a viewpoint including large single structures, large developments or the cumulative impact of small developments
9	<b>Overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness / wildness and dark skies</b>	Much of National Landscape	Varied	Poor to good, with localised disturbance [CPRE, CCW, NRW maps]	Changes in land management including new or expanding development and intensification of use (i.e. inappropriate tourism and recreation or increasing road or air traffic); Loss of trees due to disease; Change driven by new standards and legislation e.g. street lighting, highway construction may lead to loss of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and dark skies.

Special Quality	Extent	Recognition	Condition	Changes or Threats	
<b>Historic Environment</b>					
10	<b>Historic environment and landscape – Palaeolithic to Iron Age sites; Roman and early medieval remains including Offa’s Dyke; medieval defensive and ecclesiastical sites; post-medieval industrial landscapes and railway heritage</b>	Throughout National Landscape	Paleolithic occupation at Arthur's Cave; 18 prehistoric SMs, 3 Roman SMs (included c.50km Offa's Dyke); 5 Castle SM (Chepstow, Goodrich, Raglan, Monmouth, Penyard, St Briavels); 4 Ecclesiastical SMs (Tintern, Grace Dieu, Llanthony, Monmouth); several post-medieval industrial SMs. Numerous other undesignated sites	Variable. Some excellent, some in need of conservation	
11	<b>Ancient and veteran trees</b>	Scattered through-out National Landscape, particularly in ASNW and parkland	Range of species but oak particularly important. Also small-leaved lime in ASNW	Variable. Many in good condition, some in need of conservation management	Inappropriate management may degrade or destroy trees, including felling, damage during development, harmful grazing by stock, particularly horses; Disease (eg. Ash dieback, Acute Oak Decline)
12	<b>Historic / registered parks and gardens</b>	Scattered through-out National Landscape	11 Registered Parks & Gardens. Numerous designed landscapes (non-registered)	Variable. Some excellent, some in need of conservation	Inappropriate management may degrade or destroy historic features
13	<b>Vernacular architecture: Farmsteads, Commoners cottages, Estate houses</b>	Through-out National Landscape, dependant on geology	Varied – no one dominant style due to varying geology. 17 Conservation Areas	Varied, dependant on geology & building materials	Inappropriate management may degrade or destroy historic features

Special Quality		Extent	Recognition	Condition	Changes or Threats
<b>Language</b>					
14	<b>Welsh language &amp; accent; Forest of Dean &amp; South Herefordshire dialects &amp; accents</b>	Varied through-out National Landscape	9.9% of Monmouthshire population able to speak Welsh increasing in all age groups except over 65s. Welsh taught in schools in Monmouthshire.	Welsh usage consolidating in Monmouthshire [2011 Census]	Loss of local identity can further erode traditional usages; Influences of universal education and media
<b>Access and Recreation</b>					
15	<b>Old tracks: often in sunken ways &amp;/or bounded by drystone walls</b>	Through-out National Landscape. *Routes with public access for MPVs mapped by TRF at <a href="http://www.greenroadmap.org.uk">www.greenroadmap.org.uk</a> and by GLASS at <a href="http://www.trailwise2.co.uk">www.trailwise2.co.uk</a>	Some in Rights of Way network, some County Road (Highways), some other highways, remainder private. No formal cataloguing and assessment	Variable	Degradation of surface and/or boundary features due to changes in levels of usage &/or ownership or management, eg. water erosion, deep rutting and waterlogging, hard surfacing, widening, etc.; Blockage and/or obstruction; Unclear classification and misleading signage
16	<b>Extensive recreational network of circular and linear footpaths and trails including Offa's Dyke Path and Wye Valley Walk</b>	Through-out National Landscape	Offa's Dyke Path - National trail; Wye Valley Walk - Regional		
17	<b>Access land</b>	Forestry England and Welsh Government woodland and Woodland Trust holdings eg. Haugh Wood, Chase Wood & lower Wye Valley woods	Good	Good [Woodland dedicated as Access Land under CROW]	Changes in legislation or sale removing access rights

Special Quality		Extent	Recognition	Condition	Changes or Threats
18	<b>Small commons; largest are Coppet Hill, Broadmoor, Staunton Meend, Whitelye, The Hudnalls</b>	**455ha scattered throughout National Landscape	Generally good	Generally good	Obstruction to access; Lack of, or inappropriate, management

[Ecosystems goods and services table based on current plan to be included]

## Vision

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

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

# Themes and Outcomes

The management plan is organised into five themes – **Nature, Climate, Water, People and Place** – to provide a clear logic chain from the National Landscape’s Special Qualities to outcomes and policies. The five-theme structure reflects Natural England’s and Natural Resource Wales’ Management Plan guidance, aligns with DEFRA’s Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), and ensures cross-border policy duties are addressed. Water is treated as a standalone theme to reflect the central importance of the River Wye and catchment pressures for the National Landscape and its communities.

## Outcomes

The outcomes are what we want to achieve by 2031 and are grouped under each theme.

### Nature

- Nature Recovery and Biodiversity – The biodiversity of the National Landscape is conserved, enhanced and restored through robust and resilient ecological networks that connect habitats across the National Landscape.
- Geodiversity – Sites important for scientific and general understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the geodiversity heritage of the National Landscape are conserved and enhanced.

### Climate

- Climate Change Mitigation – The National Landscape, its communities and visitors contribute to climate change mitigation by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon storage through sustainable land use, land management and development.
- Climate Change Adaptation – The National Landscape and its communities are prepared for and resilient to the impacts of climate change, including through natural flood management, drought resilience, and adaptation of land management practices.

### Water

- River Health – The River Wye and all watercourses in and around the National Landscape are restored to good ecological status with clean water that supports thriving wildlife and contributes to the wellbeing of people and the local economy.
- Water Resources and Resilience – Water is stored and managed sustainably across the National Landscape, with natural solutions that reduce flood and drought risk, support farming and land management, and contribute to a resilient landscape.

### People

- Access, Recreation and Inclusion – Travel to and within the National Landscape is increasingly sustainable and integrated, with improved public transport, walking and cycling routes. People of all backgrounds and abilities enjoy recreation and visiting

the WVNL in ways that conserve and enhance its natural beauty and benefits local communities economically and socially.

- Health and Wellbeing – Opportunities for people to benefit from the National Landscape for their physical and mental health and wellbeing are enhanced, connecting more people to nature and the outdoors.
- Understanding and Stewardship – People’s understanding and appreciation of the National Landscape, why it is designated, and its Special Qualities are increased through education, interpretation, volunteering and engagement, inspiring care and action for the National Landscape.
- Partnership Working and Delivery – Proactive and imaginative achievements in the National Landscape continue through successful partnerships, effective governance, evidence-based decision-making and sustainable resourcing.

## **Place**

- Landscape – The natural beauty of the National Landscape is conserved and enhanced, with its natural and cultural features and processes, including its Special Qualities and features of the Landscape Management Zones.
- Farming, Forestry and Land Management – Farming, woodlands and trees are managed sustainably to conserve and enhance the National Landscape’s natural beauty, Special Qualities and distinctive landscape features.
- Development and Built Environment – Development in the National Landscape and its setting is landscape-led, conserves and enhances natural beauty and the area’s Special Qualities is climate-resilient, and meets the needs of local communities.
- Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage – The historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape are conserved and sympathetically managed, with engagement promoted to secure long-term care.
- Rural Economy and Local Distinctiveness – Viable rural enterprises derive benefit from and enhance the natural resources and local distinctiveness of the National Landscape, contributing to a nature-positive, low-carbon economy that provides local employment.

# Policies

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## NATURE

### Nature Recovery and Biodiversity

**The biodiversity of the National Landscape is conserved, enhanced and restored through robust and resilient ecological networks that connect habitats across the National Landscape.**

#### **N.N1 Habitat restoration and connectivity**

Develop, implement and promote schemes and initiatives that conserve, enhance and restore the National Landscape's biodiversity, strengthens ecological networks and natural processes, and increases resilience to climate and other environmental change, including through nature-based solutions and landscape-scale habitat connectivity.

#### **N.N2 Biodiversity targets and priorities**

Contribute to the delivery of national, regional and local biodiversity and nature recovery targets, including commitments to protect and manage at least 30% of land and water for nature by 2030 and beyond, with a focus on key habitats and species relevant to the Wye Valley National Landscape.

#### **N.N3 Designated sites**

Work with partners to ensure the management of all statutory designated sites and locally designated sites in the National Landscape so that they are in favourable condition and within robust ecological networks.

#### **N.N4 Biosecurity**

Develop, implement and promote initiatives to prevent, control and manage invasive non-native species, pests and diseases that pose a risk to the National Landscape's biodiversity, farming, forestry and woodland. Ensure measures are compatible with the purposes of designation and the area's Special Qualities, and are informed by ongoing identification and monitoring.

#### **N.N5 Species and habitat monitoring**

In partnership with relevant conservation organisations, individuals and Local Biological Record Centres, identify and monitor key indicator and/or priority species and habitats, including utilising historic data.

## **Geodiversity**

**Sites important for scientific and general understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the geodiversity heritage of the National Landscape are conserved and enhanced.**

### **N.G1 Site identification and monitoring**

Work with geoconservation organisations, local Record Centres, site managers and partners to identify, record and monitor significant geodiversity features and sites (including SSSIs and LGS/RIGS), and to secure their protection and positive management. Maintain key geological exposures and access where appropriate, and ensure quarrying operations and restoration conserve and enhance the National Landscape's geodiversity interest, natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features.

## **CLIMATE**

### **Climate Change Mitigation**

**The National Landscape, its communities and visitors contribute to climate change mitigation by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon storage through sustainable land use, land management and development**

#### **C.M1 Low-carbon transition in land management**

Promote land management practices and implement initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon storage in soils, woodlands, hedgerows and other habitats across the National Landscape, contributing to national and regional net-zero and carbon sequestration targets.

#### **C.M2 Net zero and national targets**

Work with partners and stakeholders to decarbonise and reduce energy demand in existing and new buildings, infrastructure and transport, including promoting renewable and low-carbon energy solutions that will not have significant adverse impacts the natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features of the National Landscape.

## Climate Change Adaptation

**The National Landscape and its communities are prepared for and resilient to the impacts of climate change, including through natural flood management, drought resilience, and adaptation of land management practices.**

### **C.A1 Climate adaptation and landscape resilience**

Work with partners to implement the Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the National Landscape, engaging with stakeholders across relevant sectors to recognise climate risks and vulnerabilities, and to prioritise actions that build landscape and community resilience.

### **C.A2 Climate-resilient land management**

Encourage, advise and support farmers and land managers to adapt to changing climate conditions, integrating climate adaptation as a core component of land management, agri-environment schemes and rural development support, and promoting practices that build resilience and sustainability.

### **C.A3 Climate-resilient development and infrastructure**

Ensure that climate change adaptation is a significant driver in all new development, infrastructure and transport provision within and around the National Landscape, promoting designs and layouts that are resilient to climate impacts.

## **WATER**

### River Health

**The River Wye and all watercourses in and around the National Landscape are restored to good ecological status with clean water that supports thriving wildlife and contributes to the wellbeing of people and the local economy.**

### **W.R1 River recovery and pollution reduction**

Support, promote and participate in collaborative catchment action to restore and maintain the ecological health of the River Wye and its tributaries within and around the National Landscape. Develop and implement initiatives, working with partners, regulators, farmers, landowners and other stakeholders to take targeted action on pollution prevention, habitat restoration and land management within and around the National Landscape, helping to achieve statutory conservation objectives and agreed water quality targets.

## Water Resources and Resilience

**Water is stored and managed sustainably across the National Landscape, with natural solutions that reduce flood and drought risk, support farming and land management, and contribute to a resilient landscape.**

### **W.W1 NFM and water management**

Promote and implement nature-based approaches to enhance water quality and water quantity across the National Landscape and its tributaries and water bodies, including natural flood management, sustainable drainage, grassland, floodplain and wetland restoration, riparian buffers, soil management and targeted woodland planting.

### **W.W2 Sustainable water resources and abstraction**

Promote and support sustainable water use and water resources management within and around the National Landscape, including appropriate abstraction, efficient water use and on-farm water storage, to reduce pressure on watercourses during low flows. Ensure water-related infrastructure is sensitively sited and designed to conserve and enhance the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features.

## **PEOPLE**

### Access, Recreation and Inclusion

**Travel to and within the National Landscape is increasingly sustainable and integrated, with improved public transport, walking and cycling routes. People of all backgrounds and abilities enjoy recreation and visiting the WVNL in ways that conserve and enhance its natural beauty, and benefits local communities economically and socially.**

#### **P.A1 Responsible access and recreation**

Promote and encourage inclusive access and recreation that conserves and enhances the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features, working with partners to enhance visitor experiences, encourage responsible behaviour, and manage visitor pressures by directing use to more robust and/or less sensitive locations.

#### **P.A2 High quality and inclusive access**

Improve access for all, including under-represented groups and people with disabilities, by identifying gaps in provision and working with partners to deliver access enhancements with sustainable design and maintenance that conserve and enhance the National Landscape's natural beauty, special qualities and landscape features.

### **P.A3 Sustainable travel**

Promote sustainable travel options for reaching and moving around the National Landscape that reduce car dependency, including public transport, walking and cycling, and support initiatives that link sustainable travel options.

### **P.A4 Sustainable tourism**

Promote the National Landscape as a sustainable tourism destination, supporting tourism activity and development that conserves, enhances and helps people enjoy its Special Qualities. Use tourism and visitor evidence, including engagement and feedback, to guide the visitor economy, visitor management and ongoing conservation and enhancement.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

**Opportunities for people to benefit from the National Landscape for their physical and mental health and wellbeing are enhanced, connecting more people to nature and the outdoors.**

### **P.H1 Nature for health and wellbeing**

Promote opportunities for people to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing through inclusive nature-based and/or nature-friendly outdoor activities in the National Landscape. Work with health and social care bodies, local authorities and delivery partners to embed the National Landscape in prevention and wellbeing, including green and blue social prescribing and targeted programmes for under-represented groups.

### **P.H2 Children and young people**

Encourage and support initiatives and environmental education opportunities that help children and young people experience the National Landscape first-hand, building confidence and skills, and fostering appreciation of its Special Qualities and how they can be conserved and enhanced.

### **P.H3 Local food**

Promote opportunities for people to improve their health and wellbeing through access to affordable, locally produced food within the National Landscape. Work with local authorities, health bodies, community organisations and delivery partners to

strengthen local food networks, build food literacy and improve access to sustainable and seasonal food choices, particularly for communities experiencing barriers to access.

## **Understanding and Stewardship**

**People's understanding and appreciation of the National Landscape, why it is designated, and its Special Qualities are increased through education, interpretation, volunteering and engagement, inspiring care and action for the National Landscape.**

### **P.U1 Awareness, interpretation and learning**

Promote understanding of the National Landscape, its designation and Special Qualities among residents, visitors, organisations and businesses through communication, interpretation and learning, connecting people with its natural, cultural and historic heritage, and raising awareness of the National Landscape's high-quality environment in attracting and retaining businesses, investment and skills.

### **P.U2 Volunteering and participation**

Support and develop opportunities for people and organisations to take part in caring for the National Landscape, including active participation in nature recovery, citizen science and responding to pressures that arise beyond the National Landscape boundary.

### **P.U3 Exemplar land management practice.**

Promote the National Landscape as a living, working landscape by increasing understanding of the value of farming and land management to the local economy and to sustaining the National Landscape's Special Qualities and distinctive landscape features. Share knowledge, skills and good practice to support continuous improvement and strengthen the National Landscape's role as an exemplar of sustainable land management.

### **P.U4 Community engagement**

Foster pride and connection to the National Landscape's Special Qualities and sense of place, and enable inclusive involvement in its management and delivery. Ensure engagement is accessible (including Welsh language provision where appropriate) and support volunteering and citizen participation that builds skills and stewardship across all parts of the community.

## **Partnership Working and Delivery**

**Proactive and imaginative achievements in the National Landscape continue through successful partnerships, effective governance, evidence-based decision-making and sustainable resourcing.**

### **P.P1 Partnership and governance**

Maintain and develop effective partnerships and governance arrangements to lead and coordinate delivery of the Management Plan, ensuring the National Landscape Partnership is an effective forum for collaboration, advocacy and decision-making on issues affecting the National Landscape. Share good practice nationally.

### **P.P2 Resourcing and funding**

Secure and sustain funding and resources from local and national government, partners and other sources to support the delivery of the National Landscape Management Plan and the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features.

### **P.P3 Partner delivery and statutory duties**

Work with and encourage relevant authorities and delivery partners to fulfil their statutory duties in relation to the National Landscape designation and to embed the Management Plan in their own plans, programmes and decision-making.

### **P.P4 Evidence, monitoring and learning**

Develop, coordinate and maintain a proportionate, shared evidence base and monitoring programme for the National Landscape including robust baseline information, to assess landscape condition and the direction of change. Use consistent indicators and analysis to inform priorities, measure progress against Management Plan outcomes, evaluate what works, and share learning locally and nationally to support adaptive management and continuous improvement in delivery.

## **PLACE**

### **Landscape**

**The natural beauty of the National Landscape is conserved and enhanced, with its natural and cultural features and processes, including its Special Qualities and features of the Landscape Management Zones.**

### **PL.L1 Landscape conservation and enhancement**

Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the National Landscape. Ensure their sustainable management and avoid, mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features.

#### **PL.L2 Landscape character evidence**

Promote and ensure the use of the Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation to inform local distinctiveness in development plans, strategies, guidance, developments and landscaping schemes.

#### **PL.L3 Tranquillity**

Ensure the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's relative tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness. Work with local authorities, communities, land managers and businesses to avoid and minimise activities and development that would significantly or cumulatively erode tranquillity, and to secure improvements to minimise intrusive noise and visual disturbance.

#### **PL.L4 Dark skies**

Promote and protect dark sky places across the National Landscape, and work with partners to minimise light pollution for the benefit of natural beauty, nocturnal wildlife and human wellbeing. Promote and provide advice on best-practice lighting design and seek opportunities to reduce existing light pollution.

## **Farming, Forestry and Land Management**

**Farming, woodlands and trees are managed sustainably to conserve and enhance the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and distinctive landscape features.**

#### **PL.F1 Sustainable farming practices**

Encourage and work with farmers, landowners and land managers to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve and enhance the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features, and disseminate good agricultural practices through networks, partnerships and training.

#### **PL.F2 Agri-environment schemes**

Influence and shape agri-environment and other land management schemes to support practices that deliver conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features. Encourage, advise and support uptake by farm businesses of all sizes.

#### **PL.F3 Skills and diversification**

Support the development and continuation of both traditional and innovative land management skills and practices, and appropriate farm diversification opportunities, that are compatible with the purposes of the National Landscape and conserve or enhance its Special Qualities and economic, social and ecological resilience.

#### **PL.F4 Woodland management advice**

Provide advice and support to woodland owners and managers on sustainable, multi-purpose woodland creation, restoration and management that conserves and enhances the National Landscape's Special Qualities, including sensitive restoration of planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

## **Development and Built Environment**

**Development in the National Landscape and its setting is landscape-led, conserves and enhances natural beauty and the area's Special Qualities is climate-resilient, and meets the needs of local communities.**

#### **PL.D1 Landscape-led development management**

Ensure that statutory planning documents and local plans provide a consistent and coherent framework of policies relating to the National Landscape, and that all development proposals within the National Landscape and its setting adopt a landscape-led approach.

#### **PL.D2 High quality design**

Ensure high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage, landscaping and Green Infrastructure in all developments, including Permitted Development, and that they conserve and enhance the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features including scale and setting and benefit or enhance the natural environment.

#### **PL.D3 Resisting harmful development**

Oppose development that would create a persistent, dominant or incongruous feature; or give rise individually or cumulatively to effects harmful to the character or setting of the National Landscape, its Special Qualities or landscape features; or adversely affect internationally, nationally or locally designated sites.

#### **PL.D4 Developer contributions**

Ensure the use of planning obligations, community infrastructure levies and other mechanisms to secure contributions from development towards the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's Special Qualities, infrastructure and community facilities.

### **PL.D5 Community planning**

Encourage and support community involvement in local planning and placemaking, including through neighbourhood development plans and community strategies, ensuring that such plans contain coherent objectives for conserving and enhancing the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features, and that their implementation and effectiveness are monitored.

### **PL.D6 Affordable housing**

Prioritise and support the provision of affordable housing that meets evidenced local needs within rural communities in the National Landscape, ensuring that housing is of high design quality, appropriate to its setting, and compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features.

### **PL.D7 Transport infrastructure**

Ensure transport infrastructure, traffic management and highway schemes are designed and implemented in ways which support reduced car dependency and minimise environmental impacts, while also conserving and enhancing the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities, and landscape features.

### **PL.D8 Utilities infrastructure**

Ensure utilities infrastructure, including power, telecommunications and digital connectivity, is sensitively designed, sited and installed to conserve and enhance the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features. Support the undergrounding of overhead lines where this would benefit skylines and key views, and encourage mast-sharing and co-location of telecommunications equipment.

## **Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage**

**The historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape are conserved and sympathetically managed, with engagement promoted to secure long-term care.**

### **PL.H1 Historic environment conservation**

Conserve, enhance and promote the National Landscape's historic environment by working with landowners, national agencies and partners to develop and support schemes, policies, advice and sympathetic management that maintain and restore historic features, sites and landscapes.

### **PL.H2 Heritage evidence and monitoring**

Improve the understanding, recording and appreciation of the National Landscape's historic environment through research, monitoring, heritage recording and

interpretation, working with local authorities, archaeological trusts, community groups and the wider public to maintain and enhance heritage databases and records

## **Rural Economy and Local Distinctiveness**

**Viable rural enterprises derive benefit from and enhance the natural resources and local distinctiveness of the National Landscape, contributing to a nature-positive, low-carbon economy that provides local employment.**

### **PL.R1 Thriving rural communities**

Support and encourage community-led initiatives and investment that sustain the vitality, diversity and quality of rural communities within the National Landscape, including retention and improvement of local services, employment and facilities.

### **PL.R2 Local products and distinctiveness**

Support markets and initiatives for local products and services, that draw on and reinforce the National Landscape's Special Qualities, landscape features and sense of place. Encourage and support local producers to supply local markets and strengthen demand for local produce among public bodies, consumers, accommodation providers and food outlets.

### **PL.R3 Sustainable rural enterprise**

Support rural businesses and micro-enterprises to become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable through advice, training and cooperative schemes, raising awareness of good practice that conserves and enhances the National Landscape's natural beauty, Special Qualities and landscape features.

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**Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan Review Programme (Feb 2026)**

<b>Task No.</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Suggested timetable</b>	<b>Progress</b>
	<b>Formalities and Notification</b>		
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
	<b>Scoping</b>		
6.	Consider strengths and weaknesses of current Plan and new strategic priorities	Feb 2025	19 <sup>th</sup> March Seminar
7.	Endorse consultation programme	Mar 2025	JAC 3 <sup>rd</sup> 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	19th 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	
	<b>Consultation</b>		
15.	Undertake targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups on current Plan, policies, evidence, positions and new strategic priorities	Jun 2025	19th March Seminar & on-going
16.	Identify key issues, aims and objectives	July 2025	Nov/Dec 25

<b>Task No.</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Suggested timetable</b>	<b>Progress</b>
17.	Draft new wording for consultation draft of revised Plan	Aug 2025	Dec 25 /Jan 26
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	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	Delay to Apr 2026 for 10 weeks (avoiding Easter)	
21.	Undertake specific targeted consultations/participatory workshops with relevant groups as required	3 public events during 10 week consultation	
22.	Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	July – Aug 2026	
23.	Initial report on consultation and suggested amendments	TOWP Oct 2026	
	<b>Adoption</b>		
24.	Draft revised Plan to JAC for approval	Nov 2026	
25.	Send to Natural England for formal observations	Nov 2026	
26.	Consider comments from formal observations and amend Plan	Dec 2026	
27.	Get new plan formally approved by Local Authorities and JAC Chair	Jan 2027	
28.	Design, printing and distribution	Feb 2027	
29.	Send approved plan to Secretary of State	Mar 2027	
30.	Publish statement of how SEA taken into account and changes	Mar 2027	
31.	Confirmation of full adoption of Plan	JAC Mar 2027	

## WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE NATURE RECOVERY PLAN

### ***Purpose***

To present members with the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Endorses the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan, in accordance with the Colchester Declaration commitments.
- B. Notes the public consultation on the draft Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

### ***Key Issues***

- The Colchester Declaration – a ‘declaration for nature’ was produced in 2019 supported by all the AONB (now known as the National Landscape) Partnerships and the National Association for AONBs (now the National Landscapes Association).
- The ambition was pledged for every AONB Partnership to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan and deliver Species Action Plans to reverse the decline of threatened species.
- Five species, or assemblage of species, were chosen as representative of the Wye Valley National Landscape Special Qualities as a commitment to the Colchester Declaration.
- The suite of Species Action Plans support the Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan, which is appended below.
- Four previous Species Action Plan (SAP) have been adopted by the JAC, the fifth and final Species Action Plan will be presented to the next JAC meeting, focusing on Water Crowfoot, emblematic for the sustainable restoration and management of the riverine habitat.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and Species Action Plans are designed to align with the Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) and Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs).
- The Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy is currently out for public consultation until 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

### ***Reasons***

Biodiversity is in decline. Landscape-scale action is needed to reverse the declines in biodiversity and realise nature’s recovery, enacting the Lawton principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined Up.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced the duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience in the exercise of local authority functions. This means that the responsibility for compliance and delivery sits across all services and functions.

In England, the Environment Act 2021 introduced the requirement for local bodies to take responsibility for restoring the environment within their locale, working with local groups and the local authority. DEFRA has mandated every county in England to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). These draw on ecological insights and natural solutions that improve biodiversity and describe where and how the development of habitats should have the greatest benefit for nature.

### ***Implications***

The Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan 2026–2031 is primarily for the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership to give strategic direction to nature recovery work by the National Landscape Team. However it can be used by a broader audience in decision making around land management opportunities, including landowners and land managers, communities and other interest groups.

The current AONB Management Plan identifies 27 Special Qualities of the landscape. These include 6 Biodiversity features as the most distinctive and important habitats in the Wye Valley National Landscape, being:-

- Woodlands [SQ2]
- The River & Tributaries [SQ3]
- Species rich grassland, including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland [SQ4]
- Boundary habitat diversity & connectivity [SQ5]
- Ancient & Veteran tress [SQ18]
- Orchards [SQ27]

The conservation and enhancement of these habitats therefore has the greatest potential for the recovery of nature in the National Landscape. The Nature Recovery Plan explores the extent, condition and issues relating to each habitat and identifies opportunities for nature recovery. Under each Special Quality/habitat theme are a list of ‘Nature Recovery Aims’ and ‘Targets’. These focus on conserving and enhancing the existing natural habitats, but also making them bigger, creating new areas of species-rich habitat and, critically, ensuring they join up to create functional and resilient ecological networks that enable nature and people to thrive.

The Nature Recovery Plan does not advocate ‘re-wilding’ the National Landscape nor wholesale change to the existing landscape mosaic. Many of the special places that exist, such as traditional orchards, species-rich grasslands, rivers and streams, semi-natural and ancient woodlands, are rich in cultural as well as natural heritage. The landscape is special because of the interaction and relationship between the natural and cultural features and each have value in the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape.

The Wye Valley National Landscape Species Action Plans (SAPs) complement the Nature Recovery Plan. The last of the 5 Species Action Plans is being finalised and will be presented to the next JAC meeting in July.

In July 2025, Monmouthshire County Council adopted a Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) to help deliver the Council's commitments under the Climate and Nature Emergency and Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The NRAP aims to provide practical, achievable

actions designed to help reverse the decline in biodiversity and build ecosystem resilience in Monmouthshire, see

<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/s42022/Appendix%20%20Local%20NRAP%20Part%201.pdf>

Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is the Responsible Authority for the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The development of the strategy has been a collaborative effort and showcases Gloucestershire's wildlife, and acts as an essential tool for steering nature recovery in the county. Public consultation on the LNRS ran for 6 weeks in September and October 2025. The LNRS includes a spatial online tool that maps the priority Potential Measures across areas of the county where they would have the best impact for nature - joining up existing wildlife sites and expanding from existing habitat. For more detail see:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/gloucestershire-local-nature-recovery-strategy/>

Herefordshire Council is leading on the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). A public consultation on the draft LNRS started on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February and closes on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026. For further details see <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/lnrs>.

### **Background**

In 2019 the annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference took place at the University of Essex, Colchester. The conference concluded with The Colchester Declaration – a Declaration for Nature. This was developed through a series of pre-conference discussion fora and workshop sessions during the conference. The Colchester Declaration has been supported by AONB/National Landscape partnerships across England and Wales, pledging to protect what remains and restore what has been lost.

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

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# Wye Valley National Landscape

## Nature Recovery Plan 2026 – 2031



**Dyffryn Gwy**  
**Tirwedd Cenedlaethol**  

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**Wye Valley**  
**National Landscape**

March 2026

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## Introduction

The Wye Valley National Landscape, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is one of the country's finest lowland landscapes. The only cross border protected landscape, straddling the English Welsh border, the primary purpose of the AONB designation is 'to conserve and enhance natural beauty'.

Biodiversity is in decline. To reverse the declines in biodiversity and realise nature's recovery, we need to work together and on a landscape scale to enact the Lawton principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined Up. This means conserving and enhancing our existing natural habitats, but also making them bigger, creating new areas of species-rich habitat and, critically, ensuring they join up to create functional and resilient ecological networks that enable nature and people to thrive. Landowners, be they gardeners, smallholders or owners of large tracts of land, are central to Nature Recovery, creating space for abundant wildlife, enhancing natural beauty and delivering benefits for people, including healthy food, flood alleviation, well-being and recreational opportunities and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Biodiversity loss goes far beyond the habitats and species themselves. The ground breaking Dasgupta Review<sup>1</sup>, into the economics of global biodiversity, explains that broad-based sustainable growth, now and into the future, depends on urgent action across all levels of society to protect and restore nature. The Covid pandemic has put a spotlight on what we value, further highlighting the climate and environmental emergency and our dependency on the robustness of nature. More recently in 2026 the National security assessment on global ecosystems<sup>2</sup> concludes that "Global ecosystem degradation and collapse threatens UK national security and prosperity". The report goes on to state that "Biodiversity loss, alongside climate change, is amongst the biggest medium to long term threat to domestic food production - through depleted soils, loss of pollinators, drought and flood conditions. Ecosystem collapse would place the UK's agriculture system under great stress, leaving it struggling to pivot to the new approaches and technologies that would be required to maintain food supply."

It is well documented that the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. Whilst the Wye Valley National Landscape is rightly regarded, and protected, as one of the finest lowland landscapes in the country, nature here is also suffering many of the same problems as elsewhere. The Wye Valley National Landscape, and National Landscapes throughout the country are though, well placed to be at the forefront of nature recovery. This plan sets out how we propose using the special habitats found in the Wye Valley to aid recovery of those species who depend upon them.

### Our approach to nature recovery

Wildlife and the habitats that sustain them represent our biodiversity. We have purposely not approached nature recovery with a single species approach. The Way Valley National Landscape is a landscape designation, designated in part due to the important habitats found within it. These habitats, some of the most special found in the UK, are home to a range of plants and animals. By conserving and enhancing these habitats, we create space for some of our most threatened species. We want to see nature rich habitats across the landscape, between which species can move easily.

We must also remember that the National Landscape is an evolving landscape, where people live, work, spend leisure time and one which provides a range of goods and services to society. Nature recovery sits alongside other important priorities such as historic sites and archaeology, leisure activities, health and wellbeing, farming and food production. We believe nature can thrive in a

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<sup>1</sup> [Final Report - The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>2</sup> [National security assessment - global biodiversity loss ecosystem collapse and national security](#)

landscape which provides all these and more; it is not a case of any of priorities being incompatible with each other, but they can and must work together for the benefit of all.

As with and set out in the statutory Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan (2021-26)<sup>3</sup>, conservation and enhancement of the character and quality of the National Landscape lies at the heart of this Plan. There are four landscape management strategies:

- **Conserve** – for landscapes in good condition with stronger character where the emphasis is on protecting the key characteristics of the area.
- **Enhance** – for landscapes where some features have fallen into decline. Management should aim to reintroduce features, improve their management and remove features that detract from the overall character.
- **Restore** – for landscapes where features have been lost or are in a severe state of decline. Management should aim to repair and re-establish characteristic features.
- **Create** – for landscapes where condition is poor and character weak beyond repair. Management should consider creation of a new landscape.

In taking forward these approaches, management tends to focus on large or landscape scale initiatives. However they are equally applicable to small sites. Sometimes working at suitable scale means reaching beyond the boundary of the National Landscape into surrounding catchments or nearby habitats, and this is encouraged where resources allow.

This plan does not advocate ‘re-wilding’ the National Landscape or wholesale change to the existing landscape. Many of the special places that exist here such as traditional orchards, species-rich grasslands, rivers and streams, semi-natural and ancient woodlands, are rich in culture as well as wildlife. They are an integral part of what makes this landscape so special. There are many issues in play including communities, culture, heritage, scenic landscape value and wildlife and biodiversity. This landscape is special because of the interaction and relationship between them and each have value in the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. It is though accepted that in order to reverse the decline of biodiversity, some landscape change is inevitable and this should not be shielded away from or discounted. There is great opportunity for the Wye Valley National Landscape to play an important role in nature recovery through the expansion, enhancement and creation of habitats important to the National Landscape and its character.



Orchid in New Grove Meadow (©Wye Valley National Landscape)

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<sup>3</sup> [Wye Valley](#)

## The Colchester Declaration

The Wye Valley AONB Partnership, along with all AONBs (now National Landscapes), signed up to the collective 'Declaration on Nature in AONBs', following the adoption of the Declaration at the national Landscapes for Life Conference in Colchester in July 2019.

*Set against the backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) identified a need to increase the pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Using our unique network and partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change.*

*Many AONB host authorities had at the time taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency. The Colchester Declaration demonstrated AONBs readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitat within the context of a wider response to climate change.*

### The Colchester Declaration:

#### ***We believe***

- 1. Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people***
- 2. AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife***
- 3. Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty***
- 4. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change***
- 5. The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges***

#### ***We pledge***

##### ***By July 2020***

- 1. To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature.***
- 2. To work towards the creation of Nature Recovery Plans for each AONB***

##### ***By 2024***

- 1. To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans***
- 2. To ensure all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero***

##### ***By 2030***

- 1. That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition***
- 2. That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals***
- 3. That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place***
- 4. That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030***

***We call on Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable***



The River Wye from Wintour's Leap

## The Nature Recovery Plan

### What area does this plan cover?

This plan covers the Wye Valley National Landscape, the area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (map 1). The National Landscape covers an area of 32,735 hectares (126 square miles), being 36% in Wales and 64% in England.

### Other plans and documents

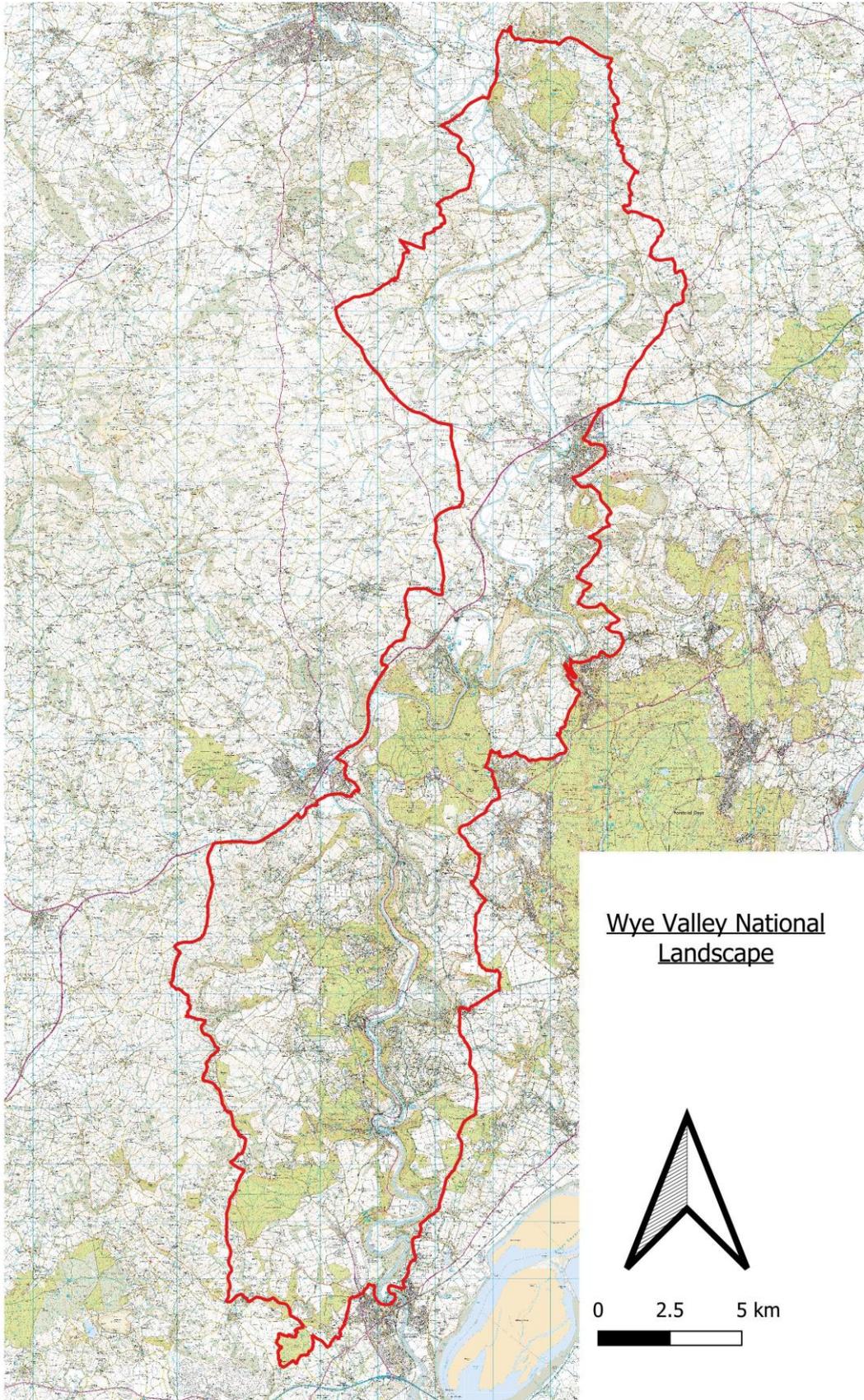
This plan builds on a number of existing documents including the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-26) and is also closely linked with Wye Valley National Landscape Species Action Plans<sup>4</sup> for five adopted species or assemblages. This Plan has also been produced in alignment with the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) for Herefordshire and Gloucestershire and the Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP). The development of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) in England and Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) in Wales, and the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) provision as part of new development, are also likely to significantly influence this Nature Recovery Plan. As these schemes and strategies develop, there will be a need to review and revise the Nature Recovery Plan as necessary, as well as any reconfiguration with the next Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan.

### How this plan can be used

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

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<sup>4</sup> [Priority Species Project - Wye Valley AONB](#)



Map 1 – The Wye Valley National Landscape

## Nature of the Wye Valley National Landscape

The AONB Management Plan identifies 27 Special Qualities of the landscape. These include Biodiversity, Geological, Visual and sensory, Historic Environment, Language, Access and Recreation features. The biodiversity features have been identified as they are the most locally distinctive and important habitats in the Wye Valley National Landscape, and consequently are those habitats which hold the most value for nature. The conservation and enhancement of these habitats therefore has the greatest potential for the recovery of nature in the National Landscape. The Nature Recovery Plan explores the extent, condition and issues relating to each habitat and identifies opportunities for nature recovery.

The Wye Valley National Landscape team has, in consultation with partner organisations and expert individuals, identified and ‘adopted’ a distinctive and threatened species associated with each biodiversity Special Quality. The aim of this work was to identify locally distinctive threatened species to champion and work towards their recovery.

The approach taken in establishing this list was to consider each of the habitats identified as a Special Quality and identify a species or assemblage of species associated with each of these habitats. This approach would ensure that good habitat management and therefore landscape enhancement, was at the core of work to recover species.

### Basic principles

- To choose species which are representative of Special Qualities, and benefit from positive landscape scale management.
- To choose species which are already found in the National Landscape and are in need of conservation work.
- To choose species with which the general public can engage, as much as possible, and ideally contribute towards conservation work.

Using these basic principles, a list of 5 species or assemblage of species was established around which conservation effort can be focused over the coming years. As a result of this work, ‘adopted’ species for the Wye Valley AONB are:

- SQ 2 Woodlands – Woodland Butterfly assemblage (with a focus on Wood White & Pearl Bordered Fritillary)
- SQ 3 The River & Tributaries – Water Crowfoot
- SQ 4 Species rich grassland, including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland - Bumblebee assemblage (with a focus on Shrill Carder Bee, Brown Banded Carder Bee & Redshank Carder Bee)
- SQ 5 Boundary habitat diversity & connectivity – Hedgehog. Also a species associated with urban areas in the landscape.
- SQ 27 Orchards – Noble Chafer beetle

Species Action Plans for each of these adopted species accompany this Nature Recovery Plan.

### The State of Nature in the Wye Valley National Landscape

The State of the AONB Report (2021)<sup>5</sup> analyses available statistics for habitats as well as other Special Qualities. It is difficult to paint a cohesive picture across the whole National Landscape, as the data available differs between England and Wales. However, it is identified that of the English Priority Habitats, the Wye Valley National Landscape has significant extents of Deciduous Woodland, Good quality semi-improved grassland, Lowland Meadow and Traditional Orchards.

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<sup>5</sup> [State-of-the-AONB-Report-2021-final.pdf](#)

Baseline data, where available, for habitats was used in the State of the AONB Report, trends will be mapped where possible when this is reviewed as part of the Management Plan review in 2026.

### Condition

Other than Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) where condition monitoring has taken place, it is difficult to ascertain the condition of habitats across the National Landscape. 26 SSSIs on the English side of the National Landscape covering 1,674 ha, and on the Welsh side of the National Landscape 22 SSSIs covering 655.12 ha. Condition monitoring differs slightly on each side of the border, condition data for SSSI notifiable species is available in Wales, but not currently in England. Data for SSSIs habitat condition (2024) across the Wye Valley National Landscape is presented here:

#### Condition statistics for SSSIs in Wye Valley National Landscape

##### England

Favourable	Unfavourable - Recovering	Unfavourable - Declining	Unfavourable – No Change	Unknown	Total Area
808.4 ha	240.3 ha	575.4 ha	50.3 ha	0 ha	1674 ha
48.3%	14.4%	34.4%	3%	0%	
63%		37%			

Source - <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::sites-of-special-scientific-interest-england/about>

##### Wales

Favourable	Unfavourable	Unknown	Total Area
11 ha	516.9 ha	127.2 ha	655.1 ha
1.7%	78.9%	19.4%	

Source - <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/protected-sites-baseline-assessment-2020/?lang=en>

## Nature Recovery Themes & Special Qualities

### Woodlands [SQ2]

#### Current extent

The National Landscape is well known for its woodland cover, being just under 28% woodland<sup>6</sup>. 14% of the English National Landscape is Deciduous Woodland. Whilst there is space for more tree planting in the Wye Valley National Landscape and it should be encouraged, the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason principle should be followed. Woodland creation should be targeted to locations where it has greatest landscape benefit through habitat connectivity or expansion of existing sites. Ill thought out woodland planting has the potential to have a significant detrimental impact on the landscape character of the Wye Valley and could impact on other Special Qualities. The value of the good management of existing woodlands in the recovery of nature is great and should be encouraged.

Woodlands are a dominant feature of the Wye Valley AONB, with significant connectivity across the landscape. Much of the woodland is ancient woodland of high nature conservation value, but there are also sizable conifer plantations. Over 900ha of woodland is within the Wye Valley Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Wye Valley woodlands are not only notable as important wildlife habitats, but are also of economic value for their timber production, and provide significant recreation and health and wellbeing benefits.

#### Condition

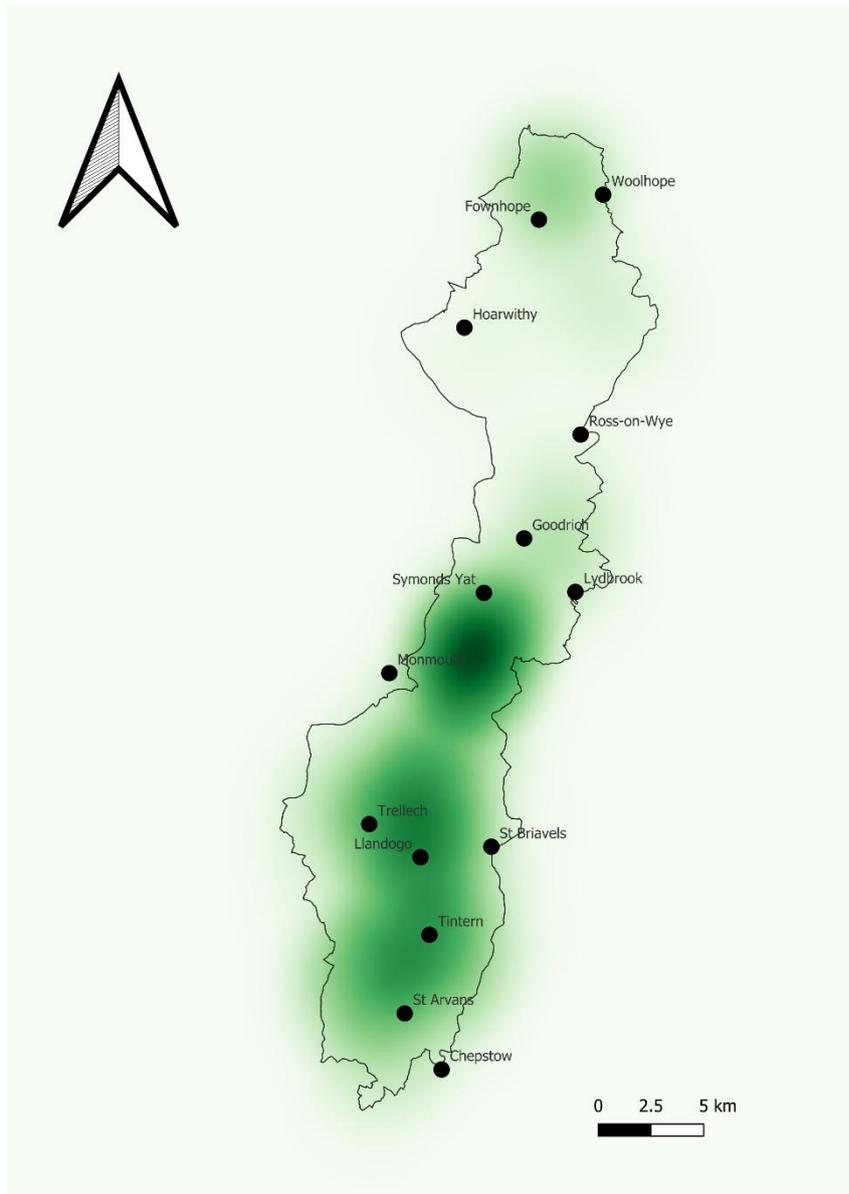
Pests and diseases affecting trees and woodlands are increasing at an unprecedented rate. These include Ash Dieback which is in evidence throughout the AONB and Phytophthora effecting predominantly alder along river banks. The impact of these can be seen on a landscape scale. Deer and grey squirrel populations, both found in large numbers in the Wye Valley, can have a serious detrimental impact on the conservation value of our woodlands, as can Wild boar particularly in the Forest of Dean, but also as the population ranges further into Wales and Herefordshire.

Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) such as cherry laurel and Himalayan Balsam are also seen to be having a detrimental impact, especially in the Wye Gorge.

Woodland habitat condition varies greatly. The condition of woodland SSSIs is recorded and ranges from favourable to unfavourable depending on the level of management present and the effect of pests, disease and INNS on the habitat.

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<sup>6</sup> extrapolated from [National Forest Inventory GB 2024](#)



Map 2- Wye Valley National Landscape Woodland Heatmap (Source – Woodland Inventory 2022)

### Key Flora and Fauna

Woodland of the Wye Valley are a special habitat and home to a broad range of species. In identifying a species to represent woodland habitats and encourage their positive management, a range of mammals, plants, trees, insects, birds and reptiles were identified by local experts as important and/or distinctive to this area, and often in need of conservation work.

Dormouse are present in woodlands throughout the Wye Valley, requiring good woodland management, age structure and varied ground flora.

The Wye Valley is a key site for a number of bat species, particularly in the Lower Wye Valley. A number of bat sites in the National Landscape are designated SSSI and the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Bat sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is one of only 3 SACs extending into the National Landscape,

26% of which is broad-leaved deciduous woodland. Species that are a primary reason for designation are Lesser horseshoe bat and Greater horseshoe bat<sup>7</sup>.

Wye Valley Woodlands are home to Roe, Fallow, Red and Muntjac deer. Although much loved and a thrill to see, high numbers and the associated browsing is having a large detrimental impact of woodland habitat condition. Control is required throughout the National Landscape. Similarly, Wild Boar are to be found in woodlands, primarily from Ross southwards, and can have a significant detrimental impact on woodland condition, especially impacting on woodland understory, ground vegetation and regeneration.



Bluebells in a Wye Valley woodland (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

Recently reintroduced in the Forest of Dean, Pine Marten have spread into and beyond the Wye Valley National Landscape.

Plant and tree species of particular interest include Small and Large leaved lime trees. Sorbus species unique to this area including *Sorbus saxicola* (commonly known as Symonds Yat Whitebeam) and *Sorbus eminentiformis* (Doward whitebeam). The Lower Wye Valley being the second most diverse site for sorbus in the British Isles with 19 taxa<sup>8</sup>. Distinctive woodland plants include Spreading Bell

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<sup>7</sup> <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0014794>

<sup>8</sup> <https://naturalresources.wales/media/688205/cym-report-332-sorbus-diversity-in-wye-valley-woodlands-sac-wales.pdf>

Flower, Narrow Lipped Helleborine, White Helleborine, Tintern Spurge, Herb Paris, Wood Barely and Ghost Orchid.

Although Turtle dove used to be present, they are no longer found despite the good habitat available. As with other mobile species, the condition of habitat elsewhere is as important as that here. Pied Flycatcher are a lover of wood pasture and Nightjar are to be found in the area, benefiting from the open spaces created by woodland management and felling. Wood Lark and Tree Pipit are also to be found in Wye Valley Woodlands. Peregrin Falcons are spectacular feature at Symonds Yat Rock, where they can be viewed from the viewpoint which is the picture postcard image of the dramatic Lower Wye Valley.



Symonds Yat Viewpoint (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

Adders are found on heathlands across the National Landscape, but also use woodlands, grasslands and other open spaces. Woodland management which creates good habitat for Nightjar, can also be good reptile habitat.

Favouring old coppice management and associated with decaying timber and deadwood, Cosnards Netwing Beetle are present in a small number of sites. Populations of Oil beetles and also to be found locally. Surveying and study at Piercefield woods have identified it as a hugely important site for invertebrate populations.

An assemblage of woodland butterflies have been adopted as one of the National Landscapes key species, with a particular interest in Wood White and Pearl Bordered Fritillary (See associated Species Action Plan), to represent woodland habitats. The Forestry Commission and partners have carried out extensive work in Haugh Wood, including ride management and a programme of reintroduction, which has made the site a hot spot for Wood White and other woodland butterfly species. Ride and

glade management can also benefit Glow Worms. These can be found where woodland management is taking place for butterfly and adder populations.



Wood White butterfly on orchid (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

### Aims and Objectives for Nature Recovery

#### Woodland Nature Recovery Aim:

*To ensure woodlands are well managed, better connected and opportunities for woodland creation are considered (following the principle of the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason). The woodlands of the Wye Valley should continue to be renowned as some of the most diverse, special and wildlife rich the country has to offer, and are understood and enjoyed by a diverse range of visitors.*

OBJECTIVE	HOW WILL WE ACHEIVE
For all Woodland SSSIs and LWSs to be in good or recovering condition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the monitoring of woodland SSSIs to establish current condition, and the continuation of monitoring to monitor change.</li> <li>• Encourage the surveying of Woodland Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) to establish current condition.</li> <li>• Support the positive management of Woodland SSSIs and LWSs to improve condition and maintain good condition.</li> <li>• Where available and when it is the most appropriate source of funding to use, provide funding support to carry out management work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> </ul>
Support the creation of new woodland where it is suitable and has no detrimental impact on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where available and when it is the most appropriate source of funding to use, provide funding support to carry out woodland creation work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> </ul>

<p>other Special Qualities of the Wye Valley National Landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Encourage the use of available opportunity mapping tools such as the Gloucestershire Nature Map<sup>9</sup> as an indication of habitat suitability</li> <li>• Establish National Landscape guidance to aid the decision making process for new woodland planting schemes.</li> <li>• Continue to provide considered advice on the suitability of planting schemes through consultations.</li> <li>• Encourage consultation with the National Landscape team when considering woodland planting schemes.</li> </ul>
<p>Support the positive management of existing woodland, including but not limited to PAWS restoration, coppicing, ride and glade management, INNS control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable management, or signpost woodland owners to recognised organisations and experts for management advice.</li> <li>• Where available and when it is the most appropriate source of funding to use, provide funding support to carry out management work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Promote woodland management techniques through promotional material, talks and events.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling and training of arboriculture contractors, to ensure management is suitable and well considered, and there is a deep enough pool of local skilled contractors.</li> </ul>
<p>Support the monitoring and promotion of woodland habitats to enable deeper understanding and influence management beneficial to wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect people with woodlands through volunteering opportunities, walks, talks, events and social media promotion.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling of volunteers to enable surveying and monitoring of woodland habitats and associated species.</li> </ul>

### Woodland Nature Recovery Targets

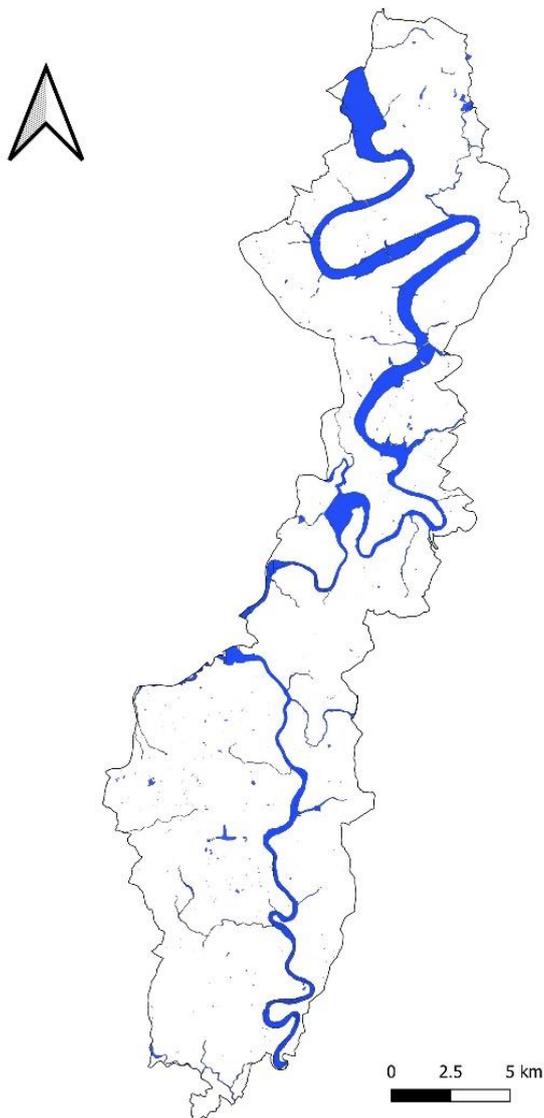
- To bring all woodland SSSI sites into good or recovering condition by 2031
- Contribute towards achieve Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Objective Target 8: Increased tree canopy and woodland cover. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from a 2022 baseline). In the Wye Valley 3% = 982ha created by 2050
- Extend Woodland Habitat in the Wye Valley by 500ha by 2031, 100ha per annum, and to greater than 29% woodland cover.

<sup>9</sup> [www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/nature-map](http://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/nature-map)

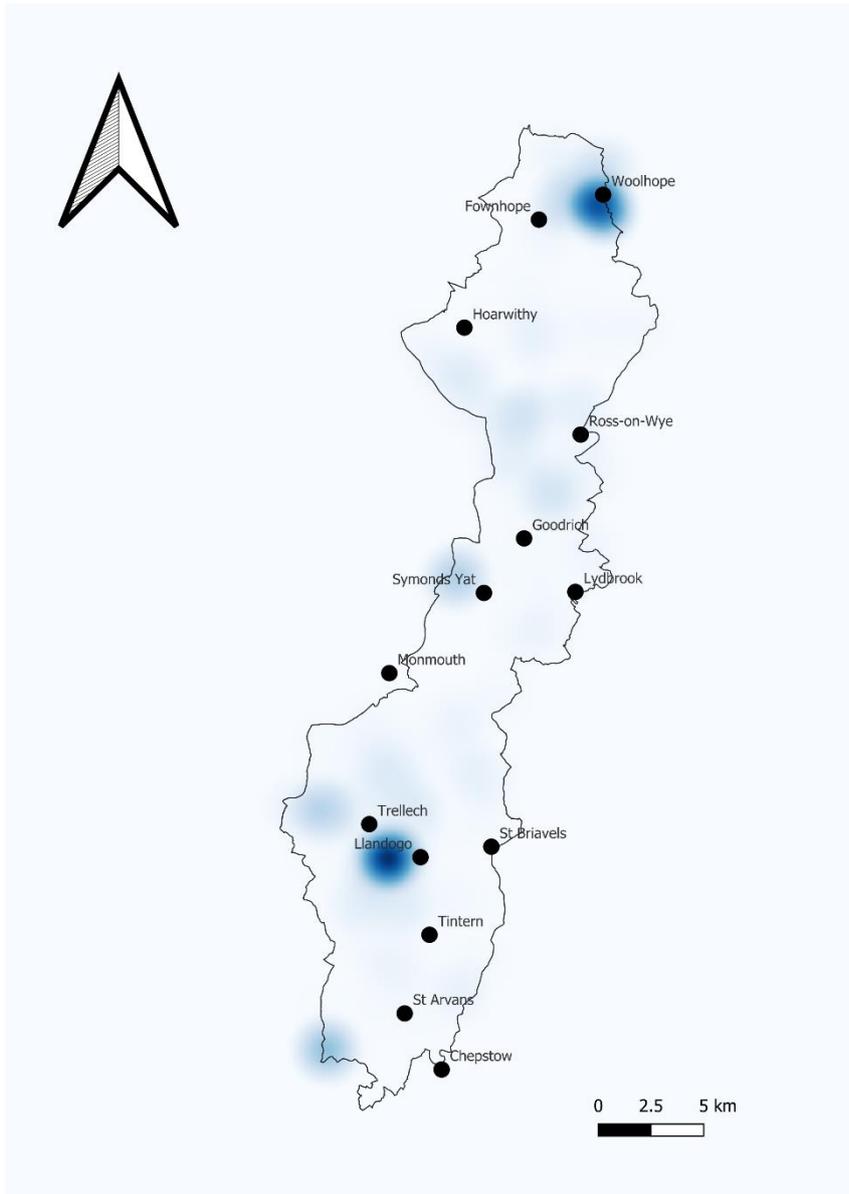
## River & Tributaries [SQ3]

### Current extent

At the heart of the National Landscape is the River Wye, which flows through the Wye Valley National Landscape for 58 miles (92km) from Mordiford to Chepstow, being tidal south of Bigsweir bridge. Streams and tributaries cover a similar length. Flood Zone 2 (medium risk, with a 1% chance from rivers) covers approximately 3,121 ha of floodplain throughout the National Landscape. Other wetland habitats are to be found throughout the National Landscape. Phase 1 habitat surveys have identified ponds, wet grasslands, mire and other similar wetland habitats covering just over 122ha. Flood zone 2 and other wetland habitats are presented on map 3 below, with a heatmap showing the primary location of wetland habitats in map 4.



Map 3 - Wye Valley National Landscape Flood Zone 2 and wetland habitats



Map 4 - Wye Valley National Landscape wetlands heatmap

### Condition

The River Wye is designated as both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) containing a rich variety of plants and animal life. Recent condition monitoring of designated features downgraded the River Wye SSSI from unfavourable – recovering, to unfavourable – declining; unfavourable in Wales.

The plight of the Wye has become national news, with the river suffering from high levels of pollution, particularly excessive phosphate and nitrate levels, and algal blooms, all of which are associated with the loss of wildlife and habitat quality. It has been identified that agriculture is the source for much of the excess nutrients (72-74%), but sewage and household waste also contribute<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> [River Wye Action Plan - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421616/River_Wye_Action_Plan.pdf)

Much work is being done to both better understand and reverse the worrying state of the river, but it must be recognised that there is no quick fix and despite best efforts it is likely to take a number of years of concerted effort to return the river to its former state.

Invasive Non-Native Species are a significant threat to the river and its tributaries, particularly Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and American Skunk Cabbage (on tributaries). Although there are no known Giant Hogweed stands in the National Landscape, it is known to be present in small quantities on tributaries higher up the catchment.

Climate change is having a significant impact on the river and its tributaries. Warmer and wetter winters are leading to more frequent flood events, with hotter dryer summers leading to low flows and high water temperatures. Both drought and flood conditions are having a detrimental impact on the wildlife that depends on the river. Water quality and quantity is also having a negative impact on river users and the associated health and wellbeing, and local economy benefits.

### Key Flora and Fauna

The SSSI<sup>11</sup> and SAC<sup>12</sup> citations identify a number of species which make the river so important. Discussions around the most appropriate species to adopt for recovery across the National Landscape identified a range of mammals, plants, insects, fish and birds found locally and which rely upon the river habitat.

Water Crowfoot (*Ranunculus*) was chosen as the adopted species for the river and its tributaries, being a distinctive feature of the Wye and a key indicator species within the SAC citation. It is under threat from the issues which are affecting water quality and quantity (see associated Species Action Plan). Algal blooms, high water events and poor water quality are all considered factors in the decline in water crowfoot, the extent of which has reduced dramatically in recent years.

Clubtail dragonfly and White tail damselfly are both indicators of water quality and specialities on the Wye. Crayfish, Eels/Elvers, Pea Muscle and Lamprey were all identified as species of local interest. Atlantic Salmon are also a distinctive feature of the Wye, but as with others, numbers have been on the decline. Dippers are a feature of tributaries, and kingfisher can be seen on the river throughout the Protected Landscape. Tufa is also an interesting feature on the Slade Brook SSSI in the Gloucestershire part of the National Landscape.



Water Crowfoot in the River Wye (© Ellie Baggett / Wye Valley National Landscape)

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<sup>11</sup> [CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU](#)

<sup>12</sup> [European Site Conservation Objectives for River Wye SAC - UK0012642](#)

## Aims and Objectives for Nature Recovery

### The River and Tributaries Nature Recovery Aim:

*To work with statutory agencies and partners to reverse the declining habitat of the River Wye and its tributaries, encouraging positive action. To see the return of species and habitats in decline as a result of water quality and quantity issues.*

*To increase the extent of wetland features to create permanent and seasonal habitat, and slow the flow of water across land and in tributaries, including but not limited to ponds, scrapes and leaky dams.*

OBJECTIVE	HOW WILL WE ACHEIVE
For the River Wye SSSI to be in Good or recovering condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working through partnership including the Wye Catchment Partnership and Farm Herefordshire, encourage positive upstream activity which improves water quality and reduces the impact on the Wye Valley National Landscape.</li> <li>• Within the Wye Valley National Landscape, and where possible upstream, continue to develop projects and prioritise funding for projects which work towards improvements in water quality.</li> <li>• Support the monitoring of water quality by both the public and voluntary sectors and promote opportunities to get involved.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding for beneficial projects, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Support riparian owners to manage land and features for the benefit of the habitat and species.</li> <li>• Promote the adoption of land management activity which promote good soil management, reduction in surface water run off and storage of water on land.</li> <li>• Where available, provide funding support to carry out work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Encourage and support the surveying of indicator species in the river, to better understand their condition and influence practice to restore habitats.</li> <li>• Continue to explore opportunities for coordinated river management and initiatives that could benefit the habitat, species and public enjoyment.</li> <li>• Celebrate and promote good practice to highlight and encourage sharing and learning.</li> </ul>
Support land management activity which slows down, soaks up and stores water in our soils, vegetation and small watercourses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and promote Natural Flood Management opportunities</li> <li>• Support riparian owners to manage land and features for the benefit of the habitat and species.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling and training of contractors, to ensure management is suitable and well considered, and there is a deep enough pool of local skilled contractors.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote NFM techniques through promotional material, talks and events.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Where available provide funding support to carry out work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> </ul>
To reduce the negative impact of Invasive Non Native Species on our river and tributaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable management.</li> <li>• Encourage volunteer and community activity in the monitoring and management of INNS.</li> <li>• Where available provide funding support to carry out work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Continue to monitor the extent of INNS in the National Landscape to establish success rates of removal and any potential spread and/or new species.</li> </ul>
To use the National Landscapes platform to promote and encourage positive action, enlist support and celebrate achievements.	<p>Continue to work with partner organisations and groups to highlight the plight of the river, coordinate beneficial project work and promote good land management practice. Celebrate and promote good practice to highlight and encourage sharing and learning. Promote opportunities for monitoring, surveying and engagement with river enhancement activities through talks, walks, events and social media.</p>

### The River and Tributaries Nature Recovery Targets

- To bring all riparian and wetland SSSI sites into good or recovering condition by 2031
- Increase the extent of wetland features, both permanent and seasonal, by 50% by 2031. 12.5ha per annum created.
- Install 100 new Natural Flood Management (NFM) Features per annum. 500 by 2031
- Create 50,000m<sup>3</sup> of new water storage in the landscape per annum. 250,000m<sup>3</sup> by 2031
- By 2031 3 tributaries of the River Wye clear of Invasive Non Native Species.

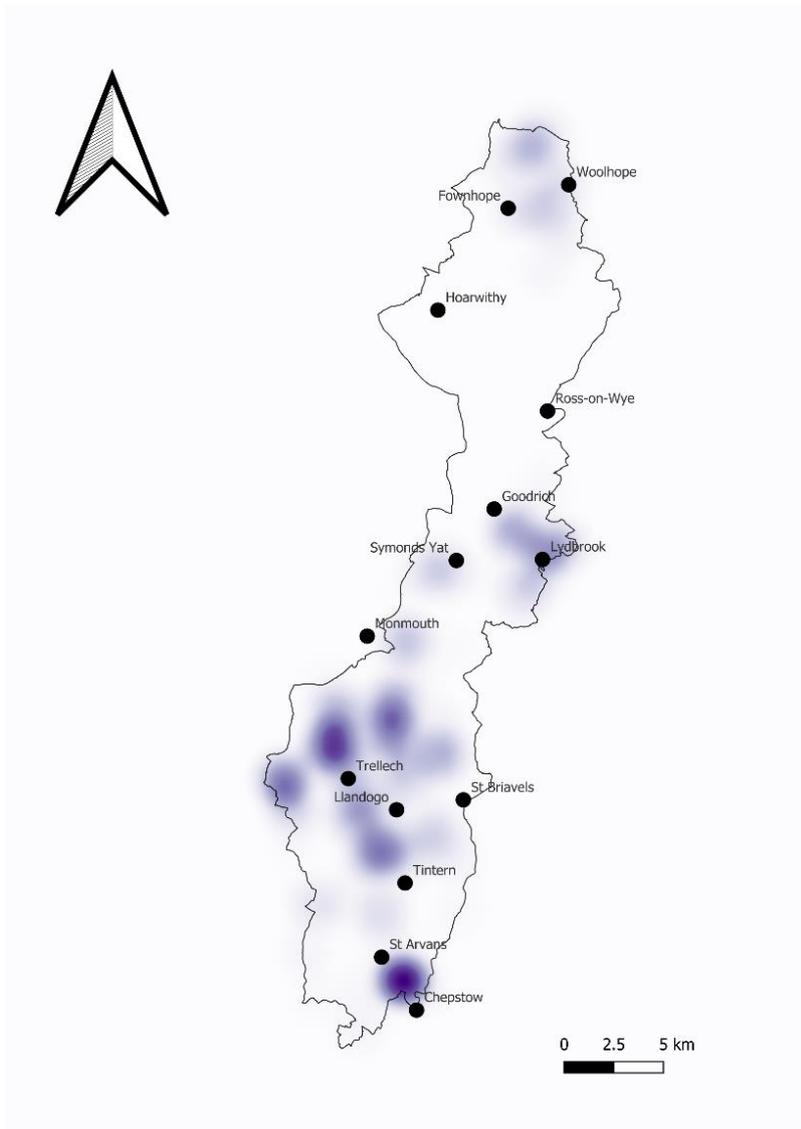
## Species-rich grassland, including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland [SQ4]

### Current extent

Phase 1 habitat data identifies 10,148ha of grassland across the National Landscape, 31% of land. Of this the majority is improved grassland (5,240 ha / 16%). Land recorded as semi-improved species rich or unimproved grassland totals 480ha, just 1.47% of land across the National Landscape. From a different source, Priority Habitat data for England has recorded 174.5ha of Good quality semi-improved grassland, 122.5ha of Lowland Meadows and small areas (less than 5ha) of Lowland Calcareous and Lowland Dry Acid Grassland combined. Although species-rich grassland and un/semi-improved grassland covers a comparatively small part of the National Landscape, it is a significant resource in the national context, is a Special Quality of landscape and provides a valuable habitat for wildlife. Key locations are to be found in the Woolhope Dome, Hewelsfield & Brockweir, Doward and Monmouthshire parts of the National Landscape.



New Grove Meadow (©Wye Valley National Landscape)



Map 5 - Wye Valley National Landscape un and semi-improved grassland sites heatmap

**Condition**

Very few grassland sites are designated as SSSI, however many more are recorded as Local Wildlife Sites. The condition is therefore unknown.

Within each of the 3 Counties a group with a ‘meadow’ grassland focus has been established; The Parish Grasslands Project focusses on sites and landowners in and around Hewelsfield and Brockweir, Monmouthshire Meadows has a county wide focus, and Herefordshire Meadows again with a county wide but more of an agricultural focus. Roadside verge nature reserves in Herefordshire are also covered by the Verging on Wild group. Whilst their extent and condition are recorded as having declined since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the current picture is brighter with a renewed interest in managing, restoring and safeguarding this precious habitat.



Six spot burnet moth (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

### Key Flora and Fauna

A key habitat for many pollinators, meadow grasslands are important to a range of species. As well as bumblebee species, butterflies and moths thrive here, including spotted burnet moths and marbled white butterflies. An assemblage of bumblebees has been adopted by the Wye Valley National Landscape to represent Species-rich and good quality semi-improved grassland sites (See associated Species Action Plan).

The flowers upon which the pollinator species thrive include a range of orchid species including green-winged, lesser and greater butterfly orchid. Wild daffodil are also found, particularly in the northern part of the National Landscape. Into the autumn, on many of these sites fungi flourish, including the less common waxcap.



Shrill Carder Bee (©Nature Picture Library)



Waxcap at New Grove Meadow (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

**Aims and Objectives for Nature Recovery**

**Species Rich Grassland including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland Nature**

**Recovery Aim**

*To ensure species-rich and good quality semi improved grasslands are recorded, well managed, better connected and opportunities for restoration are promoted and taken. The extent of meadow grasslands is increased.*

OBJECTIVE	HOW WILL WE ACHEIVE
To see the creation of new species rich and good quality semi-improved grassland sites throughout the National Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support landowners to manage, restore and create meadow grassland habitats.</li> <li>• Continue to explore opportunities for coordinated meadow grassland creation and management initiatives that could benefit the habitat, species and public enjoyment.</li> <li>• Where available provide funding support to carry out work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Work with partner organisations and meadow groups to promote meadow creation opportunities.</li> </ul>
To see all grassland SSSIs and LWSs in good or recovering condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the monitoring of grassland SSSIs to establish current condition, and the continuation of monitoring to monitor change.</li> <li>• Encourage the surveying of grassland LWSs to establish current condition.</li> <li>• Support the surveying of potential grassland LWSs and/or Priority Habitat sites, for inclusion on registers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the positive management of grassland SSSIs and LWSs to improve condition and maintain good condition.</li> <li>• Where available provide funding support to carry out work, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> </ul>
Support the positive management of existing good quality grassland sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable management, or signpost landowners to recognised organisations and experts for management advice.</li> <li>• Promote best practice management techniques through promotional material, talks and events.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling and training of contractors, to ensure management is suitable and well considered, and there is a deep enough pool of local skilled contractors.</li> <li>• Invest in upskilling and equipment to enable broader seed harvesting operations</li> </ul>
Support the monitoring and promotion of good quality grassland habitats to enable deeper understanding and influence management beneficial to wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect people with species-rich and good quality semi improved grasslands through volunteering opportunities, walks, talks, events and social media promotion.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling of volunteers to enable surveying and monitoring of grassland habitats and associated species.</li> <li>• Continue to support and champion meadow restoration groups who work to promote the habitat and support landowners, throughout the National Landscape.</li> </ul>

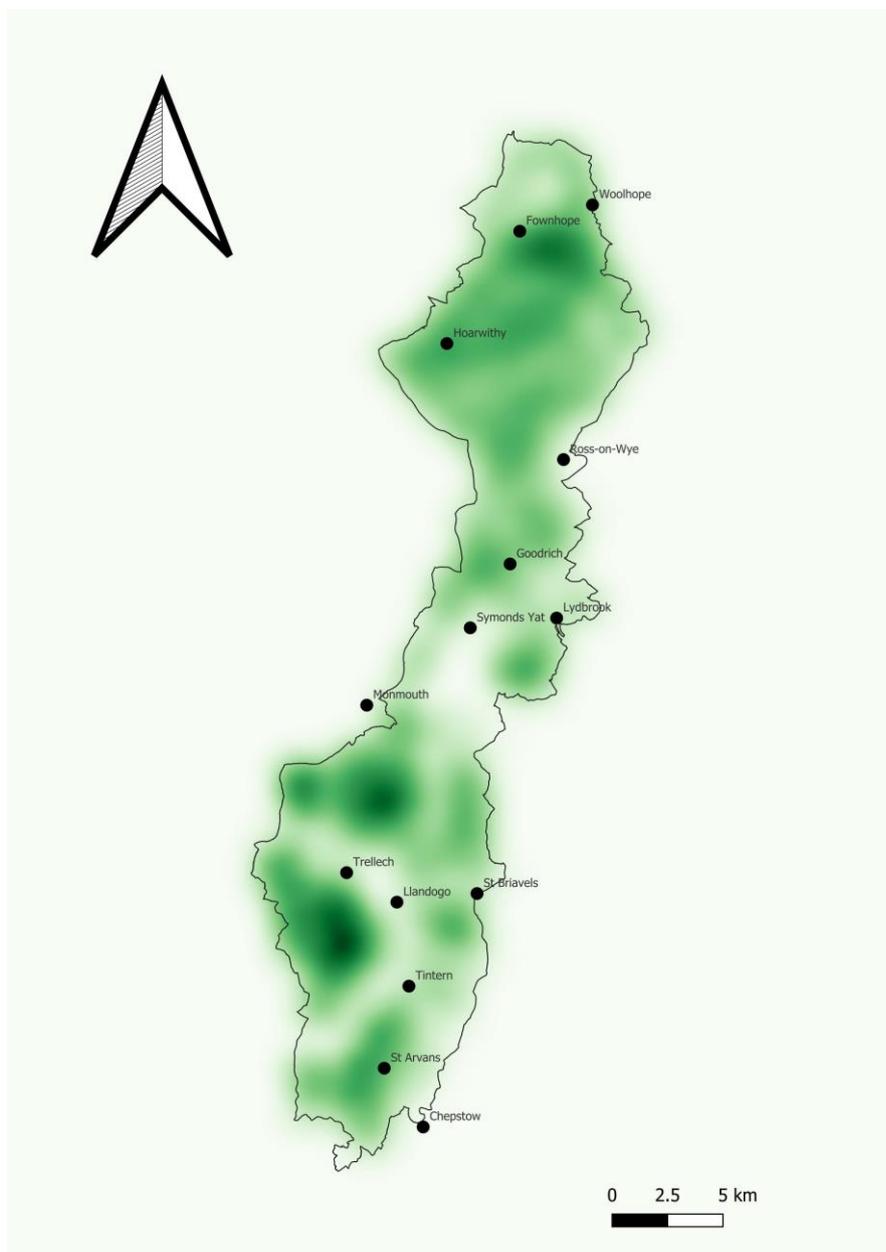
**Species rich grassland including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland Nature Recovery Targets**

- To bring all grassland SSSI sites into good or recovering condition by 2031
- To create 250ha of new meadow grasslands across the National Landscape by 2031. 50ha per year created.

## Boundary habitat diversity & connectivity [SQ5]

### Current extent

Throughout the AONB. Dry stone walls are a feature of the Lower Wye Valley and small field patterns south of Ross-on-Wye. Hedgerows are found throughout the National Landscape, being more widespread in the more agricultural land of Herefordshire, but also bounding grassland and arable fields and providing habitat connectivity in the more densely wooded lower Wye Valley. UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) data for England, combined with Wye Valley National Landscape Phase 1 data for Wales has mapped 1,083km of hedgerows across the National Landscape. The data shows that hedgerows are more evenly spread throughout the Herefordshire part of the National Landscape where the fields are generally larger, with density varying slightly. Land to the south of Fownhope being a hotspot. More density of hedgerows are to be found bounding the fields between woodlands in the lower Wye Valley.



Map 6 – Wye Valley National Landscape hedgerow heatmap

## Condition

Hedgerows play an important connectivity role across the National Landscape, especially between woodland and species-rich grassland sites. Their condition varies greatly not only between different parts of the National Landscape, but often from field to field. Ash dieback has the potential to have a significant impact on the condition and functionality of our hedgerows as connectivity features.

Dry stone walls are more of a feature in the Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire parts of the National Landscape, but are generally considered to be in poor condition. They often no longer function as a livestock barrier.

Hedgerows can play an important role in natural flood management, especially when they are found cross slope, slowing down the flow of surface water, catching sediment and soaking up water.



Wye Valley National Landscape hedgelaying (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

## Key Flora and Fauna

Hedgehogs, one of the Wye Valley National Landscapes adopted species, are associated with hedges (See associated Species Action Plan). They form highways along which the animals can safely shelter and navigate by.

One of the three SACs in the National Landscape is the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat sites. Hedgerows are an important feature for bat species for navigation and orientation, as well as a source of food through the abundance of invertebrates.

A range of bird, insect and mammals will make use of hedgerows throughout the National Landscape for navigation, food, shelter, home and to connect between other nature rich habitats.



Wye Valley dry stone wall (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

### Aims and Objectives for Nature Recovery

#### Boundary Habitat diversity & connectivity Nature Recovery Aim

*Promote the cultural and ecological importance of hedgerows and dry stone walls, and their importance as features for habitat and connectivity. Encourage their reinstatement and maintenance for the benefit of species which use them. Support the creation of new hedgerows and dry-stone walls, increasing their extent.*

OBJECTIVE	HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE
<p>To see the extent of hedgerows and drystone walls increase throughout the Wye Valley National Landscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support landowners to plan and deliver hedge planting schemes, prioritising those which provide good habitat connectivity.</li> <li>• Continue to explore opportunities for hedgerow and drystone wall creation and management initiatives that could benefit the habitat, species and public enjoyment.</li> <li>• Provide funding support to carry out work where available, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Promote the use of cross-contour hedgerows as a Nature Based solution to mitigate the impact of climate change and slow down the flow of surface water.</li> </ul>

<p>To see the condition of existing boundary features enhanced through good hedgerow management and drystone wall restoration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote good management techniques such as hedgelaying and coppicing, to improve condition and longevity.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of the impact of pest and disease on hedgerows and encourage the replacement of lost specimens with suitable replacements.</li> <li>• Provide funding support to carry out work where available, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p>Support the monitoring and promotion of boundary habitats to enable deeper understanding and influence management beneficial to wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support monitoring activity to better understand and map existing resource.</li> <li>• Celebrate the importance of hedgerows through promotional activity, using the hedgehog and other key species as engagement opportunities.</li> <li>• Develop a programme of monitoring and surveying of dry stone walls, following circa 2005 AONB survey, to establish changes in condition and extent.</li> <li>• Connect people with hedgerows and dry stone walls through volunteering opportunities, walks, talks, events and social media promotion.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling and training of contractors, to ensure management is suitable and well considered, and there is a deep enough pool of local skilled contractors.</li> </ul>

**Boundary habitat diversity & connectivity Nature Recovery Targets**

- To restore 100m of dry stone wall per annum.
- All hedgerows to be in good management by 2031
- To create 25km of new hedgerows across the National Landscape by 2031. 5km per annum.
- To restore, through coppicing, hedge laying, gapping up &/or protection from livestock, 37.5km of existing hedgerows across the National Landscape by 2031. 7.5km per annum.
- To plant 500 standard hedgerow trees by 2031. 100 per annum

## Ancient and veteran trees [SQ18]

### Current extent

Found throughout the AONB in field boundaries, woodlands and open settings. Key locations include The Doward and Lower Wye Valley.



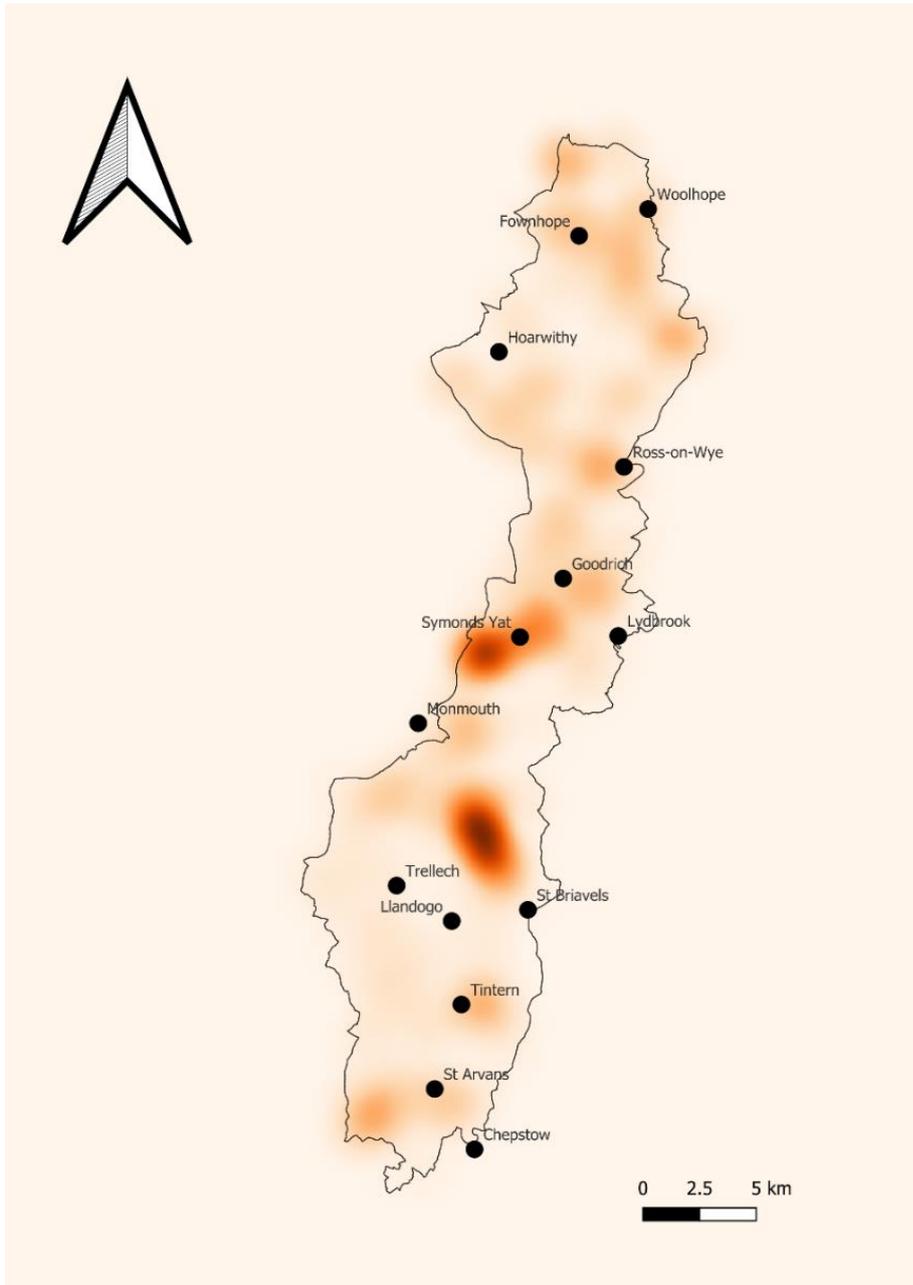
Veteran sweet chestnut tree (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

### Condition

Mostly unknown, but considered to be poor in the majority of cases. A survey carried out by Wye Valley AONB Volunteers in the mid 2000s recorded the features and conditions of many. A number of the trees recorded have known to have been since lost.

### Key Flora and Fauna

One of the key attributes of ancient and veteran trees are the species that are dependent on deadwood habitats, saproxylic species. Rot holes in branches and hollow trunks can be used as nest sites for many species of bird and bat. A huge diversity of invertebrates are also supported by veteran trees, which can also act as food for nesting animals. Fungi, lichens, mosses and liverworts also thrive in the environment created by ancient and veteran trees. In orchard settings, the decaying wood of veteran fruit trees is a key habitat for Nobel chafer beetle (see traditional orchards theme).



Map 7 - Wye Valley National Landscape Veteran Trees heatmap

### Aims and Objectives for Nature Recovery

#### Veteran Trees Nature Recovery Aim:

*Promote the importance of ancient and veteran trees both culturally and ecologically. Encourage their monitoring and good management to secure longevity, and encourage and support the management of potential veterans and planting of future veterans.*

OBJECTIVE	HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE
To see no not loss of ancient and veteran trees across the Wye Valley National Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support landowners to plan and deliver life prolonging management of ancient and veteran trees.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide funding support to carry out work where available, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Work with partner organisations to promote opportunities.</li> <li>• Revisit early 2000s veteran tree survey, using it as an established baseline, to establish habitat expansion or retraction.</li> </ul>
To see an increase in the management of candidate veteran trees, and the planting of standard trees as veterans of the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote good management techniques to improve condition and longevity.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of the impact of pest and disease on trees and encourage the replacement of lost specimens with suitable replacements.</li> <li>• Provide funding support to carry out work where available, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Promote standard tree planting following the principle of the right tree in the right place.</li> <li>• Encourage the planting and/or management of standard trees in new and existing hedgerows.</li> </ul>
Support the monitoring and surveying of ancient and veteran trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage landowners and volunteers to survey and record veteran trees.</li> <li>• Revisit early 2000s veteran tree survey, using it as an established baseline, to establish habitat expansion or retraction.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling and training of contractors, to ensure management is suitable and well considered, and there is a deep enough pool of local skilled contractors.</li> </ul>
Celebrate the cultural and ecological importance of ancient and veteran trees, and promotion the importance of veteran trees to enable deeper understanding and influence management beneficial to wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect people with ancient and veteran trees through walks, talks, events and social media promotion.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling of volunteers to enable surveying and monitoring of woodland habitats and associated species.</li> </ul>

### Veteran Trees Nature Recovery Targets

- To plant 1,000 in field standard trees, as future veterans, by 2031. 200 per year.
- No net loss of existing veteran trees.
- Carry out life prolonging management of 25 veteran trees by 2031, 5 trees per annum

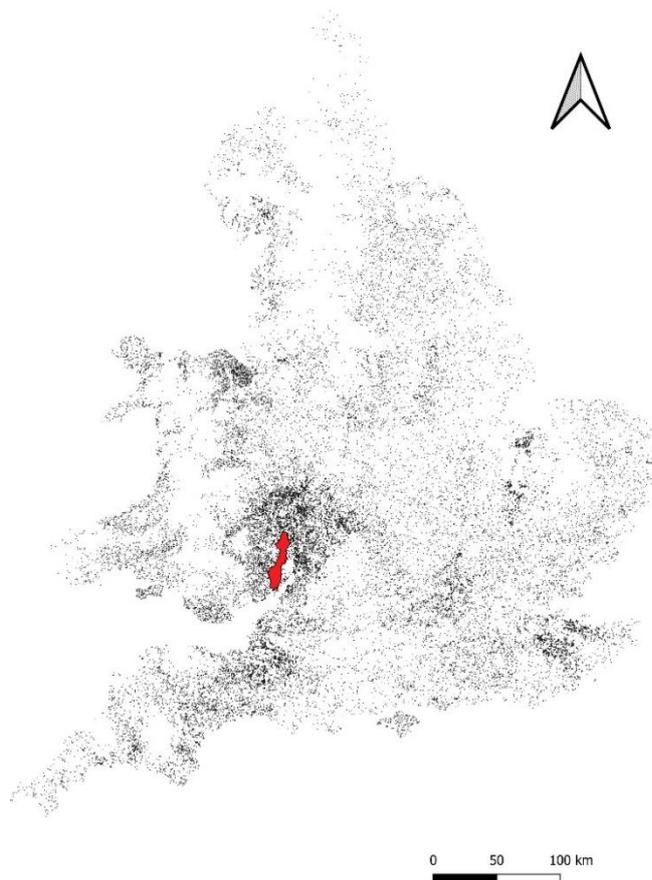
## Traditional Orchards [SQ27]

### Current extent

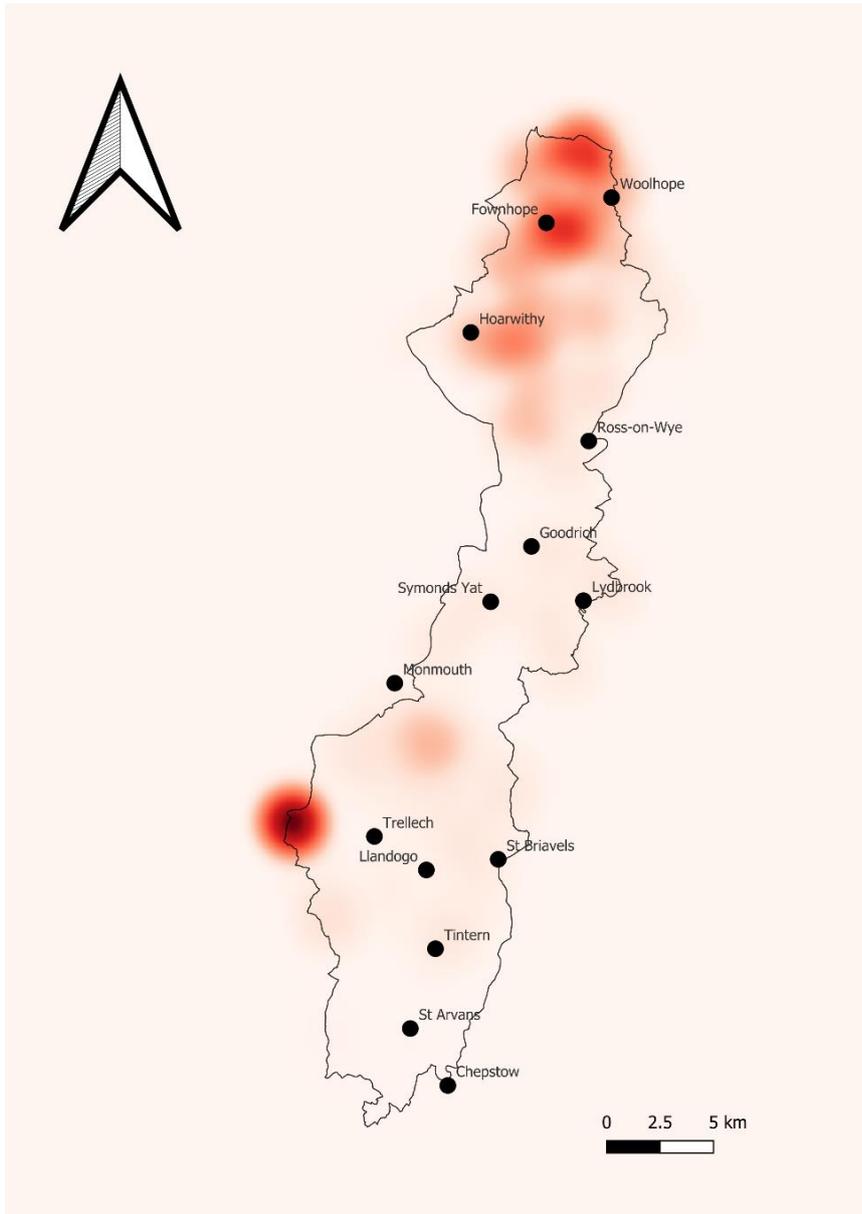
Herefordshire and Gloucestershire are both recognised historically as counties rich in traditional orchards. From 1891 to 1988, in the parishes between Holme Lacy and Bridstow the extent of traditional orchards fell from 460ha to 65ha (Hurley, Landscape Origins of the Wye Valley, 2008). Despite this decline, the National Landscape still retains just under 223ha of traditional orchard, 0.7% of the land area. This is a significant resource, being approximately 1% of all traditional orchards in England and over 6% of those found across Wales, predominantly is a number of large orchards near Cwmcarvan. Orchards are found throughout the National Landscape, but very few are to be found south of Llandogo.

### National Context

Traditional Orchards are an England Priority Habitat of which the Wye Valley National Landscape has 1% of the National resource. Since the 1950's, 90% of traditional orchards in England and Wales have been lost (PTES, 2022). The overall area of orchards in England has declined by 63%, and of the remainder, only a third are traditional. This means that only 13.5% of the former English habitat range exists (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, 2015). In Wales, the agricultural census estimates that there was a 94% reduction in area of orchards between 1958 and 1992 (Oram, Alexander & Sadler, 2013).



Map 8 - England and Wales Traditional Orchard density (source DataMapWales / Natural England Open Data Geoportal)



Map 9 - Wye Valley National Landscape Traditional Orchards heatmap

**Condition**

Mainly unknown but many traditional orchards considered to be in poor condition due to lack of management and neglect. Only 0.1ha sit within a SSSI, with 0.09ha in unfavourable recovering and 0.01ha in Favourable condition. The remaining orchards have no protected status and are vulnerable to removal. (Wye Valley AONB State of the AONB Report, 2021)

**Key Flora and Fauna**

The noble chafer beetle is one of the National Landscapes adopted species (see associated Species Action Plan). Associated with deadwood in old fruit trees, the main national distribution today is in the old orchard country of the ‘Three Counties’ (Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire). Recent project work in the National Landscape has establish two small populations in the far north of the National Landscape, with an aim of expanding the available habitat and range of the species. Pheromone trap survey work established a small but significant number of beetles, increasing the know records from 2 individuals to 5. Surveying has been carried out twice in recent years in

Monmouthshire, with no beetles found in either survey. There are a number of records just outside the National Landscape boundary in both Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.

Other species of note to be found in Wye Valley Traditional Orchards include bird species mistle thrush and lesser spotted woodpecker. Mistletoe is also synonymous with the habitat as are species associate with mistletoe, the mistletoe moth and gall weevil.



Orchard restoration at Brampton Abbots (© Emma Drabble)

### **Aims and Objectives for Nature Recovery**

#### Traditional Orchards Nature Recovery Aim:

*To encourage the management of traditional orchards to bring existing habitat into good condition. To encourage and support the planting new orchards to expand the habitat and provide stepping stones between existing sites.*

OBJECTIVE	HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE
For all Traditional Orchards to be in good condition and under appropriate management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the monitoring and surveying of traditional orchards to establish current condition and appropriate management opportunities, and the continuation of monitoring to monitor change.</li> <li>• Support the positive management of traditional orchards to improve condition and maintain good condition.</li> <li>• Provide funding support to carry out work where available, through the development of projects and in conjunction with partners.</li> </ul>

<p>Support the creation of new orchards and expansion of existing orchards, particularly where they provide connectivity or stepping stones between existing sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on the location of new orchards and the most suitable species to include in planting schemes.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p>Support the positive management of existing traditional orchards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable management, or signpost woodland owners to recognised organisations and experts for management advice.</li> <li>• Promote orchard management techniques through promotional material, talks and events.</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance on suitable sources of external funding, and support applications where appropriate.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling and training of contractors, to ensure management is suitable and well considered, and there is a deep enough pool of local skilled contractors.</li> </ul>
<p>Support the monitoring and promotion of traditional orchard habitats to enable deeper understanding and influence management beneficial to wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect people with orchards through volunteering opportunities, walks, talks, events and social media promotion.</li> <li>• Encourage the upskilling of volunteers to enable surveying and monitoring of orchard habitats and associated species.</li> <li>• Promote good management practices and signpost orchard owners towards available funding opportunities</li> <li>• Celebrate the cultural and ecological importance of traditional orchards through promotional activity.</li> </ul>

### Traditional Orchards Nature Recovery Targets

- To create 10ha of new traditional orchards throughout the National Landscape by 2031. 2ha per annum
- To plant 200 fruit trees as standard trees, or restocking existing traditional orchards by 2031, 40 trees per annum.



Noble chafer beetle (© Ellie Baggett / Wye Valley National Landscape)



Orchids at Joans Hill Farm (© Wye Valley National Landscape)

## 30 by 30

In 2022, at the UN Biodiversity Conference, the UK made a formal commitment to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030, known as 30x30. Whilst establishing what land is eligible towards 30x30, it is recognised that work to recover nature must be taking place now. Protected Landscapes can play a key role in the delivery of 30x30 and we believe should be aiming higher than this target. In our aim to achieve greater than 30x30 in the Wye Valley National Landscape, we are in this Nature Recovery Plan setting targets in relation to the designated land and Special Quality habitats, which will also achieve significant landscape value enhancements.

What land contributes to 30x30 targets is currently in consultation, so it is difficult to set a figure for our aspirations for the Wye Valley National Landscape. However, the aspirations and targets identified below will contribute towards greater than 30% across the protected landscape.

By 2030, in partnership with landowners and other organisations, within the Wye Valley National Landscape we aspire to see:

- All SSSIs to be in favourable or recovering condition (2,295.68ha / 7%)
- All Local Nature Reserves to be in positive management and good condition (125.2ha / 0.004%)
- All National Nature Reserves to be in good condition (121.74ha / 0.4%)
- All Local Wildlife Sites mapped, recorded and in positive management (3,642.13ha / 11.1%)
- All Priority and Sensitive habitats in good condition and the mapped extent increased (3,988.23ha / 12.18%)

*NB – it is noted that there is cross over in the figures above and some land will be recorded under more than one aspiration.*

We have set the following aspirations for the increase in extent of Special Quality features throughout the Wye Valley National Landscape by 2031.

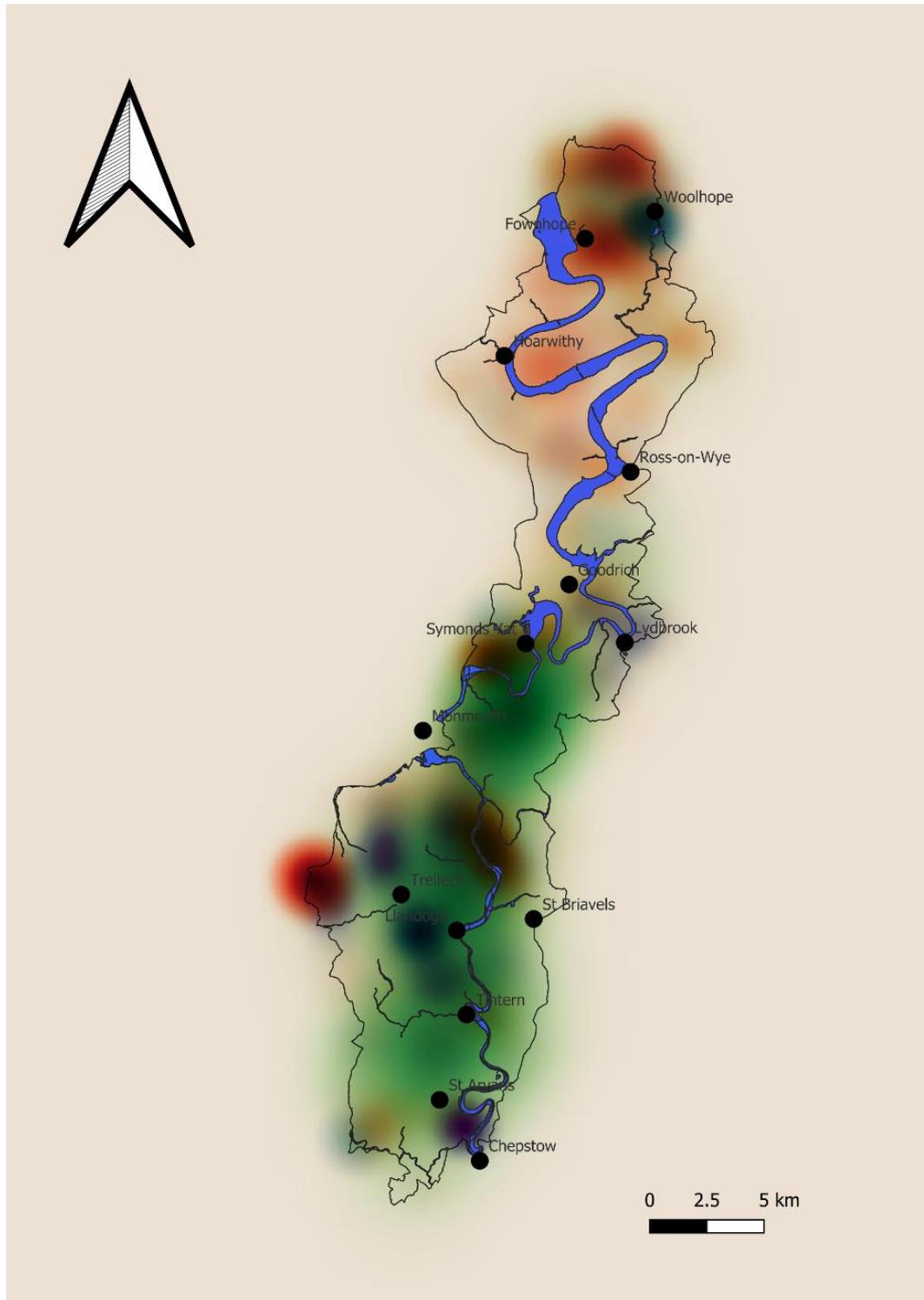
Habitat	Current Extent 2024	Target Extent 2031	New habitat target
Woodland	9,033.1ha / 27.6%	9,533ha / 29.1%	500ha
Species-rich/good quality semi-improved grasslands	479.97ha / 1.47%	730ha / 2.2%	250ha
Traditional Orchards	222.6ha / 0.68%	242.6ha / 0.74%	10ha
Wetland features	122.2ha / 0.37%	184.7ha / 0.56%	62.5ha
Veteran Trees	2,350	No net loss	1000 new standards as future veterans
Hedgerows	1,083 km	1,108 km	25 km

On the English side of the National Landscape, these targets will also work towards achieving the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Targets 1 and 8.

- Target 1: Wildlife-rich habitats. Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).
- Target 8: Increased tree canopy and woodland cover. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from a 2022 baseline).

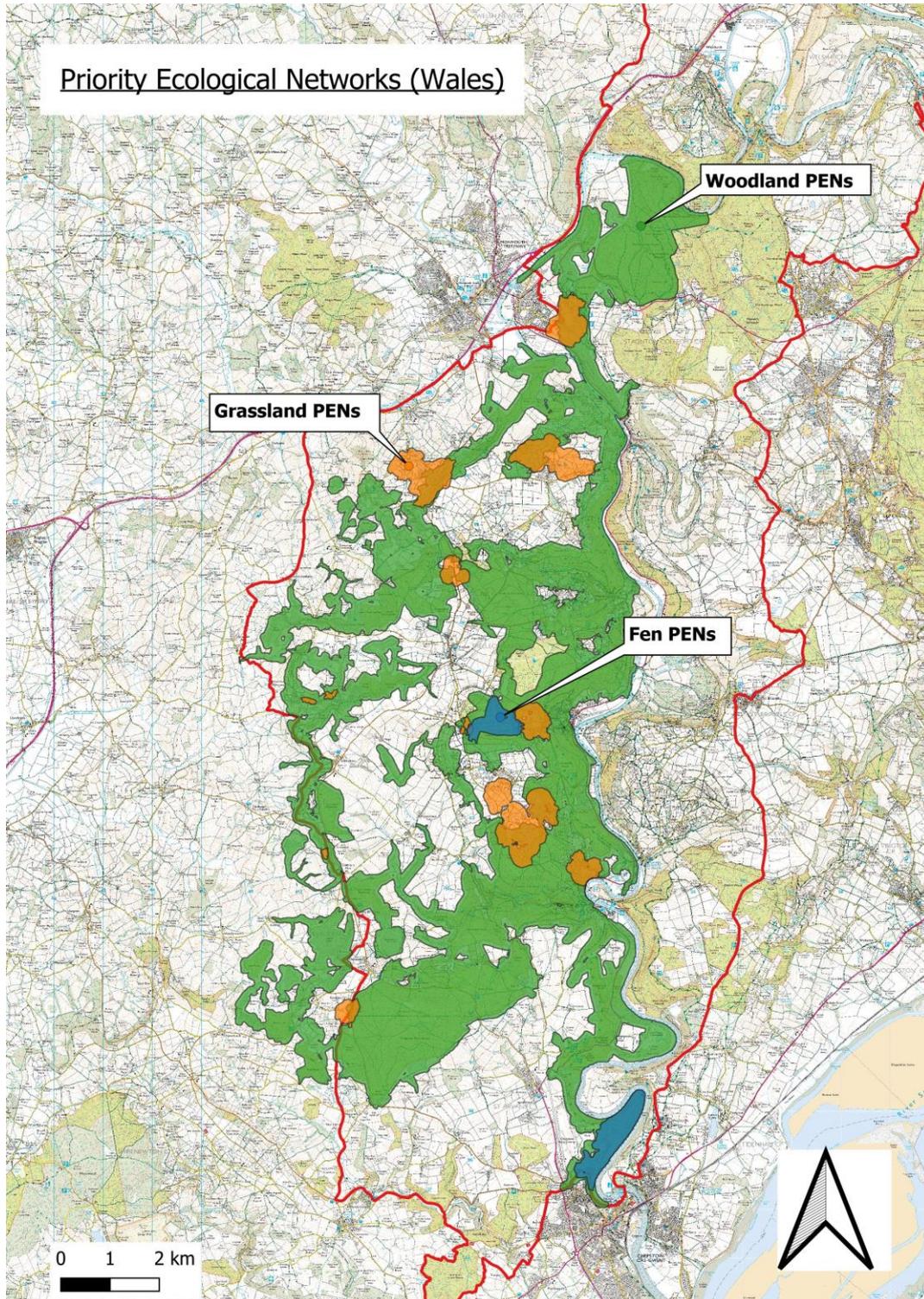
## Opportunity mapping and enhancing nature recovery network across the National Landscape

Combining the priority habitats discussed above (minus hedgerows due to their extent throughout the National Landscape) gives us this visual representation of where the most important wildlife habitats are to be found based on the best available data. The darker the area, the greater density of existing habitat.



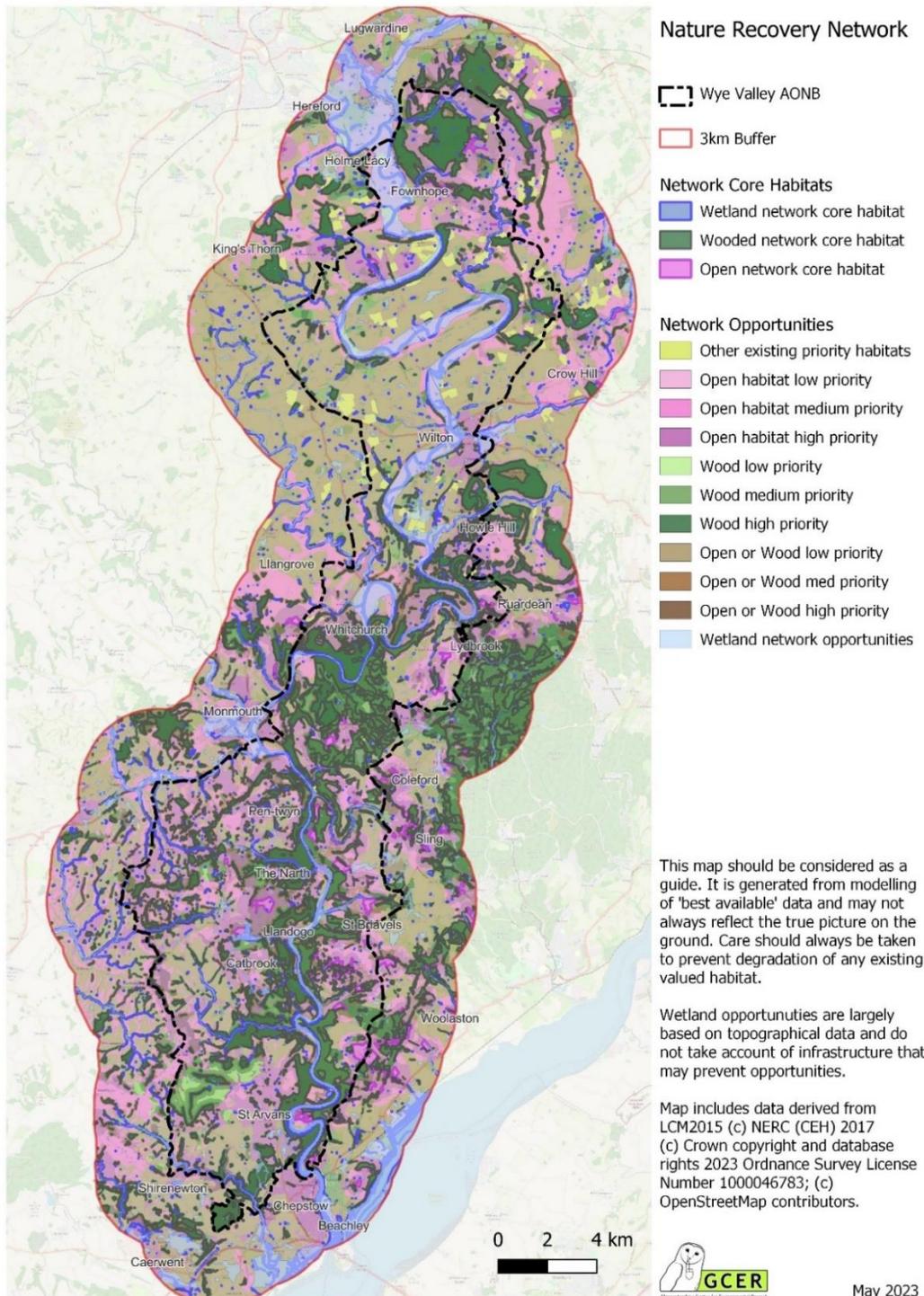
Map 10 - Wye Valley National Landscape Priority Habitats combined

In Wales, Priority Ecological Networks (PENS) show areas of connectivity between Protected Sites, providing a framework to inform the location of action to build functional resilient ecological networks. Native Woodland, Semi-natural grassland and Fen PENS are located within the Wye Valley National Landscape. They are shown on map 11 below, and further information can be found at [https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/new?layer=geonode:nrw\\_priority\\_ecological\\_networks#/](https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/new?layer=geonode:nrw_priority_ecological_networks#/).



Map 11 – Priority Ecological Networks (PENS) in Wales

Produced by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the map below goes further and identifies the areas where there is highest opportunity for expanding or creating different habitat types, based on the location of existing habitats and the way key species move between them. The mapping undertaken considers open (grassland), woodland and wetland habitats. It can be clearly seen the greater opportunities presented in the southern half of the National Landscape along with the Woolhope Dome in the north. The map should be used by anyone considering and planning for changes on the ground. The maps can be seen in greater detail at <https://naturalcapital.gcerdata.com/>.



Map 12 – Wye Valley National Landscape Nature Recovery Network (© Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)

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## WYE VALLEY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE WORK PROGRAMME AND FUNDING 2026/2027

### ***Purpose***

To seek approval for the outline work plan for the Wye Valley National Landscape during the forthcoming financial year, following confirmation of funding from DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the funding commitments from DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales for the Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership.
- B. endorses the outline Wye Valley National Landscape Team Work Programme for 2026/2027

### ***Key Issues***

- DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales have all made confirmations of funding allocations for Wye Valley National Landscape for 2026/27.
- Welsh Government have offered a 29% increase in Core Revenue funding for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team whereas all other allocations are the same as 2025/26.
- The outline Work Programme for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team for 2026/2027 is attached, furthering the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty, themed around delivering for Nature, Climate, People and Place.
- Priorities include: the consolidation of the support for farming, through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) and Ffermio Bro programmes, a proposed in-year extension of the Wye Adapt to Climate Change? Programme; on-going focus on Nature & Climate outcomes through DEFRA and Welsh Government Capital funding, including the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme and Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) in Wales; continued Planning advice shared jointly with the Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnership; the on-going activities and achievements of the Volunteers and Young Adventurers; the delivery of the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects; the completion of Management Plan review; and continuing a range of existing activities and projects, including continuation of the control of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and progressing the Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Action Plan; while retaining enough flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.

- The Wye Valley National Landscape Team core budget for 2026/27 as presented to the Steering Group is £575,945 and additional Capital funding programmes, grants and other project funding is anticipated to reach £1,250,000 levered into the National Landscape during the year.

### ***Reasons***

DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have all been able to confirm allocations for 2026/2027, along with some indicative allocations for up to a further two years. This provides some medium term security and enables more strategic planning of projects and programmes to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the designed Wye Valley National Landscape.

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

### ***Implications***

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team core budget for 2026-27 has been calculated at £575,945 based on an effective flat-line budget, apart from a welcome increase from Welsh Government.

DEFRA have confirmed continuation of grant funding for 2026/2027 financial year with a total annual grant award of £426,494, split between Core Revenue Funding of £151,855, and Core Capital and Access Funding of £274,640. Criteria include making land greener, wilder, and more accessible to all, and to increase the contribution that Protected Landscapes make to Environment Act and Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) targets, measured through the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF). Current allocations may be considered indicative of expected allocations for 2027/28 and 2028/29, however final confirmation of subsequent years will follow DEFRA annual business planning process. A further total of £345,390 is allocated to the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, with similar flat allocations in 2027/28 and 2028/29.

Following the Senedd budget being agreed, Welsh Government have confirmed Core Revenue Grant uplift of 29% to £66,500 for 2026/27, along with flat allocations of General Capital, SLSP Landscape Nature & Carbon grant and Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) totalling £290,000. A further total of £237,000 is allocated to the Ffermio Bro programme, with indicative budgets for subsequent years subject to approval following the Senedd elections.

Natural Resources Wales have confirmed their funding allocations for Wye Valley National Landscape of £49,000 for 2026/27, being the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a two year agreement.

These commitments considerably help with medium term budgeting and work programming. Consequently it is possible to consolidate the current National Landscape Team at 10.5 FTE and deliver the core functions of the team, and purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the four constituent Local Authorities.

The Work Programme for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team is outlined below, enhanced by projects and partnership initiatives with funding and grants from a variety of sources, such as the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects between Ross-on-Wye and Whitchurch. Where required National Landscape budgets and grant match-funding are supplemented by drawing on National Landscape reserves.

<b><i>Wye Valley National Landscape Work Programme 2026-27 outline priorities &amp; projects</i></b>
<p><b>Nature</b></p> <p>Farming &amp; land management support: advice, guidance and grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme [England only]</li> <li>• Ffermio Bro programme (tbc) [Wales only]</li> <li>• Wye Adapt to Climate Change? (WACC) Programme</li> <li>• National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects x3</li> <li>• Conservation Grazing</li> <li>• River Friendly Farming</li> <li>• Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects</li> </ul> <p>Species Actions Plans – Finish/publish &amp; deliver actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat Creation/Restoration</li> <li>• Monitoring &amp; public engagement</li> <li>• Support Hedgehog Rescue Centre</li> <li>• Water crowfoot drone filming</li> </ul> <p>Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) control</p> <p>Deer Management</p> <p>Wildlife of the Wye Valley Guide/Leaflet</p>
<p><b>Climate</b></p> <p>Peatland Restoration particularly at Cleddon Bog SSSI</p> <p>Climate Action Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon &amp; Climate Assessments of Landscape Management Zones (LMZs)</li> </ul> <p>Training &amp; Development</p> <p>Climate Action Network</p> <p>Wye Adapt to Climate Change? (WACC) Programme - extension</p>
<p><b>People</b></p> <p>PR, comms &amp; Social Media</p> <p>Promotion &amp; Events</p> <p>Website update &amp; review</p> <p>Volunteers</p>

**Wye Valley National Landscape Work Programme 2026-27 outline priorities & projects**

Young Adventurers

Training & Development of LPA staff & Cllrs including s85 Training

Governance, including Joint Advisory Committee & National Landscape Partnership (inc. training, Tour & Seminar)

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) [Wales only]

Farm Clusters

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

Local Authority & partner liaison

Local, Regional & National partnerships, collaborations & liaison,

- including National Landscapes Association and Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales

Diversity & engagement

**Place**

Management Plan Review

- Climate Action Plan
- SEA, HRA
- State of the National Landscape Report
- Public Consultation Draft

Lower Wye Track & Trails Steering Group & Action Plan delivery

Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) [Wales only]

Access for All & route enhancements

- Cleddon Falls & Jubilee Walk
- Chepstow Park Wood Access improvements
- Willow Walk launch
- Wye Valley Walk including Piercefield Walk & Wyesham River Bank
- Bridges (large & small)
- Trellech Virtuous Well
- 65 & 69 Bus Routes/Walks

Dark skies

Fixed Point Photos

Undergrounding (low voltage lines)

Planning & Development Control

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

Cultural heritage projects - Overlooking the Wye legacy & Offa's Dyke Collaboratory

Landscape Connections Bid

PR, communications & outreach activities

Building PR content (inc. photos & videos)

Wye Valley River Festival

Funding, resource management & Monitoring

Work placements

## **Background**

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team consists of 11 staff (10.5 FTE) employed across 3 local authorities with one additional seconded member:-

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

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

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## NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF) PROPOSED REFORMS

### ***Purpose***

To review changes in the proposed reforms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. endorses and adopts the response from the National Landscapes Association on the proposed reforms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- B. encourages partner organisations to incorporate the NLA response in their submissions on the NPPF.

### ***Key Issues***

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is seeking views on a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with a consultation closing at 11:45pm on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026.
- The revisions include several changes in the way in which National Landscapes are addressed in national planning policy.
- The National Landscapes Association has collated a response, developed in consultation with the Planning and Placemaking panel.

### ***Reasons***

National Landscapes are outstanding, iconic landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that they are safeguarded in the national interest. They are of immense value to the nation, offering a wide range of public goods and services. For over 20 years, current national planning policy has helped balance the protection of such landscapes along with supporting the delivery of appropriate new housing in National Landscapes to support vibrant and thriving rural communities, which is compatible with, and does not compromise, the character and natural beauty of the National Landscape.

### ***Implications***

The Government is currently consulting on proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England. The consultation finishes on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026. Some of the policies in NPPF indicate how much weight the government would expect a particular consideration to be given, including cases where it is appropriate to give substantial weight to certain benefits, and the limited circumstances in which it is expected that permission would be refused.

It is disappointing to see the removal of the statement that Protected Landscapes have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. However, there are some beneficial changes such as Protected Landscape Management Plans being explicitly referred to (Policy N1 in the draft NPPF), reference to 'natural beauty' rather than 'scenic beauty', as this aligns with the purpose of designation. Potentially the most significant adverse change relating directly to National Landscapes is that the draft NPPF makes no explicit reference to the circumstances in which the application of NPPF policies relating to National Landscapes can provide a strong reason for refusal in decision-making ( which is addressed in paragraph 11d(i) of the current NPPF).

The National Landscapes Association (NLA) has collated a response, developed in consultation with the Planning and Placemaking panel, consisting of lead and planning officers from a range of National Landscapes.

The key messages developed by the NLA are outlined below, forming the backbone of the response from the NLA. Local partners are encouraged to include these points in any local responses.

1. We welcome the change from 'landscape and scenic beauty' (current NPPF para 189) to 'natural beauty' N4 (1) in the proposed draft, as this aligns better with the underpinning legislation for National Landscapes.

Natural England's guidance on Protected Landscape Management Plans identifies that the natural beauty of each Protected Landscape is described in the respective Management Plan. Therefore a footnote should reference that the Management Plan for each Protected Landscape defines the natural beauty of the designated area. This has the benefit of highlighting the importance of Management Plans in planning decisions and aligns with Natural England as the government's advisor on landscape.

2. We do have concerns that some of the wording changes in the draft NPPF will inadvertently reduce protections and lead to the degradation of nationally designated protected landscapes.

3. We want to retain the phrase "the highest status of protection" (para 189) in proposed policy N4 (1): Protected Landscapes. This is a crucial and long-standing tenet of the protection, merit and scrutiny afforded to these places by LPAs, developers and others; removing it would convey the message that such scrutiny or merit is no longer warranted.

4. There needs to be a better way for decision-takers to differentiate between the many 'substantial weights' now proposed in the draft – the current parity of weights looks neat but fails to recognise the statutory, nationally designated status of National Landscapes and National Parks, which has a greater weight than other considerations without a statutory basis. We recommend that the 'substantial weight' of the draft should therefore be reverted to the current 'great weight' of the para 189.

5. The current NPPF has explicit presumption of refusal of major development in National Landscapes and National Parks (i.e. 'should be refused' in para 190). This changes to a 'caveated approval' (i.e. 'should only be supported...') in the current draft's N4 (2); this would weaken in-practice protection of these landscapes, which should not be the direction of travel for a new NPPF.

6. The proposed new decision-making policies S3, S4 and S5 no longer recognise existing policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance. The omission of the current 'qualification' in NPPF para 11 (d) (i) ("unless: i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance ... provides a strong reason

for refusing the development proposed”) means there is no longer a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the context of protected landscapes, and no clear distinction made between statutorily designated and undesignated landscapes. This would significantly reduce the ability to effectively apply policy N4 in protected landscapes, threatening internal consistency of the NPPF.

7. We suggest that Spatial Development Strategies (PM1) offer the opportunity to create genuinely holistic spatial strategies for delivering affordable homes, healthy and green neighbourhoods, space for nature, sustainable living and vibrant communities, sufficient provisioning and accessible routes and ways. Considering protected landscapes at a genuinely strategic scale should be a critical component of such strategies. We are therefore concerned that the new policy PM1 does not mention or require the new SDSs to consider National Landscapes, National Parks or National Trails as critical national infrastructure or as key components of such Spatial Development Strategies.

8. It is critical that a consistent position is taken to major development in protected landscapes at both plan-making and decision-making stages. We consider that both PM1 SDS and PM2 Local Plans need to include presumption against major development in protected landscapes (as set out in N4), in order to ensure consistency across the NPPF. PM1 needs to explain how apportionment of ‘objectively assessed needs for housing’ (OAN) to local planning authorities (LPAs) reconciles with S1 (1.a.i), which importantly allows LPAs to plan for less than the OAN in certain circumstances, including in protected landscapes.

9. The emphasis in the current NPPF requires strategic policies and plans to address economic, social and environmental priorities together, as well as to conserve and enhance landscapes and address climate change (current paras 11, 15, 20). These are not carried forward into the current draft. We are concerned that this discontinuity would have the effect of deprioritising the environment in plan-making, thus upsetting the balance of sustainable development; we therefore recommend that these requirements are carried forward by adding them into PM2 Local Plans or S2 Producing a Spatial Strategy.

10. The phrase “recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services” currently in para 187 (b) of the NPPF is an important perspective and long-standing tenet of rural planning policy that underpins the more specific protections of protected landscapes. We are concerned about the loss of this phrase in proposed N1. Without recognition in N1 that the countryside does have intrinsic character and beauty that is worth protecting, all subsequent policies and intentions are weakened.

Details on the NPPF consultation can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

### ***Background***

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government’s policies for plan making and for making decisions on development proposals in England. The national decision-making policies in the NPPF are a material consideration in making these decisions and should be read alongside the policies in the Local Development Plan.

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## **UPDATES ON 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 approved grants for 13 projects totalling £93,600 since the last JAC, with near complete allocation of the £339,063 budget for 2025/26.
- The Ffermio Bro Assessment Panel approved 13 grants for £64,832 on behalf of Rural Payments Wales, allocating all the remaining available funding for this year totalling £99,450.
- The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Assessment Panel recently approved 3 projects allocating the remaining funds of the total £95,000 on behalf of Welsh Government.
- 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, Ffermio Bro and SDF grant allocations in 2026/27 have been confirmed by DEFRA and Welsh Government respectively.

### **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)**

Wye Valley National Landscape FiPL allocation for 25/26 is £339,063 including advice & guidance and administration. The Wye Valley FiPL Officer, Richie Alford, has hosted two FiPL Panel meetings since the last JAC and grants totalling £93,600 were awarded (see table below). The total grants awarded this year, including advice & guidance and administration, amount to £333,129 which leaves £6,000 (2%) remaining up to end of March 2026. Applications under £10,000 may be determined by the National Landscape Manager.

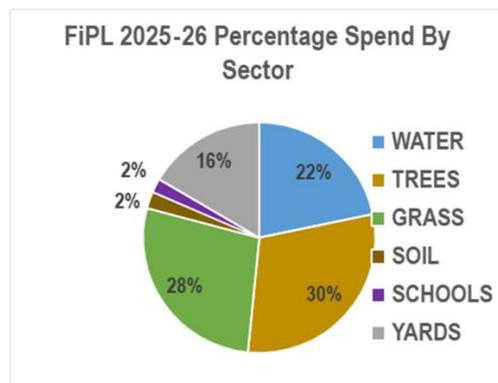
DEFRA have confirmed that the FiPL grants programme will be extended to March 2029. Next year, 2026/27, will have the same budget as 2025/26 and subsequent years are currently indicative allocations dependent on DEFRA business planning. However, this enables opportunities for more targeted and strategic planning and engagement.

WV 137	Hoarthorn Wetland	£ 8,212.96
	fencing out neighbouring pond (owned by FC), digging an attenuation pond, installing 2 small leaky dams, hedging around the pond and installation of concrete in the yard to better manage dirty water.	
WV 138	Moraston Agroforestry riparian buffer	£ 4,050.40
	Riparian tree planting	
WV 139	Coxbury Shelterbelt	£ 4,393.90
	planting a 170m shelterbelt providing excellent habitat and added wildlife connectivity around the farm	
WV 140	Hancocks Meadow	£ 5,764.90
	shelterbelt using fruit and nut trees to provide additional value for both nature and pollination	
WV 141	The Hyde Wetland creation	£ 27,200.00
	remove the old pipework and create scrapes, bunds and attenuation areas, reducing the speed of the waters flow and keeping it on the land, alleviating downstream problems.	
WV 145	Shipleigh Habitat Creation	£ 13,343.34
	422 metres of hedge planted, 25 old orchard trees pruned.	
WV 146	Buckstone Common Habitat Restoration	£ 6,000.00
	trailing goat grazing through Grazing Management, to control bracken and bramble encroachment on the Staunton Meend heathland.	
WV 147	Calcareous Grassland Restoration Buchanan Park	£ 7,920.00
	livestock handling facilities at Buchanan Fields, Coleford, to enable introduction of livestock to better manage calcareous grassland.	
WV 148	St Briavels Common Grazing Livestock facilities	£ 4,339.16
	Replacing 151m of stock fence and 3 gates, creating cattle handling facilities and a new pond as a water supply for stock to enable improved grazing of species rich neutral grassland.	
WV 149	Grazing Management Ltd	£ 1,654.16
	scrub control and habitat monitoring through goat hurdles, masterject kit and a drone further enabling extensive conservation grazing across the National Landscape	
WV 150	Hancocks Meadow sand martin Nesting box	£ 4,877.00
	sand martin nesting box to be placed above the river flood level	
WV 151	Ragmans Lane Farm Leaky dams	£ 1,845.56
	four leaky dams to slow the flow in a channel that funnels water directly into the concrete yard	
WV 153	Willowbank	£ 4,000.00
	Deer Fenced Willow Pasture	
<b>Total</b>		<b>£ 93,601.38</b>

## FiPL outcomes 2025/26

43 grants to 40 farmers – average grant £5,240

FiPL Project Sector Outcomes 25/26 (to Jan 26)		
Wildflower meadows created	27.5	hectares
Grazing farmer advice days	55	Days
Cattle NoFence Collar	60	Units
Goat Grazing Hurdles	100	Metres
School visits	10	Days
Trees planted	1863	trees
Hedges	772	metres
Fencing	1151	metres
Ponds	8	ponds
Leaky Dams	5	leaky dams
Concrete yard area	820	metres <sup>2</sup>



## Ffermio Bro

Welsh Government's Ffermio Bro programme has an allocation for the Wye Valley National Landscape in 2025/26 of £99,450 for grants for farmers in the Welsh part of the National Landscape.

The Wye Valley Ffermio Bro Officer, Chris Knight, has hosted three Local Assessment Panel meetings since the last JAC and grants totalling £64,832 were awarded (see table below). The total grants awarded this year, including advice and administration, commit the full allocation of £99,450. Applications under £10,000 may be determined by the National Landscape Manager.

Welsh Government have confirmed that the Ffermio Bro grants programme will continue to March 2028. Next year, 2026/27 the budget will be increased to £195,300. Subsequent years are currently indicative dependant on the Welsh Government elections.

Number	Applicant	Grant £
WVNL0005	Upper Meand Farm	£6,474.9
	Pond restoration, Scrape creation, 20 small leaky dams, Hedge planting, Hedge laying and fencing, 0.24ha of woodland management and fencing to restrict livestock access to woodland	
WVNL0006	Great House Farm	£5,591.04

	672m stock fencing to exclude livestock from the Angidy brook and protect existing hedgerow.	
WVNL0007	LLan Y Nant Farm new hedge	£5,380.80
WVNL0008	Keepers Lodge Farm Install fence to restrict stock access to a field of wet grassland, allowing the site to naturally regenerate.	£2,592.76
WVNL0009	The Meads 255m new hedge with fencing, separating 2 arable fields and connecting to exiting hedgerows and woodland beyond Also fruit trees to augment a small neglected orchard.	£8,835.35
WVNL0010	Village Farm 200m of Hedgelaying and fencing, 80m of hedge planting and fencing, 2 Standard Fruit trees, 2 soft wood gates and a stile in fence lines. Woodland glade creation	£6,861.84
WVNL0013	Lower Gockett Farm Fencing laid hedge and habitat enhancements	£1,994.40
WVNL0014	TY Mawr 200m Hedgelaying, including training, scrape creation for dual benefits of habitat creation and diverting highway surface water runoff, extension of an existing pond, planting 10 specimen trees and replacing 2 stiles with gates	£3,618.58
WVNL0016	The Tump Farm reinstating 370m of hedgerow removed in the 1950s, including hedgerow trees, providing connectivity between other remaining hedgerows	10,879.72
WVNL0019	Mill Farm fencing to separate a newly planted woodland, allowing livestock grazing whilst protecting the woodland and Angidy river beyond	£1,515.92
WVNL0022	Old Parc Farm Planting 105m Hedgerow	£3,968.50
WVNL0023	GWT The Wern 12m Dry Stone Wall Stabilisation and public access enhancements	£1,250.00
WVNL0024	Keepers Lodge B Fence off 240m Riparian corridor and woodland from stock	£5,868.56
	<b>TOTAL this period</b>	<b>£64,832.37</b>

### **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 ring-fences 60% for projects that further the objectives of tackling the Biodiversity and Climate Emergencies. Lucinda James, Wye Valley National Landscape Community Links Officer works with potential and successful applicants and the SDF Assessment Panel to achieve this objective. The total grants awarded by the SDF Assessment Panel since the last JAC equals £25,621.70 (see table below). This commits the full allocation for the year. Welsh Government have allocated a further £95,000 of SDF for 2026/27 in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley National Landscape. Applications under £3,000 are determined by the National Landscape Manager.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>SDF Grant</b>
WV08 YR26W	Ty Mawr Farm, Old Lands.	Roots In – Knowledge Shed habitat restoration & regenerative farming.	£24,860.87
WV09 YR26W	Transition Monmouth	Wyesham Community Woodland Management Plan	£400.83
WV10 YR26W	St Michael's Church, Mitchel Troy	Drystone wall repairs	£360.00
		<b>TOTAL this period</b>	<b>£25,621.70</b>

**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 £65,521 as of the last statement dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 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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## RIVER WYE CHARTER AND UPDATE

### ***Purpose***

To present the Charter for the Rights of the River Wye and advise of the latest activities to help restore the River Wye.

### ***Recommendation***

That the JAC endorses the Charter for the Rights of the River Wye and welcomes the other progress in the Wye Catchment.

### ***Key Issues***

- Herefordshire Council have adopted a Charter for the Rights of the River Wye and are encouraging other partners to endorse it.
- Haskoning Ltd have been appointed to produce the Wye Catchment Management Plan.
- The Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) for England and the Welsh Evidence have been published, contributing to the evidence base for the Catchment Management Plan.
- DEFRA and Welsh Government £1million research programme for the Wye is currently out to tender.
- 'Forest to Sea - A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for water in the Forest of Dean' has completed a public consultation period and is being reviewed by the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership in collaboration with the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.
- The Wyescapes – food, nature, water - Landscape Recovery programme has been submitted to DEFRA by Herefordshire Rural Hub.
- Welsh Government are consulting on a Green Paper 'Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales' until 7<sup>th</sup> April.

### ***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***

On 5th December 2025, Cllr Swinglehurst, Herefordshire Council Cabinet Member for the Environment and Chair of the Wye Nutrient Management Board, brought a motion to support a Charter for the River Wye which received majority support at full council. Officers are now drafting the executive response (a Cabinet Member Decision) including recommendations for how Herefordshire Council can practically support the Charter. Other authorities are exploring opportunities to endorse the Charter, including Forest of Dean District Council who have amended and agreed to support their own version, which passed through full council in January. Powys and Monmouthshire County Councils and Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority are also exploring options and have requested updates on progress in Herefordshire. Given that rights can only be legally granted by an Act of Parliament, supporting &/or endorsing the Charter is an intermediary step that does not require legislative reform or enforcement, but still advocates for the Rights of Nature. This is possible through, for example, committing to integrate the principles of the Charter - a nature-centric approach - into policy and decision making, and using the Charter as a reference document in the writing of other plans and strategies as and when these are updated. The full Charter is appended below.

The Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) for the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC), was published in November 2025 and presented to the Wye Nutrient Management Board. It was prepared jointly by the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE). The DWPP outlines the current condition of the River Wye SAC, identifies the sources and impacts of diffuse pollution and sets out the strategic priorities and actions required to achieve favourable condition status. The plan focuses specifically on phosphate and sediment, and integrates technical findings, modelling outputs and stakeholder input to guide effective action. The DWPP recognised that “agricultural land is now the dominant source of nutrient and sediment pollution across the Wye catchment. Most phosphate, and nearly all excess sediment, originates from farmed fields and degraded riverbanks adjacent to agricultural land. Nutrient enrichment in the catchment is a long-standing issue, with applications of fertilisers and manures historically exceeding the total nutrient offtake in crops and livestock products.... The greatest impact from nutrients and sediment is seen in the River Lugg, where phosphate targets are exceeded by a wide margin, mostly due to diffuse pollution from agriculture.” The report notes “Diffuse water pollution is not solely a farming issue. It is a global, systemic challenge embedded in the entire food supply chain. In the Wye catchment, nutrients originate from several sources, including manure application on farmland, the import of animal feed and fertiliser products, the use of crops and organic waste in anaerobic digestion (AD) plants, and population pressures and household consumption patterns that influence food production and waste generation. These sources are influenced by national policies, trade, regulation, and operational decisions across multiple sectors. Diffuse pollution results from the combined and interacting effects of these activities, rather than any single driver.”

Key Recommendations from the DWPP are that improving water quality and river health in the Wye and Lugg require a coordinated, long-term approach that addresses both immediate pressures and legacy issues. The report states, “The following holistic and system-wide actions will help to reduce nutrient and sediment inputs, address other factors that contribute to eutrophication impacts, and support ecological recovery:

- **Prioritise land use change in high-risk areas**, for example by converting intensively

managed arable land on steep slopes, floodplains or adjacent to watercourses into low-input uses like extensively managed grassland, to reduce erosion and nutrient runoff.

- **Target interventions in the upper catchment** to reduce runoff, erosion, and pollutant transport during rainfall events. These may include Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures in headwater areas to slow and store water, as well as land management practices such as cover cropping, buffer strips, and soil improvement in areas where flow pathways increase connectivity between farmland and the river.
- **Enhance riparian zone management** by increasing vegetative cover to stabilise banks, reduce water temperatures, and improve habitat quality. Where livestock access contributes to bank erosion and nutrient input, implement measures to reduce poaching, such as fencing and alternative drinking sources.
- **Ensure that farm-scale nutrient inputs align with crop requirements** and soil capacity. Further reduce P inputs below off-take levels in areas where soils have accumulated legacy P, to actively draw down excess stores in soils and sediments...
- **Carefully manage large-scale sources and movements of organic nutrients**, including manure, slurries, poultry litter, digestate and biosolids.

The DWPP proposes five over-arching strategic priorities:

1. Farm gate nutrient balancing
2. Catchment-scale management of bulk organic nutrients
3. Reducing the impact of high-risk crops on high-risk land
4. Targeted use of Environmental Land Management schemes, advice and funding
5. Supply chain engagement and accountability

The report concludes “Even under optimistic modelled scenarios, the current suite of mitigation measures and mechanisms will not deliver the reductions needed.”

The full DWPP is available here:

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50131134/Diffuse%20Water%20Pollution%20Plan%20River%20Wye%20Special%20Area%20of%20Conservation%20November%202025.pdf>

The ‘Phosphorus in the River Wye: Evidence Base for Wales and options appraisal’ report was published in December by Ricardo for Herefordshire Council on behalf of the Wye Nutrient Management Board and Wye Catchment Partnership. The Evidence Base and options appraisal draws together the existing evidence related to phosphorus pollution in the Welsh Wye, predominantly in Powys, and outlines a range of mitigation measures that could be implemented across the Welsh Wye catchment to reduce phosphorus concentrations from a range of sources. The mitigation measures presented in the report will be appraised for inclusion in the Wye Nutrient Management Plan to improve compliance with SAC and Water Framework Directive (WFD) targets, the ecological health of the river, safeguard wildlife, support resilient and sustainable agricultural practices, and improve the quality of our water supplies. The report is available here:

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50131135/Phosphorus%20in%20the%20River%20Wye%20Evidence%20Base%20for%20Wales%20Evidence%20base%20and%20options%20appraisal%20Issue%204%20.pdf>

The contract for the production of the integrated, cross-border 10-year Wye Catchment Management Plan has been awarded to Haskoning Ltd, through Herefordshire Council on behalf of the Wye Catchment Partnership. Haskoning Ltd are independent international consulting engineers specialising in sustainable development and innovation with their

Water Resilience team leading on the contract. Some of the known issues the Wye Catchment Management Plan (Wye CMP26) will address include:-

**Flood and droughts** -Increasing frequency of extreme high and low flows, and elevated water temperature, compounded by land management issues and abstraction

**Water quality** -influenced by sediment, nutrients, pesticides, herbicides and acidity

**Biodiversity loss** -declines in species abundance, distribution, habitat quality and connectivity, and invasive non-native species

**Geomorphological limitations** - weirs, overgrazed channels, channel straightening of the tributary network and restricted sediment supply.

**Elevated water temperatures** – both summer and winter.

Work has commenced with an Evidence Review, to be followed by Options Appraisals, drafting of an Action Plan, by late summer, and Stakeholder engagement and consultation on the draft Wye CMP26. Haskoning report to a Task & Finish Group of Wye Catchment Partnership members.

Meanwhile, DEFRA are tendering for the potential £1million 'Water Quality Research and Catchment Planning in the River Wye' contract. The Aims and Objectives of this research programme, with a maximum duration of 3 years until 2029, will be to build on existing evidence and work alongside stakeholders to:

- Investigate the sources of the pollution and pressures affecting the river, in particular focussing on agricultural pollution
- Study the impacts of changing farming practices and land management in the catchment
- Develop and test new ways to improve land management to improve water quality, which are suitable for the Wye catchment and will also be transferable to other catchments, using a 'living-labs' approach to test solutions by engaging and incorporating diverse stakeholder groups from the catchment throughout the process and testing approaches in the field.
- Examine what's driving wildlife decline and water flow – the movement and quantity of water which is crucial for habitats and species
- Understand best practice for undertaking research involving a complex stakeholder group.

It is intending that this research will identify and quantify new innovative methods to reduce agricultural diffuse pollution to river environments and explore the costs and benefits as well as barriers to uptake of these measures. The research will also gather evidence that can be integrated into new and existing models to estimate the impact of agriculture on the water environment and contribute to reducing agricultural diffuse pollution. The project will also act as a case study to apply learnings on sustainable governance and stakeholder engagement for future research programmes in other river catchments with similar or differing challenges.

The Wyescapes Landscape Recovery Project Development Phase Proposal has been submitted to DEFRA. It is anticipated that ongoing review by DEFRA will take until the autumn before a confirmed outcome. A newsletter will be issued shortly by Herefordshire Rural Hub to confirm submission and to share ongoing news. The Wyescapes Landscape Recovery programme incorporates 49 land holdings across 5,125ha between Leominster and Goodrich. For further information see <https://herefordshireruralhub.co.uk/wyescapes/> .

The Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) met on 25<sup>th</sup> February at Dingestow Village Hall, with the support of Monmouth Rotary, followed by an afternoon site visit to Ty Mawr Farm on the Old Lands Estate. Haskoning Water Resilience team made a presentation on their process and timetable for the Wye Catchment Management Plan (Wye CMP26). Herefordshire Council, as secretariat for the WCP also published the first Wye Catchment Partnership newsletter.

The latest Wye Nutrient Management Board (NMB) meeting was held on 21<sup>st</sup> January. The NMB agreed to endorse the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP25) Commitment 26: to reduce in total Nitrogen, Phosphorous and sediment pollution (tonnes) from agriculture by at least 18% by December 2030 from 2018 baseline (Environment Act 2021 interim target). The NMB also debated the DWPP and the Welsh Evidence Base. Details of the meeting and the recording are available here: [Agenda for Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board on Wednesday 21 January 2026, 2.00 pm - Herefordshire Council](#)  
The next scheduled NMB meeting is on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026.

Welsh Government have published a Green Paper setting out proposals for fundamental reform of the water system in Wales ‘Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales’. It responds to the Independent Water Commission, established jointly by the Welsh Government and UK Government published in July 2025. Proposals in the Green Paper include creating a new, dedicated Welsh economic regulator for water, supported by new legislation and a modern regulatory framework designed to encourage investment, protect the environment and deliver a water system that works for Wales, leading to cleaner rivers, stronger regulation and better accountability. Consultation on the Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales Green Paper is open until 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026. For further details see: [Green Paper: Shaping the Future of Water Governance in Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

‘Forest to Sea - A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for water in the Forest of Dean’ has been through a public consultation managed by Severn Vale Catchment Partnership in collaboration with the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other partners. The document sets out the environmental priorities and ambitious, specific objectives to be delivered by 2035 and includes the tributaries of the Wye within the Forest of Dean District. The Strategic Action Plan is now being finalised for adoption by the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership.

The River Restoration Centre Annual Conference is 29th & 30th April 2026, at the ICC Wales, Newport. For more information see <https://www.therrc.co.uk/rrc-conference-2026>

### ***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.

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## **Charter** **Rights of the River Wye**

### **What is a river charter?**

A river charter is a way of defining and expressing the intrinsic and inalienable rights of a river. Aligned with existing regulations and laws, it offers an alternative to the customary human-centric (anthropocentric) lens through which decisions regarding Nature are often made and considers that Nature itself is worthy of rights.

It's accepted that lifeless entities such as companies have rights - the Rights of Nature movement simply asks: why not recognise the same for a living and vital ecosystem?

This movement is global and growing; from Ecuador's recognition of the rights of Nature in its constitution in 2008, to the recognition of Colombia's Atrato River as a legal entity in 2016<sup>1</sup>, and the legal personhood given to Whanganui River (Te Awa Tupua) and Mount Taranaki (Taranaki Maunga) in New Zealand in 2017 and 2025<sup>23</sup>.

In the UK, the Rights of the River Ouse Charter was supported by Lewes District Council in February 2025<sup>4</sup>. Later in the same year Basingstoke and Deane district council passed a motion to develop a charter for their local chalk stream rivers.

Other local authorities are either investigating or producing charters for their rivers, and a private members bill is going before the House of Lords. It is an idea whose time has come.

### **Local Background**

In February 2023 Herefordshire Council debated a notice of motion calling on the executive to explore the possibility of a byelaw to enshrine the rights of the River Wye and, in addition, wrote to the then secretary of state, Dr Therese Coffey, with a suggestion for a Commissioner for Nature.

The legal advice at that time was that the existing mechanisms of byelaws were not suitable for this proposal, and a Commissioner for Nature never materialised. Although the executive had acquitted the specific question, the spirit of the motion, and of subsequent motions brought before full council, remained.

The adopted council plan states that the council will do 'everything that it can' to improve the health of Herefordshire's rivers, including the Wye. That the river should be given full consideration in matters that could impact on its condition remained a hanging thread.

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<sup>1</sup> [Judgment T-622](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Te Awa Tupua \(Whanganui River Claims Settlement\) Act 2017 No 7 \(as at 27 August 2025\), Public Act – New Zealand Legislation](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Te Ture Whakatupua mō Te Kāhui Tupua 2025/Taranaki Maunga Collective Redress Act 2025 No 1, Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Council champions 'pioneering' Rights of River Charter to protect 'landmark waterway' - Lewes and Eastbourne Councils](#)

In 2024 the Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board took a critical step in addressing that shortfall and allocated a space on the board for someone to act as an advocate for the river, and to vote on its behalf in Board decisions. After much effort and a rigorous recruitment process, Dr Lousie Bodnar became the first person to take the mantle of Voice of the River Wye, with full voting rights on the Nutrient Management Board.

Since 2023 the current Cabinet Member Environment has investigated and interrogated the concept of rights of Nature. She has met with Paul Powlesland (Lawyers for Nature), Monica Feria-Tinta (Barrister), Tom Johnston (River Guardian of the Usk) and attended a number of webinars regarding the ways in which local authorities can support the idea of a charter.

Working in collaboration with members of the Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board and the River Wye Catchment Partnership, the Charter for the Rights of the River Wye has been developed. Using the Charter for the Rights of the River Ouse as a reference point, with the aim of producing a high-level document able to garner broad support, the group agreed the Charter as it now stands. This Charter offers an incredible opportunity to local authorities in the Wye catchment to unify under a shared purpose – an action which would be of national significance and a step forward in the recognition of the rights of the nation's vital natural systems.

### **What will it mean in practice?**

A charter typically recognises the inalienable rights of natural entities – that their existence, functions, cycles, and ability to regenerate, should be respected and protected.

In the UK, the production of a charter offers a framework through which natural systems can be recognised, represented, and considered in the decision-making processes that have the capacity to affect their function.

Facing the scale of biodiversity loss and population decline the UK has witnessed in the last few decades (19% of species experiencing decline, with 1 in 6 at risk of extinction) and increasing threats from the climate emergency exacerbating risks to Nature<sup>5</sup>, raising the profile of essential ecosystems is critical to their continued existence.

As an innovative area of law making it is not yet clear how this Charter will apply. It is something that is evolving and, if nothing else, it sets down an intention. The rights that are expressed in this Charter are reflected in current legislation and regulation. In that sense, the protections should already be in place, supported by the rights in this Charter. Appendix 1 details local, national and international regulations, policies and treaties that are relevant to this Charter.

### **What will it mean locally?**

The River Wye and tributaries have been nationally recognised for their ecological and cultural significance, with sections gaining legally protective designations including as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>6</sup> thanks to the presence of indicator species, including salmon and water-crowfoot. The river is also the central feature of the Wye Valley National Landscape. However, the features that make the catchment special are in

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<sup>5</sup> [TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report\\_2023\\_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf](#)

<sup>6</sup> [River Wildlife - Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#)

unfavourable condition due to multiple complex factors including climate change, flow, excessive nutrients, known and emerging pollutants and non-native invasive species.

As part of the integrated Catchment Based Approach adopted nationally, the Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) exists to enable collaborative working to deliver improvements across key issues on water quality, wildlife, and sustainable land use along the length of the River Wye<sup>7</sup>.

Alongside this, the Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board (NMB) provides a forum for stakeholders to influence, advise and challenge those having an impact on the river<sup>8</sup>. Together, the WCP and the NMB represent the interests in and of the River Wye.

Representatives from both the WCP and NMB, from a variety of specialisms and backgrounds, and representing a range of authorities across the catchment, came together to produce the accompanying Charter, adapting the global movement for the recognition of Nature's rights to a UK and local context.

By positioning the River Wye as a stakeholder in planning, permitting, and other decision-making processes, governance and accountability is strengthened and collective environmental ethics reinforced. Alongside other national and international efforts, this Charter is a foundation for change, driving forward the regeneration of UK waterways, fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, and re-shaping the national approach to environmental management.

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<sup>7</sup> [Home - Wye Catchment Partnership](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Committee details - Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board - Herefordshire Council](#)

# Rights of the River Wye

## **The Right to Flow and Perform Natural Functions**

To maintain its natural course and seasonal rhythms without obstructions or extractions that detrimentally affect ecological function of any part of the river system.

## **The Right to Biodiversity**

To good biological health through the existence of balanced, diverse, and viable populations of native species and habitats specific to the Wye and its tributaries.

## **The Right to Be Free From Pollution**

To exist in a state of ecological health and not be subject to detrimental levels of known and emerging pollutants that adversely affect the life of the river.

## **The Right to Be Supported by a Healthy Catchment**

To flow through environments which support the river as a balanced, sustainable, and resilient aquatic ecosystem.

## **The Right to Regenerate**

To recover to full ecological function through natural processes and for this to be supported by intervention, where necessary, to halt the decline in biodiversity and abundance and to increase both over time.

## **The Right to Representation**

To be represented and have these intrinsic rights recognised in the determination of matters that directly affect the river's health now and in the future.

## **Appendix 1: Key Legislative Drivers**

Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

Environment Act 2021.

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (under review).

Habitats Directive 1992 - Council Directive 94/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018 (also known as Farming Rules for Water).

The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive England and Wales) Regulations 2017.

UN Biodiversity Conference (CoP15), Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework 2022 whereby UK government committed to conserving 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.

Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers.

Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

## **Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms**

### **Anthropocentric**

A human-centred perspective that prioritizes human needs and interests over those of Nature.

### **Byelaw**

A local law or regulation made by a council or authority under statutory powers.

### **Catchment Based Approach (CaBA)**

A national framework in the UK for managing river catchments collaboratively to improve water quality and biodiversity.

### **Nutrient Management Board (NMB)**

A governance body focused on managing nutrient levels in the River Wye catchment to protect water quality.

### **Rights of Nature**

A legal and ethical movement recognizing ecosystems as entities with rights to exist, regenerate, and maintain their natural functions.

### **Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

A protected site designated under the EU Habitats Directive for its ecological importance.

### **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

A UK conservation designation for areas of particular interest due to their fauna, flora, geological or physiographical features.

### **Voice of the River Wye**

An appointed advocate with voting rights on the Nutrient Management Board to represent the river's interests.

### **Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP)**

A collaborative alliance bringing together organisations, agencies, community groups, landowners, and individuals with a shared interest in the River Wye catchment.

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'  
WORKING PARTY REPORT

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

9<sup>th</sup> March 2026

## NATIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES

### ***Purpose***

To advise members of activities of the National Landscapes Association, Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) and the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.

FOR INFORMATION

Below are update reports on the National Landscapes Association, Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) and National Landscape Team: -

- a. National Landscapes Association (NLA)
  - i. Lead Officers' Meeting [11th-12th Feb]
  - ii. Annual Conference, Norwich [7th-9th July]
- b. Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW)
  - i. independent Task and Finish Group
  - ii. Manifesto
  - iii. Chair
- c. Wye Valley National Landscape Team
  - i. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects/awards
  - ii. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails

a. **National Landscapes Association (NLA)** <https://www.national-landscapes.org.uk/>

i. **Lead Officers' Meeting [11th-12th Feb]**

National Landscape lead officers from across England, Wales & Northern Ireland met in Birmingham with NLA colleagues and discussed a range of issues to help steer NLA work for 2026/7. Topics included Governance and purposes; Organisational resilience; and the Office for Environmental Protection - Protected Landscapes Review.

ii. **Annual Conference, Norwich [7th-9th July]**

The National Landscapes Annual Conference 2026 will be at University of East Anglia, Norwich from 7th – 9th July 2026. The Conference will explore the role of National Landscapes as drivers of vitality in their areas. Ticket sales are due to open shortly. For more information see <https://www.national-landscapes-conference.org.uk/>

**b. Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW)** <https://landscapeswales.org.uk/>

**i. Independent Task and Finish Group**

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) has convened a Task and Finish Group to review the legislative and governance arrangements for Designated Landscapes in Wales, namely National Parks and National Landscapes. The group comprises independent and experienced members not directly involved day-to-day in Designated Landscape management bodies. The review responds to a growing recognition that existing frameworks may not be fully aligned with contemporary Welsh ambitions for nature recovery, climate resilience, wellbeing, equity, and long-term stewardship. The questions arisen include: Why is improvement needed? What are the real issues at play? Where are the blockers, and can they be worked around? The review recognises that challenges may arise not only from legislative limitations, but also from:- how existing duties are interpreted, applied, and enforced, including evidence that current legislation may already allow more flexibility than is widely understood, but that this is unevenly implemented; and Capacity, culture, and resourcing constraints. At the TCLW meeting in April, draft recommendations will be presented for discussion. The review aims to support clear, ambitious, and implementable recommendations that strengthen the long-term contribution of Designated Landscapes to Wales. For more information see: <https://landscapeswales.org.uk/reviewing-wales-designated-landscapes/>

**ii. Manifesto**

In anticipation of the Welsh Government elections in May, TCLW has produced a Manifesto, which along with the outcome of the above work will help discussions with any new administration following the Senedd elections. See <https://landscapeswales.org.uk/a-manifesto-from-tirweddau-cymru-landscapes-wales/>

**ii. Chair**

In June Andrew Blake will step down as chair of TCLW following a 2 year term. Catherine Mealing-Jones, CEO of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park will succeed him.

**c. Wye Valley National Landscape Team** <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/>

**i. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects**

The three projects funded through the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), between Walford and Marstow have completed their first year of operation. LEI work completed to date includes the following Hedgerows:

- 1,495m new hedgerow
- 296m gapping up
- 35 standard hedgerow trees

Species-rich grassland and meadows:

- 1.73ha species-rich grassland creation

Trees, Woodlands & Orchards:

- 6 standard & parkland trees planted
- 5 orchard trees planted

Wetlands and Natural Flood Management

- 1 pond created
- 8 leaky dams
- 115m bund & de-silted scrape

## ii. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy & Steering Group

The Tracks and Trails Steering Group has received the audit report from Earth Science Partnership (ESP) on the Unclassified County Roads - Tintern and Whitebrook Pilot Areas. The report surveyed 11km of unsealed unclassified roads around Tintern and Whitebrook and is available to download from the Wye Valley National Landscape website:

<https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ESP.9264.4328-Rev2-Wye-Valley-Final-07.10.25.pdf>

The Steering Group held a workshop on the report in December with further discussions at their meeting in February, to prioritise tasks for the year ahead. Based on the report, a condition-based shortlist of UCRs is being drawn up for targeted work, along with legal clarification on a range of options and interventions. There is a recognised need to create a clear information resource to guide the public and users on understanding legal trail usage and how and when to report illegal use and issues. It is intended that this will be available shortly. However funding for significant interventions remains undetermined and further costings will be needed to take agreed options forward. Further and on-going engagement with the public, users, the Police and landowners is to be arranged.

Notes of the meetings, and subsequent/further updates, are published here:

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

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