

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

AONB UNIT WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2019

Purpose

To seek members' approval for the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Endorses the AONB Unit Work Programme 2018/2019
- B. Welcomes the Welsh Government two-year allocation of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).
- C. Note the various additional project funding bids submitted by the AONB Unit in support of the AONB Work Programme

Key Issues

- The attached table sets out the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit in the form of the Work Programme 2018/2019.
- This is focused on delivering the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and appraising the future prospects for the River Festival, commencing the review for the AONB Management Plan for 2020-2025 and continuing other existing activities while retaining flexibility to pursue new funding opportunities and develop new initiatives.
- Welsh Government have confirmed that the allocation of the Sustainable Development Fund will remain at £55,000 for 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- The budgets in the Work Programme have been approved by the AONB Steering Group and DEFRA, and are being negotiated with Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

Reasons

The main tasks in the year ahead are:

- Promoting the use of the adopted AONB Management Plan 2015 - 2020.
- maintaining a high profile for the AONB including launching a refresh website, delivering the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and evaluating its success
- continuing activities such as the AONB Farming Awards and the Youth Rangers and mindSCAPE programmes, both now part funded through the Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership and Heritage Lottery Fund
- delivering ongoing partnership initiatives, such as the Wye Valley Walk Partnership and the legacy opportunities related to the Overlooking the Wye scheme

- developing and submitting new projects, partnership initiatives and funding bids for the future delivery of the AONB Management Plan including landscape scale partnership projects, pursuing the restoration of Lydbrook Bridge and supporting the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory.

Implications

Defra provided a four year grant allocation (2016-2020) and a new Memorandum of Understanding has been signed for 2018-2021 between the Local Authorities. Similarly a new three year grant programme is being negotiated with Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Welsh Government have confirmed that the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Environment have agreed to provide funding of £55,000 in 2018/19 and again in 2019/20 to the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). They have also agreed to provide an indicative figure of £55,000 for the SDF in 2020/21. This all provides medium term security of funding for the core AONB Unit.

Overall the AONB Unit business plan, based on the Work Programme, maximises the benefit for the local communities, the local economy and the outstanding landscape, while making best use of resources available. This is achieved by collaboration and having the flexibility to lever in additional funding and resources wherever possible.

Additional Funding Applications

The following bids and applications have been submitted by the AONB Unit in support of the AONB Work Programme:

Recreational Access Funding - Welsh Government

Following submission of a Recreational Access Pressures and Opportunities Report for the Monmouthshire part of the AONB, Welsh Government have offered £15,000 revenue & £20,000 capital towards priority access work identified in the Pressures Report. The main priority scheme is the Wye Valley Walk between Monmouth Showground and Monmouth - a 600m section adjoining the River Wye at risk due to river erosion and very limited land availability. The revenue funding will facilitate commissioning the studies, specifications and licenses, and the capital funding will be used to contract and deliver the works. Any underspend will be directed to other items listed on a prioritised 'quick wins' basis, including the revamp of the Wye Valley Walk website.

Total project cost £35,000.

AONB commitment in-kind staff time.

Wild Venison Supply Chain Training - Natural England

Funding is approved for £2,000 to take forward recommendations set out in the Wild Venison Marketing Feasibility Study, to provide training for butchers and restaurateurs in England.

Total project cost £2,000

AONB commitment in-kind staff time.

An application was unsuccessful to Natural Resources Wales for an 18 month project to deliver recommendations set out in the Wild Venison Marketing Feasibility Study in Wales. Total project cost was £27,370 requesting £13,500 from NRW. The AONB budgetary offer was £3,000 and £8,170 in-kind (staff time). Options for other funding is now being pursued.

Lower Wye Valley Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management Scheme - Natural Resources Wales

In partnership with Monmouthshire County Council, an Expression of Interest has been accepted for an 18 month project to develop plans to resolve long standing access problems

caused by surface water run-off and flooding in the lower Wye Valley, integrating landowner advice, small scale 'slow the flow' works and Invasive Non Native Species control. The full application is now being prepared for the submission deadline of 23rd April.

Total project cost £144,023 requesting £72,000 from NRW.

AONB budgetary commitment £10,275 and £21,600 in-kind (staff time)

Wye Valley River Festival 2018 – Visit Wales

An application to Visit Wales has been submitted to provide funds for marketing the Wye Valley River Festival in 2018 and to fund a Research and Development phase to be undertaken from September 2018 to March 2019 to produce a 6 year Business Plan taking the biennial Festival up to 2024.

The total project cost is £30,000

AONB budgetary commitment £5,000 in-kind (staff time)

Tintern Abbey ibeacon project - Monmouthshire LEADER

Application submitted to Monmouthshire LEADER LAG for a project to start in June, researching stories and developing an app to provide digital interpretation of the Abbey's connections with the wider landscape.

Total project cost £24,824, application for £16,080.

AONB budgetary commitment £0 and £2,265 in-kind (staff time)

mindSCAPE continuation - Arts Council England

Artspace Cinderford are leading on an application to Arts Council England to continue and expand upon the mindSCAPE project. This 3 year project will include the continuation of the existing group at the Orchard Trust, development of a second group in the Forest of Dean and community outreach activities. This will complement and expand the on-going work in Residential Centres and Care Homes funded through the Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership and Heritage Lottery Fund.

Total project cost £113,280, application for £90,000.

AONB budgetary commitment £3,000

Trees Outside Woodlands - Woodland Trust / Heritage Lottery

The Woodland Trusts is collating 'expressions of interest' for a collaborative 'Trees Outside Woodlands' Heritage Lottery funded project. The AONB Unit has submitted one project proposal and is a named partner in another.

1) Riparian & Veteran Trees

This expression of interest is for a 5 year project to increase management and understanding of the importance of Veteran and Riparian Trees in the AONB.

The total project cost is £845,000, requesting £478,500 from the Heritage Lottery.

AONB budgetary commitment £25,000 and £25,000 in-kind (staff time)

2) Wye to Wyre project

This expression of interest is also for a 5 year project, focussed on habitat connectivity and fruit trees. It looks to improve connectivity and orchard habitats between the Wye Valley woodlands and the Wyre Forest.

Total project cost is £1,947,400 plus in kind contributions.

No allocated Wye Valley AONB commitment, but AONBs (Malvern Hills and Wye Valley) are highlighted as possible cash match funders.

Three other submitted proposals touch on the AONB: Herefordshire Wildlife Trust have a Tree Warden scheme, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are leading on a connectivity project between the Wye woodlands and Forest of Dean and the Woodland Trust are lead for the Usk to Wye landscape scheme. The overall bid is likely to be heavily oversubscribed.

