

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
5th March 2018

A466 RIVER VIEWS FEASIBILITY REPORT

Purpose

To inform members of the outcomes of the A466 River Views Feasibility Report.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the 'A466 River Views Feasibility Report' and the identified areas where views could be opened up.
- B. Encourages landowners, Highway departments and other stakeholders to have regard to the Report when considering works along the A466.

Key Issues

- The JAC had received requests for roadside and riverside vegetation to be managed along the A466 to open up lost views of the river.
- The 'A466 River Views Feasibility Report' has been concluded and published on-line.
- The AONB Trainee Ecological Surveyors undertook the study, identifying 18 places along the A466 where enhancements to views could be made.
- Separate to the Report, the section of the A466 between Bigsweir Bridge and The Florence has recently had tree work done which has opened up the views.
- Highway departments, roadside landowners, and other stakeholders should be encouraged to have regard to the Report when considering works along the A466.

Reasons

The JAC and the AONB Unit at various times have received requests for roadside and riverside vegetation to be managed along the A466 between Monmouth and Chepstow to open up lost views of the river. The AONB Unit secured an SDF grant to extend the contracts of the two AONB Trainee Ecological Surveyors to undertake a study to identify any potential areas where work could be carried out to enhance the views of the River Wye from the A466. It was recognised that there may also be impacts on the landscape, wildlife and tranquillity of the area that also needs to be considered and balanced in any decisions.

Implications

The A466 River Views Feasibility Report is available to view on the AONB website http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/images/uploads/general/FINAL_A466_river_views_feasibility_report_s.pdf. The Report surveyed the entire A466 between Monmouth and Chepstow identifying 11 existing views (Section 2 of the report) and 12 stretches of road where constraints suggested that works would not be appropriate (Section 5 and the maps in Appendix 3 of the Report). Eighteen places were identified where consideration could be

given to opening up views (Section 3). The Report also covered General considerations and constraints (in Section 4).

The report did not gather landowner information. The respective landowners will need to be contacted with regard to the view enhancement opportunities. Similarly there are no immediately applicable resources to take forward any roadside view management. However there will be opportunities, such as has been realised between The Florence and Bigsweir Bridge, when views of the river can be managed and/or re-opened. Landowners and Highways authorities should be encouraged to take these opportunities when appropriate. But additional surveying needs to take place in these specific areas to more accurately investigate the potential. Ecological surveys, landscape and visual appraisals and habitats regulations assessments may need to be included in further investigations.

Background

In the past, viewpoints in the Wye Valley were, in general, more open due to the way that riparian woodlands and adjacent land used to be managed. Local residents who have lived in the area for many years remember the journey along the A466 offering more frequent and extensive views of the River Wye and valley beyond. As coppicing, heavy industry, river traffic and the railways declined in the Wye Valley, the steep valley sides became more wooded and trees grew up along the roadsides, riverbank and redundant railway line. These provided habitats for wildlife and, in many areas, a visual screen and noise buffer from road traffic for local residents. As this landscape change has progressed, roadside and bankside vegetation is now quite dense in places obscuring previous views of the river.