

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)
Annual Report on Work Programme for AONB Unit 2017/2018

AONB Partnership Initiatives	AONB Unit Work Progressed / Achieved
<p>AONB Management Plan 2015-2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise and distribute Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Monitor use of Plan in Planning Applications, Public Inquiries etc Evaluate Plan review options for 2020+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 available on AONB website http://www.wyevallyeaonb.org.uk/index.php/about-us/management-and-guidance/management-plan-2015-2020/ AONB Management Plan referred to in planning application responses and reports.
<p>AONB Strategy & Development Advisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew contract for year to support AONB Manager with planning advice. Comment on relevant Planning Applications and strategic planning documents Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB Engage in development and consultation on national strategy in liaison with NAAONB Deliver CPD & training for LA Planning staff & members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract renewed with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Planning Department, shared with Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. 568 planning applications were registered in the AONB. 22 planning applications assessed by the contracted Planning consultants 3 responses submitted by the AONB Manager on behalf of the AONB Partnership. The protocol with Monmouthshire County Council, whereby the AONB Manager is consulted on draft Planning Committee Reports, continued efficiently. Three applications were commented on through this protocol. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training held by Wye Valley & Malvern Hills AONB Managers for 30 Herefordshire Council Planning officers and WCC AONB planning advisors. AONB Manager provided advice for 4 Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)
<p>AONB Farming Awards</p> <p>Promote & publicise 10th Awards for farmers, landowners and land managers that make an outstanding contribution to conserving &/or enhancing the features, special qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek sponsorship for the AONB Farming Awards from local businesses etc. Site visits of all farm entries for short-listing And judging Present the prizes at the Monmouthshire Show Involve winner in Open Farm Sunday event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Award criteria changed to allow entries from anyone managing land within the AONB. 4 nominated landowners for 2017 AONB Farming Awards: Square Farm, Monmouth; Coppett Hill Common Trust; Cherry Orchard Farm, Penallt, and Gadr Farm, Llangovan. Judging panel consisted of AONB Manager, NFU Wales and Farming4Wildlife representatives and 2015 winner. Coppett Hill Common Trust was the winner. The Award was presented in the Countryside Matters Ring at the Monmouthshire Show on 1st July Display boards of previous winners produced for the Monmouthshire Show, installed around the Countryside ring. Banners also produced which were attached to the ring to advertise the awards. Coppett Hill Common visited during AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour, with Trust members explaining their work. Judging panel and dates for 2018 confirmed. The Award will be presented in the Countryside Matters Ring at the Monmouthshire Show on 7th July

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<p>Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate SDF project applications for the SDF Assessment Panel • Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating funds • Review SDF application processes and Assessment Panel • Complete establishment of AONB Fund with Herefordshire Community Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full spend of £55,000 in 2017/18 • 11 projects supported • 2 PR opportunities • Final SDF report to come in late May 2018 with leverage figures • Our expectation is that figures will be similar to 16/17 totals of £170,174.84 with £149,705.24 cash and £20,469.60 In kind • 5 projects led / managed / partnered by AONB Unit • 6 independently led projects were assisted / supported by AONB staff
<p>Picturesque Produce and distribute regular on-line editions of the AONB newsletter, 'Picturesque' to provide information and interpretation to increase subscribers' awareness and appreciation of the AONB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Information Officer recruitment successful and new person in post from June 2017. • Picturesque has not been priority, but focus has been on new website and social media promotion
<p>AONB Partnership events For JAC members, AONB Ward members, representatives from partner organisations and local Town/Parish/Community Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise AONB Partnership Seminar on key issue • Organise AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues • Complete evaluation of AONB Perceptions Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 attendees for AONB Partnership tour on 22nd September 2017. The tour included Ross-on-Wye riverbank, Goodrich Castle visitor centre, Coppett Hill Common Trust, Garren and Gamber brooks with AONB trainee ecologists and Lydbrook Bridge. • Evaluation of responses to AONB Perceptions Questionnaire completed & reported on in 2016/17 • Seminar delivered as part of Offa's Dyke Collaboratory, on Lancaut Archaeological Investigations, 16th March 2018.
<p>Exhibitions & Outreach Promote the AONB through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stands at the Monmouthshire Show, Herefordshire Country Fair and other relevant shows. • Local exhibitions and other local appropriate / prestigious events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB stand at Monmouthshire Show and Foresters' Forest LP events • 5 Talks and presentation were given including to The Valley's That Changed the World familiarisation visit, Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Monmouth Chamber of Commerce and Monmouth Breast Cancer support group. Presentation to Offa's Dyke Collaboratory in Knighton on Lancaut archaeological investigation.
<p>MindSCAPE Final (4th) year of £165,000 Big Lottery funded initiative enabling people living with dementia to access and reconnect with the landscape, through arts and creative environmental activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage final year of project and submit reports & claims for Big Lottery • Supervise contractor organising regular creative sessions, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 activities run fortnightly throughout 2017/18 • 22 people (people living with dementia and carers) engaged with the project during 2017/18. <p>Summary of questionnaire statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 100% Have made friends ○ 93% less isolated ○ 86% less stressed

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<p>workshops and social activities at appropriate sites for participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host final year seminar to promote findings and success of scheme. • Develop legacy project & exit strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 93% More positive/happy ○ 50% more fit/active ○ 60% More able to do 'mindscape activities' at home ○ 93% more creative ○ 100% more part of their community • Events delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Raised awareness of the project by running a practical workshop in the grounds of Hawkwood College Stroud in May 17 (8 attendees) ○ Consulted with dementia colleagues and trailed activity resource guide at the Meaningful Activities Network meeting (Coleford – 20 attendees) and at two of the Dementia Education teams Community Dementia Link worker CPD events in Cheltenham (Sept/Dec 17 totalling 25 attendees) ○ Delivered a successful day conference to share learning and celebrate the project (Oct 17 – 46 attendees) ○ Annual report produced and circulated amongst Councillors, Assembly Members and other AONBs.
<p>Wye Valley River Festival 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit applications to Arts Councils and other funders of the Festival • Continue Research & Development phase for events and ideas • Develop business sponsorship for 2018 • Commence outreach programme including with schools, young people and intergeneration opportunities • Consolidate preparations for Festival 5th May – 15th May 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous small meetings with production team, partners and performers/artists around Festival theme of 'Woods & Trees' • Development of programme for 5th – 20th May 2018 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ local communities engaged: Hereford, Fownhope, Ross, Lydbrook, Symonds Yat, Monmouth, Redbrook, Llandogo, Tintern & Chepstow. ○ 2 local Partnership sites: Yat Rock (FC) & Tintern Abbey (Cadw) • 9 schools engaged with the project • Pilgrimage Walks scoped and prepared with volunteers • Total raised from other sources £110,000 to date, Total raised in kind-£27,000
<p>Youth Rangers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude structured programme of activity for 3rd Cohort of young people (14-16 year olds) that will increase their skill set in landscape and heritage conservation and management. • Develop the next phase of the scheme, linking with the Foresters Forest LP and other funding sources to continue the model of engaging young people in conservation and heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 activities delivered, including drystone walling, farm visits, forestry & green-wood work, charcoal making, climbing & crag-clean, caving, summer camp, graduation & bush-craft event. • HLF Foresters' Forest Project started March 2017 continuing project to 2022 • 4th Cohort recruited with 20 enrolled in October 2017. • AONB staff & Youth Ranger Leader volunteers received 'Lowland Leader' training.
<p>Deer Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene & service Deer Management Groups and Deer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Wye Valley Deer Management Group met 1st November. • Local Wild Venison Supply and Demand Feasibility Study commissioned with funding

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<p>Monitoring Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate deer surveys in the Woolhope Dome and Lower Wye Valley • Assist co-ordination of collaborative deer cull through the Deer Management Groups • Review and implement as appropriate the recommendations of the venison marketing feasibility study 	<p>from Monmouthshire LEADER, Natural England and AONB Sustainable Development Fund.</p>
<p>Habitat Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Phase 1 and priority BAP habitat surveys • Liaise over national roadside verge initiatives with local authorities and Highways Agency • Organise monthly volunteer task days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 conservation activities took place in a variety of locations, with a wide variety of partners. Approximately 70 volunteers took part in these sessions. The work ranged from, hedge planting, vegetation management, drystone walling, coppicing. We worked with a diverse range of partners from the Deer Initiative, NRW, Community Councils, Wildlife Trusts, Plantlife. Also worked regularly with 'Dads Can' Project from Monmouthshire Housing to re-instate 30meters drystone wall. • Work continues in partnership with Ross Town Council to manage bankside vegetation and erosion along the SSSI/SAC riverfront and amenity park. • AONB Ecological Survey Trainees continued Phase 1 Habitat Survey work in Monmouthshire and south Herefordshire, including digitisation on QGIS. Trainees have undertaken a comparison of Phase 1 surveys in Monmouthshire producing a report of their findings. • A466 River Views Feasibility Report produced by AONB Ecological Survey Trainees covering roadside views of the river Wye between Monmouth and St Arvans. • Restoration of drystone walls a regular Youth Ranger/ volunteer activity.
<p>Website and social media</p> <p>Upgrading and management of www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk and social networking sites e.g. facebook and twitter. Maintenance of www.wyevalleywalk.org and hosting of www.overlookingthewye.org.uk & www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk websites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new website and social media promotion developed • Facebook 'Likes' for Wye Valley AONB https://www.facebook.com/wyevalley.aonb/ increased from 942 to 1,139 over year. The highest reach was 3,402 people.
<p>Work placements</p> <p>Support the needs of student placements/group projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate new under-graduate and post-graduate research opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Ecological Survey trainees hosted by the AONB Unit on contract extensions to the LEMUR + scheme, to undertake additional project work (see 'Habitat Conservation' above). • PhD student in final stages of completion of work.
<p>Undergrounding</p> <p>Continue working with Western Power to identify power-lines within</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 3 undergrounding schemes completed, in Goodrich and 2 schemes in Tintern. A further scheme in Goodrich has been approved by the steering group -

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<p>the AONB suitable for undergrounding.</p>	<p>Western Power are currently undertaking detailed assessments of the proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Development Officer attended the Annual WPD Stakeholder workshop. • The Development Officer attended Wales undergrounding group meetings on May 15th and Sept 11th; also West Midlands undergrounding group meetings on June 29th.
<p>Landscape scale conservation Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop scheme around Little Doward & South Herefordshire with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust & others • Develop options for a possible Landscape Partnership scheme in the north of the AONB between Woolhope and Sellack • Scope for appropriate projects and prepare applications for National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) for area between Ross & Goodrich • Work with partners in Monmouthshire on Long Forest and Usk to Wye initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An AONB wide Landscape scale schemes in relation to Veteran & Riparian Trees was developed and an expression of interest submitted for consideration as part of the Woodland Trust Trees Outside Woodlands project. • Development Officer represents AONB on the Herefordshire Meadows Group Steering Group, assisting with the delivery of Natural England Feasibility Fund group. • Lower Wye Valley Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management partnership project developed with Monmouthshire County Council, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Wye & Usk Foundation and Woodland Trust. • Water Environment Grant application prepared with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Wye & Usk Foundation
<p>Wye Valley Walk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership • Monitor counters along Walk • Manage Passport scheme • Facilitate future options for Lydbrook Bridge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 counters along Wye Valley Walk in AONB recorded 114,594 movements in 2017. Feedback remained largely positive despite monitoring of website and Passport scheme being hindered by staff vacancy in first half of year. • AONB Manager prepared £1.7million Heritage Lottery Fund application on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council for the restoration of Lydbrook Black Bridge – currently closed and causing a diversion of Wye Valley Walk.
<p>Public Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote guided walks, events, children’s activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses in and around the AONB • Give talks/presentations to local groups • Regular press releases and magazine articles / advertorial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AONB Community Links Officer (CLO) has given 4 talks to local schools. • Well-being Walking event and lunch attended by 70 people, led by CLO • 5 guided walks with Chepstow Walkers are Welcome, Monmouth Walkers are Welcome and Lower Wye Ramblers. • 1 talk given on Wye Valley Habitats • 10,000 copies of AONB Map & Guide distributed to key tourism outlets
<p>Partnership Influence & attend partnerships as appropriate; eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Destination Management Partnership • Visit Herefordshire Leisure and Recreation Forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AONB staff engaged in Strategic Partnership of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association and the Visit Herefordshire Tourism and Leisure Forum. • AONB Manager attended Monmouthshire Public Service Board seminar • AONB Manager &/or AONB Development Officer attended meetings of Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (NAC), Wye Catchment Partnership, Monmouthshire

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wye Catchment Management Partnership Wye Navigation Advisory Committee (WyeNAC) Monmouthshire Environment Partnership, Herefordshire Wildlife Link 	<p>Environmental Partnership Board, Welsh Assembly Rural Affairs Cross Party group and Future Landscapes Wales Working Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Links Officer represents AONB on 'Creative Canopy' Arts Council England sponsored network in Forest of Dean Community Links Officer on Wye Beaver liaison group.
<p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and Europarc seminars & events Work with Welsh Government and Wales Designated Landscapes in taking Future Landscapes Wales Programme forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Protected Landscapes in Wales collaborated through on-going Future Landscapes Wales programme. The Protected Landscapes in Wales also collaborated over the Scenic Wales calendar, with 200 copies distributed to AONB Partnership members. AONB Manager attended AONB Lead Officers meeting on Birmingham. AONB Manager attended the National Parks Wales Seminar in Brecon, Welsh Protected Landscapes Legislation training in Llanelli and strategic planning workshop with National Association for AONBs. AONB Manager and Information Officer attended NAAONB Landscapes for Life conference. A long standing JAC member (from CLA & River Wye Preservation Trust) received a Landscapes for Life Award.
<p>Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS and State of the AONB data, including habitats and species, heritage, tourism and recreation etc. Support evaluation of Drystone walls Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Ecological Survey Trainees continued Phase 1 Habitat Survey work in Monmouthshire and south Herefordshire, including digitisation on QGIS. Trainees have undertaken a comparison of Phase 1 surveys in Monmouthshire producing a report of their findings. Under development is a drystone walling project of further survey and awareness raising.
<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group Prepare grant bids and claims for Natural Resources Wales and Defra, and other funding bodies as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 full JAC meetings held, 3rd July 2017, 6th November 2017 & 5th March 2018, preceded by TOWP meetings on 14th June 2017, 11th Oct 2017 & 7th Feb 2018, AONB Annual report 2016-17 presented to JAC in July 2017 AONB Steering Group held on 11th Oct & 7th Feb with AONB Unit budgets and spend profile presented and scrutinised.
<p>Funding and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate a new Memorandum of Understanding between the core funding partners for 2018 - 2021 Continue investigating funding and development opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) 2018 – 2021 signed between four constituent local authorities. Application successful for Monmouthshire LEADER funding to produce an AONB app through a partnership project with Cadw investigating and interpreting links between

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigation into external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects 	<p>Tintern Abbey and the wider landscape.</p>
<p>Offa's Dyke Collaboratory <i>Investigate opportunities for future cross border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting archaeological projects and investigation into landscape significance of the 8th century monument</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Manager is on steering group for Offa's Dyke Collaboratory, and gave presentation at ODC event at Offa's Dyke Centre, Knighton on archaeological investigation of Lancaut peninsular.
<p>Overlooking the Wye legacy <i>Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination, on behalf of Forest of Dean Building Preservation Trust, of archaeological investigations of Lancaut Church & Spital Meend hillfort. AONB team hosted day school at Chepstow Drill Hall on Lancaut archaeological investigations, on behalf of Offa's Dyke Collaboratory and Forest of Dean Building Preservation Trust. 90 people attended.