

AONB & PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the AONB Unit and Partners, relating to:-

- a. AONB Farming Awards
- b. Marketing of local Wild Venison
- c. mindSCAPE
- d. Offa's Dyke Collaboratory
- e. Undergrounding
- f. Water Environment Grant (WEG)

FOR INFORMATION

a) AONB Farming Awards

2018 was the 11th year of running the Wye Valley AONB Farming Awards. The AONB Unit received seven applications to this year's award, which were shortlisted down to four finalists visited by the judging panel.

The judging panel was made up this year of Andrew Blake (AONB Manager), David Price (NFU Cymru/JAC), Mike Williams (Farming and Wildlife advisor/Wye & Usk Foundation) and 2016 winner Mike Johnson (Broome Farm, Peterstow). The four finalists were:-

- Humble By Nature, Meend Farm, Penallt;
- Gadr Farm, Llangovan;
- Gwent Wildlife Trust; and
- Ballingham Court Farm, Ballingham.

Following visits to all four finalists over a day of judging, it was decided the winner of the awards were Esther and Henry Rudge of Ballingham Court Farm. This was the 3rd time the Ridges have won the Award. The Award was presented on 7th July at the Monmouthshire Show.

Ballingham Court Farm has subsequently been visited on the annual AONB Study Tour, to show the work being undertaken, with particular emphasis on the renewable energy aspects of the farm enterprise.

b) Marketing of local Wild Venison

Funding has been secured through Natural England to deliver training sessions which will progress two of the Recommendations in the 'Feasibility Study Investigating the Production, Marketing and Sale of local Wild Venison in the Lower Wye Valley and southeast Monmouthshire'. These training sessions will be run in the coming months and targeted at

butchers and restaurateurs, promoting the variety of flavour and uses for wild venison, and encouraging promotion of the product to customers.

The report, published in early 2018, highlights eight recommendations, mainly around training and increased understanding, which would help encourage greater supply and consumption of local wild venison.

c) mindSCAPE

Delivery of the mindSCAPE project by the AONB Unit has now finished. BIG Lottery funding for the project ran from April 2014 until the end of March 2018. The AONB Unit were given an additional 6 months to ensure full spend of the BIG Lottery grant. The final project report was submitted at the end of September.

The mindSCAPE group continues to run in Lydbrook, now funded by Arts Council England through their Celebrating Age funding, and run by Artspace Cinderford as part of their Branching Out project. This two year project has enabled the continuation of the existing group, as well as the development of two additional groups being delivered through the mindSCAPE model and ethos but open to all, rather than just those living with dementia, in Newnham and Viney Hill. The project will also work with groups of older people across the Forest of Dean.

Before its completion, the mindSCAPE project produced a resource guide containing considerations to make when putting on an activity along with 12 seasonally appropriate nature and landscape activities. A project evaluation was also undertaken by Dementia Adventure which, amongst other statistics, shows that during the 4 years of the project 96 sessions were run with 55 participants (29 carers and 26 people with dementia).

mindSCAPE is also being delivered in care homes across the Forest of Dean through the Foresters Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme, with Heritage Lottery Funding. Over four years, eight care homes will take part in 10 sessions each, delivered by an arts practitioner, again overseen by Artspace Cinderford. The sessions will also contribute towards the production of care home resource guides. Work in three care homes is complete, sessions in a fourth care home will be completed during late 2018.

d) Offa's Dyke Collaboratory

Two events were held in September connected with the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory. The AONB Manager spoke at a one day conference on 'Offa's Dyke and related medieval linear earthworks' held at the Marches School, Oswestry on Saturday 15th September. The event was organised and hosted by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, one of the co-conveners of the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory. It featured talks on historical and archaeological aspects of these important border features, updates on recent excavation work, and discussions from conservation and heritage groups, with perspectives from field archaeologists, academics, local history societies and enthusiasts. The event was followed by an optional guided tour of the excavation of a section of Offa's Dyke at Chirk Castle.

On Saturday 29th September, Tidenham Historical Group hosted a day school at Chepstow Drill Hall about Offa's Dyke in the Tidenham and Chepstow area. The AONB Manager spoke about supporting local heritage in the Wye Valley AONB. Other speakers were Dr Keith Ray, Jon Hoyle, Senior Archaeological Project Officer at Gloucestershire County Council and Mel Barge, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England. In the afternoon there was a short guided walk to explore the Sedbury and Buttington Tump parts of the Dyke.

Following on from the Lancaut Day School in March, an evening event is planned, for Wednesday 28th November, again at Chepstow Drill Hall, to update the public about the most recent findings and conclusions from the archaeological investigations at Lancaut and Spital Meend.

e) Undergrounding

The AONB Unit continues to work with Western Power Distribution and other Protected Landscapes to identify overhead power-lines for undergrounding, targeting those which deliver the greatest landscape benefit.

The Wye Valley is in both the South Wales and West Midlands areas. There are currently schemes in Llandogo, Sollers Hope and Kerne Bridge which are being explored.

Considerable work around landowner consent and wayleaves is still to be carried out before the schemes can be implemented.

In anticipation of further funding during the next price review period from 2023 onwards, the AONB Unit are already identifying potential schemes for consideration by the Protected Landscape Steering Groups.

f) Water Environment Grant (WEG)

The Wye & Usk Foundation, working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and the AONB Unit, submitted an application for the Water Environment Grant, entitled Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR). The bid is for £1,188,905 which includes most of the English part of the AONB as well as the adjacent Garren & Gamber catchment.

The WEG scheme is part of the Rural Development Programme for England. A decision of funding is anticipated in late autumn 2018.