

WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL 2020+

Purpose

To present the Five Year Business Plan for the Wye Valley River Festival 2019-2024 and the 5 tests for the future development of the Wye Valley River Festival.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. welcomes the Business Plan for the Wye Valley River Festival 2020 and subsequent proposals for future Festivals over the next five years
- B. supports the on-going funding applications for Wye Valley River Festival 2020
- C. endorses the 5 tests identified to secure the future of the Wye Valley River Festival.

Key Issues

- Arts Council England funding is supporting the Research & Development phase of the Wye Valley River Festival 2020.
- Two weeks of Creative Laboratory workshops have involved over 30 people, generating a range of exciting proposals and ideas around the Festival theme of 'Time'.
- The Five Year Business Plan for the Wye Valley River Festival, covering 2019-2024, has been produced (attached) and submitted with grant applications to Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England
- The Business Plan was informed by the governance options study and includes 5 tests for the JAC to approve to take the Wye Valley River Festival forward into a proposed Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).
- Currently £186,800 has been secured for the 2020 Festival and further opportunities and funding bids are being pursued including a grant application to Arts Council England.
- The Bowland Award, won by the Wye Valley River Festival last year, will be returned at the forthcoming national Landscapes for Life conference for a 2019 winner to receive.

Reasons

The study of governance, audience demographics and funding models to take the Wye Valley River Festival forward was received in March. This has informed the new 5 year Business Plan. It proposes moving towards a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) for the Wye Valley River Festival, recognising that the current management, governance and funding of the Festival is not a sustainable model that can be carried forward indefinitely.

Currently Wye Valley River Festival is a Wye Valley AONB Partnership project, delivered by the AONB Unit with the support of the professional Festival team led by Festival Director, Phillipa Haynes, and Artistic Directors, Desperate Men – Richard Headon and Jon Beedell. The Vision for the Festival, as outlined in the Business Plan, is:

The Wye Valley River Festival will inspire audiences to engage positively with landscape. The artistic programme will promote change, creating a compelling call to action for citizens to conserve and enhance the Wye Valley Landscape for future generations. To that end the Wye Valley River Festival will deliver thought provoking, site specific, and high quality inspiring art in the outdoors, growing empathy, emotional engagement and better understanding of the landscape of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Through celebratory and insightful Festival experiences the Festival will foster a strong connection between the Festival audience and the Wye Valley landscape.

The research and development of the Wye Valley River Festival 2020 and the theme of ‘Time’ is progressing with funding from Arts Council England, Visit Wales and the AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

Implications

The scoping of ideas around the theme of ‘Time’ for the 2020 Festival is developing well. Similarly, fund raising is progressing with over 60% of the budget secured. The main application to Arts Council England is being prepared while the grant from Arts Council of Wales, for £25,000 has just been approved. Meanwhile meetings are taking place with other potential funding partners, including some of the local Town, Parish and Community Councils, community participants and hosts.

The change of date of the May Day Bank Holiday, to coincide with VE Day on Friday 8th May, has led to a review of some of the timetabling and programme proposals. But at this early stage in the process this is not considered a critical problem. Securing the budget remains the primary concern.

The 5 year Business Plan sets out the medium to long term prospect for the Festival. Central to this is working towards the establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as a sustainable vehicle to take the Festival forward, as a new governance, management and delivery model. Further works is needed with partners and participants in developing the Festival and the proposed CIO beyond 2020.

The intention is for an independent entity that has greater scope for accessing funds from trusts and charitable sources, while retaining close links with the landscape of the Wye Valley and AONB Partnership. Five key tests are identified as necessary before progress can be made towards the new CIO for the Wye Valley River Festival. These are identified in the Business Plan (pages 15-17) as follows:

- 1) To build up a reserve of funds before setting up a CIO. This needs to be in the region of £50,000 to enable the recruitment and training of a leadership board, recruitment and employment of a part-time employee, administration and office costs and all legal fees.

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2023. This will be reviewed as the Business Plan is updated after the next Festival in June 2020.

- 2) Select and nurture a leadership team to become part of a future Board to run a Wye Valley River Festival CIO.

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2022.

3) Formalise key partnerships with key organisations, community supporters & artists around the vision, mission, values and aims of Wye Valley River Festival set out in this Business Plan.

Time frame: aiming to have partnership agreements with those partners that have become long term supporters to achieve this by December 2019.

4) Legal requirements are confirmed by host authorities Monmouthshire County Council, Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Forest of Dean District Council enabling the transition of Wye Valley River Festival from a Wye Valley AONB Partnership Project to an independent entity: CIO.

Time frame: aiming to achieve by December 2020.

5) Satisfy the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), as the Festival leadership body, that all the above tests have been met.

Time frame: aiming to achieve at the latest by December 2024, can be earlier if all other transition tests are met.

The progress of these 5 tests will be reviewed throughout the lifetime of the Business Plan.

Background

The Wye Valley River Festival is a Wye Valley AONB Partnership initiative. The Festival is a biennial festival focused on arts & environment with landscape at its heart. The Festival has taken place over 2 weeks and 3 weekends in early May in 2014, 2016 & 2018 and includes a community engagement programme of workshops in the run up to May. By staging magnificent outdoor arts events that captivate and engage, the Festival has celebrated and interpreted the River Wye, the countryside and its communities, using the arts to develop thinking, imagination and understanding, building new audiences and strengthening the vital role that culture plays in the future development and ‘place making’ of this AONB.

The Wye Valley River Festival received the national Bowland Award in July 2018 at the annual AONB ‘Landscapes for Life’ conference. The annual Award recognises a best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A fresh round of projects will be nominated and voted on by the AONB Network at this year’s conference between 9th-11th July.