

## **NAAONB UPDATE**

### ***Purpose***

To advise members of activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

FOR INFORMATION

### ***Key Issues***

- The national AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference, in Colchester in July, was attended by the AONB Manager, AONB Development Officer and AONB Community Links Officer.
- The Colchester Declaration – a 'declaration for nature' (attached) - was agreed at the Landscapes for Life Conference.
- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairperson's Conference and AGM is on 28<sup>th</sup> November and will focus on challenges of The Colchester Declaration and the Landscapes Review. The AONB Manager will attend.
- The AONB Development Officer and the AONB Community Links Officer are participating in the professional training 'Taking the Lead' programme as part of the NAAONB Future Landscapes Programme supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Resilient Heritage grant.
- Landscapes for Life Week (formerly Outstanding Week) was 21<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September with the National Moment of 'hearts in the landscape' and publication of 'Fugitives' by the poet laureate, Simon Armitage
- The Glover Landscape Review Final Report was published to coincide with Landscapes for Life Week.

### **Landscapes for Life Conference 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> July, Colchester**

The annual National AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference took place at the University of Essex, Colchester from 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> July in association with the Dedham Vale AONB and Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager and Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, and Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer attended. Keynote speakers included: Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State DEFRA; Dame Fiona Reynolds; Jules Pretty, Professor of Environment and Society at University of Essex; Julian Glover, Chair of the Review of Designated Landscapes in England and Craig Bennett, Chief Executive of Friends of the Earth.

There were also field trip options. Andrew Blake's trip looked at 'Natural Beauty, Special Qualities and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' around the village of Wissington and the Stour valley. Sarah was on the 'Enhancing Natural Beauty through Management' trip visiting several estuarine and woodland sites to discover how management techniques can help these habitats in time of climate change, while Nick's trip looked at 'Enhancing Special Qualities' visiting a river restoration scheme and learning about the practicalities of achieving catchment improvements in today's lowland river systems.

On behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the Wye Valley River Festival, Andrew & Sarah handed over the won The Bowland Award to the Chichester Harbour Education Service, as elected winners for 2019. There were 6 projects nominated for The Bowland Award 2019 which is voted on by all AONB Partnerships attending the conference. The Award recognises a best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The conference concluded with NAAONB Chief Executive Howard Davies making The Colchester Declaration – a Declaration for Nature. This was developed through a series of pre-conference discussion fora and workshop sessions during the conference. The Declaration is appended and is the pledge for nature of the AONB network: to protect what remains and restore what has been lost.

The conference is an excellent networking opportunity with plenty of informed, enthused and energised debate and sharing of experiences and advice.

### **NAAONB Chairperson's Conference & AGM**

The Landscapes for Life Chairperson's Conference and NAAONB AGM which will take place on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in London. The programme is attached. Andrew Blake, AONB Manager, will attend on behalf of the JAC Chairman and represent the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

This year's Chairmen's Conference will focus on the challenges of The Colchester Declaration and the Landscapes Review. A key challenge identified in the Review is an apparent disconnect with the wider public where much of UK's society has little engagement, knowledge, or appreciation of our National Parks & AONBs. Lord Gardiner, Under Secretary of State for Environment, will be keynote speaker, along Maxwell Ayamba, Environmental Journalist and author of 'Black Men Walking' and 'Outdoors for all? Exploring barriers to the use of open spaces by British Black and Ethnic Minority young people'.

### **Taking the Lead - Future Landscapes Programme.**

Nick Critchley, Wye Valley AONB Development Officer and Sarah Sawyer, Wye Valley AONB Community Links Officer both continue their participating in the 'Taking the Lead' programme. This is a professional and personal development programme delivered through the NAAONB across staff from 38 AONBs in England and Wales. It aims to help develop greater collaborative working across the AONB network. Through CPD, personal reflection based upon Lumina Spark psychometric tests, and Topic Working Groups, the participants

are concentrating on some of the key challenges facing AONBs, and will be finalising their recommendations early in the New Year.

Nick Critchley is working in the Staff Development Topic Working Group. They are looking at a number of connecting themes related to the subject, including reviewing and rewriting an AONB Induction Pack for both new AONB staff and members of AONB Partnerships. They are also exploring both formal and informal staff development opportunities.

Sarah Sawyer is in the Technology, Data and Evidence Topic Working Group. Their research has revolved around harnessing data to provide insight and evidence for AONB work.

The Taking the Lead programme, with support from the National Lottery Resilient Heritage grant, is an enriching experience for participants and is having positive benefits in work practices locally and nationally. Much of the focus of the programme involves looking at ways to improve collaboration and partnership working in individual settings and across the AONB Family.

### **Landscapes for Life Week**

Formerly ‘Outstanding Week’, this week-long focus on AONBs ran from 21st – 29th September this year. One of the Topic Working Group co-ordinated a National Moment of ‘hearts in the landscape’ as part of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. All AONB Partnerships were encouraged to make heart shapes in the landscape. The Wye Valley AONB Partnership did this 2 (or 3) ways; on the AONB Partnership Tour attendees stood in a heart shape by Bigsweir Bridge; the AONB Youth Rangers navigated a route on footpaths that marked out a (rough) heart shape; they also made a number of hearts with their bodies, shadows and even some blackberries!

The poet laureate, Simon Armitage, was commissioned by the NAAONB to create a poem for the National Moment and in celebration of AONBs, following their designation under the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The poem is entitled ‘Fugitives’ (included above in Glover Landscape Review report and also available here <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/1915/6923/9522/Fugitives.pdf>)

Julian Glover decided to launch of the Landscape Review Final Report to coincide with the National Moment.

### ***Background***

The NAAONB is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK’s AONBs. Its objectives are to promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs, advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs, and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other Protected Areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued. It takes a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with its membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals. For more information see:

[www.landscapesforlife.org.uk](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk)