

AONB UNIT & PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit and various partners.

FOR INFORMATION

Below are brief update reports on the following AONB Unit and partners' initiatives: -

- a) Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management & Green Infrastructure Project
- b) Gilpin2020
- c) Water Environment Grant ROAR & Catchment Advisors
- d) Offa's Dyke Collaboratory

a) Lower Wye Catchments Natural Flood Management (NFM) & Green Infrastructure (GI) Project

The NFM&GI Project with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) funding has finished. However, some modest resources have been secured from Welsh Government to continue with some elements of the project. The Project Officer, Chris Rees, left in January and a new Project Officer is being recruited on a 12 month contract.

The Natural Flood Management (NFM) seminar, which was postponed from November, was held at the Bridges Centre, Monmouth, on 31st January. The event was well attended and gave a chance for local agencies and interested individuals to hear about different NFM approaches, experiences and best practice through a series of presentations from national experts, including from Chris Uttley (Environment Agency), Bethany Lewis (Herefordshire Council), David Gasca-Tucker (Atkins Consultancy) and Huw Thomas (Forest Research).

A number of leaky dams have been installed on private land. These will be useful to demonstrate locally how NFM can help to slow the flow of water through a catchment. Interest in the application of such measures is likely to increase following the recent flooding.

b) Gilpin2020

The Wye Valley AONB Unit has been helping co-ordinate local organisations to celebrate the 250th anniversary of William Gilpin taking the Wye Tour in 1770. Although 'officially' launched by HRH Prince of Wales in November, the formal launch of Gilpin2020 is taking place in St Mary's Church, Ross-on-Wye on Thursday 12th March, 7.30 pm. This will include the launch by Pallas Athene (Publishers) of the reprinting of Gilpin's 1770 book and a talk by Richard Humphreys, former curator of Tate Britain. The event is kindly sponsored by Harrison Clark Rickerbys Solicitors, The Kings Head Hotel, Ross, and The Old Court Hotel, Whitchurch.

A full programme of events and activities are planned under the Gilpin2020 celebrations, including artists and painters reinterpreting Gilpin's Picturesque views, exhibitions in Ross-on-Wye, Goodrich Castle and Chepstow, talks & guided walks following in the footsteps of Picturesque Wye tourists, such as William Wordsworth (it also being the 250th anniversary of his birth), pubs & hotels offering 18th Century meals, a video project on the Wye Tour by the Wye Valley Learning Network of Primary Schools around Ross, and various concerts and poetry readings connected to the period. Celebrations conclude with The Big Wye Draw Challenge on 8th October.

A leaflet of events will soon be printed, meanwhile for more details please see <https://gilpin2020.org/>

c) Water Environment Grant ROAR & Catchment Advisors

The Catchment Advisors operating through the Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) Project, Ben Nott and Rebecca Meredith, have continued to visit farms in the English part of the Wye Valley AONB and the adjacent Garren & Gamber catchment. To date Ben & Bex have visited about 20 farms in the area and are preparing Farm Plans for each. A successful demonstration event on Under-sowing Maize was also held in the Garren and Gamber catchment.

The ROAR project is led by the Wye & Usk Foundation, working with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, the Wye Valley AONB Unit and Herefordshire Rural Hub, with funding from the Water Environment Grant (WEG) under the Rural Development Programme for England. The total project is for £672,000 until March 2021 for the English part of the Wye Catchment.

d) Offa's Dyke Collaboratory (ODC)

The 2nd Research and Conservation Forum meeting was held in Cardiff University on 22nd January 2020 (1st meeting was in Chester University, Shrewsbury in April 2017). A range of speakers provided academic, archaeological and local community perspectives on research and conservation initiatives on the Early Medieval linear earthworks of Offa's Dyke & Wat's Dyke down the eastern Marches of Wales and the frontier between England and Wales that has endured since then to the present day.

On Saturday 4th April 2020 in Trefonen, Shropshire there will be a public event 'Communities & Offa's Dyke' where local community groups along Offa's Dyke can meet and share discoveries and experience, with walks and talks by researchers and community groups exploring Offa's Dyke and its environs from Prestatyn to Chepstow.

The AONB Manager continues to be a Convenor of ODC along with Professor Keith Ray (Cardiff University), Professor Howard Williams (Chester University), Christopher Catling (Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales), Dr Paul Belford (Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust) & David McGlade (Offa's Dyke Association) that focuses on the promotion, interpretation and conservation of Offa's Dyke.

For more information see also <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/>