

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 scheduled for early July was cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- The Colchester Declaration – a 'declaration for nature' - has been progressed through a series of on-line meetings and AONB partnerships refining proposals for their Nature Recovery Plans. A National Landscapes Nature Recovery Coordinator has been employed part time to take the initiative forward.
- The NAAONB submitted a £4.5M application to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in September, which unfortunately was not successful.
- Landscapes for Life Week (formerly Outstanding Week) was 19th – 27^h September, coinciding conveniently with the Wye Valley River Festival.
- The NAAONB has been granted some resources from DEFRA to run a National Landscapes advocacy project on the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme.
- Art in the Landscape - A National Strategy, was commissioned by the NAAONB and launched in July with further training on-line this Autumn, including contributions from the Wye Valley AONB and Wye Valley River Festival team.
- The AGM for the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) is on 19th November and will be on-line, as will the Chairperson's Conference early in the new year.

Colchester Declaration and AONB Nature Recovery Plans

In July 2019 the Colchester Declaration was produced by the NAAONB and supported by AONB partnerships. The Declaration demonstrates the readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change. The ambition was pledged for every AONB to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan and deliver Species Action Plans to reverse the decline of threatened species identified on the IUCN Red List, see: https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/7815/6326/2583/The_Colchester_Declaration.pdf. The AONB Unit has been collaborating with key contacts at the Malvern Hills AONB, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts on devising a Nature Recovery Plan. Nick Critchley, Wye Valley AONB Development Officer and Sarah Sawyer, Wye Valley AONB

Community Links Officer recently convened a meeting of local ecologists to define the appropriate species for the Wye Valley to prepare and deliver Species Action Plans for. The intention is to take a landscape and ecological network-based approach, not a single species approach, and focus on what is actionable within the AONB. The NAAONB have also recently recruited a National Landscapes Nature Recovery Coordinator to help co-ordinate this work nationally.

Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid: ‘Recovering Nature and Connecting People in AONBs’

The Expression of Interest application for the Green Recovery Challenge Fund was submitted by the NAAONB in September. The bid ‘Recovering Nature and Connecting People in AONBs’ was for £4.5M covering all 36 AONBs in England and included a Nature Recovery Officer for each AONB and an associated capital fund for local ‘shovel-ready’ projects, many with local Wildlife Trusts and other eNGOs. Unfortunately the bid did not pass the Expression of Interest phase. But the collaborative effort in developing the application and identifying many of the schemes and projects will most likely not be wasted. The majority of projects remain ‘shovel-ready’ should the opportunity and resources become available.

ELM National Landscapes advocacy project

DEFRA are supporting the NAAONB to run a National Landscapes advocacy project on the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. Working collaboratively across AONBs and National Parks, the project aims to:

- build on National Landscapes’ existing networks to increase farmer/land manager engagement in ELM, and in Countryside Stewardship as a route into ELM.
- create an evidence base for roles National Landscapes could have in ELM when it is rolled out which will support any future funding submissions.

Specific elements of the project include training for National Landscapes staff, online events for farmers and land managers, ‘farmer to farmer’ video content and electronic updates. It is intended to help raise farmers’ awareness and understanding of ELM planning in National Landscapes and create a conduit to disseminate information beyond the end of the project. This will in turn support future funding bids, farm clusters and the enhancement of nature at a landscape scale. The NAAONB are currently working in collaboration with DEFRA to ensure a timely flow of information and with AONB staff who have responsibility for developing relationships with farmers, growers and land managers of all kinds.

Art in the Landscape - A National Strategy

The ‘Art in the Landscape’ Strategy was prepared by consultants Activate Performing Arts as part of an Arts Council England funded project with the NAAONB. The strategy is available here:

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2116/0318/0964/Art_in_the_Landscape_-_Final_Report.pdf. It builds on the experience of AONB staff and wider organisations

working with art in the landscape, including the Wye Valley River Festival. Sarah Sawyer, Wye Valley AONB Community Links Officer, is on the Steering Group for the project.

Initially a national training event was incorporated into the Wye Valley River Festival in May

2020, in the Monmouth. This inevitably had to be cancelled and on-line training will now be carried in November. The purpose of the training is to enable staff to build their confidence, skills and networks to enable them to create and manage art projects. Sarah Sawyer and Phillippa Haynes, Wye Valley River Festival Director will be contributing to the training, sharing their experience of running Wye Valley River Festival.

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