

NAAONB UPDATE

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The NAAONB 2019/20 Annual report is published and available on line.
- The national AONB's Chairperson's Conference is to be in March jointly with National Parks to focus on the Farming in Protected Landscape programme.
- The national 'Landscapes for Life' Conference 2021 is scheduled for early July and will be on-line but 'hosted' by the five Devon AONBs.
- The NAAONB are involved in the national Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership, led by Natural England.
- The Chief Executive of the NAAONB, Howard Davises is stepping down later this year and recruitment has commenced for his replacement.
- The AGM for the NAAONB was held on-line in November 2020 with the AONB Manager representing the Wye Valley AONB.

NAAONB Annual Report 2019-2020

The NAAONB Annual Report for 2019/20 is now available through this link:

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2916/1117/5323/Annual_Report_20_FINAL.pdf

The report includes case studies demonstrating how AONBs all around the country are delivering for nature, heritage and people. There is a section covering the Welsh AONBs including a case study from the Wye Valley AONB (page 25) on the Lower Wye Valley Catchments Project. The Annual Report has been shared with DEFRA and Welsh Government Ministers and key members of the respective government Landscape teams.

Chairperson's Conference

The NAAONB is organising a Chair-level conference for AONBs and National Parks in March. The focus for this high level conference will be the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Dates are yet to be finalised but the intension is to run two, 2-hour webinars for the chairs and senior management of Protected Landscapes.

Landscapes for Life Conference 2021

Having postponed the 2020 conference, the NAAONB will be hosting its first ever online annual conference. It will be 'in' Devon, as intended for 2020, with the 5 Devon AONBs hosting, as they would have been for a face-to-face conference. The conference will be held during the week commencing the 5th July, and it is likely there will be short sessions across the week rather than one long, tiring day having to remain at a computer screen. It will be on Zoom. It is intended that the host AONBs bring the county to the attendees virtually along with networking opportunities and a social evening in a format to be confirmed.

The five hosting AONBs are Blackdown Hills, East Devon, North Devon Coast, South Devon and Tamar Valley.

Nature Recovery

Natural England lead on delivery of nature recovery. The Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership was launched at the beginning of November, the National Association are part of the partnership. Natural England are also supporting nature recovery across the sector by funding posts – Frances Winder is the National Landscapes Nature Recovery Lead for AONBs, there is a similar post for the National Parks.

In the Colchester Declaration AONB Partnerships pledged to prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB by July 2020. The impacts of covid-19 have meant that deadline was unachievable but it is intended that every AONB will have a Nature Recovery Plan in 2022.

The Wye Valley AONB Unit is collaborating with the Malvern Hills AONB Unit and Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts on data and mapping for our respective AONB Nature Recovery Plans.

Chief Executive recruitment

After over 10 years as Chief Executive of the NAAONB, Howard Davises is stepping down later this year. The recruitment process has started to find his successor. Howard has led the NAAONB with considerable skill, agility and boldness since 2010, enabling AONBs collectively to punch above our weight in many spheres of influence. Some of the successes of the NAAONB under Howard's leadership include:

- Securing a protected settlement for AONBs during a period of austerity,
- Steering the NAAONB and AONB Family through a sponsorship change, from Natural England to DEFRA, and bringing them closer to Government in England and Wales,
- Delivery of a programme of leadership development and transformation that built collaborative skills across the AONB Family
- Raising ambition around nature recovery by providing vision and leadership around the Colchester Declaration – a declaration for nature in AONBs,
- Building influence and respect for AONB partnerships across a wide range of organisations including governments in England and Wales and the National Parks.

There is no shortage of challenges for the new CEO, not least the need to tackle climate change and to recover and protect nature in our landscapes. They will influence and drive

forward the implementation of the full spectrum of proposals in the Glover Review, which will incorporate the coordination of testing and delivery of post-Brexit nature-friendly farming payment systems, positioning the NAAONB in relation to the National Designated Landscape Partnership in Wales and the National Landscape Service in England, exploring new ways of sharing natural beauty with a wider and more diverse audience and maximising the opportunities for awareness and profile raising presented by the 25 Year Environment Plan, Colchester Declaration, Green Recovery, COP26 and the increasing sense of urgency around the environmental crisis.

It is intended that a successful recruitment may be announced in April.

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