

PARTNER REPORTS

Purpose

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

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a) Forestry England update
- b) National Forest Wales
- c) Gloucestershire County Council – Wireworks Bridge Tintern

a) Forestry England update

Forestry England (FE) continues to invest in building resilience into the Nation's forests, ensuring that natural processes feature prominently in FE's forest planning and operations. In particular, the pine marten re-introduction partnership project continues in the Forest of Dean with real success, and the new Forest Waters project in partnership with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency sees four catchment management plans being drafted. These plans will recommend and evidence how the watercourses and bodies within the Forest of Dean can be protected and enhanced to improve water quality and regulation.

The pair of beavers near Lydbrook, enclosed within 6 hectares of woodland along the Greathough Brook, continue to be carefully monitored.

Repairs and maintenance are being carried out to Biblins Bridge, necessitating its closure from 8th February for 3 – 4 weeks. This work includes replacing the timber 'U' frames along the bridge, as well as resurfacing the bridge with new anti-slip boards.

b) National Forest Wales

In March 2020 First Minister Mark Drakeford announced that Welsh Government will create a National Forest running the length and breadth of Wales. In November 2020 the first sections of the National Forest were announced, focusing on the Welsh Government estate. These include the Wye Valley Woodlands managed and maintained by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). These are recognised as among the very best woodlands in Wales and exemplars for the benefits other sites could emulate before becoming part of the National Forest. Welsh Government and NRW will work alongside partners to discuss the features and benefits which the woodlands can provide as part of the National Forest, such as existing infrastructure and connectivity including bridleways, pathways and access and how to create connected woodlands across the length and breadth of Wales.

c) Gloucestershire County Council – Wireworks Bridge Tintern

The Wireworks Bridge, Tintern spans the Wye and the England Wales border. Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire County Councils share responsibility and ownership of the bridge, however Gloucestershire County Council leads on repairs and maintenance.

A project is now underway to renovate the bridge. This commenced with some investigation works on the bridge between the 22nd and 26th February. The work included a roped access inspection, removal of some of the vegetation and scour assessment of the foundations.

The inspections will be followed by an assessment of the work required to fully refurbish the bridge. A detailed design of the preferred option will be put together later this year. Contractors will then be selected to carry out the work, which is due to get under way in 2022.

Further information, when available, will be posted on

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/tintern-wireworks-bridge-improvements/> .